

A healing outdoor experience

The potential of outdoor environments to enhance psychological healing at Weskoppies psychiatric hospital

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Study leader: Ida Breed

Project address: Ketjen St. Pretoria West, Pretoria
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the potential of a designed physical outdoor environment to improve the social environment and thereby enhance the psychological healing process at Psychiatric institutions. Weskoppies Psychiatric Hospital situated in Pretoria West served as a model for testing the hypothesis.

The physical and social environment at Weskoppies was analyzed through observations, interviews and literature research. Findings from analysis and theoretical research regarding the influences that physical and social outdoor environments have on mental health, were synthesized to establish design guidelines. These informed the design decision making process and assisted in the proposal of an outdoor environment with emotional healing potential. An open space framework and catalytic sketch plan was designed to illustrate the application of the design guidelines.

The author found that an outdoor environment that encourage independence, purpose, consciousness, rest, connectedness and physical activities have the potential to enhance the psychological healing process. The open space framework and sketch plan proved that these guidelines can be accommodated on different scales.

*Hierdie werk word met dankbaarheid opgedra aan
my hemelse Vader en ondersteunende ouers
wat hierdie vir my moontlik gemaak het.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	1
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
LIST OF FIGURES.....	4

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. THE PROBLEM IN CONTEXT.....	12
1.2. INTRODUCTION TO SITE.....	13
1.3. PROJECT MOTIVATION.....	14
1.4. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION.....	14
1.5. CLIENT.....	16
1.6. RESEARCH PROCESS.....	16
1.7. LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS.....	17

Chapter 2: Theoretical research

2.1. INTRODUCTION.....	20
2.2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS.....	20
2.3. THE ROLE OF THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT.....	22
2.4. THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT.....	24
2.5. CONCLUSION.....	28

Chapter 3: Context analysis

3.1. LOCATION.....	32
3.2. STATUS QUO.....	33
3.3. HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF WESKOPPIES.....	33
3.4. CITY CONTEXT ANALYSIS.....	37
3.5. CAMPUS CONTEXT: PHYSICAL ANALYSIS.....	40
3.6. CONCLUSION.....	47

Chapter 4: Social analysis

4.1. INTRODUCTION.....	50
4.2. BUILT INFRASTRUCTURE.....	50
4.3. PATIENT CLASSIFICATION.....	52
4.4. ACTIVITIES.....	52
4.5. SOCIAL PROBLEMS.....	55
4.6. CONCLUSION.....	56

Chapter 5: Design guidelines

5.1. INTRODUCTION.....	60
5.2. INDEPENDENCE.....	60
5.3. PURPOSE.....	61
5.4. CONSCIOUSNESS.....	63
5.5. REST.....	66
5.6. CONNECTEDNESS.....	68
5.7. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY.....	69
5.8. CONCLUSION.....	69

Chapter 6: Precedent studies

6.1. THE BLACKTHORN MEDICAL CENTRE.....	72
6.2. MOROKA DAM PRECINCT.....	73

Chapter 7: Open space framework

7.1. INTRODUCTION.....	77
7.2. GUIDELINES FROM ANALYSIS.....	78
7.3. VEHICULAR MOVEMENT.....	79
7.4. PEDESTRIAN MOVEMENT.....	80
7.5. BOUNDARIES.....	82
7.6. ACTIVE & SOCIAL HEART.....	84
7.7. OUTDOOR ROOMS.....	86
7.8. WETLANDS.....	87
7.9. CUT FLOWER FARM (AGRICULTURAL).....	88
7.10. WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE.....	96
7.11. CONCLUSION (DESIGN MATRIX).....	98

Chapter 8: Sketch plan

8.1. INTRODUCTION.....	102
8.2. ANALYSIS.....	102
8.3. DESIGN PROPOSAL.....	104
8.4. SPACES AND EXPERIENCES.....	108
8.5. CONCLUSION (DESIGN MATRIX).....	120

