



Bulbs & Blooms

Intergenerational Garden Club – Innisfail, Alberta

A Facilitators Guide





Intergenerational programming – especially gardening – is a great way to connect individuals of all ages. Programs like these allow community members to share, learn, and engage with each other.

The “Community Partners in Action” and the Innisfail Garden Club are committed to building a dementia friendly community in Innisfail. Thank-you for volunteering to be a facilitator with the Intergenerational Dementia Friendly Garden Program. This Facilitators Guide was designed to assist in the planning and implementation of a Dementia Friendly Intergenerational Garden Program in Innisfail, Alberta. Intergenerational programming provides opportunity for community members, youth, and people living with dementia to socialize, learn and grow together. By developing an intergenerational garden program in Innisfail, we hope to achieve our vision of a truly dementia friendly community! Other forms of facilitator support can be provided through the Dementia Friendly Community Partners in Action. Please contact us if you need any direction or support.

Contact:

Family and Community Support Services, Innisfail
403-227-3356 EXT 233

Geriatric Assessment Nurse
Wolf Creek Primary Care Network
403-227-3376

Community Recreation Therapist
Alberta Health Services
403-350-5092

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Foreword

Dementia is one of the biggest challenges that our society faces today. People affected by dementia often give up the activities they want or need to do due to inaccessible and unsupportive environments, this includes gardening and using local businesses.

Gardens are important and a constant feature throughout our life, especially so for older people and people affected by dementia. From playing in our private garden as a child, to exercising in public gardens or parks, to socialising with our families. The importance of gardens increases especially as we get older, as a place to relax and recover, as well as receive multi-sensory stimulation from the environment around us. Gardening continues to remain an important activity, as other pastimes and hobbies may become more difficult to access due to physical barriers.

Gardens serve many purposes: they can be for growing fruit or vegetables, used as spaces for exercise and can be a vital link to green space in the community. The garden is often an important focal point of people's homes and gardening is a pursuit of which all ages enjoy. A garden can help people living with dementia enjoy socialising and connect with others by creating a shared experience, to take part in physical activity and stimulate the senses and memories, all of which greatly improves their well-being. Gardening improves both your mental and physical health by keeping you active, helping people living with dementia to relax. Gardening is also a wonderful opportunity for wisdom to be passed down to a younger generation.

The therapeutic benefits of gardening and being outdoors is unrivalled. Visiting garden centres is a pastime enjoyed by all and can help to reduce social isolation. An intergenerational gardening program in Innisfail is one step to change in the way people think, talk and act about dementia. The Dementia Friendly Community Initiative and the "Community Partners in Action" are delighted to support this guide and the incredibly important work the Innisfail and District Garden Club is doing working to support people living with and affected by dementia.

What is dementia?

Dementia is caused when the brain is damaged by diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease or a series of strokes. It is not a natural part of the ageing process. There are different types of dementia – the most common form is Alzheimer's disease.

Dementia is progressive, which means it begins with mild symptoms that get worse over time. Different types of dementia tend to affect people in different ways, especially in the early stages.

A person with dementia might:

- Have problems with day-to-day memory – for example how to tie up shoelaces or getting home from stores.
- Have difficulties making decisions, solving problems or carrying out a sequence of tasks, for example planting seeds.
- Have language problems, including difficulty following a conversation or finding the right word – for example, the name of a person they may know.
that they are looking for a certain plant or flower for their garden, but they are unable to remember the word or the name.
- Have problems with perception of where objects are, for example judging distances and seeing objects in three dimensions.
- Lose track of the day or date or become confused about where they are.
- Show changes in their mood, for example becoming frustrated or irritable, withdrawn, anxious, easily upset or unusually sad.
- See things that are not really there (visual hallucinations) or believe things that are not true (delusions).
- Show changes in behaviour, such as repetitive questioning, pacing, restlessness or agitation.

