

Project DIG (Disability Inclusive Gardening)

Growing community connection and social belonging through inclusive accessible gardening



A partnership between the Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities (RIIC) and The Arc of Western Montana

- RIIC is part of the University of Montana whose mission is to build access and opportunity for people with disabilities through education, research, evaluation, and service.
- The Arc of Western Montana is a local disability service organization that works directly with people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, providing enriching support and opportunities for them to be active members of their community.

Funded Project Summary

DIG is a unique community-based therapeutic horticulture pilot project aimed to promote quality of life and meaningful social participation of people living with disabilities.

Therapeutic horticulture programs support general physical and mental health and add social and societal benefits, particularly when people experience limited opportunity to engage in meaningful community-based activities.

We envision creating a therapeutic community-based garden that is both open to the public and designed to facilitate specific therapeutic horticulture programming. The long-term vision is for this programming to grow and expand to other spaces and to reach more members of the community. The outcomes and community support developed in the pilot will serve as a foundation for sustained program development and expansion.

Activities and Objectives:

- Create an accessible therapeutic garden space at The Arc of Western Montana.
- Provide therapeutic horticulture education and training to The Arc of Western Montana staff and clients through facilitated and intentional garden activities.
- Gather outcomes on the diverse impacts therapeutic horticulture can have in a community, including on participants' personal goals and sense of belonging.

Intended Outcomes:

- Education and awareness of therapeutic horticulture programming.
- Participant progress toward quality of life and community engagement goals.
- A proof of concept for future therapeutic horticulture program development and capacity building.
- Bridged community connection for continued interdisciplinary collaboration.

Funded by: The Rural Institute for Inclusive Communities (RIIC)

Partnering with: The Arc of Western Montana

Project Duration: April 2023–October 2023

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Get more information or learn how to get involved

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Visit <https://www.ahta.org/about-horticultural-therapy> for more information on therapeutic horticulture

Rural Institute