Chapter 9: Technical resolution

9.1. MATERIALS.....	124
9.2. TECHNICAL DETAILS.....	130
9.3. STORM WATER MANAGEMENT.....	138

Bibliography.....	134
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: *Weskoppies administration building tower (Photograph manipulated by author 4 April 2009)*

Figure 1.2: *Faded sketch showing the proposed view over Weskoppies (drawn by Author 2009)*

Figure 1.3: *Guitar playing man at Weskoppies (manipulated Photograph by Author 25 May 2009)*

Figure 1.4: *Depressed man (drawing by Author 2009)*

Figure 1.5: *Context summary (map by Author 2009)*

Figure 1.6: *Design process diagram (Author 2009)*

Figure 2.1: *Vegetation at Weskoppies (Manipulated Photograph by Author 2009)*

Figure 2.2: *Areal photo of The Retreat, York, U.K 1960 (Sachs, 1999:238)*

Figure 2.3: *Collage of articles from various newspapers in South Africa from 1985-present, depicting the negative media concerning Weskoppies that results in the stigmatization of psychiatric hospitals (author 2009)*

Figure 2.4: *Collage of articles from various newspapers in South Africa from 1985-present, depicting the positive more factual media concerning Weskoppies and leading to a more accurate perception of the hospital. (author 2009)*

Figure 2.5: *Faded sketch of various ideas for creating a healing outdoor environment (author 2009)*

Figure 3.1. *Aerial photograph of study area, Tshwane base map provided by Department of Geography, University of Pretoria (manipulated by Author 2009)*

Figure 3.2. *South African provinces map (http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c6/South_Africa_Provinces_showing_nuclear_sites.PNG accessed on 18 October 2009)*

Figure 3.3. *Tshwane map indicating the position of Pretoria-West (<http://images.google.co.za/images?hl=en&source=hp&q=tshwane+map&btnG=Search+Images&gbv=2&aq=null&oq=> accessed on 18 October 2009, manipulated by author)*

Figure 3.4. *Study area & project area (author 2009).*

Figure 3.5. *The first photograph of the Administration block in 1892 (Breedt 2009).*

Figure 3.6: *View from the north east (South African Medical journal, 1992:221).*

Figure 3.7: *The Hospital environment in 1892 (Breedt 2009).*

Figure 3.8: *View from the north drawn by Hannes Meiring (Meiring1980:17).*

Figure 3.9: *Front view from the north west drawn by Hannes Meiring (Meiring1980:17).*

Figure 3.10: *Historical growth: a patchwork of more than hundred years additions (Author 2009).*

Figure 3.11: *City Context analysis (Author 2009).*

Figure 3.12: *Urban opportunities and challenges (Author 2009).*

Figure 3.13: *Topography with gradient allowing views to the city and the mountain and maximum sun exposure (Author 2009)*

Figure 3.14: *Table indicating the Geology & Soil on campus, info provided by Department of Geography, University of Pretoria, (manipulated by Author 2009)*

Figure 3.15: *Geography and soil map, info provided by Department of Geography, University of Pretoria (Author 2009)*

Figure 3.16: *Earlier years- an open view to the main building, very little trees in sight (Breedt 2009).*

Figure 3.17: *Today- trees block the views towards the building (Author 2009).*

Figure 3.18: *Natural Bushveld (Author 2009).*

Figure 3.19: *Disturbed Bushveld (Author 2009).*

Figure 3.20: *Maintained vegetation (Author 2009).*

Figure 3.21: *Map with the three vegetation types (Author 2009).*

Figure 3.19: *Wind and water movement (Author 2009).*

Figure 3.20: *campus entrance with narrow vehicular route used by pedestrians (Author 2009).*

Figure 3.21: *Bus stops are just objects in the landscape and not integrated with the surrounding areas (Author 2009).*

Figure 3.22: *Table indicating the temperature and rainfall of Pretoria (<http://www.weathersa.co.za/Climat/Climstats/PretoriaStats.jsp> accessed on 5 March 2009).*

