

Lady Flower Gardens  
Alberta Health Services 2021 Report



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## General Program and Overview

Lady Flower Gardens program provides the opportunity for clients connected to Addictions and Mental Health Services to improve and/or enhance leisure activity skills, social interaction skills, and emotional well-being through participation in gardening and nature walks.

The program format remains consistent from previous years and included introductions, a brief educational session, gardening and or hiking. Clients were encouraged to rate how they are feeling on a pre and post questionnaire to reflect and learn about their experience. Year after year, data consistently shows that participation in the garden is likely to increase a person's level of happiness and decrease their stress levels.

Overall participation in the program stayed constant from 2020 to 2021. The adult program was expanded to include residents from Ambrose Place, Balwin Place, and Elizabeth House. There was a decrease in participation from the Alberta Hospital Edmonton 12A group due to staffing challenges. Participants report feeling included by the group and often attend multiple times throughout the summer.



Why did you come to the garden today?

***“To destress and feel more connected”***

(2021 12-A Participant quote)

## Participation Data

**Program Start Date:** June 1, 2021

**Program End Date:** September 15, 2021

**Adult program:** 14 weeks

**Young Adult programs:** 14 weeks

**\*\*\*Program cancelled two weeks due to weather conditions. 12A attended four times due to staffing constraints.**

**Surveys completed:** 101 (Adult =40, Young Adult =61)

**Staff complement:** Recreation Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Social Worker, Addictions Counsellor, Peer Support Workers, Supportive Employment Specialist and Therapy Assistants

**Typical staff complement per visit:** 3 to 6

**Attendance chart:**

Year	Young Adult	Adult	Total
2016	CBC	DiverseCity/Pathways/Bridging Paths	160
2017	CBC, 12A, UofA	DiverseCity/Pathways/H&W/FACS	340
2018	CBC, 12A, Emerging Adults Transitional Home	DiverseCity/Pathways/H&W/FACS	336
2019	CBC, 12A, UofA, Emerging Adults Transitional Home	DiverseCity/Pathways/H&W/FACS	254
2020	Eagles Nest, Anderson Hall, 12A	DiverseCity Housing	124
2021	YAS, Anderson Hall, 12A	DiverseCity Housing, Elizabeth House, Ambrose Place, Balwin Place	124 ** 23 clients chose not to fill out the pre-post questionnaire

## Program Format

Participants signed up for the program on a weekly basis with their program/Recreation Therapist.

Clients were transported from their homes (independent market housing/transitional housing/permanent supportive housing sites/hospital) to the garden which is located northeast of Edmonton.

After arriving at Lady Flower Gardens, clients were asked to fill out a pre-participation questionnaire and assigned a chair for use during the program (due to COVID-19 protocols). Staff led an icebreaker activity (example: say your name and would you rather vacation on a beach or in the mountains), outlined Lady Flower Gardens guidelines and provided information or led an activity based on the foundations of the Leisure Well Being Model (Hood and Caruthers). Some of the topics explored were gratefulness, mindfulness, volunteering, community, physical health, and savoring leisure.

Lady Flower Gardens staff outlined the needs of the garden which included weeding, planting, watering, and harvesting vegetables. Participants were encouraged to engage in the planned activity but were able to sit and observe nature/meditate. This year there was more opportunities to hike in the forest which was enjoyed by all.

From August until September participants harvested vegetables for the Edmonton Food Bank and were able to take one large grocery bag of vegetables home for personal use. In 2021 LFG donated a grand total of **11,284 lbs** to the Edmonton Food Bank.

At the end of the program participants filled out post participation questionnaire and were transported back to Edmonton.



