



(Rettig, Ethan. Edited by Cooper, L. "A light in the forest." September 26, 2024).

How can a memorial garden or greenspace be effectively designed to assist adults
grieving the loss of a loved one?

Research by Ethan Rettig for a Bachelor's of Science, Horticulture
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(Rettig, Ethan. Edited by Cooper, L. "Sunrise at the farm." October 8th, 2024)

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Personal Introduction



(Cooper, L "Ethan Rettig Graduation." April 2nd, 2025)

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"We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. And medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for. To quote from Whitman, 'O me! O life!... of the questions of these recurring; of the endless trains of the faithless... of cities filled with the foolish; what good amid these, O me, O life?' Answer. That you are here – that life exists, and identity; that the powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse. That the powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse. What will your verse be?"- Tom Schulman, *Dead Poets Society*, 1989.

Relevant Experience

2021 — 2025

Spring 2025 Botany, BIOL 3010C, Professor David Lentz, UC.

Spring 2025, Horticulture Final Project, HORT 4092, Professor Stevie Famulari, UC.

Fall 2024, Plant Morphology, HORT 4010, Professor Brian Grubb, UC.

Spring 2024, Plant Propagation, HORT 4012, Professor Brian Grubb, UC.

Fall 2023, Landscape History, HORT 3050, Professor Stevie Famulari, UC. Project: "The Cemetery Planning of Adolph Strauch."

Fall 2023, Horticultural Entomology, HORT 3020, Professor Gene Kritsky, UC.

Summer 2023, Herbaceous Ornamentals II, HORT 2033, Professor James Hansel, UC.

Spring 2023, Herbaceous Ornamentals I, HORT 2032, Professor Brian Grubb, UC.

Spring 2023, Horticulture Science II, HORT 1011, Professor James Hansel, UC.

Spring 2023, Woody Ornamentals II, HORT2031, Professor Steve Foltz, UC.

Fall 2022, Woody Ornamentals I, HORT2030, Professor Steve Foltz, UC.

Fall 2022, Horticulture Technologies, HORT 1010L, Professor Brian Grubb, UC.

Spring 2022, Native Plants II, HORT2034, Professor Donna McCollum, UC.

Spring 2022, Horticulture Science I, HORT 1010, Professor Brian Grubb, UC.

Fall 2021, Native Plants I, HORT1030, Professor Donna McCollum, UC.

Abstract:

This research demonstrates the positive effects of gardens on the well being of those grieving the loss of a loved one in the United States. This research also discusses the attitudes surrounding grief in American society, highlighting areas in which current grief support can fall short for some people. The primary intent of this research provides additional outlets for those struggling with grief. The intent is not to replace current methods of helping those with grief, but to highlight where it may fall short for some people and give more options. The result of this project is a guideline on how to construct an effective memorial garden using elements such as motion, stillness, privacy, community, plant choice, and other design elements. The author also includes a recommended plant list for the midwest United States as well as reading recommendations for garden design.

Keywords

Arboretum- A collection of trees

Bereaved- (Someone who is) suffering the death of a loved one (Merriam Webster).

Cultivar- Cultivated variety, plants grown using clones and sold with identical characteristics and genetics, often trademarked.

Cemetery- A burial ground (Merriam webster)

Ephemeral- Something that only lasts a short time, specifically for plants- a plant that grows, flowers and dies in only a few days. (Merriam webster)

Grief- Deep and poignant distress caused by or as if by bereavement (merriam webster)

Grief gardening- A movement that encourages gardening as a way to work through grief.

Horticulture- The art and science of growing fruits, vegetables, flowers, and ornamental plants.

Memorial- A structure, location, or object built or designed to remember or honor someone or something.

Monoculture- A planting that only features one species or a limited selection of diversity.

The Five Stages of Grief- Published in 1969, they were from a study on patients with terminal illness, and were intended to understand their emotions The stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance. These stages were not meant to be linear or universal (Devine 2017, pg. 31), but are often misunderstood as the only way people process grief.

Trauma- a disordered psychic or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress or physical injury (Merriam webster)

Problem statement

How can a memorial garden or greenspace be effectively designed for adults grieving the loss of a loved one?



(Rettig, Ethan. "Tulips." April 6th, 2024)

Project Justification

Grief from losing a loved one is something that most people will experience multiple times in their life. Despite many people experiencing loss, it is completely different for every person, as is the grief that accompanies it. Loss can be expected, such as a grandparent passing from old age. Loss can also be sudden and unexpected, leaving you less time to process. The unique nature of grief makes it impossible for a “one size fits all” strategy for living with it and requires many different approaches with gardening being a growing option.

This project is important to me for personal reasons. I recently lost one of my best friends and have been struggling with grief. One of the most effective things that has helped has been getting outside, working with plants, and actively gardening. I want to look into why this has helped when other things have not. With my friend passing away over the winter it was especially rough being stuck inside for months with everything lifeless or dormant. Even while dormant, plants were still able to give moments of beauty and reflection through their structure and interactions with snow and ice.



(Rettig Ethan. "February Gloom." February 16th, 2025)

Grief is often misunderstood in the United States as something that needs fixing, to overcome, or pushing through. This is a misunderstanding that can be harmful to those living with grief. Grief is a natural emotion that is evidence of great love. To deny grief is to deny love. There is no one correct way to grieve. Similarly to this, there is no one correct way to make a memorial greenspace. This research demonstrates that there are different ways to achieve this effectively.