Figure 3.23: *Wind direction, water movement and wetlands. (Author 2009).*

Figure 3.24: *Weskoppies entrance (Author 2009).*
 Figure 3.25: *Bus stops (Author 2009).*
 Figure 3.26: *Prominent vehicular route (Author 2009).*
 Figure 3.27: *Pedestrians have to make use of the vehicular route (Author 2009).*
 Figure 3.28: *Pedestrian walking on vehicular route (Author, 2009).*
 Figure 3.29: *Informal pedestrian paths (Author, 2009).*
 Figure 3.30: *Retaining wall as a boundary (Author, 2009).*
 Figure 3.31: *Fenced of areas without buildings (Author, 2009).*
 Figure 3.32: *Fenced of closed wards (Author, 2009)*
 Figure 3.33: *Map indicating the existing movement, Access & Boundaries (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.1: *Photograph of patient holding a plastic flower that he assembled as part of the industrial therapy program (Author, 2009)*

Figure 4.2: *Western male wards without outdoor social area (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.3: *Eastern male wards with a small outdoor socializing area (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.4: *Female wards without social outdoor spaces (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.5: *Nurses homes with no connection to the outdoors or nature (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.6: *Nurses homes enclosed with palisade fencing (Author, 2009)*

Figure 4.7: *Kiosk with inadequate areas for social interaction and too little shade (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.8: *Administration (Heritage building) (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.9: *Clubhouse (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.10: *Occupational therapy with no connection to the outdoors (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.11: *Map showing the building functions and activities (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.12: *Map with sport and exercise activities (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.13: *Put put court (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.14: *Patients playing baseball on soccer field (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.15: *Tennis courts also used for basketball & netball (Author, 2009).*

Figure 4.16: *Volleyball court with no shaded places to sit for spectators*

Figure 4.17: *Jukskei court doesn't accommodate spectators*

Figure 4.18: *Patient doing physical exercises*

Figure 4.19 & 20: *photos of the workshop where plastic funeral flowers are being assembled by Weskoppies patients (Author 2009)*

Figure 4.21: *Male patients socializing around their ward (Author 2009).*

Figure 4.22: *Patients socializing outside the kiosk (Author 2009).*

Figure 4.23: *Patient on vehicular route (Author 2009).*

Figure 4.24: *Patient wandering around on informal path (Author 2009).*

Figure 4.25: *Weskoppies patient sleeping on the lawn (Author 2009).*

Figure 4.26: *Weskoppies patients lying on the lawn (Author 2009).*

Figure 4.27: *Contemplating Weskoppies patient (Author 2009).*

Figure 4.28: *Faded collage of negative media publicity & opportunities (Author, 2009).*

Figure 5.1: *Collage with design guidelines (Author, 2009)*

Figure 5.2: *Walkway that accommodate independent functioning for people with different abilities (Author, 2009)*

Figure 5.3: *The outdoor environment should give a sense of freedom (Author, 2009)*

Figure 5.4: *Passive surveillance: patients around the ward are not visible to the public, but patients can have an open view to the landscape when standing on the platform (Author, 2009).*

Figure 5.5: *A row of trees can focus the attention on an important feature while change in paving colour/material can invite the user to explore other places (Author, 2009).*

Figure 5.6: *A horticultural therapy program and mosaic art provides patients with a sense of ownership. (Author, 2009).*

Figure 5.7: *Sketch illustrating how patients can be motivated to participate by watching other people participate in positive activities. Mosaic with positive words/ motivational phrases can also uplift a patient's mood (Author, 2009).*

Figure 5.8: *Patients are involved in the maintenance of the landscape while productive gardens like cut flower farming provides more job opportunities (Author, 2009).*