## Weekly Questionnaire Data

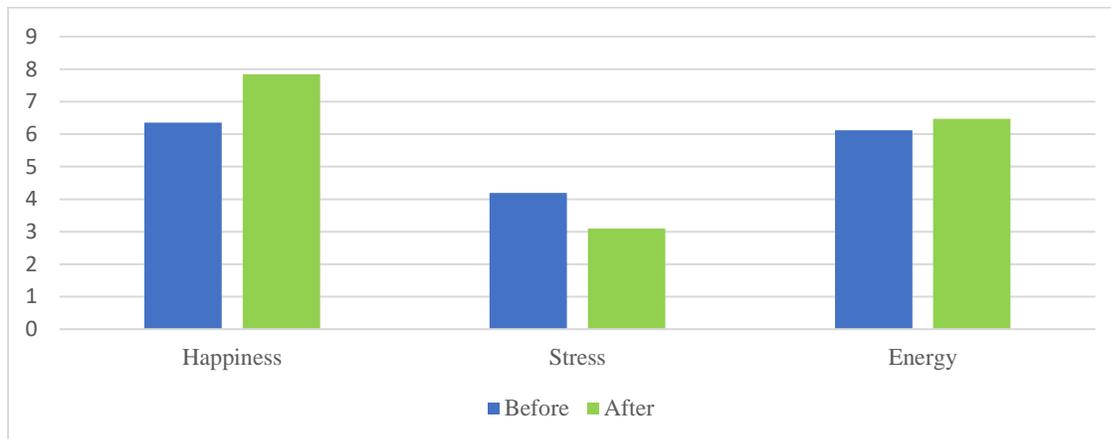
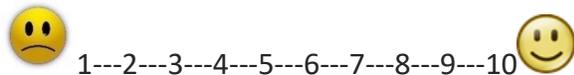
Participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire before and after engagement in the program. The questionnaire included rating of happiness, stress, energy levels, social inclusion, and physical exertion. Reflection about experience is an important aspect of the Lady Flower Gardens program as participants are able to see the benefits derived from participation. Analysis of results follows.

### Why did you come to the garden today?

Participants came to the garden because they were curious about the program; to socialize; to improve their mental and physical health; for enjoyment; to garden; to observe nature; and for a change in environment (get out of the city or to leave hospital).

### Wellness Impact

Participants were asked to rate their happiness/stress/energy level on a scale of 1-10.



### **How happy are you right now?**

Average rating before participation in program: 6.35

Average rating after participation in program: 7.84

Average change: 1.53

### **How stressed are you right now?**

Average rating before participation in program: 4.19

Average rating after participation in program: 3.09

Average change: -1.20 (decrease in stress)

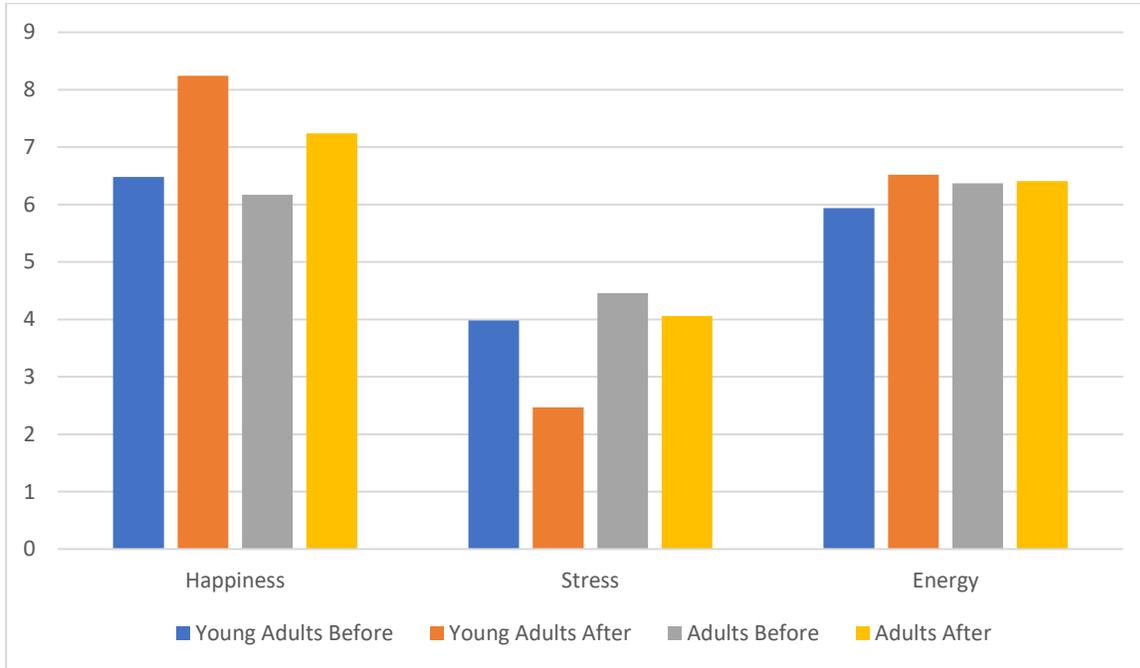
### **How much energy do you have right now?**

