

Study finds psychological, environmental benefits of horticultural activities

January 18 2011

Taiwanese researchers Hui-Mei Chen, Hung-Ming Tu, and Chaang-Iuan Ho published a study in *HortScience* that explored an array of attitudes toward horticultural activities. The results showed that people engage in gardening and related activities for both psychological and environmental reasons.

The researchers used qualitative and quantitative methods to explore participants' attitudes toward horticultural activities. In the first study, seven themes and several subthemes of attitudes were induced from open-ended interviews with participants. Based on interview results, a questionnaire was designed and a quantitative survey was conducted to identify the dimensions of attitudes toward horticultural activities.

The researchers extracted five critical "dimensions of attitudes" toward horticultural activities: increasing positive mood, improving the environment, leisure belief, improving [social relationships](#), and an attitude the researchers label 'escaping'. Respondents rated the dimension of 'increasing positive mood' highest, indicating an emphasis on psychological benefits such as feeling glad, pleased, optimistic, relaxed, tranquil, and comfortable as the essence of their attitudes toward horticultural activities.

The researchers also found that that engaging in horticultural activities can provide people opportunities to forget worries, transfer attention, or experience another way of life, or 'escape'. That the respondents rated the dimension of 'escaping' so high emphasizes the importance of the

restorative benefits of contact with nature, observed the scientists.

Participants also rated 'improving the environment' as a critical dimension of their attitudes toward horticultural activities. This is a notable change from the well-known Leisure Attitude Scale (LAS), a 1982 model widely used by researchers in the leisure field; the LAS does not include 'improving the environment'.

"To further promote horticultural activity as a form of leisure, it is crucial to first ascertain participants' attitudes about it. Our research shows that horticultural activities are beneficial not only for individuals, but also for the environment", the researchers wrote.

More information: The complete study and abstract are available on the ASHS HortScience electronic journal web site:

[hortsci.ashspublications.org/c ... t/abstract/45/7/1120](http://hortsci.ashspublications.org/content/45/7/1120)

Provided by American Society for Horticultural Science

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