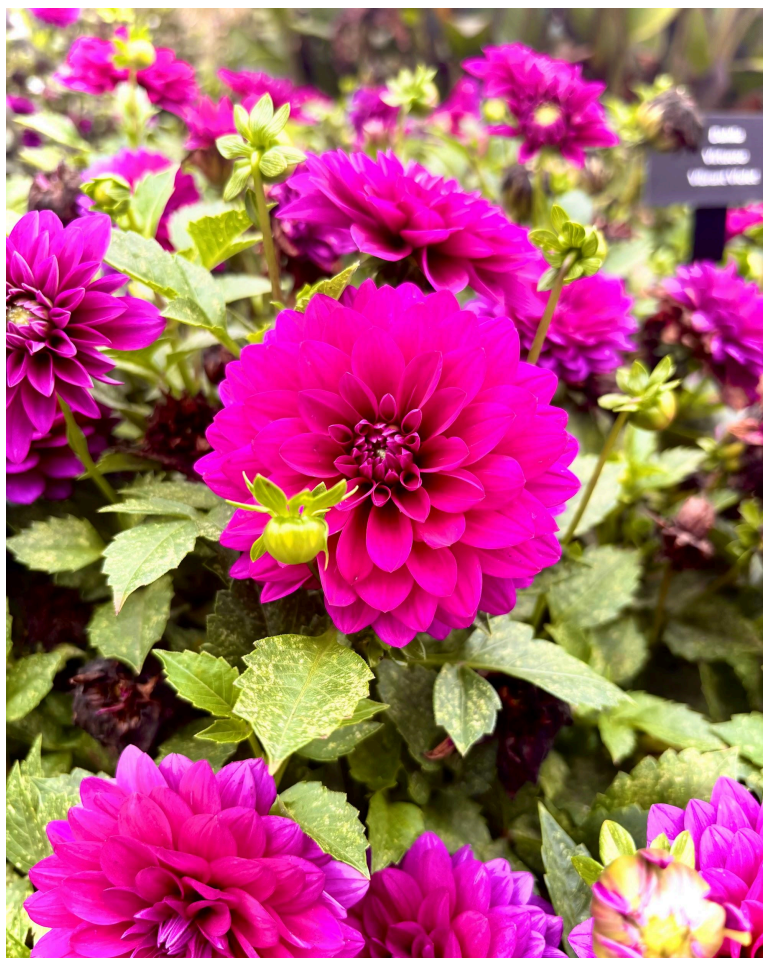


(Forest Star Nurseries “Cercis Canadensis ‘Forest Pansy Red’” n.d. Retrieved on February 28th, 2025 from

<https://westernstarnurseries.com/plants/cercis-canadensis-forest-pansy/>)

User Description

The users of this research are those struggling with grief after losing a loved one. Grief can be from many different things such as losing a job or house, however this research will focus specifically on those grieving the loss of a loved one because it is most relevant to the author. These users can be found worldwide, however because different cultures approach grief in vastly different ways, this is specifically focused on people in the United States. The age of the users is people above the age of 18, as children experience the world differently than adults and would be beyond the scope of this project.



(Rettig, Ethan. Edited by Cooper, L. "Dahlias in Bloom" September 26, 2024.)

Major project elements

What does it mean to grieve a loved one? How do people grieve?- In its most simple form, grief from losing a loved one is love no longer having an outlet (Devine 2017).

Grief is complicated. But it is human. To feel grief is proof that you have loved. No grief is the same and no two people will grieve the same way. When, where, why and how people grieve can sometimes feel random to an outside observer without the needed context of what has been lost. Grief can be refusing to eat, go outside, or talk to people. Grief can be crying, emotional detachment, or anger. Grief is nuanced. Grief is vast and deep.

How is grief “treated” currently and how has it changed?- In recent years, grief has been understood more as an emotion and assistance has become more easily accessible. Support groups, therapy, books on the subject, and other resources exist to help those grieving. However, there is still a stigma associated with grief (Devine 2017). It is a sensitive topic (not without reason) that some people do not want to talk about. Often those grieving are told to move on, cheer up, keep moving forward, just hold it together, or other similar words of encouragement. Even when these sentiments come from good intentions, they may make the bereaved feel like something is wrong with them, or that they are grieving wrong (Devine 2017). A common misconception around grief that may cause some of these issues is the five stages of grief from a study published in 1969. These stages were anecdotal and not meant to be universal or linear. Despite this,

some people still have the misunderstanding that the order of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance are the “correct” way to grieve.



(*Speaking Grief | Understanding Grief: There is no step-by-step process.* (n.d.).

<https://speakinggrief.org/get-better-at-grief/understanding-grief/no-step-by-step-process>)

Why this may fall short for different reasons/people - “An intervention for some people bereaved by suicide is support groups. Various factors that may influence participation in support groups include time constraints, fatigue, and challenges associated with listening to other survivors’ stories (Feigelman, Jordan, McIntosh, & Feigelman, 2012). Additionally, bereaved people may leave support groups due to dissatisfaction with leader facilitation, social norms, and relationships in the group. Length of time since the death also affects group participation and involvement (Feigelman et al., 2012)” (Machado and Swank 2019). Because of the variety of responses to grief, there needs to be a variety of methods of support.

Important note-

This research is not intended to tell someone step by step how to build a memorial garden, nor is it intended to tell someone how to grieve. It is instead intended to be a helping hand in finding what works for them when designing a memorial garden.

Elements of the garden will change or evolve depending on the needs of the bereaved and the passage of time.

Important questions to ask before starting a memorial garden-

Who is the garden for?- Building a memorial garden for someone that you knew personally will be different than building a memorial garden for someone that you never knew so it is important to recognize that.