Average rating before participation in program: 6.120

Average rating after participation in program: 6.477

Average change: 0.320

### Average impact by group



Similar trends were found in both groups however there appeared to be a slightly greater effect of the program for young adult participants in all areas. Clients reported increased happiness and energy and decreased stress levels.

### **Level of Physical Exertion: participants were asked to rate their level of physical exertion on a scale of 1-10**

On average participants rated their level of physical exertion as 6.03/10.

### **Social Inclusion: Participants were asked to rate their level of inclusion on a scale of 1-10**

On average participants rated their level of inclusion as 8.55/10.



Participants were asked to share their about their experience at the garden in the questionnaires. Several themes emerged from the qualitative data. Examples provided below.

**Examples:**

<b>Health/Wellness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peace and tranquility</li> <li>• It was good for my mental health</li> <li>• This evening really changed my week :) I was having a really hard time this really helped me</li> </ul>
<b>Nature</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I had a wonderful time connecting with earth in your beautiful garden</li> <li>• It was nice to relax and be in the forest</li> <li>• It was nice to be outside the city</li> </ul>
<b>Relationships/Community</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It made me happy to help</li> <li>• It's nice to be a part of something</li> </ul>
<b>Activity/Program/Gardening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I enjoyed washing carrots for the foodbank</li> <li>• My favorite part was picking flowers and learning about them</li> <li>• The forest walk was amazing, it was nice to be in nature. Exactly what I needed.</li> </ul>

**Other feedback**

A few clients left comments about the program and one person suggested that we go fishing/canoeing. Most people did not provide feedback or simply put “no suggestions, the program is great!”



## **Appendix A: Program Protocol**

### **Lady Flower Gardens**

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#### **Background and Rationale:**

Lady Flower Gardens is a gardening program north east of Edmonton for young adult and adult individuals who have mental health and addictions concerns. The program offers participants an opportunity to connect with others, participate in low-impact exercise, improve mental health, and give back to the community.

Recreation Therapists use the Leisure Well Being Model (Hood & Carruthers, 2007) as a framework for psychoeducational interventions that enhance the client's experience at the garden. The model states that engagement in therapeutic recreational activities will improve person's overall well-being by developing resources and enhancing leisure experience.

Meta-analysis of 76 studies shows that gardening increases life satisfaction, quality of life and sense of community while reducing depression, anxiety and body mass index (Soga, Gaston, & Yamaura, 2016). Individuals who participate in gardening and community gardens also experience a decrease in their stress levels (Conradson, 2012, Rappe et al. 2008). Participants at Lady Flower Gardens are asked to rate their mood, stress level and energy level pre and post participation which increases awareness of how they are feeling and the benefits they may experience from participation in gardening as a leisure pursuit.

Participating in community gardens can improve a person's social skills and aide in the development of a social network (Kam & Sui, 2010). At Lady Flower Gardens clients have the

opportunity to interact with a therapist in a non-threatening environment. These interactions can increase client's confidence to interact with others in a group setting (Relf, 2007a, 2007). Participants at the garden are able to relate to one another based on shared experience of growing and caring for plants. Working towards a common goal improves social health and community cohesion (Shiue, 2012, 2013).

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### **Statement of Purpose**

To provide the opportunity for clients attending Lady Flower Garden to improve and/or enhance leisure activity skills, social interaction skills, and an emotional well-being.