Living well with dementia

A diagnosis of dementia does not mean it is not possible to live well. Many people with dementia continue to drive, socialize and hold down satisfying jobs. Even as dementia progresses, people can lead active, healthy lives, carry on with their hobbies and enjoy loving friendships and relationships. Someone with dementia may forget an appointment or tell you the same joke twice, but their condition does not stop them doing the things that matter the most.

What gardening can mean for people with dementia?

Having access to a garden can meet many health needs for people with dementia, their families and carers. It can provide many physical, social and wellbeing benefits leading to a longer, healthier life (Hynds, 2010). These include:

- Physical health benefits through providing routine exercise and activity, for large and small muscle groups through digging, sweeping, cleaning and walking. This can improve appetite, boost oxygen levels, reduce agitation, as well as maintaining or improving balance, stamina, co-ordination and strength. Gardening helps to maintain and improve muscle tone, as well as the fine motor skills and hand and eye co-ordination.
- Opportunities for Vitamin D production in response to sunlight, which is important to keep bones healthy (Cobley, 2003). As well as giving people with dementia access to natural light, this is important for the maintenance of circadian rhythms to improve sleep quality.
- Provides stimulation with colour, smells, touch and sounds of wildlife. This multisensory stimulation and contact with nature can restore the body and promote feelings of calmness, reduce stress and lower blood pressure (Hartig 2003, Cobley 2003, & Kennard 2006).
- Providing opportunities to relieve tension, frustration and aggression. It has been proven exposure to gardens can improve sleep and increases energy, as well as reducing agitation, confusion and aggression. (Thompson Coon et al 2011, Pallister 2001, Lee and Kim, 2007).
- Providing space for reflection and privacy; reminiscence opportunities to talk about their past lives and reinforcing a sense of self (Cobley, 2003).
- Provides different social environments: group activity can improve interaction with others, encourage social skills and allow privacy for solitude (Cobley, 2003).
- Alleviate feelings of helplessness and of being dependent on others through caring for plants such as sowing seeds or watering plants, giving people a better sense of control (Cobley 2003).
- Activity and Dementia: There is some evidence that exercise and physical activity such as walking and gardening may delay effect on the onset of dementia (Bradley, 2010)



What challenges may people living with dementia face with participating in a Garden Program?

People with dementia face psychological and emotional barriers to being able to do more in their community, alongside physical issues.

- **Problems with mobility, navigating around the garden plot** – for example, difficulty recognizing places, unclear signage, patterns or shiny surfaces being disorientating, fear of getting lost, difficulty with wheelchairs on gravel, problems finding items, and not knowing where to go or who to go to for additional support.
- **Challenges caused by their memory problems** – for example, forgetting their address, confusing information or being unable to find the right words to describe the items they need.
- **Problems with sequencing steps within a task** – for example difficulty remembering the steps involved in activity or instruction, getting steps in the wrong order when trying to sow seeds or plants.
- **Problems when paying** – for example, having difficulty remembering chip and pin codes, trouble counting or recognising money, coping with new technology and payment methods, feeling rushed or worrying that they will forget to pay, or actually forgetting to pay.
- **Worries about other people's reactions** – for example, people not understanding their difficulties, not following social cues, staff not being confident to help or the reaction of security staff to unusual behaviour.

For carers the most common issues related to looking after the person with dementia – for example:

- Worrying that the person will walk away during an outing or when they are gardening
- Being able to take the person with dementia to the toilet
- Difficulties helping the person in and out of the car
- Anxiety about what other people will think, potentially embarrassment on how people will respond to unusual behaviours
- Difficulty navigating garden plot, especially when pushing a wheelchair



What might it look like to facilitate an intergenerational dementia-friendly garden club?

