



Horticultural Therapy Core Skills & Knowledge

The following resource comprises core skills and knowledge that the Canadian Horticultural Therapy Association recommends and recognizes to be included in the practice of horticultural therapy (HT) and therapeutic horticulture (TH) in Canada.

We acknowledge that HT/TH professionals come from a wide range of experience and scope of practice and work with a wide range of populations, and that the amount of expertise for each point may vary. Our goal is that this document reveals a professional's areas of current expertise, and the areas requiring education and professional development.

Horticultural Therapy (HT) and Therapeutic Horticulture (TH) - Foundations of Profession

The horticultural therapy professional has an awareness of:

- the difference between horticultural therapy (HT) and therapeutic horticulture (TH)
- different titles and terms used by HT/TH professionals (Horticultural Therapist Registered, Horticultural Therapy Technician, Horticultural Therapy Practitioner, Nature Therapist, Ecopsychology, Ecotherapy)
- foundations and diverse evolution of horticultural therapy and the contemporary use of HT/TH internationally
- assessment, treatment planning, implementation, and evaluation methods pertinent to HT/TH
- CHTA Code of Ethics
- CHTA Professional Registration process
- research and evidence base that supports the use of HT/TH and therapeutic landscapes

Assessment

The horticultural therapy professional possesses the skills to:

- conduct assessment processes
- document assessment findings
- review findings and implications for treatment with client, family, and team members
- incorporate assessment findings to complement and design an individualized healthcare plan
- reference assessment instruments from other health care disciplines relevant to the horticultural therapy treatment process

Program and Treatment Planning

The horticultural therapy professional has the ability and skills to:

- select appropriate interventions and activities relevant to stated goals and objectives
- construct treatment plans which:
 - acknowledge culture, heritage, socio-economic background, skills, and capabilities of individuals and groups
 - adhere to ethical and professional standards of practice
 - incorporate safety and risk management procedures
 - accommodate individual strengths, skills, and preferences of the client group
- prepare and/or comply with a stated budget as pertinent to the facility, client population, and seasonal programming
- write functional outcome measures that include goals, objectives, progress notes, and other forms of documentation related to design and delivery of a therapeutic program and therapeutic sessions
- document a therapeutic session and client's response to an intervention
- ensure adequate work time is provided to grow, cultivate, harvest, or forage for plant material and/or purchase supplies to support a HT/TH program
- develop therapy plans for ongoing health and wellbeing

Evaluation of Therapeutic Horticulture and Horticultural Therapy Programs

The horticultural therapy professional shall be familiar with:

- methods for evaluating HT/TH programs
- methods for evaluating the progress of people
- methods for evaluating the professional's effectiveness through reflective practice
- documentation protocols for program planning and accountability
- basic medical vocabulary and acronyms
- use of data to modify interventions
- recommendations for ongoing well-being
- safety and risk management procedures
- ethical documentation for research purposes
- procedures for scheduling and making decisions with interdisciplinary and community support teams

Conditions that Affect Health and Wellness

The horticultural therapy professional has knowledge of:

- how to develop person-centered interventions appropriate to the individual's well-being (eg. social, cultural, physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual health)
- basic concepts, theories, and principles related to people of diverse abilities
- risks and benefits of HT/TH services
- barriers for individuals to access HT/TH
- complementary therapies that support the practice of HT/TH
- basic human anatomy and physiology
- gross and fine motor skills relevant to designing appropriate interventions

- health, safety, security and privacy protocols for individuals served
- protocols relating to infectious disease control, Physical First Aid, Mental Health First Aid, and Safe Food Handling Practices

Individual and Group Dynamics and Leadership

The horticultural therapy professional demonstrates competencies in:

- creating a safe and welcoming environment
- understanding individual and group dynamics
- facilitation skills
 - one to one therapeutic facilitation
 - group leadership skills
- awareness of learning styles
- adaptive facilitation styles
- using compassionate communication
- effective, intentional communication (cuing, gendered language, etc.)
- cultural awareness
- conflict resolution

Employment & Professional Responsibilities

Horticultural Therapy professionals work in a variety of structures (employee or self-employed, part-time, full-time, independent contractor, etc.). Employment status directly affects a person's entitlement to employment insurance (EI) benefits under the *Employment Insurance Act*. It can also have an impact on how a worker is treated under other legislation such as the *Canada Pension Plan* and the *Income Tax Act*.

