

For the past two years, as part of my PhD research, I have interviewed adolescents who garden, some at a rural school and some in an urban community program. I used a variety of qualitative methods (word count, domain analysis, taxonomic analysis), to analyze their responses to my questions regarding their sensory and emotional responses to gardening, their changes in food choice, attention restoration experiences and environmental attitudes. Touched by the deep experiences they shared with me, I took their phrases and created poems from them. These poems are totally their words, but the ordering of their phrases is mine. I wrote them to capture the essence of the youth's experiences.

Illène Pevec, MA

PhD candidate at the University of Colorado at Denver

Children, Youth and Environments Center for Research and Design

Illene.Pevec@colorado.edu

Light and Life

Feeling really good
With nature
In the garden
Makes me see.
My senses come in as one,
I connect with my childhood
Memories.
I get into the mindset to work.
I'm helping myself.
I eat the energy in the food
I grow
Calm, joy
Relaxed.
Everything is about
Everything else.

George, 17, urban

Like a Sanctuary

Get up early,
Spend five hours outside
Feeling like doing things,
Feeling complete.

Doing something good,
Things I normally don't do
For someone else,
Feeling happy.

Plants all around me
Relax, heat, sweat
Progress, self therapy,
Focusing on the light source.

Earthy, dirty smells-

It's a refreshing scent.
I hated cherry tomatoes,
I love them now!

More fresh, more flavorful,
I can see what I have accomplished.
I'm harvesting! I'm weeding!
It's really therapeutic.

Rose, 16, urban

Connection

Connecting with touching, seeing, smelling
Through nature,
Calm, relaxed,
Creating something,

Watching it grow
Seeing its stages
Caring for a little community,
Affecting nature in a good way.

Being outside
Using the soil
Eat what I grow
Pleasure.

The power to plant
Energized responsibility
Self reflect
Having a relationship with nature.

Tom, 17, rural

Pleasure

Working with soil
Touching bugs and worms
Transplanting seedlings
Calm, tranquil, peaceful.

Little plants are like babies
Other people's plants are my relatives
I am more aware of live things
Nurturing, gentle.

Eating food right out of the garden
Liking raw vegetables more
I think more about live things
I like this new world of gardens and living things.

Sage, 19, foreign student at rural school

Aroma of the Basil

Feeling soil warmth and coolness
Smells great just like basil
Beautiful mountain backdrop
Gorgeous to be around the garden.

Smells can't be matched
Bright colors of flowers
Beautiful colors
Speckles of color, tones of green.

Working every sense
Snap of bean, smash of lettuce
Tasting carrots, bites of chard,
Flower petals.

Sense of beginning
Smell just really puts
me into gardening
Enjoy. Joy!

Pleasure towards my work
Worries taken away
Readiness,
Love for this work.

Basil, 14, urban

I've Never Had a Bad Time Gardening

That smell puts me
In the zone of calm,
Cool and collected.
Good childhood memories.

When I was a little girl,
In the garden with my mom,
There is this different scent
Like new life almost.

I seem more in tune
To everything that's
Around me,
The wind, the plants, the bugs.

I see pleasure
Watching things grow.
It's very relaxing,
Calming, you know.

Greens, orange or red

Like peppers puts
A lot of people
at ease, refreshed.

Playing in the dirt
Your blood is flowing
Feeling close to nature
Re-energized.

Artemesia, 18, rural