



The Role of Horticulture at Nova Institution for Women

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Outline

- Overview of Nova and the Horticulture Skills Training Program
- Tour of the gardens
- Program benefits
- Community connections
- Successful graduates
- Therapeutic horticulture
- Future opportunities



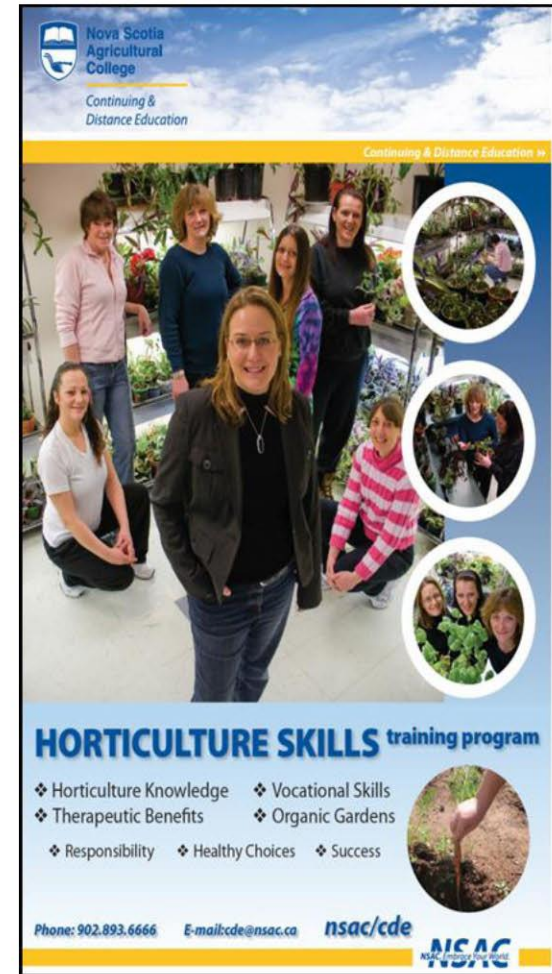
Nova Institution for Women (Nova)



- Opened fall 1995
- Multi-level Institution
- Capacity of 99 inmates
- Goals of Nova: empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices, respect and dignity, supportive environment, and shared responsibility

Horticulture Skills Training Program

- Therapeutic Horticulture Program initially developed in 1995, by Extended Learning at Dalhousie University, Faculty of Agriculture
- Overall goal is to teach technical and vocational skills to transition to employment post-release
- Secondary goals are to promote and enhance life skills, including self-confidence, healthy habits and healthy eating



Nova Scotia Agricultural College
Continuing & Distance Education

Continuing & Distance Education

HORTICULTURE SKILLS training program

- ❖ Horticulture Knowledge
- ❖ Vocational Skills
- ❖ Therapeutic Benefits
- ❖ Organic Gardens
- ❖ Responsibility
- ❖ Healthy Choices
- ❖ Success

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NSAC

Nova Institution for Women (Nova)

- 8 Courses:
 - Organic Vegetable Grower
 - Garden Fundamentals
 - Landscape Maintenance Worker
 - Landscape Installation Techniques
 - Plant Propagation
 - Garden Centre Worker
 - Horticultural Business Exploration
 - Horticultural Business Operation



Nova Gardens – The “Loop”



Vegetable Gardens

- Community Garden – The women learn to grow multiple crops and share the produce
- Supply Garden – We grow a few main crops and share with the entire institution



The Greenhouse

- Completed in 2011 – the greenhouse strongly positions the program for teaching professional vocational skills year-round
- The women grow all of their own fruit and vegetable transplants including extra to sell to staff and give away to community groups
- House plants are maintained year-round
- Mist bed, black out curtain, fertigation and drip irrigation



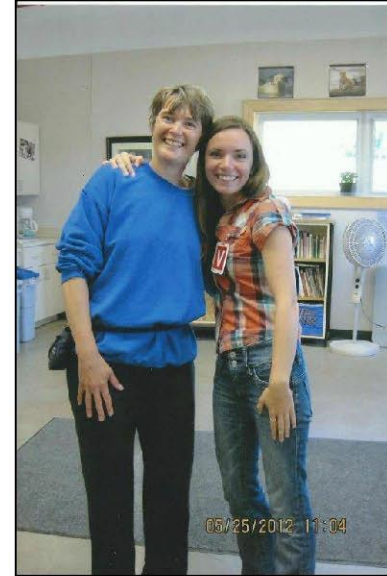
Program Benefits

- Therapeutic/social benefits from working with plants, instructors & others in a group setting
- Program is designed for input from the women, allowing for improved cognitive processes, shared responsibility and decision-making
- Dalhousie Certificates of Achievement
- Communication, interpersonal and teamwork skills
- Self-esteem, self-confidence and problem-solving skills



