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**The Therapeutic Power of Plants**

Courtesy of NICH/ConsumerHort.org. *with Commentary by National Grange President Betsy Huber*

Celebrate National Horticultural Therapy Week March 14-20, 2021!

Many people (especially me!) enjoy looking at plants and flowers and find it relaxing to dig in the dirt. But research and a growing number of horticulture therapy programs are showing that gardening holds serious healing power.

Trained and certified therapists, including members of the American Horticultural Therapy Association (AHTA), help clients treat physical and psychological conditions including PTSD, addiction, and dementia through gardening.

According to the AHTA website, “Horticultural therapy helps improve memory, cognitive abilities, task initiation, language skills, and socialization. In physical rehabilitation, horticultural therapy can help strengthen muscles and improve coordination, balance, and endurance.”

Horticulture therapy programs have been implemented in schools, correctional facilities, retirement homes, hospitals, outpatient facilities, and community centers, and the same techniques can be adapted to home gardens. More information on finding a program or licensed therapist can be found at AHTA.org.

National Garden Bureau past-president Heather Kibble says, “Caring for plants and experiencing nature brings healing and purpose to people whose lives have been affected by illness, addiction, violence or military service.” The National Garden Bureau (NGB.org) administers an annual grant for therapeutic gardens to support garden-based education and therapy.

Research compiled by the National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture (NICH) reveals other benefits of plants and gardening on the healing process, including a reduction in the amount of pain relievers taken post-surgery by patients in rooms containing plants. Plants in room décor also reduced the stress, blood pressure, and reported fatigue levels of hospital patients.

More findings on the healing benefits of plants can be found in the infographic, “#PlantsDoThat Where We Heal,” available for download, reprint, or adaptation at ConsumerHort.org. When posting on social media, please use the hashtag #PlantsDoThat.

The National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture (NICH) is a consortium of industry leaders who are promoting the benefits and value of horticulture. NICH brings together academia, government, industry, and nonprofits to cultivate the growth and development of a healthy world through landscapes, gardens and plants — indoors and out.

If you have a Grange hall with property, have you considered using a portion of it for community gardens? You could be instrumental in feeding people as well as healing their stress from a long winter of pandemic isolation!

**COVID Relief Highlights**

*By Sean O’Neil, Legislative Intern*

Earlier this week, the House finally passed President Biden’s $1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, a bill aimed at tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and associated recession. Highlights of the bill are:

* $1,400 stimulus checks for individuals earning up to $75,000 and dependents
* Extension of $300 federal unemployment benefits increase to September 6
* Expansion of the Child Tax Credit to $3,600/child for children aged 0-6, $3,000 for children aged 6-17
* $7.25 billion in money for the Paycheck Protection Program, with new emphasis on small businesses
* $128 billion in education funding
* $4.5 billion for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, expanded SNAP and WIC benefits
* $25 billion in rental assistance
* $7.5 billion for the CDC, $46 billion for coronavirus testing, $14 billion for vaccine distribution
* $350 billion for state and local governments
* Increased assistance under the Affordable Care Act, incentives for states to expand Medicaid

These are just highlights of the bill as the Senate discussed many different issues such as a wage increase. These issues will continue to be at the forefront of the 2021 session and amidst the COVID crisis.

**Attention Secretaries**:

Form M – Grange Membership Recognition Application form has been updated and revised on 11/20. Here is the link <https://www.nationalgrange.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Form-M-Revised.pdf>

The form can be found on the National Grange website Member Resources tab, under Secretaries forms.

While some states have created their own version of this document, we ask that you make sure you utilize this new form and discard any old forms that you may be using.

**Grange Month is just around the corner**.

Don’t forget to order your Community Citizen Award and/or Pomona Grange Award for Public Service either in the Grange Supply Store or by mailing the order form <https://www.nationalgrange.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Grange-Month-Citizen-Award-Order-form.pdf>. These awards are available for purchase year round and with Grange month right around the corner, there is no better way to honor those within your community.

**A Few Great Mentions**

The Grange has been hard at work these last two weeks! Here are some links to some of our

more popular articles about the Grange in action. Take the time and check out what is happening

both on the National and State level. If you have any news highlights you would like to share

with the Grange community email, them to [kgwin@nationalgrange.org](mailto:kgwin@nationalgrange.org)

**High Desert Grange, NV**. Thanking front line workers: <https://www.nevadaappeal.com/news/2021/mar/10/high-desert-grange-thanks-front-line-heroes/?fbclid=IwAR3rV4i3-Lyahc5dA8K2_K5jGnjtMMmQKeDhcJN4_aPUeCl6dv0IxDzkkEs>

**Williamsport Grange #1815, OH.** Hometown Hero Banner Project:

<https://www.morrowcountysentinel.com/news/36464/hometown-hero-veteran-banner-project-under-way?fbclid=IwAR10xgavkRK9T9N--03hGTdX3QHuyvJ1dR1iCSPl5ZPrkhkiEbuBnfA6FG8>

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**Membership Matters: Off on the Right Foot**

Join us for the next Membership Matters Zoom event on Tuesday, March 16 at 8:30 p.m. Eastern as State Presidents and membership directors from Washington, Pennsylvania and North Carolina will discuss the ways in which their State Granges work to welcome new members. From the importance of welcoming to the timeliness of outreach to our newest members and the ways in which we can engage and put our best foot forward.

To log on, go to [bit.ly/z-1867](http://bit.ly/z-1867) or your Zoom app or [zoom.us](http://zoom.us) and enter the Meeting ID: 525 965 930 and Passcode: 981892. You may also call in by dialing (301) 715 8592.

**MEMBER BENEFIT**

RX Pharmacy Card provided by CV Caremark (also for pet prescriptions) –program offers the RxSavings Plus Card, a NO FEE exclusive benefit to National Grange members that is not offered to the public. The RxSavings Card allows members to go to almost any pharmacy.  Unlike other savings plans, the CVS-Caremark program applies to 99% of prescription drugs. Save on Lipitor, Viagra, Plavix, high blood pressure medications and thousands more—even pet medications! For the Rx Card Program, go to [http://nationalgrange.rxsavingsplus.com](http://nationalgrange.rxsavingsplus.com/).

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[REGISTER TODAY FOR THIS EVENT](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZUtd--qpz8oHN0ecUitC7o1siki1H0sQaHR)

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