Refer to the following publication from the Government of Canada for more information. *Employee or Self-employed?*

Professionals should also refer to your provincial or territorial guidelines regarding employment standards.

While you may work as an independent contractor or employee, both can participate as a member of a department or a service team.

A. Employment Responsibilities:

The horticultural therapy professional is aware of:

- differences in wages, benefits, expectations, and working conditions for an employee vs. a self-employed contractor
- range of rates for those working in HT or TH and differences that apply with respect to types of qualification (e.g. HTR, HTT, or Horticultural Therapy Practitioner)
- proprietorship of intellectual and physical therapy materials
- employer coverage for worker's compensation plans
- professional and general liability insurance
- safety and risk management protocols (including, but not limited to: infectious disease control, fire safety, WHMIS, criminal record check)

B. Professional Responsibilities:

The horticultural therapy professional is aware of:

- CHTA professional designation and titles
 - educate and communicate professional designation and title
- opportunities to promote and advocate for HT/TH principles and practice
- using social media and other tools in an ethical manner
- privacy and confidentiality protocols for work with individuals and groups, including requirements to use waivers for photographs and other forms of media
- responsibilities with respect to training, managing, and supporting volunteers
- financial management of HT/TH program budget
- strategies to acquire funding for HT/TH program
- relationships to management and responsibilities as member of a department or team
- effective communication skills with interdisciplinary team, management, and caregivers
- ongoing professional development in HT/TH and related fields
- Updates from the CHTA, including updated core documents (always refer to the CHTA website for the most current version of documents)
- Current opportunities to contribute to the CHTA

Horticulture and therapeutic garden design and the therapeutic value of nature

A. The horticultural therapy professional has knowledge of horticulture theories, principles and practices:

- Indoor and outdoor plant care
- Plant Science:
 - plant life cycles
 - botany
 - taxonomy
 - soil science and plant nutrition
 - plant pathology
 - entomology
 - integrated pest management
 - weed identification and management
 - plant propagation
 - plant toxicity and allergic effects of plants
 - floriculture
- Organic gardening practice:
 - seasonal garden care and maintenance
 - water use and resource management
 - greenhouse or nursery production techniques
 - understanding of native plants in your region
 - composting
 - companion planting
 - food production & food handling
 - harvesting and storage
 - safe food handling practices

- o seed saving
- o honourable, ethical, and expert harvesting
- Tools:
 - o tool identification
 - o how to safely use and maintain tools
 - o use and development of adaptive horticultural tools
 - o safe storage of tools

B. The horticultural therapy professional has knowledge of therapeutic garden design:

- accessible and therapeutic landscape design
- the principles of universal design
 - o physical aspects
 - o adaptive tools
- basics of designing for varying physical abilities, cognitive abilities
- sensory plants in the landscape and how to engage with all 5 senses
- the physical aspects (hardscape) of creating a therapeutic environment
- adaptive tools and design strategies
- using small spaces
- greening indoor spaces/ interior plantscaping
- passive and active therapeutic garden design to maximize the potential for plant-people engagement (signage, invitations to engage, etc.)
- cultural history and value of plants, include native and non-native plants
- garden design for the 4 seasons
- ability to engage and consult with stakeholders when designing and installing therapeutic gardens

C. The horticultural therapy professional has knowledge of the therapeutic value of plants and nature:

- physical, cognitive, psychological, social, and spiritual effects of plants on people
- theories supportive of HT/TH (Biophilic Theory, Attention Restoration Theory, etc.)
- knowledge of plants and programs for each season
- awareness of life connection between plants and people
- the therapeutic benefit of connecting with all 5 senses
- the value and practical application of botanical arts and crafts
- creative use of plant materials indoors
- cooking/nutrition
- land stewardship, honourable harvesting practices, and environmental education
- community consultation (ex. awareness of community horticultural pursuits, horticulture network, or therapeutic needs of immediate community)
- nature-based self care as a tool of professional development
- cultural history of forest tending and value of local plants
- traditional Native plant medicine practices and the medicinal value of local and native plants
- environmental issues and eco anxiety