Community Connections

- Featured in Canadian Gardening and Quatre-Temps, Botanical Garden of Montreal
- Hundreds of books donated from across the country
- Prominent community guest speakers
- Escorted tours to Dalhousie and community gardens
- Work releases
- Donated plants to community gardens, food to food bank and monetary donation to community fundraiser



Successful Graduates

- Participant was successful in obtaining funding and building a community garden at a half-way house in Cape Breton.
- Women have been successful at gaining employment, landscaping, greenhouses and retail centres.
- Major limitation of program: There is no mechanism in place to track women post-release. I only know if they contact me directly or I hear from others who have kept in contact.

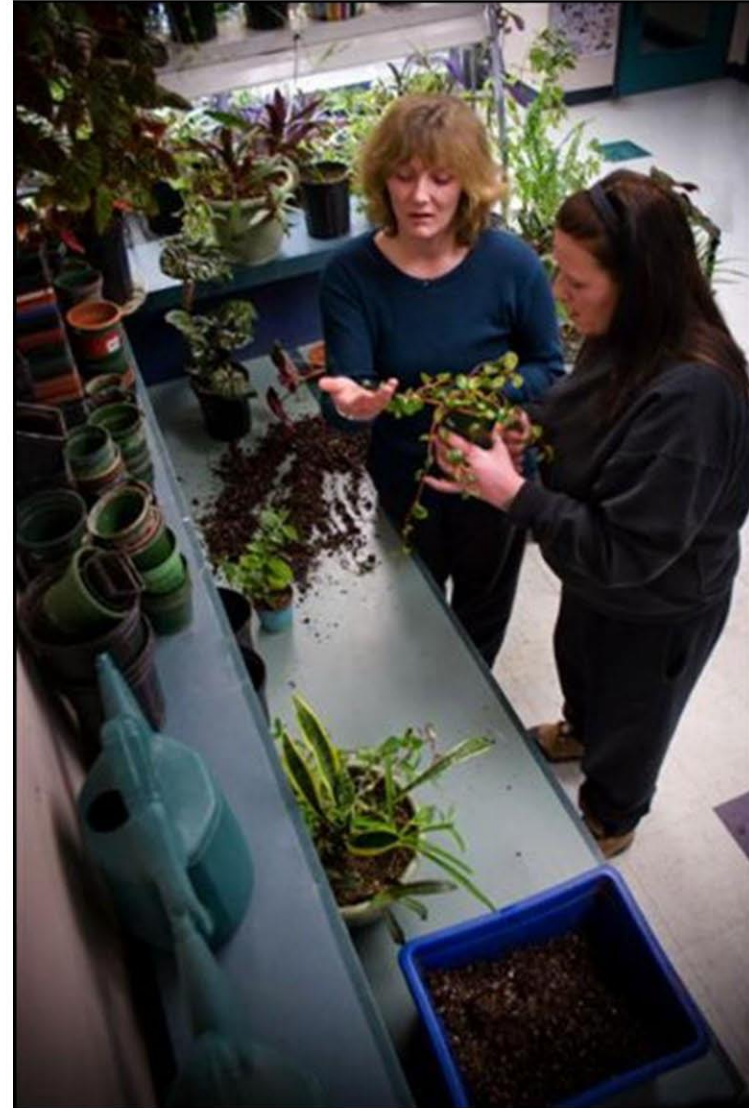


Therapeutic Horticulture

- 2014 – Built an accessible vegetable garden
- Intake assessments, informal interventions, formal reporting

“...there is so much potential for our horticulture program, & not only for the female offender participants employment wise – enjoyment / therapeutic value & educational enhancement but for the community as well.”

-Horticulture Skills Training Program
Participant



A word from the Participants

“Exciting, refreshing, overall it made me feel confidence in achieving something in my life, and learning all that I have, and knowing that what I have learned I can make a career out of it, and teach what I have learned to my children.”

– Program Participant 2011-12

“I felt a sense of achievement and have an awareness that I am a capable person (woman) and have the skills to become anything or anyone that I put my mind to”.

-Program Participant 2009-10

“This is a well-organized program, well instructed with a certificate from a highly recognized University”.

-Program Participant 2012-13

A story from Michelle...

– Program Participant 2013

Future Opportunities



- More community partners (giveaways of plants)
- Post-release employment and volunteer opportunities
- Work releases
- More formalized TH interventions
- Research

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Photo credits:
Lana Bos and
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