



# UPDATE

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MENDOCINO COAST  
DISTRICT HOSPITAL

*Competent, Caring & Committed to Your Health*

## The Healing Garden

### Promoting Healing, Meditation, and Peace

Throughout history, gardens have been used to aid in the healing process. This long and rich tradition stretches back as far as medieval times. Whether a Japanese Zen garden or a Monastic Cloister garden, healing gardens have proven to be beneficial to patients throughout history.

Among their proven health benefits, healing gardens have the ability to lower blood pressure, reduce pain, decrease stress, improve mood and strengthen the immune system. Studies have shown that patients who have views of nature, whether through a hospital window or in a painting, get out of the hospital faster, have fewer complications and require less pain medication than patients without such vistas of the natural world.



In our commitment to holistically serve the health needs of our community, MCDH is creating a Healing Garden on the hospital campus for the use of patients, their families, staff and visitors.

Local artist and renowned Japanese culturalist **Dr. Shozo Sato** (*shown above*) generously donated his talents to design the Healing Garden. The Zen-style garden is designed to symbolize what healthcare is all about: life with its ebb and flow of beauty and challenges.

A sculptural stone fountain is the Healing Garden's centerpiece, providing the soothing sound of flowing water. A stepping stone path through a rock "river," stone benches, medicinal plants, and stone and wooden fencing will provide a private sanctuary for garden visitors.

The Healing Garden is located on the south exterior of the hospital, outside of the Hematology-Oncology-Infusion Clinic and adjacent to the Emergency Department entrance. When completed in December, it will be accessible to all patients, staff and visitors during weekday business hours (7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.).

#### Community Support

The Healing Garden has attracted significant support from the community. In fact, the entire project is community-supported, and will not require funding from the hospital's budget. The catalyst for initiating the project was a \$4,000 grant from the Community Foundation of Mendocino County, received in June 2006. Dr. Sato then joined the team to design the garden, and an outpouring of community support and contributions followed.

Jerry Matson overwhelmed the hospital team with his offer to donate virtually all of the needed building supplies through Matson Building Materials. The Healing Garden is to be dedicated in loving memory of Jerry's father, Harold Matson.

Scott Zeramby of Dirt Cheap, in collaboration with Rachele Zachary and her import business, donated river-tumbled stones from Thailand for the garden's water feature and benches. Says Zeramby, "It is our pleasure and our commitment to give back to the community in a meaningful way."

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"Working to develop the Healing Garden has been one of the most satisfying and exciting projects of my employment at the Hospital. The way that the garden has been embraced by donors in the community and members of the Hospital staff has been very encouraging. Working with Dr. Shozo Sato has truly been a pleasure." – *Terry Knaus, Groundskeeper*





# Learning About Medicinal Plants

by Dr. John Rochat

When I came to MCDH, I was excited about the prospects of a great Hematology & Oncology clinic. When I saw fresh dirt surrounding our clinic, the gardener in me became more excited too! When I discovered a Healing Garden was planned near our clinic, I asked if perhaps instead of simply having a Healing Garden, that we have an educational Healing Garden.



I've always been interested in the historic and current medicinal uses of plants. Nearly every culture has attempted to do this in one form or fashion, and some have been very successful.

One of the more common misconceptions about chemotherapy agents is that they are all synthetic chemicals, and therefore more dangerous or toxic. This misunderstanding leads some patients to immediately discount the potential good uses for chemotherapy, and also to think that "natural" medicines can't be dangerous. Oh, but they sure can be toxic.

Several commonly used chemotherapy agents are derived from plants that do, or can, grow in this area (some of which will be included in the Healing Garden). These include:

- *Catharanthus roseus* (Periwinkle, pictured above) from which we get the vinca alkaloids Vincristine, Vinblastine and Vinorelbine
- *Podophyllum peltatum* (Mayapple) from which we get Etoposide and Teniposide
- *Taxus baccata* (English Yew) and *Taxus brevifolia* (Pacific Yew) from which we get the taxanes Docetaxel and Paclitaxel
- *Camptotheca acuminata* (Xi shu or Happy Tree), from which we get the camptothecins Irinotecan and Topotecan.

These drugs are used frequently to treat breast cancer, colon cancer, lung cancer, some lymphomas, some leukemias, ovarian cancer, some sarcomas, cervical cancer and some head and neck cancers. Now that's what I call a significant impact.

Hopefully, this Healing Garden will serve in numerous ways, to reconnect us all to our calming environment, to remind us of the importance our environment can have on other aspects of healing, and perhaps it will also remind us why we should take great care to preserve our environment.

## A Rewarding Time

My time at MCDH as your Interim CEO has been rewarding to me and, I hope, to the Hospital. The emphasis has been to seek clear focus and direction in making the Hospital's primary and secondary health care product the best it can be. The emphasis has also been on the people – inside the Hospital and in the community.



Jon Baker, Interim CEO

Over the past six months we have achieved more expedient and guest-friendly services in registration and the laboratory. The financial services are fine-tuned for more accuracy and timely flow of billings and receivables. The interior of the facility is being uplifted with new community contributed artwork and planned guest room improvements. Outside, the grounds are being enhanced by community donations of new plantings and a wonderful Healing Garden for people to collect their thoughts.