- Figure 5.9: *A horticultural therapy garden stimulates the senses. Fragrant flowers, climbing plants and crushed groundcovers stimulates the sense of smell. Herbs can be tasted and different and touched (Author 2009).*
- Figure 5.10: *Seasonal change in the lanscape heightens the patients sense of time and results in feelings of excitement and anticipation (Author, 2009)*
- Figure 5.11: *A variety of outdoor experiences. (Author, 2009)*
- Figure 5.12: *The outdoor environment should provide patients and staff with private, intimate places for reflection. The illustration shows a seating pocket overlooking flower fields (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 5.13: *The sketch indicates how passive surveillance can strengthen security (Author 2009).*
- Figure 5.14: *Comfortable seating areas for summer and winter (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 5.15: *Comfortable wooden benches for sleeping (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 5.16: *Sculpted lawn for comfortable sleeping (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 5.17: *An outdoor area that accommodatessocial interaction (Author 2009).*
- Figure 5.18: *An active outdoor environment(Author 2009).*
-
- Figure 6.1: *View of part of the garden. (Photo by Clare Cooper Marcus) (Sachs 1999:289)*
- Figure 6.2: *A coworker in the garden (Photo by Clare Cooper Marcus) (Sachs 1999:291)*
- Figure 6.3-6.5: *Photo's of mosaic art by the community reflects the communities' views and culture (NLA, 2005).*
- Figure 6.6: *A sense of ownership is established by allowing people from the local community to do the mosaic art (NLA, 2005).*
-
- Figure 7.1: *A sketch showing a birds eye view of the proposed framework (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 7.2: *Open space framework map (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 7.3: *A summary of how the context analysis influenced the development of the open space framework (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.4: *Section A-A through the primary road with a tree boulevard, walkway, lighting, bus stop and seating areas (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.5: *Map indicating the proposed primary and secondary vehicular routes with bus stops (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.6: *Pedestrian movement system. The pedestrian is exposed to a variety of different experiences (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.7: *The unsupervised route exposes the pedestrian to a variety of experiences. The sketch shows how the walkway connects to the flower experience, wetland, bird hides, shaded lawn and sport activities (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.8: *The hiking trail needs to be used under the supervision of a staff member or educational guide (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.9: *A narrower connector route connects the wards to the primary walkway (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.10: *Boundaries map: The proposed position of different kinds of boundaries on the site to distinguish semi private areas from public areas. (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.11: *Ha-ha physical boundary. Although a person cannot physically cross this boundary, the person will still have an unobstructed view to the other side. (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.12: *Vegetation can act as a visual screen where privacy is required (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.13: *A berm provides privacy by acting as a visual screen (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.14: *Structures in the landscape can define semi private areas and act as permeable emotional boundary Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.15: *Map indicating the position of the active & social heart of Weskoppies which links with the primary vehicular route and includes most sports fields and the kiosk. (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.16: *Sketch of the active & social area with places for social interaction, spectators, multifunctional sport field, and a horticultural therapy garden (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.17: *Map indicating the areas around wards, staff housing and private facilities that were identified as semi private and should be designed as outdoor rooms defined by soft boundaries. (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.18: *A raised walkway to the bird hide with reeds and water plants on the side (www.nma.gov.au/.../slideshow_2_4.html).*
- Figure 7.19: *The bird hides brings the user safely closer to the water and bird habitats (www.huntsdc.gov.uk/Leisure+and+Culture/Parks+...).*
- Figure 7.20: *The openings at the Bird hides should be at the right height to accomodate wheelchair users. (www.sanparks.org/.../birders/knp_bird_hides.php).*
- Figure 7.21: *Section that illustrates a swale as part of a natural storm water system that brings people closer to natural systems (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.22: *Map indicating the position of the retention dams on the site (Author 2009).*

