

Nurturing soil-adarities: Growing multispecies justice in therapeutic landscapes

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ABSTRACT ORIGINAL

Soil, and its underground multispecies microbiome, has so far been overlooked in work interrogating gardens as therapeutic landscapes. This chapter explores the emplaced, affective, and ethical dimensions of human-soil relations in urban home and community gardens through ethnographic fieldwork, demonstrating that the fundamental interdependence of human and soil health and wellbeing makes soil a fertile focus for investigation. Soil not only shapes the productive capacities of gardens and sustains urban green spaces; biodiverse soil has also been shown to have direct health benefits. On the flipside, the presence of contaminated, toxic soils - most prevalent in lower socio-economic neighbourhoods - exposes inequities in access to safe gardening sites and the realisation of their potential therapeutic benefits. Seizing on the growing emphasis on therapeutic spaces as relationally produced, this chapter contends that the therapeutic benefits of gardens are best realised when human participants cultivate attentive, responsive relationships with the myriad multispecies companions that mutually co-produce these sites. To do this, the chapter explores how a multispecies justice framework can be enacted in therapeutic garden landscapes to maximise human and multispecies health and wellbeing. © 2023 selection and editorial matter, Pauline Marsh and Allison Williams; individual chapters, the contributors.