Who will manage it?- A memorial garden for a single person doing the maintenance on their own will require a different design than a public garden with a full maintenance staff to not overwhelm the bereaved with chores when they are trying to utilize the space for healing.

How many people is it for?- if an entire family intends to use the space, it needs to be designed to accommodate them all. This will also impact the seating requirements, path width, and overall size of the space.

What is the goal of the garden?- Is the goal to honor and remember the deceased? To assist with the healing of the bereaved? Is it both? Neither? Does the garden even have a goal or will it be figured out as it goes along? A memorial garden does not need to have a specific goal in mind to be an effective space for healing, however a goal can make the garden feel more cohesive.

What is the budget?- An important question that will affect the rest of the design and should be realized early to prevent going over budget.

How will plant death be handled?- Plant death will need to be handled emotionally and physically. Emotionally, it can be crushing to lose someone, plant something to honor and remember them, only for that plant to die. This can cause emotional pain, therefore it is important to discuss the reality that plants can and will die. Plant death in the garden is not always a bad thing. It can be a powerful tool to discuss the reality of life and death provided that the bereaved is aware in advance and ready to handle it. Plant death may also need to be handled physically. Should the dead plants be removed, replaced, or left to stand? An old dead tree can add structure, character and age to a space while also providing habitat for wildlife, but whether or not it belongs in a memorial garden is something to discuss.



(TheOtherKev. [Dead Tree] October 23, 2019. Retrieved February 27th, 2025 from <https://pixabay.com/photos/tree-old-tree-dead-tree-lone-tree-4570057/>)

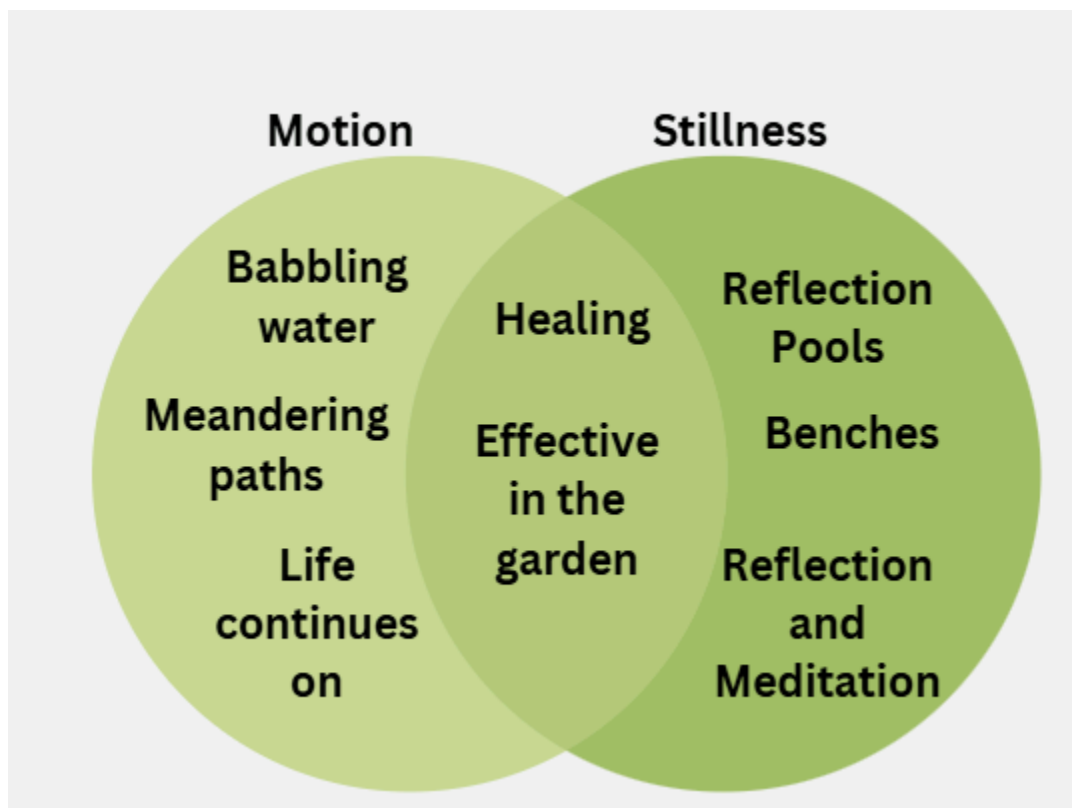
Should any metaphors be added?- Plants can be used to represent characteristics of a person. A large oak to represent bravery or strength, a flower the same color as their eyes, a cultivar that shares their name, or other physical or emotional connections between the deceased and the garden. These metaphors can strengthen the emotional connection of the garden, but are not mandatory and could potentially overwhelm the bereaved by making the garden feel too personal.

Did the deceased have any favorite plants?- If the deceased was an avid gardener or had any favorite plants it may be obvious to include them, however it is important to consider that the garden is for the bereaved. If the bereaved does not like the same plants as the deceased, should they be added? The bereaved is the one that will be in the garden after all, so should the garden be full of things they hate just because the deceased liked them?

Environmental questions- Questions about the climate, soil, and sunlight should be asked when selecting plants to ensure that the plants survive and thrive. The author supports the “right plant right place” style of gardening in that choosing plants that will thrive in the existing space will be easier and more cost effective than forcing the space to change to accommodate plants with specific needs.

