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Author: Renate Cervinka Markus Schwab Regina Schönbauer
Isabella Hämmerle Laura Pirgie Jennifer Sudkamp



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My garden – my mate? Perceived restorativeness of private gardens and its predictors

Renate Cervinka^{a,b*} renate.cervinka@meduniwien.ac.at, Markus Schwab^{a,b}, Regina Schönbauer^a, Isabella Hämmerle^a, Laura Pirgie^a, Jennifer Sudkamp^a

^a Institute for Environmental Health, Medical University of Vienna, Kinderspitalgasse 15, 1090 Vienna, Austria

^b University College for Agrarian and Environmental Pedagogy, Angermayergasse 1, 1130 Vienna, Austria

*Corresponding author: Tel.: +43 1 40160 34923,

Abstract

There is a large body of knowledge on the restorative potential of public green space, but studies on private gardens are rare. This study was aimed at exploring perceived restorativeness of private gardens and its predictors. In an online survey, 856 respondents rated the perceived restorativeness of private gardens, attached outdoor green spaces and living rooms with green elements. Characteristics of the garden, sociodemographic data, personal characteristics, and the relationship between user and garden were surveyed. Results indicated that the private garden scored highest on perceived restorativeness. A multiple regression analysis explained 52.2 % of the variance of the perceived restorativeness of private gardens. The garden-user relationship qualified as the strongest predictor of the restorative potential. We suggest considering the significance of affective bonds in designing restorative private gardens.

Keywords

Allotment, Connectedness, Green space, Perceived Restorativeness Scale, Restorative environment, Well-being

Introduction

A growing body of research highlights the restorative potential of green spaces (Bowler et al., 2010; Haluza et al., 2014; Hartig et al., 2014). Beneficial effects on stress reduction were found for forests (Lee et al., 2011, 2009; Meyer and Buerger-Arndt, 2014; Park et al., 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007; Sonntag-Öström et al., 2014; Tsunetsugu et al., 2007; Tyrväinen et al., 2014; Yamaguchi et al., 2006), protected areas like wildlife reserves and national parks (Hartig et al., 2003), urban parks (Ortega-Smith et al., 2004; Peschardt and Stigsdottir, 2013), and green areas adjacent to water (e.g., Purcell et al., 2001; White et al., 2010). Private gardens were mentioned as an important leisure space by their owners in the UK (Bhatti and Church, 2004), New Zealand (Freeman et al., 2012) and the US (Clayton, 2007). Further, having access to a garden had a positive impact on the sensitivity to stress (Stigsdottir and Grahn, 2003). The restorative potential of private gardens however, has not received sufficient attention in prior research. The current study is aimed at investigating the restorative potential of private gardens and predictors of the restorative potential.

Prior research on private gardens highlighted numerous beneficial effects of the garden itself and activities performed in the garden. In their research, Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) stressed the importance of all kinds of gardens for the overall quality of life and well-being. Allotment gardeners reported higher well-being and better general health than people who lived in the same area, but did not own an allotment garden (van den Berg et al., 2010). Spending time in the nursing home's garden improved the cognitive performance of residents (Ottosson and Grahn, 2005). In participants from the Netherlands half an hour of gardening in an allotment garden led to more complete stress reduction than half an hour of reading indoors (van den

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