One recommendation is to provide each participant with a name tag to wear each session or have each family provide a box of Freezies or Popsicles as a 'potluck' snack. Suggested intergenerational dementia friendly gardening activities:

SPRING:

- Sowing seeds in pots or beds, pruning shrubs, preparing beds and borders for planting, planting seedlings and plants, cutting the grass.
- Create, maintain or top up a water feature. Create one simply using a washing up bowl in the ground.
- Create a wildlife corner leaving it uncut or creating a log or rock pile as a habitat for insects and shelter for other animals.

SUMMER:

- Watering plants, deadheading, harvesting vegetables and cutting flowers.
- Create a Bee hotel using hollow stems or bamboo shoots tied together.
- Harvesting fruit or berries and having a picnic or dinner in the garden.
- Painting garden structures, furniture or fences
- Intergenerational fun activities provided
- Build bird house together (Bird houses can be easily purchased from The Dollar Store for less than \$5. It would be reasonable to have each participant bring paint and stickers for a community craft potluck!)

AUTUMN

- Taking out old vegetable and annual plants, dead heading, cutting down perennial plants, planting spring flowering bulbs, sweeping pathways, gathering up leaves.
- Put out nesting box for birds in a sheltered place and high enough out of the reach of cats.
- Intergenerational fun activities provided
- Feeding the birds, making fat cakes, topping up bird baths.
- Providing chairs or seating to sit and watch others or nature (Suggestion: building a Community Chat Bench out of wood that can be enjoyed at the community garden plot).
- Long table Fall Feast where participants can enjoy the vegetables grown with a home cooked meal!

WINTER

- Preparation and planning for growing and sowing looking at magazines, seed catalogues, ordering seeds and planning new areas.
- Decorating trees or plants for Christmas, making wreaths or garlands.
- Feeding the birds or wildlife.

Opportunities for activities:

- Collect some seed packages (or scan both sides of some packages, enlarge the image and print them out), then have the person sort them based on different characteristics - where they grow, how they grow (in the ground like potatoes, on a vine, picked from the plant), when they are harvested, what you do with them etc.
- Make a book of recipes of things that the person used to make – preserves, jams, hodge podge, etc. The recipes don't have to be accurate, just have fun doing it
- Make up a list of songs that include harvest or roses, then sing them together or play a recording
- Make up a list of expressions that are related to gardening (first full moon in May, reap what you sow, not worth a hill of beans), then read them to the person leaving one word out and see if they can fill it in (similar to our "Expressions Game")
- Create a list of jokes related to gardening (What vegetable did Noah not take on the ark? Leeks. How can you tell a chili bean from a regular bean? The chilly one wears a shawl. Why is it not wise to tell secrets in a cornfield? There are too many ears.). Encourage them to share the jokes with other people
- Create a "Match the Photo", "Strip Puzzle" with pictures of gardens, vegetables for the person to do - create a word search or crossword with words related to caring for vegetable garden and making preserves for the person to do

Several sessions may be required before a bond and trust will be established between you and the participants. In the beginning, participants may simply not know how to accept your attention. The following suggestions may help to guide you.

DO

- Take time to learn something about the participants. Some suggestions are included: Interests, background, and needs.
- Respect confidence. Keep private conversations private.
- Be a good listener. Your participants may often have no one else who spends time to talk.
- Keep promises. **Be careful what you promise.** Never say anything unless you mean it.
- Be gentle, kind and sincere.
- Respect privacy.
- Remember that the participants are adults and should be treated as such. Accept and respect each participant as a unique individual, regardless of mental or physical condition.
- Remember that you are a vital part of the community; so are the participants.
- Be enthusiastic!
- Introduce yourself and say why you are there.
- Greet participants by name.
- Start with "small talk"
(How are you, what have you done today, weather report ...)

- Smile lots.
- Show sincere interest.
- Be the participant's link to the outside world and our community.
- Have a desire to learn from them.
- Tell them about your day.

DON'T

- Don't be a clock-watcher while visiting. Quality, not quantity of time is important.
- Don't feel obliged to solve the personal problems of the participants. Just being there to listen and empathize, is important.