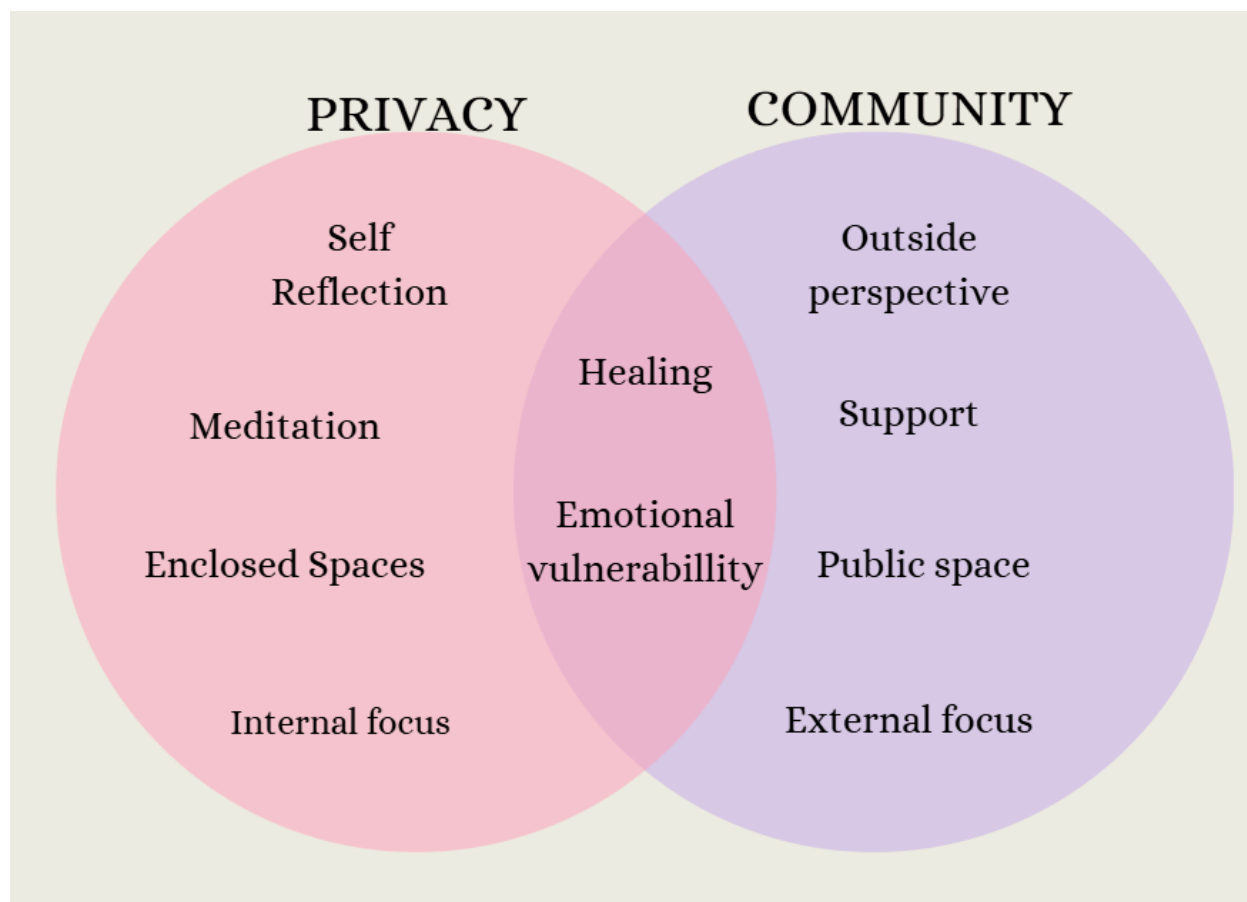
Contrasting elements in the garden- There are elements of garden design that are polar opposites and completely change the way that the garden feels, however both elements can be used effectively and one is not better than the other.

Motion in the garden can be achieved through the motion of nature (wind and water) and the motion of the individual through the space using winding paths. Stillness in the garden can be achieved through still water, benches and areas of rest. Both elements have their place in a memorial garden. Motion and movement can make the garden feel alive, while stillness gives the bereaved a chance to breathe and reflect. The choice between one or the other or both is up to the designer.



(Rettig, Ethan. "Motion Venn Diagram." February 27th, 2025)

Similarly, gardens can also have a focus on privacy or community. Both can be good or bad depending on the needs of the bereaved.



(Rettig, Ethan. "Privacy Venn Diagram." February 27th, 2025)

Potentially beneficial elements of memorial greenspace-

Dappled shade- Dappled shade will allow a space to be more comfortable especially during the summer months. The motion of the light, swaying of the leaves in the wind will also contribute to making the space feel more alive and dynamic.



(Spencer, Cheryl. [Dappled Shade] December 17th, 2024. Retrieved on February 26th, 2025 from <https://simplysmartgardening.com/what-is-full-sun-partial-sun-shade/>)

Seating- Designing areas of the garden to be spots of rest or meditation is important.

Having a spot to sit and relax can allow people to enjoy the garden longer. Especially for older or disabled people, having a bench or chair can greatly impact how often, if at all they will be able to attend.

Water bubbler or other moving water- The babbling of water in a creek or water bubbler can add a feeling of nature and peacefulness to a space. This can also be used strategically if the garden has an issue with noisy neighbors or road noise as the sound of water can help cover it up. The sound of water can also help ground people in the space.

Reflection pool/still water- On the other side of moving water, still water offers an important opportunity for reflection. In both the literal sense of seeing one's own reflection in the water, and in the figurative sense of having the world around you and the sky above you flipped upside down in the water, reflection pools are powerful tools in memorial gardens.