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### **Expected Program Outcomes:**

#### **1. To demonstrate social interaction skills**

- 1.1 To demonstrate ability to initiate conversations with peers
- 1.2 To demonstrate ability to maintain conversations with peers
- 1.3 To demonstrate active listening skills
- 1.4 To demonstrate information seeking skills with peers
- 1.5 To demonstrate information giving skills with peers

#### **2. To demonstrate emotional well-being**

- 2.1 To experience decreased feelings of stress
- 2.2 To experience increased feelings of happiness
- 2.3 To experience increased feelings of energy

#### **3. To demonstrate knowledge of leisure awareness**

- 3.1 To demonstrate the ability to identify value in having a healthy leisure lifestyle
- 3.2 To demonstrate the ability to make leisure related decisions

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### **Secondary Outcomes:**

- Strengthened ability to adapt
- Strengthened ability to relax
- Strengthened anger management skills
- Strengthened decision-making skills
- Strengthened focus
- Strengthened problem solving skills
- Strengthened physical health
- Strengthened play attitudes
- Strengthened relationship-building skills
- Strengthened social interaction skills
- Strengthened self-esteem
- Strengthened self awareness

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### **Program Description:**

**Day:** Monday (Young Adult Services) and Wednesday (Adult Services)

**Time:** 3 hours

**Place:** Lady Flower Gardens

**Cost:** \$0

**Program Structure:** Open Group Treatment

**Staff/Client Ratio:** 1:6

**Facilitators:** Recreation Therapist (2)

**Support Staff:** Psych Aide (2)

**Program and Activities:**

This program consists of 1 session per week for both Young Adult Services Programs and Adult Services Programs from mid-May until October.

**Session:** Clients are driven to Lady Flower Garden by Recreation Therapist or Psych Aide. Once at Lady Flower Gardens, Recreation Therapist is responsible for introductions/icebreaker, administering Pre/Post evaluations and facilitating group psychoeducation session. Garden Coordinator relays gardening tasks to the group and provides demonstration if needed (ie, how to harvest potatoes). Session could include: nature walk, planting, weeding, harvesting, or educational component on birding or medicinal plants. At the end of session, Recreation Therapist to administer Pre/Post evaluations to participants and collect then later input data and vegetable tracking.

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**Staff Responsibilities:**

- Acquiring equipment needed  
(\*water, sun screen, bug spray)
- Collaboration with Lady Flower Garden
- Data input (*Vegetable Tracking Sheet and pre/post questionnaires*)
- Knowledge of activity resources
- Program assessment/evaluation
- Program preparation
- Program set up/take down
- Packing/maintenance of First Aid Kit
- Recreation Therapy training
- Referral management
- Transportation to Lady Flower Garden
- Utilize/implement program protocols

**Requirements:**

- CPR
- Knowledge in horticulture
- Knowledge in mental health and addictions
- NVCi trained
- Class 4 License

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**Facilitation Techniques:**

- Activity analyses and selection
- Assess client needs and provide individualized support if required
- Assess clients (i.e. attitude, mood, behaviors, etc.)
- Appropriate approach for client population
- Goal oriented language

- Group participation/approach
- Maintain safe environment
- Positive affect and energy

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**Risk Management Considerations:**

- Appropriate staff to client ratio
- Appropriate activity selection
- Allergies (*\*EpiPens*)
- Anxiety/fear in social situations (10-30 people)
- Exposure to natural elements (*sun, rain, wind, insects*)
- Falls Risk Assessment (uneven ground and challenging terrain in forest)
- Mild to moderate physical activity
- Transportation to remote area (*30-45 minute commute*)
- Access to gardening tools

**Safety Plan:**

- A falls risk assessment and transportation forms must be completed for all clients wanting to attend the program.
- Recreation Therapists will work with individuals to diffuse situations at the garden using de-escalation techniques. Staff will encourage clients to use self-regulation skills and demonstrate/model if needed. Should a situation arise that an individual needs to leave the garden prior to the end of the program, staff may be able to transport to the nearest bus stop/LRT. If the staff member thinks that the client may be a risk to self or others EPS will be called for assistance.

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**Entrance Requirements:**

- Must be a client of Addiction and Mental Health programs

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**Referral Criteria:**

Skills and Abilities:

- Able to accept simple direction and feedback
- Able to work with others
- Able to concentrate on a task for more than 15 minutes

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**Exclusion Criteria:**

- Client identified as high risk of falls

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**Program Evaluation:**

A Pre and Post evaluation form is provided to clients for program.