Dealing with the Unforeseen

A participant seems more withdrawn than usual

- Try to ascertain the cause – is it due to a medical problem or emotional upset?
- Ask what the problem is. Ask if they can share it with you. Do this privately away from others

A participant repeatedly tries to leave the area

- Make sure that the activity or conversation is compatible with participant's abilities.
- Ascertain why they wish to leave – are they bored, unhappy or wanting the toilet?
Rely on the care partner or parent of the child to manage these behaviors
- All children must have a parent/guardian present during the program.

A participant becomes distressed during the group

- Encourage participant to share and offer individual support and time to listen. Again, rely on the parent/guardian or care partner to provide this support or direction.

Tips on how to make gardening easier

- Take frequent breaks drinking plenty of water or juice, especially on hot days. Have shady areas where you can sit and get your breath back and to shelter from sun or rain. Remind participants to bring their own lawn chairs and water.
- Wear the right clothes for the season including protective shoes, gardening gloves, lightweight comfortable clothes, hat and sunscreen.
- Offering to help if someone looks lost or confused!

Making tasks easier

- Avoid time consuming tasks such as clipping topiary and maintenance of herbaceous perennials (e.g. staking, cutting back, lifting and dividing. Reduce fallen leaves using evergreen or variegated foliage).
- Consider vertical planting up a wall or trellis to avoiding bending or stooping. This could be using climbing plants like ivy or jasmine on fences, hanging baskets to make gardening easier without having to stretch or bend.
- Raised beds, planters, troughs or containers at different heights or a tabletop garden—suitable for use by people at all heights, whether standing, sitting or kneeling. Narrow accessible beds from both sides will make digging and weeding easier.
- Larger pots with greater volume will dry out less, place saucers underneath and water in the evening when there is less evaporation.
- Landscaping with smooth paving, turning places, raised edgings to act as brakes if in a wheelchair. Handrails and gradual sloping ramps in place of steps to make it easier to navigate in a wheelchair.

Tools and equipment

- Specially adapted tools and equipment can enable independent gardening. This could be lightweight tools with wide handles which are easiest to grip, long-handled tools, hosepipe wands, sticky palm gardening gloves, tools with interchangeable heads, telescopic handled tools, pedal forks and spades, ratchet pruners, scissors instead of secateurs, and easy-grip tools. This could be done at home using foam, tape and plastic tubing to modify existing tools.
- Invest in tools to support gardening. From kneelers to provide comfort when gardening kneeling down, garden carts or wheelbarrows, to casters underneath containers to move containers around the garden easily. This is something participants can easily pick up from The Dollar Store in Innisfail and supply themselves.
- Install water points close to where you are most likely to need it.

Topics to stimulate conversation between adults and children

Getting to know you

- What was your mother's name?
- What was your father's name?
- What did you call your grandparents?
- What country were you born in?
- Did your family have pets?
- Did you have a yard? What do you remember doing in your yard?
- What sounds or smells do you remember enjoying around your home place?
- Did you have electricity? An indoor bathroom?
- What, if any, modern conveniences did you have in your home?
(e.g. A toaster, electric stove, television, radio, dishwasher....)

- Did your family have visitors over often? What did you do together?
- Did you have a fireplace or a wood stove? Who kept it full of wood?
- Did your family ever have to move? If so, what were your feelings?
- What is your favorite thing to bake?
- What is your favourite TV show?
- Do you have a special talent?
- What was the best day of your life?
- If you could have superpower, what would it be?

Garden

- Did you have a yard?
- What do you remember doing in your yard?
- Did your family have a garden? If so, did you like helping out?
- What sounds or smells do you remember enjoying around your home or yard?
- Were you a green thumb?
- What kinds of flowers did you grow?
- Did you have a big garden?
- Where did you keep your vegetables in the winter?
- Did you make homemade jams, jellies, and syrups? What kinds?
- Did you travel to greenhouses around your home town or elsewhere?
- Did you go on a garden or greenhouse tour with friends?
- What is your favorite vegetable to cook from the garden in the fall? i.e. cream vegetables, new potatoes, peas in the pods
- Did you ever raid the neighbor's garden or apple tree?