(Bloedel reserve. n.d. [Reflection Pool] Retrieved on February 26th, 2025 from <https://bloedelreserve.org/reflection-pool/>)

Year round flowers- To ensure that the space is able to be used year round, the garden should have flowers blooming as close to year round as possible. If the garden only has

flowers blooming in one month, that will be the only time that anyone will want to come, even if they need the space for grief support other times of the year. To accomplish this, especially when first establishing the garden, annuals are a powerful tool to get instant color in the garden. However, annuals do add additional maintenance and cost of planting year after year, so relying too heavily on them is not advised.

Spring flowers/ephemerals- Spring ephemerals and early bloomers in general offer pops of color and life after the dormant and dead period of winter. Winter is often hard for some people and can be a time of seasonal depression (Mayo clinic 2021). Spring flowers give people something to look forward to during the darkest parts of the year and draw people outside when it may still be cold.



(Rettig, Ethan. "Virginia bluebells." April 10th, 2024).

Private enclosed outdoor rooms- If the bereaved wants to use the garden as a space of healing by working through emotions or discussing memories of the deceased with friends or family, they may hesitate if the entire garden is open space and visible to the public. Enclosed areas that offer a sense of privacy are important to consider.

Woody plants, evergreens and grass- During the winter months the garden should still have structural interest. Woody plants, evergreens and grasses help maintain visual interest by holding frost and snow, moving in the wind, and adding texture.



(Gardens Illustrated. [Garden in winter] n.d. Retrieved on February 26th 2025 from <https://www.gardensillustrated.com/garden-equipment/tools/winter-protection-garden-mat-cover>)

Diversity of plants (Visual interest and strong planting scheme)- If the garden is a monoculture of only one or a few species, the garden is at risk if an insect or disease wipes out all of a specific species. A varied and diverse planting scheme can make a resilient garden that will survive longer.

Fragrant plants- Smell is closely tied to memory (Olofsson et al. 2020). Including fragrant plants will ground people in the space while also potentially reminding them of memories. Sitting among fragrant hyacinths may remind the bereaved of a perfume the deceased used to wear, or the scent of a magnolia may remind the bereaved of a tree outside their childhood home. Scent can be a powerful tool.

Mixed temporal permanence- The long lasting life of an oak tree, a carved stone monument, a metal plaque. These are memorials that will stand for years with minimal change year after year and can stand for the deceased long after they are gone. On the other hand, leaving handwritten paper notes, cut flowers and a message written in the dirt will fade quickly. The temporary impact of these messages that the bereaved leave is similar to the temporary impact that the deceased may have had on their life. Both long lasting and temporary memorials can be effective healing tools.



(Prout, William. [Flowers on a gravestone] September 22nd, 2022. Retrieved on February 27th, 2025 from

<https://titancasket.com/blogs/funeral-guides-and-more/why-are-flowers-placed-on-caskets-amp-gravesites>)

Things to avoid in memorial greenspace-

Heavy foot traffic or lack of private areas- While it can be good to have many people enjoying the garden, it can disturb those trying to use the space for healing if the garden does not have private spaces.

Weedy/aggressive plants- Weedy plants can break the cohesion of a garden, which may not always be a bad thing. However, if the bereaved is the one caring for the space, it can turn the garden into a chore rather than a healing space.

Road noise or other loud noises- Loud noises break the immersion and disturb the natural sounds in the garden which can distract, frustrate or sadden those using the garden for healing. Loud, jarring noises distract the brain and make it think that there is some kind of danger to be on guard for which increases stress and can have detrimental mental and physical health impacts (Gercke 2025).



(Gercke, Sofia. "Noise Pollution: A Not-So Quiet Threat to Our Health." January 23rd, 2025. Retrieved on February 28th, 2025)

Case study # 1

An example of early grief gardening can be found in the article *Grief Gardening: A horticultural Therapy Program for the Bereaved* by Elan Marie Miavitz (1998) published in the *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture*. The article follows a grief gardening group in Florida in 1998 for women aged 35-50. The group met every other week for twelve weeks at a garden center and would meet for three hours, with the first half being dedicated to support group time and the second half being gardening time. The main goal of the group was to foster community and discussion, while also encouraging the members to create their own gardens at home or in other private spaces. The author believes that, "A grief garden, whether at a botanical, city, organization, or private garden, should be a secluded space to honor the deceased and provide a place for the bereaved to recover" (Miavitz 1998).

Case study #1 Relevance

The case study is relevant to this capstone as it is an example of how grief gardening can be a way to foster community and fight the isolation that can come with losing a loved one. Specifically, the time being split between a support group and gardening is an interesting format that may appeal to some people that want or need more structure than they would have if they were to garden alone.



(Miavitz, Elan. "Lilies planted in an eternal lilly bed." 1998)

