



Lakehead
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Centre for
Education and Research
on Aging & Health

Dementia Gardens: A Place to Grow

Adult Day Program Description

Dementia Gardens: A Place to Grow is an *outdoor adult day program for people living with dementia and cognitive challenges* situated within a broader community garden initiative. Starting in summer 2026, this new program is completely outdoors and the first of its kind in Thunder Bay. This program is being offered by the Centre for Education and Research on Aging & Health (CERAH), Lakehead University.

The Dementia Gardens Adult Day Program will be offered one day a week in Thunder Bay. The 2026 location will be held at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay in preparation for our permanent location at the Centennial Botanical Conservatory, Thunder Bay.

Mission

Dementia Gardens: A Place to Grow Adult Day Program is an initiative designed to empower people with dementia to foster a sense of purpose and joy, provide opportunities for personal growth, connect with the rhythms and beauty of the natural world, and contribute to positive environmental and community change through the enlivening power of native plant gardens.

Program Values

- *Inclusion & Belonging:* We foster an environment where every individual is valued.
- *Right to Risk:* We prioritize safety while encouraging autonomy and engagement.
- *Continuous Growth:* We create opportunities for lifelong learning and personal development.
- *Meaningful Connection:* We nurture relationships between participants, staff, and the broader community.
- *Social & Environmental Citizenship:* We promote active participation in the community and a shared responsibility for our natural environment.

Program Outcomes

- *Empowering People Living with Dementia:* We believe that everyone, including people living with dementia, should have the opportunity to participate in outdoor and nature based activities that they once enjoyed. Utilizing purposeful, nature based, and gardening activities, we aim to develop an inclusive program that engages the senses, provides moments of joy, offers opportunities to enjoy and learn about nature, and provides a social environment to connect with others.



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- *Supporting Our Care Partners:* We aim to offer a meaningful and engaging adult day program so care partners can find the time to run errands, rest, and relax. By offering an extended day, care partners can have a full six hours for respite.

Participant Eligibility Criteria

Because this is an outdoor program, there are some specific eligibility requirements to ensure that the person is a good fit with the program. Staff from CERAH will conduct an assessment with the person and family/care partner to ensure a good fit related to diagnosis, physical abilities, and more.

If you require a more detailed description of our eligibility requirements, please contact us.

Staffing and Other Program Information

Dementia Gardens: A Place to Grow Adult Day Program operates at a ***low staffing ratio with one staff member to approximately 3 participants***. Staff will be trained in specific dementia approaches as well as First Aid and CPR. The program will also incorporate volunteers, many of whom are former care partners or volunteers with Dementia Cafe: A Place to Belong.

Tentative Schedule

Dementia Gardens: A Place to Grow will be offered on Fridays. The first program will be offered for 4 weeks in July. The second program will be offered for 8 weeks in August and September. With extended days, the program will open at 10 am and finish at 4 pm, with half an hour in the morning and afternoon for drop off and pick up.

- 9:30 am - 10 am → Drop Off.
- 10 am - 4 pm → Programming which will include gardening, walks, nature education, forest walks, and more
- 4 pm - 4:30 pm → Pick Up

Cost

There is a cost for the program. Please contact us for more information.

Interested in joining?

We are currently recruiting for our 2026 inaugural season!

For more information or to request a meeting about the program, please contact:

The Centre for Education and Research on Aging & Health at 807-343-8010 ext. 7271 or dementia.gardens@lakeheadu.ca