

The Healing Garden at the Cathedral of Our Lady Immaculate and St Thomas, Northampton



Our 'Healing Garden' is a place of sanctuary for everyone and was created to provide an accessible place for peoples' healing. <https://northamptondiocese.org/healing-garden/>

Our hopes

- To provide a relaxing and peaceful environment where people can sit and contemplate.
- To create a space where people can be helped to let go of their trauma and to finding a pathway to inner peace.
- The garden will be a place to experience quietness, be refreshed by the cool shade of green leaves and be uplifted by the scents and vivid colours of flower petals. If you pause to listen you will hear birds calling to you, insects buzzing round you and leaves rustling in the breeze.

The garden was designed with input from survivors, through individual conversations, combined with the contribution of members of our own Healing and Reconciliation group. We are very grateful for the work of so many people in bringing this garden to fruition. We would like to thank, in particular, the partnership that was formed with the Northampton Hope Centre charity.

Like all gardens this place is not complete. It is a work in progress and never finished, which mirrors our commitment to listen and respond compassionately to those who have been hurt. May our work to accompany and minister to all those who have been abused in any way be strengthened by the love which comes from God who is the source of all love.

This garden also provides a resting place for the ashes of people who have died and gone before us, some of whom, like Mary, have suffered abuse in their lives. Mary regularly spent much time here; it was a refuge for her. She loved the spring flowers, the trees, the birds and the peace. Mary's story is symbolic of this Healing Garden and is important to share, for so many who suffered in a similar way. *Rest in Peace, Mary.*

Prepared by the Safeguarding Office of the Diocese of Northampton for *Isaiah Journey* Working Group of the Bishops' Conference © 2023 Catholic Bishops' Conference of England & Wales.
www.cbcew.org.uk/prayer-for-survivors-of-abuse

The Isaiah Journey
seeking truth | bringing hope | finding healing

Creating a Healing Garden

If you would like to create something similar in your own diocese, parish or setting, the following may be of use to you.

Location

- Consider suitable places that would allow people to access the garden as well as enabling access to those who may have mobility needs.
- Decide upon the size of your healing garden which could be large or created on a much smaller scale.
- Make use of existing space and what's already in the area, try and incorporate the old with the new.

Collaboration and design

- Create a working group to oversee the creation and ongoing development of the garden.
- Teamwork most definitely helps and serves to bring together ideas and the ability for people to take a lead in various aspects of the design and delivery.
- Ensure multiple voices and ideas are included, most specifically survivors or those with lived experience of abuse or harm. This may take the form of survivors being directly part of the team or being consulted individually.
- Ensure consultation with stakeholders and identify key decision makers.
- Decide upon your vision for the garden and be open to review. Think big and potentially create the garden in phases. Research other types of healing gardens for ideas.
- Look to include sensory elements within your garden design such as sound, sight and touch. Water is considered to be very beneficial and life affirming.
- Maximise the appeal and use of the garden, promoting healing to all who are or have suffered from harm or loss in their lives.
- Consider creating a focal point in your garden, perhaps a shrine, a tree or water feature, or another way to bring people together.
- Ensure that the garden provides interest through the year and has spaces and places for people to sit and enjoy their surroundings. Keep in mind the need for people to access quiet areas where they may wish to be alone although with safety issues in mind.
- Consider if there may be ways to access funding for the creation of the garden or it's ongoing maintenance.
- Decide whether the garden can be created through the efforts of volunteers or whether more experienced input is required and gain quotes for the work if this is the case.
- Present proposal for the creation of your garden outlining the vision, what you are trying to achieve, who will benefit and how the development of the garden will be overseen.

Promotion

- Tell people about your garden, both within your community and beyond to encourage community engagement.
- Consider planning an open day and invite people to experience the garden for themselves. This could include a blessing of the garden and an opportunity for a social gathering. Remember to include survivors or those with lived experience within your plans for the day.
- Try to develop partnerships with local charities or agencies who would benefit from knowing about your garden to promote further through their networks.
- Make use of your garden when future events at your setting are arranged and consider various ways that the garden could provide benefit to others.