

## SCREENS VERSUS GREENS: GARDENS TO PREVENT INTERNET ADDICTION IN ADOLESCENTS

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In recent years, internet addiction (IA) has emerged as an intensifying global issue. Today, individuals spend more time interacting with digital media and less time engaging with nature than ever before; a phenomenon in which adolescents are the most vulnerable. Earlier access to digital media in childhood, the increased reliance on tech for recreation and leisure, and the integration of technology into schools, all significantly increase adolescents' 'screen time' while diminishing outdoor play. Although recent research demonstrates that this reality has destructive outcomes on human health, American institutions have expended minimal to no effort to encourage healthy technology consumption in adolescents. While collaborating with reSTART Life, I worked to establish a therapeutic gardening program as a rehabilitation technique for adolescents suffering with IA. My project with reSTART was a research study, exploring solution-based ideas on how to encourage sustainable tech behavior in adolescents *before* they became addicted. Through teaching an outdoor education curriculum and designing a garden space, I collected data to discover how the therapeutic gardening approach could be applied on a larger scale in institutions as an IA preventative measure. I also completed a literature review that delved into the cause and effect of IA, as well as the benefits of horticulture therapy and mindfulness. I discovered that gardening is an effective therapy for IA, and argue that gardening programs ought to be implemented into schools as an effective way to reduce adolescents' screen time, increase their interactions with nature, and prevent the incidence of internet addiction.