

Creating the sensory gardens and paths as outdoor sites for people with visual impairments

Presentation abstract

Gardens are a sensory and stimulating environment for recreation, education and therapy outdoors (Spring, 2016). These properties are used in a special way in sensory gardens, which, historically, have evolved gradually from the traditional concept of a 'garden for the blind' to sensory landscapes. This evolution contributes to the creation of outdoor sites promoting the social inclusion through universal design, focused on the multi-sensory landscape. Sensory garden is a self-contained area, which focuses on a variety of sensory experiences. Such an area, if designed, maintained and managed well, offers a positive resource that caters for a variety of uses, from education to recreation. Taking into account the sensory element (hard and soft landscaping, colours, textures) as the key factor in designing these gardens, its role is to encourage the users to touch, smell and actively experience the garden with all their senses (Husseini, Abidin, Omar, 2013).

The aim of the study is to present the ways of creating universal gardens and sensory paths as outdoor sites attractive also for visually impaired, in various types of the environment, both in urban and rural areas, as well as in areas of natural value. The results of the conducted analyses form the basis for the formulation of recommendations in the field of good practices of universal garden design, which can provide sensory experience to everyone, including people with visual disorder. The research area includes selected sensory gardens in Poland (including in Bolestraszyce, Bucharzewo, and Poddębice) and the sensory path (in Chorzów). The work uses archival materials regarding the functioning of gardens as well as data collected during the inventory of the area (06-07.2017 and 06.07.2018).

Based on the analyses carried out so far, the universality of the recommended principles of designing gardens and sensory paths has been confirmed (Dąbski, Dutkiewicz, 2010, Zajadacz et al., 2015). They mainly concern the use of natural stimuli of the natural environment, stimulating the senses of hearing, smell and touch.

(1) Outdoor sites need to be safe - the road communication system must be clear and convenient. The path alleys, in addition to their communication function, will also be signposts directing to the given part of the garden, their surface and width should be varied. All paths must have elevated curbs, which will prevent the visitors from leaving the path. Road intersections and corners of quarters should be rounded, accentuated by changing the surface. Also the texture and colour of the walls or fences can be varied in different parts of the garden.

(2) The composition of the garden should take into account the key places that can be located through the sound experience. For the sense of hearing, the noise of flowing water is particularly attractive. Elements of garden equipment, such as benches and lanterns, should be placed outside the alley and be of colours that contrast with the surroundings.

(3) The plants present in the garden: fruit trees and shrubs should have large, easy to find and pick fruits. It is unacceptable to plant thorny, poisonous, coniferous plants with hard needles. Plants are placed on rebates raised 50-90 cm above ground level. They should have strong and diverse scents of flowers or leaves, being grouped so that their fragrances do not mix. The fragrant garden needs protection from the wind, which may be a hedge, a wall or a building wall.

The observed development of the sensory gardens (most of the objects presented in the article have been created within the last ten years) results from the great interest of this type of outdoor sites, conducive to recreation, education, integration and social inclusion. Gardens and sensory paths,

however, should not be 'lonely islands'. Solutions developed in them should 'penetrate' and inspire to create universal gardens, accessible 'for all'.

Dąbski M., Dutkiewicz M. (2010). Przystosowanie ogrodu dla niewidomego użytkownika na przykładzie ogrodów sensorycznych w Bolestraszczykach, Bucharzewie i Powsinie. Teka Kom. Arch. Urb. Stud. Krajobr. – OL PAN, 2010, 7-17.

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Scandinavia: data from 14 sites. *Neurodegenerative Disease Management* Vol. 6, No. 2 Short Communication. Published Online:1 Apr. 2016, <https://doi.org/10.2217/nmt.16.2>

Zajadacz A., Kołodziejczyk K., Stasiak A., Śledzińska J., Włodarczyk B., Wysocki M., 2015, Dostępność szlaków turystycznych dla osób niepełnosprawnych [w:] Szlaki turystyczne od pomysłu do realizacji, Stasiak A., Śledzińska J., Włodarczyk B., (red.) wyd. PTTK Kraj, Warszawa: 413- 449.

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Biography : Prof. Alina Zajadacz is a lecturer at the Department of Tourism and Recreation, Faculty of Geographical and Geological Sciences, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan/Poland. Her research interests focus on tourist potential of towns and cities as well as on accessible tourism. She is the author of more than 100 scientific publications, including books: Leisure pursuits, tourism and recreation of deaf people in Poland: an outline (2010), Tourism of deaf people: a geographical perspective (2012). She has participated in projects related to accessible tourism: Tourism for all (2008), and Tourism of deaf people and opportunities for its activation through the use of a multimedia system of tourist information (2008-2010).

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