



## **The WENDY Practice Framework for Therapeutic Horticulture**

*A Professional Guideline for Safe, Ethical, Inclusive and Purposeful Practice*

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### **Overview**

The **WENDY Framework** offers a structured, holistic approach to therapeutic horticulture. Each letter of WENDY forms a **Pillar of Practice**, supported by detailed **Domains** and clear examples for real-world implementation.

This expanded version includes a formal case note structure, trauma-informed practice, and strengthened self-care guidance.

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### **W — Welcome & Working Alliance**

*Building connection, trust, safety, and shared purpose*

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#### **Domain 1: Therapeutic Relationship**

##### **Key Practices:**

- Warm, attuned, trauma-sensitive engagement
- Strengths-based communication
- Consent and choice as core principles

##### **Examples in Practice:**

- Inviting participants to choose their activity or pace.
  - Checking in about energy levels, worries or sensory needs.
  - Validating emotions without judgement.
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#### **Domain 2: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**

**Key Practices:**

- Honour cultural identity and lived experience
- Be inclusive of all abilities and neurotypes
- Respectful curiosity and cultural humility

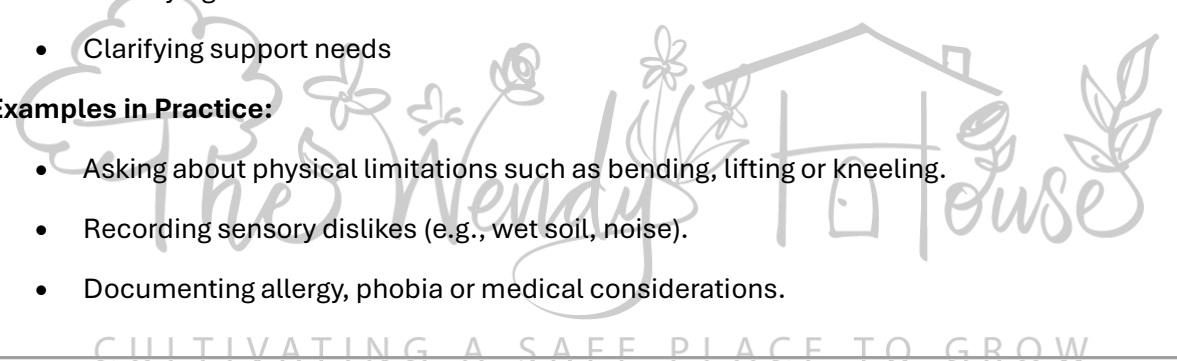
**Examples in Practice:**

- Incorporating culturally meaningful plants into programming.
  - Providing alternative instructions for participants who need simplified steps.
  - Adjusting expectations for social interaction differences.
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**Domain 3: Intake & Assessment****Key Practices:**

- Understanding goals, preferences and abilities
- Identifying risks and restrictions
- Clarifying support needs

**Examples in Practice:**

- Asking about physical limitations such as bending, lifting or kneeling.
  - Recording sensory dislikes (e.g., wet soil, noise).
  - Documenting allergy, phobia or medical considerations.
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**Domain 4: Trauma-Informed Practice****Key Practices:**

- Prioritise physical, emotional, and cultural safety
- Offer choice, predictability, and transparency
- Avoid triggers and overwhelming sensory environments
- Notice and respond to signs of distress

**Examples in Practice:**

- Letting participants know the plan for the session and giving them the option to change it.
- Offering a quiet, shaded space for participants who become overwhelmed.
- Allowing participants to step away from group activities without pressure.
- Avoiding invasive questions; offering grounding activities like slow watering.

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## E — Environment & Accessibility

*Designing gardens that nurture safety, comfort and meaningful participation*

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### **Domain 5: Therapeutic Garden Design & Layout**

#### **Key Practices:**

- Purposeful, sensory-aware design
- Spaces that welcome, reassure and inspire
- Flow that supports independence

#### **Examples in Practice:**

- Creating gentle sensory pathways with herbs and soft textures.
- Providing shaded platforms for wheelchair users to garden comfortably.
- Ensuring walkways are wide, non-slip and obstacle-free.

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### **Domain 6: Accessibility & Universal Design**

#### **Key Practices:**

- Adjusting the environment to suit diverse needs
- Visual cues, tactile markers and clear signage
- Adaptive tools

#### **Examples in Practice:**

- Using contrast-coloured edges on raised beds.
- Offering kneeling pads, long-handled tools and garden stools.
- Setting up simple visual instructions for multistep tasks.

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### **Domain 7: Risk Management & Safety**

#### **Key Practices:**

- Daily safety checks
- Identifying hazards and reducing risk
- Safe activity planning

#### **Examples in Practice:**

- Modifying sessions in extreme weather.
  - Safe tool talks: demonstrating before handing over.
  - Using insect-awareness strategies (checking pots, avoiding known nests).
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## **N — Nature-Based Activities & Interventions**

*Engaging plants, soil, water, and nature as therapeutic partners*

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### **Domain 8: Activity Selection & Adaptation**

#### **Key Practices:**

- Matching tasks to goals
- Adapting for ability, mood and sensory tolerance
- Ensuring success and empowerment

#### **Examples in Practice:**

- Using propagation for participants working on patience and nurturing.
  - Offering repetitive, rhythmic tasks for grounding and anxiety reduction.
  - Short, structured tasks for participants with ADHD or cognitive impairment.
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### **Domain 9: Horticultural Skills & Garden Maintenance**

