

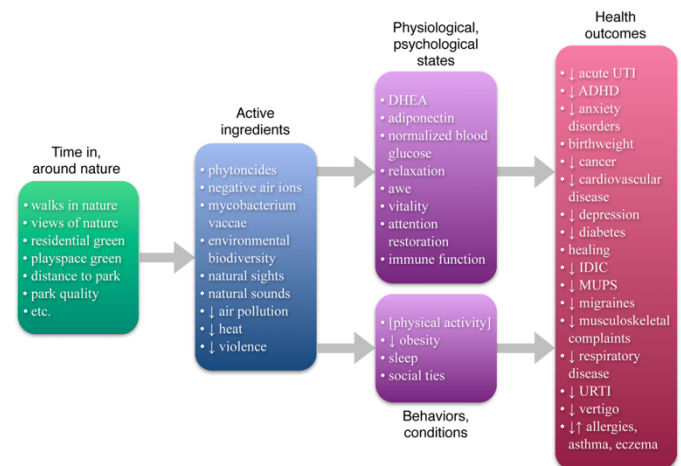
# Brainstorming Session Regarding the Intersection of Horticulture and Health/Wellness

Thursday, October 5, 8:00 – Noon (lunch provided), Hildebrand Equine Center

## The Why

Prior to the global COVID pandemic, the use of plants in landscapes and biophilic architectural designs was bolstered by the growth in the green infrastructure market and the ecosystems services provided. The COVID pandemic saw usage of plants and landscape services increase as sheltering-in-place strategies were utilized to combat the disease and people spent more time at home. Many people became aware of the physiological and psychological health and well-being benefits that are provided by time spent engaging in gardening, landscaping, and being out in nature in general. In a post-pandemic world, in the wake of isolation strategies, mental health has become an increasingly important societal issue and horticulture-based options are being considered because of their positive health outcomes at the individual and community level (Figure 1).

Several entities across Texas A&M and affiliated Agencies have already been investigating the relationship between green spaces and mental and physical health/well-being, whether those interactions take place in nature, improved residential, community, and municipal landscapes through green infrastructure, or buildings incorporating beneficial biophilic elements in their architectural design. However, all of these entities don't always know what each other is doing, so bringing them all together to share their research/outreach efforts and to brainstorm regarding potentially-synergistic collaborations should prove useful.



**FIGURE 1 | The nature-health link: filling in the details.** This Figure summarizes the state of the scientific literature on nature and health, listing (1) the "active ingredients" in nature that have been identified as having impacts on health or health antecedents; (2) physiological/psychological states, behaviors, and conditions tied to both nature and health; and (3) specific health outcomes that have been tied to nature (controlling for socioeconomic variables). Note that

physical activity (in brackets) is only sometimes tied to nature; and that allergies, asthma, and eczema are sometimes positively and sometimes negatively tied to nature. DHEA: dehydroepiandrosterone; acute UTI: acute urinary tract infection; ADHD: attention deficit hyperactivity disorder; IDIC: infectious disease of the intestinal canal; MUPS: medically unexplained physical symptoms; URTI: upper respiratory tract infection.

## The What

Representatives from all across the Texas A&M System working in this subject matter area have been invited to a half-day brainstorming session to achieve the following:

1. Each entity will share a short summary of their mission and direction, as well as major research, outreach projects, or other banner programs.
2. The group will ideate regarding potential collaborations among the entities to mitigate redundancies and/or capture synergies.
3. Unique or novel ways will be identified to enhance knowledge transfer and/or educate clientele as to the benefits of plants and greenscapes in improving mental and physical health.

## The Outcome

Notes from the meeting will be compiled and shared with individuals that were not able to attend, industry partners, and administrative contacts. Action plans will be developed so that specific outcomes emanate from the brainstorming session, ensuring that creative insights will not be lost or left unexplored.