

'It brings you in and shelters you': NHS creates 'recovery gardens' for staff and patients

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- How can being outside help people feel better and stay healthy?
- Have you ever felt happier or less stressed after spending time in nature? Can you give an example?

2 Key words

a. Match the words in bold in the article to the definitions below.

1. _____ : a place where doctors and nurses help sick people
2. _____ : an outdoor place with plants and flowers
3. _____ : people who are getting medical care
4. _____ : to rest and feel calm
5. _____ : the people who work at a place, like a hospital or school
6. _____ : the condition of your body and mind
7. _____ : not making noise
8. _____ : a set of questions that help scientists learn about people's opinions
9. _____ : very short periods of time
10. _____ : open areas or places to move around

b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity.

1. After a long day, I like to _____ on the sofa in front of the TV.
2. The head teacher gave students a(n) _____ to find out about their favourite subjects.
3. My grandmother is in the _____ because she broke her leg.
4. There are two big _____ in the park where children can play.
5. We have a small _____ with flowers and trees behind our house.

'It brings you in and shelters you': NHS creates 'recovery gardens' for staff and patients

Level 1: Elementary

6. Eating fruit and vegetables is good for your _____.
7. I need a few _____ to think before I answer the question.
8. The hotel _____ were very friendly and helped us with our bags.
9. Please be _____ in the library because people are studying.
10. The doctor is talking to some _____ about their medicines.

'It brings you in and shelters you': NHS creates 'recovery gardens' for staff and patients

Level 1: Elementary

Donna Ferguson

16 March, 2025

- 1 For Hayleigh Austin-Richards, a **hospital** garden is a place to take a deep breath, **relax**, and feel the magic of butterflies. She visits the hospital's Garden for Recovery as often as she can. "It's quiet. You feel like you're in the middle of nowhere," she says.
- 2 Austin-Richards works in a hospital and her job is difficult. She sees people going through very hard **moments**. The **garden** is a peaceful place where she can take a break.
- 3 Many hospitals in England are now creating special wellbeing gardens for their **staff** and **patients**. In the last 10 months, 16 NHS hospitals have asked the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) to help make these gardens.
- 4 Victoria Shearing from the RHS says these gardens give hope to people. "Hospitals are starting to see these **spaces** as good for **health** and wellbeing," she explained.
- 5 Dame Linda Pollard, chair of Leeds Teaching Hospitals, agrees. She says hospitals are very busy places, and it is hard to find a **quiet** space inside. "Staff rooms are not always good for relaxing because they are too busy," she said. That's why the RHS is opening a wellbeing garden at St James's University Hospital in Leeds.
- 6 The RHS is building these gardens in different parts of England to help hospital staff and patients feel better. The first one opened in 2022 at University Hospital Lewisham. A **survey** showed that 70 per cent of staff felt happier because of it, and 81 per cent said it made their work better. Another garden opened in Colchester, and a new one is planned in Greater Manchester.
- 7 Adam Frost, a designer from BBC *Gardeners' World*, created these gardens. "In a hospital, you feel many emotions – sadness, stress or happiness," he said. "Gardens give us space. If you watch a bird land on a tree, you stop thinking about problems for a moment."
- 8 Austin-Richards feels the garden helps her. "At the end of the day, when I go home, I feel better," she said. Some of her patients have stayed in the hospital for months. "For them, feeling like they are not in a hospital, even for a few minutes, is really important."

© Guardian News and Media 2025

First published in *The Guardian*, 16/03/2025

'It brings you in and shelters you': NHS creates 'recovery gardens' for staff and patients

Level 1: Elementary

3 Comprehension check

a. Decide if the statements are True or False.

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Hayleigh Austin-Richards visits the 'Garden for Recovery' to study butterflies. | True / False |
| 2. In the last ten months, more than 20 NHS hospitals asked the RHS for help with gardens. | True / False |
| 3. Dame Linda Pollard thinks hospital staff rooms are quiet places to relax. | True / False |
| 4. At University Hospital Lewisham, more than 80 per cent of staff say the garden helps them feel better at work. | True / False |
| 5. Hayleigh Austin-Richards is a patient at a hospital. | True / False |

b. Find the following information in the text.

1. two hospitals with wellbeing gardens
2. a percentage that shows how one wellbeing garden helped staff feel better
3. a reason why staff rooms in hospitals are not good places to relax
4. the name of the gardener who designed the wellbeing gardens for hospitals
5. when the first wellbeing garden opened

4 Key language

a. Match the words in bold to their function in the sentences.

- A hospital garden is a place to take a deep breath, relax, and feel the magic of butterflies.
 - She visits **the** hospital's Garden for Recovery as often as she can. "It's quiet. You feel like you're in the middle of nowhere," she says.
1. We use the definite article _____ when referring to a specific object, place or person.
 2. We use the indefinite articles _____ / *an* to introduce an object, place or person for the first time or when we speak of it in a general way.

'It brings you in and shelters you': NHS creates 'recovery gardens' for staff and patients

Level 1: Elementary

b. Write a, an or the to complete the sentences.

1. I want to see _____ horror movie tonight.
2. I want to see _____ horror movie you told me about tonight.
3. We need to get _____ new car.
4. She is _____ excellent doctor.
5. She is _____ doctor who did your father's surgery.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these questions.

- How important are outdoor spaces and nature in your life?
- Do you think that wellbeing gardens could work for people who work in other industries? Which ones and why or why not?

6 In your own words

a. Write a short story or journal entry from the perspective of a healthcare worker (e.g. a nurse, doctor or therapist) who uses the wellbeing garden during a busy workday. They should reflect on how spending time in the garden helps them cope with stress and helps them focus on their job. Include:

- a description of the garden
- personal thoughts on the emotional and psychological benefits of spending time outdoors.

b. Share your pieces of creative writing with your class.