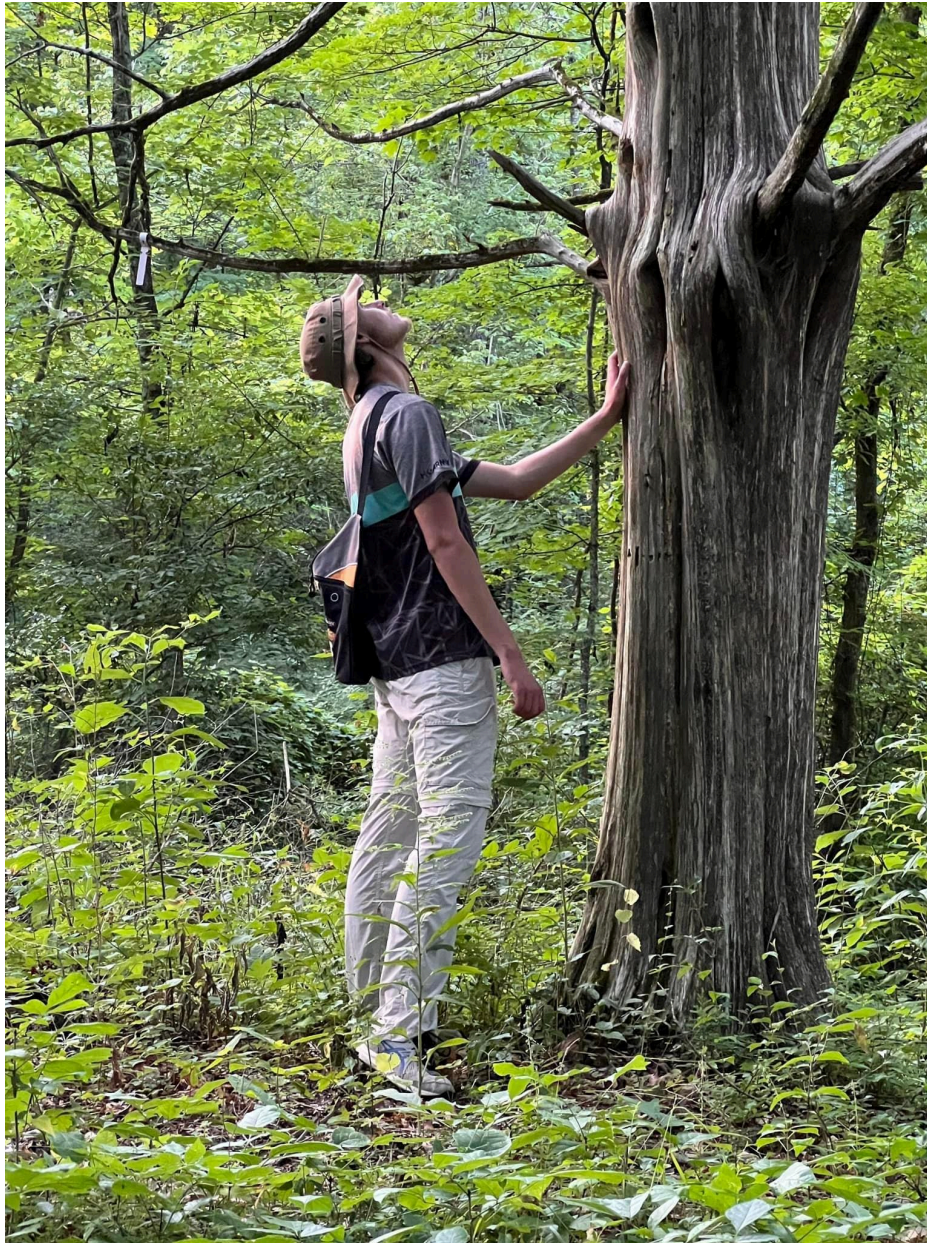
Case Study #2

Therapeutic Gardening: A Counseling Approach for Bereavement from Suicide by Machado and Swank (2019) is an article published in *Death Studies* which discusses how grief counselors can use nature based therapy effectively. The focus of the article is on the counselor and how to best support the bereaved individual. Examples of advice given to the counselor are when to take an active role with the bereaved by structuring sessions and asking questions that connect the garden to life and death. And when to

take passive roles with the bereaved, sitting back and letting them garden freely. The article also places a heavy emphasis on the power of metaphors; how nature can represent something personal to the bereaved. An example is given in a specific case study of a woman named Valerie who lost her son and sought nature based therapy. Valerie planted rows of three flowers, and told the counselor that the two flowers on the sides were her and her husband, and the smaller flower was her son that passed. Valerie would water her son's flower every day while sharing memories of him (Machado and Swank 2019).

Case study #2 Relevance

The case study is relevant to this research because it gives multiple helpful examples of how to effectively create a space for healing that will best support the bereaved. The research question of how to effectively create a greenspace for those grieving the loss of a loved one is directly supported by the evidence given in this case study as it acts as advice for counselors assisting those grieving. It also gives advice on the challenges in greenspaces as therapy, such as losing confidentiality if in public, the changing weather, and health or mobility issues that limit the effectiveness of nature based therapy. The article also discusses the importance of the emotional impact of having a plant die in the garden and needing to discuss that in advance with the bereaved.



(Ludwick, James. "Ethan Rettig observing a tree" July 20, 2022 from the authors personal collection)

Case Study #3

Similar to other memorial gardens, gardens to remember those that passed away during the 2020 COVID pandemic became popular in the United States in the wake of

the pandemic. These gardens were especially important for those that passed away in nursing homes. Because of the risk of transmission, some nursing homes did not allow visitors or discouraged visitors, which made the grieving process even harder. One spouse of a deceased nursing home patient stated, ““We always promised each other that we wouldn’t let each other die alone, but nobody saw this coming” (Kosofsky, 2021, para. 7). Many surviving families are often left wondering and worrying about the events that led up to their loved one’s death, questioning if their loved one was comfortable and at peace.” (Hoffman). With the standard rituals around death being upended by COVID, garden memorials offered ways for those mourning to gather community together and support each other while honoring the deceased in a symbolic manner.

Case study #3 Relevance

The case study is relevant to this research because the primary argument that the author makes is, “Dr Leonard Perry writes that “creating memorial gardens promotes healing. Maintaining them is therapeutic. The gardens not only keep alive their memories, but also provide beauty to those who see them even if they don’t know whom they are remembering” (Perry, n.d., para. 12).” (Hoffman 2024) Which directly supports a core element of this capstone, that gardens offer a unique way to mourn and grieve the loss of a loved one in ways that a traditional funeral may not.



