Another way to help cover maintenance costs is to consider asking donors to designate a portion of their gift to help cover future maintenance costs. This is particularly important for gifts, such as a pool or fountain, that need annual care.

When donors are asked to support a portion of a plan that has already been approved, they can expect their gift to be used responsibly to create a welcoming and well-maintained garden. Good advance planning controls and directs spending for maximum benefit to the facility.

Recognize donors appropriately
While many facilities already have a policy for identifying donated gifts, consideration might need to be given to instituting a different policy for outdoor donations. Some proven possibilities include establishing a patio of personalized bricks, using a series of wall plaques, or simply adding unobtrusive labels.

Other institutions have provided space for a memory wall in the garden where temporary displays can help provide a place for grieving, meditation, and contemplation.

Goals for therapeutic gardens
Healthcare facilities that decide to undertake an improvement to their outdoor amenities should keep the following important goals in mind.

A therapeutic garden space should
• be accessible to all,
• be secure,
• provide comfortable opportunities for socializing with other residents, as well as with visiting family and friends,
• offer a home-like environment,
• provide places for privacy, and
• provide sensory stimulation to increase mental alertness.

For more information
Check these additional publications in the Therapeutic Gardening Series:
• A Factor in Choosing Healthcare Facilities, RG 108
• Creating Raised Bed Planters, RG 111
• Gardening Tips for Older Adults, RG 107
• Resources, RG 110

Check these Web sites:
ISU Extension Distribution Center
Online Store—
www.extension.iastate.edu/store

ISU Horticulture—
www.yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu

Reiman Gardens—
www.reimangardens.iastate.edu

The Iowa Horticulturist—
www.iowahort.org

Iowa Master Gardeners
www.mastergardener.iastate.edu

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... and justice for all
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Therapeutic gardens are an important, though often overlooked feature to be considered in the list of amenities at healthcare facilities. Some facilities have fostered contact with nature by installing indoor aviaries, adopting pets, or encouraging residents to brighten their rooms with indoor plants. Top quality care, however, also includes outdoor garden space.

Therapeutic gardens benefit residents, staff, and visitors

Patients who spend 10 minutes or more in a garden have been shown to have improvements in behavior, pulse rate, blood pressure, and weight, as well as increased muscle tone, higher absorption of Vitamin D, and improved circadian rhythms. Nursing home residents who spend time in a garden have exhibited less violent behavioral episodes and reduced medication needs. Benefits of therapeutic gardens extend beyond residents to staff and visitors. Well-designed gardens provide something to do for family and friends who come to visit, and may give active children a place to burn off their excess energy. When visiting the healthcare facility becomes more enjoyable, visits become more frequent, and additional social benefits occur for both the resident and the facility.

Outdoor gardens also are valuable as a stress reducing tool for staff, and some preliminary research indicates that outdoor gardens can be a positive factor in staff recruitment and retention.

Outdoor gardens, walkways, and trails at a healthcare facility provide a place for increased physical activity. Even a short walk outdoors can provide tremendous stress relief, and provide important health benefits to residents, visitors, and staff.

Planning builds a better garden

Planning for garden placement is essential for integrating indoor and outdoor spaces. This is easiest to do when a new building is being designed but is equally important when adding garden areas to an existing facility.

The consequences of not planning ahead almost certainly mean higher costs and/or garden placement in a leftover spot with poor access and fewer amenities.

Planning a therapeutic garden involves consultations with administrators, nursing staff, physical/occupational/horticulture therapists, and design professionals to produce a concept for discussion, approval, and use in fundraising and public awareness efforts.

Once the vision for the space is translated into an approved construction design, the installation of the garden can be done in several phases. This allows labor and material costs to be spread over a span of years as needed.