Growing up

- What were your favorite things to do and games to play as a child?
- Who was/were your best friend(s) in school? What did you do together?
- Did you play sidewalk games? Games with balls? Singing games?
- Did you have chores around your house? If so, which ones did you not mind and which ones did you not enjoy at all?
- Do you remember having any illnesses as a child (measles, mumps, and chicken pox)? Did you ever have to go to the hospital?
- Did you ever experience a flood, tornado, or big snowstorm? What do you remember about it?
- What kinds of activities did you enjoy (swimming, baseball, hockey, skating, and horse riding...)? Where did you do them?
- What did you ever do that got you in serious trouble at home? How did your parents discipline you?
- Do you remember celebrating birthdays? What was your favorite kind of cake? What kind of presents did you receive?
- What were your favorite holidays? How do you remember celebrating them

School

- What was the name of your school? What kind of school was it? Did you or anyone in your family have the chance to attend high school?
- How did you get to school?
- Did you sit in a desk of your own? What kind of school supplies did you have?
- Did you pack a lunch for school? What did you carry it in and what do you remember eating?
- What did you do in the summer when school was out?
- Did you have homework to do?
- What were your favorite subjects? Why?
- Do you remember any teachers? What did you like or not like about any of them?
- Were you involved in plays, music, school sports, Christmas concerts...?
- What did you want to be when you grew up?
- Do you remember dating anyone in school? What did you do on a date?
- What activities did you do for fun as a teenager? What is your favorite memory as a teenager?

Food

- What is your favorite food?
- Did your family ever go out to restaurants? What did you like to order?
- Were you a good cook? What kinds of things did you enjoy cooking?
- What do you remember as your mother's specialty?
- What kinds of treats did your family have at Christmas?
- Did you have special meals with certain holidays or festivities?
- What is the most delicious meal you have ever had?
- Have you tried different ethnic foods? Which ones do you enjoy?

Hobbies and Special Interests

- Were you interest in sports as a child or adult? Which ones?
- Did you enjoy plays, singing, music, or dancing?
- Were you a green thumb? What kinds of flowers did you grow?
- Did you have a big garden? Where did you keep your vegetables in the winter?
- Did you make homemade jams, jellies, and syrups? What kinds?
- Did your family have a television? What programs do you remember watching?
- Did your family pray or read the Bible together?
- Would you say that you are a crafty person? What kinds of things did you make?
- Are there any other things you remember doing to pass the time?



Games to consider playing (for all generations)

- Lawn darts
- Frisby
- Catch (participants bring baseball glove and ball)
- Dingle ball
- Crazy 8s
- Go Fish
- Parachute with balls (Will have to arrange with Karen to borrow from CHIPS Program)
- Scarfs (will have to arrange with Karen to borrow from CHIPS Program)
- Soccer
- Tag
- Lawn Bowling (Bring your own lawn bowling)
- Volleyball with a balloon
- Water balloons!
- Bocce
- Badminton
- Beanbag Toss
- Pin the tail on the donkey



The “Community Partners in Action” is committed to assisting with advertising to help find interested community members to join the Intergenerational Dementia Friendly Garden Club! Please connect with Karen Bradbury at Family and Community Support Services in Innisfail (403-227-3356) to help with advertising in February before the gardening year.

Other suggested advertising media:

- Local Facebook Groups
- Local churches
- Dementia Friendly Community – Innisfail, Alberta Facebook Page
- Local children organizations like Brownies, Sparks, Boy Scouts, 4H Clubs
- Local School Newsletter
- Local Radio
- Lundgren Senior Centre
- 55+ Newsletter
- Innisfail Senior Lodges

Facilitator 1: _____

Facilitator 2: _____

Meeting Date/Time: _____

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