All these things, and more, are happening because of the desire and efforts of the Hospital's staff, physicians, Board, and volunteers. They make it all work, and will continue to do so. MCDH is a better place today; an asset of passionately committed people providing quality health care to the Mendocino Coast. The Hospital needs your support – don't go any place else for your health care unless MCDH doesn't provide what you need.

The new CEO, Ray Hino, will be on board by mid-November. New leadership brings fresh ideas – a good thing for any organization. This Hospital is a fantastic service organization. Let MCDH help you maintain your health and quality of life. The Coast and MCDH have added much to my life.

Jon W. Baker, MCDH Interim CEO

# De-Stressing Your Immune System

by Reverend Tanya Wyldflower

What are the main sources of stress in your life? The approaching holidays? Work? “Too much to do” all the time? Health concerns? No matter the source, stress can take a toll on your health and immune system.



When stress becomes prolonged or particularly frustrating, it can become harmful distress or “bad stress.” Everyone’s response to stress is unique and personal. Distress can affect the body in direct and indirect ways, from ulcers to headaches to decreasing ability to deal with chronic pain. The important issue is to learn how your body responds to stressful events.

Properly handled, stress can be turned around to motivate, invigorate, instigate and educate!

Stress-related warning signals include: tense shoulders, rapid and shallow breathing, faster heart beat, elevated blood pressure and increased adrenalin. Programmed for action, our bodies react to any crisis or perceived crisis by gearing up in this manner.

A steady diet of this “emergency response” can lead to some of these effects staying “turned on” chronically. This in turn lowers the ability of your immune system to fight off illness.

What can you do about this? First, know your stressors – what bothers you the most may not bother others. Crime shows on television might be relaxing for your partner and tension inducing for you.

Second, know how your body responds to stress – where do you most often feel tension or pain? For some this can be headaches, backaches, shoulder tension, stomach aches or clenched jaws, depending on the most vulnerable aspect of your body or personality.

Third, evaluate your coping strategies to lower stress and determine how effective they are. Negative strategies give short-term relief while creating more long-term stress, i.e., overeating, increased drinking, outbursts of anger. Positive stress reduction techniques can

include sports, exercising, taking a hot bath or drinking herbal relaxing teas.

## How to Cope with Stress

- Work off stress with physical activities: athletics, gardening, walking, or dancing.
- Learn basic relaxation techniques, such as breathing freely and deeply, meditation, positive visualization, and stretching. You might focus on relaxing the areas of your body that “collect” tension.
- Get enough sleep and rest, and be sure to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.
- Talk out your worries with someone you trust and respect; ask for support and get a hug.
- Learn to accept what you cannot change, and know when problems are beyond your control.
- Balance work and recreation: learn to take breaks and connect with nature.
- Do something for others – get your mind off of yourself.
- Practice saying “NO” to too many demands.
- Do something you love everyday: give yourself to what brings you joy, see the humorous side and laugh awhile.

## Nature and Your Health

Research has shown many physical benefits of gardens and nature, whether viewing a landscape from the indoors or being outside experiencing the landscape:

- ♥ Decreases blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration.
- ♥ Decreases unhealthy stress response to “negative” stimuli.
- ♥ Improves blood flow and brain oxygenation, resulting in improvements in memory, critical thinking, and problem-solving ability.
- ♥ Increases body and muscle relaxation.
- ♥ Moves the brain into an “alpha” or awake meditative state, and enhances the sense of well-being and feeling “grounded.”
- ♥ Speeds healing.
- ♥ Improves physical, emotional and mental stamina.
- ♥ Enhances connection to nature.
- ♥ Stimulates other senses: *smell* (e.g., flowers, soil), *touch* (e.g., wind blowing and sun shining on skin), and *sight* (e.g., brilliant sunlight, colorful flowers).

## The Healing Garden • Continued from the Front Page •

We saw this as our opportunity to help the hospital with our unique resources. My wife Tracy and I had an excellent experience at the hospital in May when our son Dillon was born," joining big sister Hana, age 5. "Everyone wants to get behind a successful venture, and the hospital is on its way."

Other contributors to the Healing Garden project include David Yeomans, donating his backhoe and labor for site preparation; David Duncan, structural engineer, developing the plans for the retaining wall; Rossi's Building Materials, donating rolled gravel for the "floor" of the garden; and Dr. John Gist, collecting and contributing medicinal plants. Several individual donors have contributed additional funding, and all are doing the Healing Garden's



Our hope is that the Healing Garden will be both physically and mentally conducive to restoring strength, providing inspiration and comfort to patients and the family and staff who assist them. With the Healing Garden, we are striving for a holistic approach to patient care, addressing emotional

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### MCDH Welcomes New CEO

Please welcome **Ray Hino**, MPA, CHE, as the hospital's new CEO. Mr. Hino will be joining us in mid-November 2006.

### Tell Us What You Think!

We'd like to know what you think of **Update**, the MCDH quarterly newsletter! Take our one-minute online survey by visiting [www.mcdh.org](http://www.mcdh.org), or call our Reader Response Line at 961-4758. Let us know what you think, and share your suggestions for future issues!

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