#### **Key Practices:**

- Seasonally appropriate tasks
- Sustainable gardening
- Teaching practical plant care

#### **Examples in Practice:**

- Starting with easy wins—succulents, herbs, hardy natives.
  - Structuring maintenance days: water, weed, feed, harvest.
  - Demonstrating mulching and composting for soil health.
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### **Domain 10: Therapeutic Interventions**

#### **Key Practices:**

- Mindfulness and grounding in nature
- Sensory modulation through plants and soil

- Metaphor, symbolism and meaning making

#### **Examples in Practice:**

- “Letting go” activities, such as pruning or removing dead leaves.
  - Using a sensory basket (soil, leaves, herbs) for grounding work.
  - Planting a “future garden” to explore goals and hope.
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### **D — Documentation, Evaluation & Professionalism**

*Clear communication, ethical practice, and accountable care*

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## **Domain 11: Case Note Structure & Professional Case Noting**

*Updated as requested*

### **Why Case Notes Matter:**

Accurate, timely and professional case notes are essential in therapeutic horticulture. They:

- record interactions, decisions and concerns
- support continuity of care
- uphold ethical and legal responsibilities
- help teams understand a participant’s needs, strengths and risks
- demonstrate progress and therapeutic intent

### **Principles of Good Case Notes:**

- Factual and objective
- Concise and clear
- Written promptly after sessions
- Focused on observable behaviour, not assumptions
- Respectful and non-judgemental
- Consistent structure

### **Recommended Case Note Structure**

- 1. Date, Time & Session Type**
  - Individual, group, half-day, outreach, etc.
- 2. Participant Presentation**
  - Mood, affect, physical state, engagement.  
*E.g., “Arrived withdrawn, avoided eye contact, slow movements.”*
- 3. Activities Completed**

- Tasks undertaken, adaptations provided, supports used.  
*E.g., “Engaged in herb planting with minimal guidance. Choose lavender for its scent.”*

#### 4. Therapeutic Focus

- Goals, themes, or interventions used.  
*E.g., “Used grounding through touch (soil and leaves). Focus on building sensory tolerance.”*

#### 5. Participant Responses & Outcomes

- Behavioural changes, engagement levels, verbal statements, and new insights.  
*E.g., “Smiled when touching the soil. Reported feeling calmer.”*

#### 6. Risks, Concerns or Incidents

- Safety issues, emerging risks, changes in behaviour.  
*E.g., “Brief overwhelm due to noise from adjacent group; resolved after moving to quiet corner.”*

#### 7. Next Steps / Plan

- Future focus, follow-up, referrals if needed.

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### Domain 12: Evaluation & Outcomes

#### Key Practices:

- Measuring change
- Participant feedback
- Reviewing goals regularly

#### Examples in Practice:

- Recording physical, emotional, cognitive and social outcomes using your book’s headings.
- Using reflection cards or journals for participant self-assessment.
- Photographing progress in garden beds or plant ownership.

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### Domain 13: Professional Conduct

#### Key Practices:

- Ethical boundaries
- Confidentiality
- Scope of practice
- Working within organisational policies

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**Examples in Practice:**

- Clear communication about what you can and cannot provide.
  - Seeking supervision for complex participant needs.
  - Protecting privacy in shared garden spaces.
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** Y — Your Role as a Therapeutic Horticulturist**

*Your presence is part of the intervention*

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**Domain 14: Self-Reflection, Self-Awareness & Growth****Key Practices:**

- Reflective journaling
- Ongoing learning
- Recognising personal triggers and limitations

**Examples in Practice:**

- Writing a brief reflection after each session to process emotional impact.
  - Being aware of personal biases around behaviour, motivation or “effort.”
  - Adjusting your own expectations with compassion.
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**Domain 15: Facilitator Presence** CULTIVATING A SAFE PLACE TO GROW**Key Practices:**

- Calm, grounded and attuned facilitation
- Encouraging independence
- Holding safe emotional space

**Examples in Practice:**

- Modelling slow, mindful work with plants.
  - Allowing silence and gentle pacing.
  - Offering support without taking over.
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**Domain 16: Practitioner Self-Care****Why Self-Care Matters:**

Working therapeutically in nature is rewarding but emotionally and physically demanding. Self-care ensures sustainability, reduces burnout, and supports ethical practice.

**Key Practices:**

- Physical care: hydration, ergonomics, rest between sessions
- Emotional care: debriefing, peer support, supervision
- Nature-connected self-care: your own time in the garden
- Workload boundaries

**Examples in Practice:**

- Taking 5 minutes after a heavy session to walk barefoot on the lawn or sit quietly.
- Saying “no” to extra sessions when fatigued.
- Scheduling regular supervision or peer reflection.
- Having your own “therapist garden bed” purely for enjoyment.

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**Domain 17: Community, Advocacy & Education****Key Practices:**

- Promoting garden-based wellbeing
- Connecting participants with nature communities
- Contributing to public awareness

**Examples in Practice:**

- Hosting community seed swaps.
- Speaking at schools, libraries or community events.
- Encouraging participants to join Men’s Sheds, community gardens or conservation groups.

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 **Conclusion**

The updated **WENDY Practice Framework** offers a trauma-informed, inclusive, and professional approach to therapeutic horticulture, enabling practitioners to create gardens that promote emotional, social, physical, and spiritual growth.