

# A garden to behold

The new therapeutic garden at Punggol Waterway Park is now open. Such gardens offer the elderly, some of whom may be wheelchair-bound, the chance to enjoy nature in an environment designed to stimulate their senses and uplift their spirits. **Joyce Teo** takes a look at some highlights of the garden.

## BENCHES IN THE CARPET GRASS AREA

- Visitors can sit and rest their feet on the softness of the grass.
- NParks created this area after getting feedback that visitors like to sit, linger and enjoy the feel of stepping on soft grass.



## SHELTERED VIEWING DECK

- Here, visitors can enjoy a view of Punggol Waterway as well as take part in therapeutic horticultural activities.
- The viewing deck has a green roof comprising various flowering species, such as the Chinese Violet (*Asystasia gigantea*) and Purple Queen (*Tradescantia pallida*), to not only help cool temperatures, but also attract more biodiversity to the urban environment.



## THERAPEUTIC HORTICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

- These sessions use plants and nature-related activities to maximise the benefits of a therapeutic garden.
- NParks has developed **more than 12 types of group-based therapeutic horticulture workshops** that are suitable for the elderly, those who have dementia and people with special needs.

Visitors can arrange seeds into patterns on a wood slab.



Cutting pandan leaves and lemongrass stalks into small pieces to make a scent bag.



- Various activities, such as maintaining the garden, leaf collage and the making of scent bags, can be conducted for groups from nursing homes at therapeutic gardens. However, these sessions are now on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Each session **lasts around an hour** and the activities are designed to stimulate participants' senses and memories through interaction with nature. They can also help to enhance fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. The sessions are customised according to the needs of the participants.

## FITNESS AREA

- Visitors can exercise here, while enjoying a view of the Punggol Waterway.

## WHEELCHAIR-PARKING AREAS

- There is space for wheelchair users to move about comfortably or to park their wheelchairs in one spot if they want to take a break.



## RAISED PLANTERS IN ORGANIC SHAPES

- An area has been specifically designed for gardening, with raised planters that are accessible to wheelchair users.



## ABOUT THE GARDEN

The **900 sq m** therapeutic garden (TG) at Punggol Waterway Park is the sixth TG in Singapore

Singapore plans to have **30 TGs** in public parks by 2030

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- more will open in the first half of next year:
- Sembawang Park
  - Yishun Pond Park
  - Pasir Ris Park
  - Bedok Reservoir Park
  - Jurong Lake Gardens

## Q&A

### WHAT IS...

#### A therapeutic garden?

A plant-dominated environment purposefully designed to facilitate interaction with the healing elements of nature. These gardens are now increasingly recognised as an important aid in healthcare.

#### Horticultural therapy?

This is the use of prescribed nature-related activities to aid recovery from mental or physical ailments. It involves offering individualised treatment programmes, with prescribed horticultural activities administered by trained therapists and done to achieve clinically documented goals.

#### Therapeutic horticulture?

Conducted by trained persons, therapeutic horticulture sessions use plants and plant-based activities to achieve group goals. Such programmes aim to promote mindfulness, uplift mood through sensory experiences and interaction with other participants and the environment, as well as improve muscular strength and motor skills through gardening activities and movement in the garden.

#### WHAT MAKES A GARDEN THERAPEUTIC?

Its features can include wide and gently graded accessible entrances and paths, raised planting beds and containers, and a sensory-oriented plant selection focused on colour, texture and fragrance.

## COLOURFUL PLANTS

- These are meant to enliven visitors.
- These plants need strong sunlight to flourish, and this is why the therapeutic garden cannot be completely shaded.
- There are also other plants in the garden, including plants with familiar smells like the pandan, which can evoke the memories of visitors.



Firecracker Plant (*Russelia equisetiformis*)



Red-flowered sea grape, known as *coccoloba rugosa*, is unique to this therapeutic garden.

Crepe Ginger (*Cheilocostus speciosus*)