(Rettig, Ethan. Edited by Cooper, L. "Goldenrod before the storm." September 24th, 2024)

Historical Context

The connection between plants and honoring loved ones dates back to the 19th century in the United States. Growing populations in the cities required larger cemeteries to be built. Poor sanitation and disease also required bodies to be moved out of the cities and away from people. This is where the rural landscape cemetery became popular. Mount Auburn in Massachusetts was the first to open in 1831, with many more soon to follow (Meier). The fusion of cemetery and arboretum successfully offered a sanitary method of honoring the dead while also providing much needed green space to a rapidly urbanizing America. The green spaces were enjoyed by those seeking fresh air and recreation, while also offering peace, reflection, and hope to those in mourning.



(Barnes, Jared. "Autumn in Spring Grove Cemetery." December 4th, 2021. Retrieved on February 20th, 2025 from <https://meristemhorticulture.com/planted/autumn-in-spring-grove-cemetery>)

The practice of planting a memorial tree became widespread following the end of World War I in 1918. Because the bodies of some soldiers were never recovered, there were no physical graves for them. The trees offered a monument to those that did not make it back and a place for family to grieve. Some trees were planted specifically by the family of the deceased, while others were planted and maintained by the government. The tradition of planting a tree to remember a lost loved one continues to this day. (Daseger 2017).



(Dasager "Memorial Trees." 2017. Retrieved on February 10th, 2025 from <https://streetsofsalem.com/2017/05/26/memorial-trees/#:~:text=In%20any%20case%2C%20one%20of,of%20their%20lost%20loved%20ones.>)

In recent times memorial gardens have become popular to honor those that have passed away from cancer. These gardens are usually open to the public and serve to provide spaces to remember and grieve lost loved ones, give support and beauty to those still fighting cancer, and serve as a triumphant monument to those that survived. Examples include Humboldt Memorial Garden in Nebraska built in 2017 and the Maggie Daley Park in Chicago built in 1996.

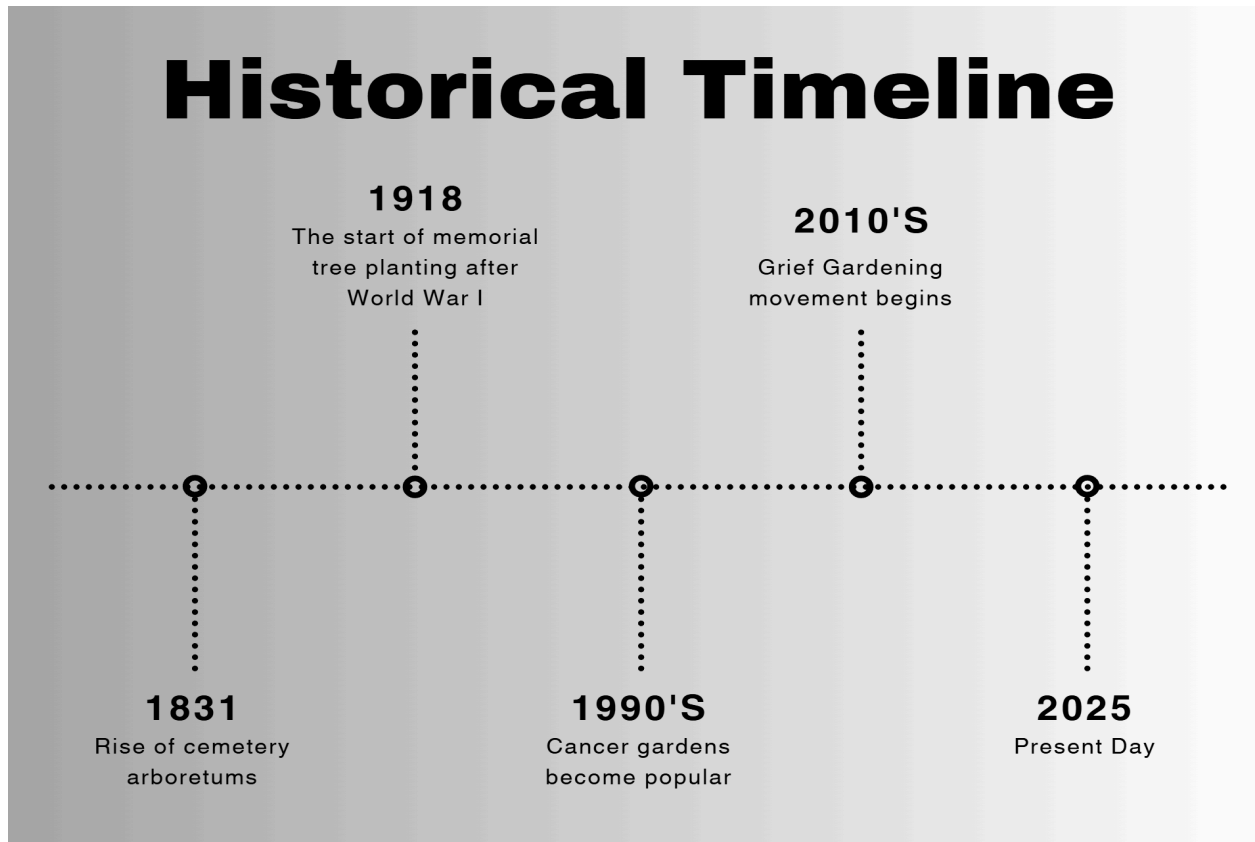


(CityPASS “Maggie Daley Park.” September 6th, 2024. Retrieved on March 2nd, 2025

from

<https://www.citypass.com/articles/chicago/maggie-daley-park-play-garden-a-chicago-adventure>)

Grief gardening is a growing movement supported by some doctors, therapists, and horticulturalists. “Researchers have found a connection between plants and the positive impact they have on our mental health, particularly during times of acute distress. Multiple studies have found that caring for plants can decrease stress, anxiety and depression, improve our mood, reduce blood pressure and may even help people recover faster after surgery.” (Lee Et al. 2015, Li Et al. 2012, Machado and Swank 2018, Nieuwenhuis Et al. 2014, Ulrich 2002, Valencia 2023, Yeo 2020).



