

# New Leaf Project

In what ways can horticultural activities be used in high schools to impact the anxiety and depression levels of teenagers?



## Problem statement and data

As reported by Statistics Canada in 2019:

**5%** Canadians 12 to 17 years old struggled with anxiety

**1.5%** Canadians 12 to 17 years old struggled with depression

As required by the Ontario Ministry of Education, kids spend during the year in school approximately:

 **1164 hours** or  **194 days**

As a result, the school environment has a crucial role in development.

## How do Ontario Districts handle it?

The **Ministry of Education** encourage and promotes positive mental health and well-being. However, the implementation of mental health strategies, services and resources is determined individually by each school district. School districts gear mental health strategies and resources toward parents rather than students.

In addition, Ontario school districts **lack standardized environmental education courses**. A few schools do have programs with horticultural activities. However, schools generally do not have horticultural activities within the context of mental health.

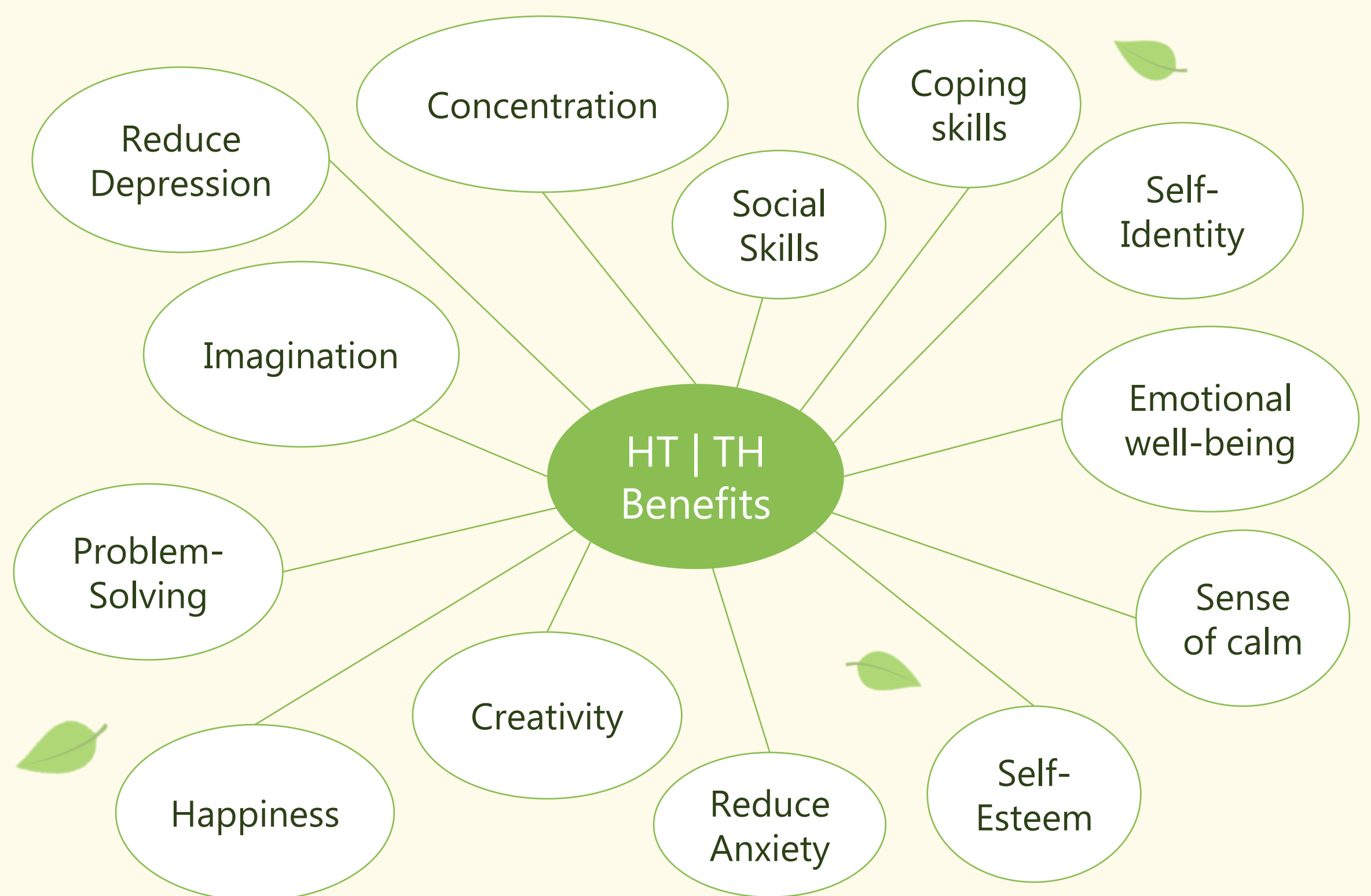
## Definitions of Horticulture

**Horticultural Therapy (HT):** facilitated by mental health professionals and is goal-oriented.

**Therapeutic Horticulture (TH):** horticulture activities carried out with the intention to improve well-being but does not need to be led by distinct therapeutic goals or mental health professionals.

**Horticultural Activities:** plant life related activities that do not have an objective to improve mental health. However, horticultural activities can indirectly improve mental health.

## What are the benefits of Horticulture?



## The New Leaf project

The New Leaf Pilot program will incorporate horticulture and mental health related activities within secondary schools for the 10-month school year. The program will be led by school staff and mental health professionals, who will be given pre-program training.

Along with gaining horticultural knowledge, the New Leaf program aims to teach students coping skills, reduce stress and increase moods. It will include a wide variety of workshops and activities concerning different topics. The program will be flexible and revisable, allowing each participating school to tailor the pilot program to their needs and limitations.

## A proposed timeline



Canadian Horticultural Therapy Association. (2022, August 25). *Horticultural Therapy Core Skills & Knowledge*. Canadian Horticultural Therapy Association. [https://www.chta.ca/uploads/2022/08/2022-08-25-111ea-85af-8bbeb7ea2c93/Horticultural%20Therapy%20Core%20Skills%20and%20Knowledge\\_ODAwNz.pdf](https://www.chta.ca/uploads/2022/08/2022-08-25-111ea-85af-8bbeb7ea2c93/Horticultural%20Therapy%20Core%20Skills%20and%20Knowledge_ODAwNz.pdf)  
 Marsh, P., Brennan, S., & Vandenbergh, M. (2018). "It's not therapy, it's gardening": community gardens as sites of comprehensive primary healthcare. *Australian Journal of Primary Health*, 24(4), 337-341. <https://doi.org/10.1071/PY17149>  
 Ministry of Education. (2009). *Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow*. Government of Ontario. <https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teachers/emi/roed/ShapeTomorrow.pdf>  
 Statistics Canada. (2020). Table 13-10-0765-01: Functional difficulties for children aged 5 to 17 years, Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth 2019. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tb1/en/cv/action?pid=1310076501>  
 Tu, H. (2022). Effect of horticultural therapy on mental health: A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials. *Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 29(4), 603-615. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jpm.12818>