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GARDENS THAT HEAL



I have always looked at my personal garden as a space for healing. I strive to plant what brings me peace from the body, mind and spirit perspectives. Water features are calming, fragrance makes me smile, and texture stimulates my senses. I love to see birds and insects visit and enjoy the space and perhaps find refuge. An overwhelming feeling of tranquility comes over me when I sit in my space and take it all in. On my bucket list is to take coursework through the Chicago Botanic Garden: *The Gardens that Heal: A Prescription for Wellness seminar and Healthcare Garden Design Certificate program*. I came across these programs about 8 years ago through my holistic nursing organization and have it on my radar for a future trip to Chicago!

If you take a look at their [website](https://www.chicagobotanic.org/education/certificate_programs/healthcare), https://www.chicagobotanic.org/education/certificate_programs/healthcare you will see a unique opportunity to learn, engage, nurture, and promote health. They offer an 8-day program led by national experts in multidisciplinary fields. The coursework includes case studies, group projects, field trips, and lectures. Following are outcomes and more information on who might want to enroll:

Learn evidence-based garden design that:

- Promotes the health and well-being of patients and visitors
- Incorporates tailored design components for specific patient populations
- Contributes to the reduction of staff stress and absenteeism
- Is applicable to other restorative landscapes

Why should you enroll?

- This comprehensive program is the only one of its kind in the country.
- When you complete the program, you'll achieve 40 professional development credits. The setting is like no other—385 acres of gardens and natural areas, an on-site laboratory.

I was not surprised to learn of the existing healing gardens in and around Easton, and some plans for future spaces. I also came across many others in my research for this article, including the Upper Chesapeake Cancer Center in Bel Air, Maryland. (<https://www.mahanrykiel.com/portfolio/upper-chesapeake-cancer-center/>)



They have one of my favorite features: a labyrinth that offers visitors, staff and patients a place for reflection.



I hope to enroll in the programs in Chicago in the next few years, once COVID is not an issue and my time allows. In the meantime I find joy and peace in visiting these healing spaces for my own self-care and will continue to create healing spaces in my own garden.