(Rettig, Ethan. "Historical Timeline." February 27th, 2025.)

Solution:

To reiterate on and reinforce what has been stated previously: there is no one perfect solution and there is no one size fits all memorial greenspace. The context of the loss determines the beneficial design elements that will make the greenspace effective. The term solution may not be the correct term to use either. A memorial does not solve anything, it can help, it can assist, but it does not solve.

With that said, this research will assist in designing a greenspace that can be effective in assisting with grief from losing a loved one.



(Rettig, Ethan. Edited by Cooper, L. "Crocus" March 13th, 2025)

Reference Manual of Memorial Greenspace Design

- Begin by asking questions-

Who is the greenspace for?

Is there already a space chosen or will one need to be found?

What is the size of the space?

Who will manage it?

How many people will use it?

What is the goal/is there a goal of the greenspace?

What is the budget?

How will plant death be handled?

Should any metaphors be added?

Did the deceased have any favorite plants?

What are the environmental conditions of the site?

What style of greenspace is desired?

- Decide early on if the garden is to focus on privacy or community

A private garden will be more enclosed, focusing on reflection and self healing.

A public or community focused garden will foster support, connection, and can bring friends and/or families together.

- Beneficial elements of memorial gardens-

Motion and stillness

Dappled shade

Seating

Water features (bubblers and reflecting pools)

Year round flowers (Annuals can be utilized to achieve this)

Spring flowers and ephemerals

Private enclosed outdoor rooms

Structure plants (Trees, grasses, evergreens)

Diversity of plants

Fragrant plants

Stone or metal monuments to contrast with the plants

- Things to avoid in memorial greenspaces

Heavy foot traffic

Weedy and aggressive plants

Road noise or other loud noise

Memorial Garden plant list-

These plants are a few of the author's favorites to use in memorial gardens. This plant list is based on a midwest climate and depending on climate, soil, general site conditions and the desired style of the garden these may not work for every memorial. However, the specific plants don't matter quite as much as the feelings that they evoke and the role that they play within the garden.

- Large trees- to provide shade and live on for many years beyond the bereaved.

Oak (*Quercus*)

Hickory (*Carya*)

Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*)

Bald Cypress (*Taxodium distichum*)

Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*)

Tulip Poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*)



(Barnes, Jared. "400 year old White Oak" December 4th, 2021. Retrieved on March 20th, 2025 from

<https://meristemhorticulture.com/planted/autumn-in-spring-grove-cemetery>)

- Small flowering trees or shrubs- Structure and seasonal interest

Redbud (*Cercis canadensis*)

Serviceberry (*Amelanchier*)

Flowering Dogwood (*Cornus florida*)

Viburnums (*Viburnum*)

Black Chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*)

Roses (*Rosa*)

Hydrangea (*Hydrangea*)

Witch Hazel (*Hamamelis*)



(Cherokee Tree Care. "Witch Hazel" n.d. Retrieved on March 20th, 2025 from <https://www.cherokeetreecare.com/tree-of-the-month-common-witch-hazel-tree/>)

- Perennial flowers- Seasonal interest and beauty

Aster (*Symphyotrichum*)

Iris (*Iris*)

Purple Coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)

Black eyed susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)

False Indigo (*Baptisia australis*)

Blazing Star (*Liatris*)

Sunflower (*Helianthus*)



(Special Plants Nursery. "Baptisia australis" n.d. Retrieved on March 20th, 2025 from https://www.specialplants.net/shop/seeds/baptisia_australis/)

- Annual Flowers- Beauty, year round blooms, and to assist the garden while the trees and perennials get established.

Vervain (*Verbena*)

Geranium (*Geranium*)

Petunias (*Petunia*)

Chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum*)

Lantanas. (*Lantana*)



(Eden Brothers. "Geranium" n.d. Retrieved on March 20th, 2025 from

<https://grow.edenbrothers.com/planting-guides/geranium-bulbs/>)

- Grasses- Structure and winter interest.

Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)

Little Bluestem (*Schizachyrium scoparium*)

Northern sea oats (*Chasmanthium latifolium*)

Prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

Purple love grass (*Eragrostis pectinacea*)



(FastGrowingTrees. "Switchgrass" n.d. Retrieved on March 20th, 2025 from <https://www.fast-growing-trees.com/products/shenandoah-switch-grass?variant=39611614232638>)

- Spring blooming plants- Year round blooms and something to look forward to during winter.

Phlox (*Phlox*)

Bluebells (*Mertensia virginiana*)

Crocus (*Crocus*)

Tulips (*Tulipa*)

Snowdrops (*Galanthus*)

Daffodils (*Narcissus*)



(Sarah Porteus. "Snowdrops" February 28th, 2018. Retrieved on March 20th, 2025 from <https://www.creativecountryside.com/blog/the-folklore-of-snowdrops>)

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