

Therapeutic Plant ‘stations’ and related contemplative experiences,
Designed by Deb Habib, Seeds of Solidarity.

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Scents/Sense of Hope

Gently touch a leaf of each scented plant between thumb and finger and then ‘sample’ the scent with a sniff of your fingertip. Use a different fingertip for each. As you inhale the scent, let your breath fill your belly and gently rise up to your heart and collarbones. Then allow the exhalation to release through your nose from collarbone to belly. Repeat several times. Allow your shoulders to rise and fall with your breath. Keep your jaw and face soft as you breathe by maintaining a gentle smile. What are a few words of hope that come to mind for you and for others?

Scented plants include geraniums, bee balm, sage, lemon balm, lavender and rosemary

Healing Teas

Chamomile, lemon balm, pineapple verbena, several types of mint (contained in pots), lavender, valerian, and Tulsi basil (an annual) are all soothing and relaxing. Touch the leaves of, and then choose one or two that appeal to you. Gently take a leaf or two from those plants, so long as there are ample leaves. While herbs such as these are typically dried, you can steep a fresh leaf in hot water and enjoy your tea! Grow your own or purchase these dried from health food stores and food coops.

Shine Brightly

Your solar plexus, the area just above your navel and to your breastbone, is a center of power as well as self-confidence, purpose, and transformation. In many Eastern healing and movement practices, there is great potential and centering related to this part of your body. The associated color is bright gold or orange like the sun, like the blooms on these plants. Stand with your feet hip distance with your knees just slightly bent. Place your hands just above your navel. Breathe for a few moments while in this position, gazing at the golden plants to connect with and invigorate your own inner sun, your personal power. Poppies, perennial and annual sunflowers, daylilies, goldenrod, coreopsis are among the bright yellow/orange flowers!

Gratitude Garden

Pink and red plants like phlox, red bee balm, cardinal flower, and blues like perennial bachelor button and irises inspire gratitude. Try this heart opening movement: Bring your hands to your heart, palms together, elbows bent at your sides. Drop your arms to your sides, and then inhale to raise your arms wide, reaching outwards as you inhale your arms up and overhead, touching palms together. Then exhale to bring your palms down, touching, slowly back to your heart. Do this a few times. While you are moving or standing still as you prefer, consider the quality of gratitude. What are you grateful for in this moment?

Textures of Nature

Plants offer many diverse textures and shapes. As you look at this garden, pay attention to sounds and sensations around you. Nature is richly textured; meditating in nature provides a healing background and is always a better soundtrack than our negative thoughts. Sit or stand quietly for a few moments, gazing at the plants if helpful, and simply pay attention to the diverse sounds or sensations (breeze, sun) around you. Some plants with diverse textures and shape include lamb’s ear, Artemisia, globe thistle, and sedum are hardy.

Awaken Taste

Fresh herbs in food are delicious. Sometimes as part of making dietary changes towards health or periods of time of not eating well we need to awaken our taste buds. Gently pick then slowly chew a leaf of one of the plants. Take your time, noticing all of the flavors. If you enjoy cooking, you can try growing a fresh culinary herb or two—they are perfect for container gardens. Sage, oregano, chives, garlic chives, savory, rosemary (tender, in a pot) and annuals like basil and parsley are great herbs to grow!

Pollinator Attracting

Milkweed, phlox, butterfly bush, purple coneflower and many other bright flowering plants are beneficial to pollinators. Creating habitats and providing nectar for pollinators serves all; pollinators are essential to our food supply, and to continuity of life. Rev Dr. Martin Luther King said: ‘everybody can be great, because anybody can serve.’ Contemplate a way that you have been of service to others, through your work, a volunteer activity, a simple act of kindness, or a supportive friendship.

Herbs and Self-Care

Commonly used and healing plants include purple coneflower (Echinacea); St. John's Wort, Calendula (self-seeding annual), Oregano, Arnica, Comfrey and Peppermint (contain as these spread). You can find salves and non-alcohol tinctures that contain these in natural foods markets to address different ailments. Learning about and using these promotes natural self-care. For example, Echinacea is known to boost the immune system. Calendula flowers are used to make healing salves. Mint tea eases digestion. Enjoy these examples of what the plant looks like, and consult an experienced herbalist or reputable source of information before use.

Sage Wisdom Garden

Sages have culinary, medicinal, and spiritual uses and are associated with clarity and wisdom. Some indigenous peoples burn sage, called smudging, to cleanse energy in a living space, around a person, or as part of ceremony. Contemplate any ancestral, cultural traditions that you know of in your lineage. Is there a piece of wisdom, teaching, or advice that you have received from a family member, counselor, spiritual teacher/teaching or book that helps you in your life? Common garden, tri-color, Russian, and purple sage are among the many grown.

Vegetable Gardens

Depending on the season a raised bed garden may contain cherry tomatoes, pole beans, small cucumbers, small carrots or radishes, peas in spring/fall, array of basil, and salad greens. Pick something carefully, and before eating it, observe the color and texture. Eat it slowly. Practice ‘mindful eating’ during a meal, preferably with something you really enjoy- by intentionally slowing down your eating and chewing slowly to taste all of the flavors and consider all that went into making it so: soil, water, sun and labor. Eating mindfully helps digestion too!