- Figure 7.23: *The retention dams as a habitat for birds . The Dam is secured and people can get closer to the water in bird hides. (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.24: *Map indicating the areas suitable for agricultural use that can be developed as cut flower fields. The experiential route with picnic pockets are also shown on this map (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.25: *Sketch showing open areas between plower fields along the path for picnicking etc (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.26: *Diagram that illustrates the structure of a cut flower farm at Weskoppies. (Author 2009)*
- Figure 7.27: *Preparation of flower beds: The field after being ploughed. The soil is improved with fertilizer and compost (Author 2009)*
- Figure 7.28: *The flower beds after flower seeds have been sown. Flowers can be sown directly in the flower beds or germinated in seedling trays before being planted out in the field (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.29: *A wire grid connected is placed over the flower beds to keep flowers in place. The grid will be moved up and be held in position with droppers or other appropriate vertical elements as the flowers grow taller. This is optional and not essential (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.30: *Flowers plants can also be germinated in seedling trays or cultivated from cuttings in tunnels (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.31: *Young flower plants after being transplanted from seedling trays to the flower beds (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.32: *Young sunflower plants in an open field(Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.33: *Blue and pink flowering Delphinium elatum plants with yellow mustard plants (Brassica juncea) in the background. The mustard plants are used as mulch in flower beds to prevent the growth of weeds (Author 2009)*
- Figure 7.34: *Flowering blue Delphinium elatum plants with yellow mustard plants (Brassica juncea) in the background (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.35: *Flowering blue Limonium sinuatum plants. Note the raised wire grids to keep plants upright (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.36: *Flowering blue Limonium sinuatum plants with wind breaks made from shade cloths. The flowers are protected from winds that comes from the mountain in the background (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.37: *Tall and dense plants also functions as wind breaks (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.38: *Laborers picks flowers and puts them in crates from where they will be picked up and delivered to the packing room (De Beer 2009).*
- Figure 7.39: *The flowers arrive at the packing room where they will be prepared to be sent to the flower market (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.40: *The flowers are being trimmed by the laborers and prepared to be putted together in bunches (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.41: *The flower bunches are placed on a machine where they are stringed together mechanically (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.42: *Laborers prepare flowers (Author 2009). Working with flowers can have an uplifting effect on the human spirit.*
- Figure 7.43: *Flowers are ready to be distributed and stored in a cold room (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.44: *Flowers are ready and loaded and taken to the flower market (De Beer 2009).*
- Figure 7.45: *Flower beds are between 20-30m long with a minimum gap of 5m that functions as a pickup zone. Flowers from the flower bed will be taken to this point where it will be placed in crates and loaded to be taken to the packing room.(Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.46: *Layout of flower beds. Flower beds are between 1-1.5m wide with a gap of 500m in between for walking and picking flowers The flower beds are between 20-30m long with a minimum pickup zone of 5m (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.47: *Flower beds are between 1-1.5m wide with a gap of 500m in between for walking and picking flowers. Picked flowers are then carried to the pickup zones (Author 2009).*
- Figure 7.48: *Map indicating the area with natural existing bushveld vegetation which will be enclosed and used as a guided wilderness experience with a hiking trail with lookout points.(Author 2009)*
- Figure 7.49: *Illustration showing controlled access points and a hiking trail.(Author 2009)*
- Figure 7.50: *Illustration showing the lookout point with a panoramic view over Weskoppies campus and the city in the distance. (Author 2009)*
- Figure 7.51: *The design matrix illustrates how the open space framework satisfies the design guidelines as set out in chapter 5 (Author 2009)*
- Figure 7.52: *Faded sketch, birds eye view of proposed framework (Author, 2009)*
- Figure 8.1: *Faded image of sketch plan (Author 2009)*
- Figure 8.2: *Area to be developed as the catalyst project for which a sketch plan will be designed (Author, 2009)*
- Figure 8.3: *Analysis diagram, highlighting the most prominent features (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.4: *Photographic analysis, highlighting the most prominent features (Author, 2009).*

- Figure 8.5: *Design diagram illustrating the different spaces, circulation and boundaries as accommodated in the sketch plan (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.6: *A graphic illustration of the sketch plan showing the application of the structuring elements in 8.3 and the experiences and spaces that will be discussed in 8.4 (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.7: *Section C-C shows the different spaces and experiences accommodated in the sketch plan area (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.8: *Section A-A shows the different spaces and experiences accommodated in the sketch plan area (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.9: *Kiosk exterior plan (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.10: *Kiosk exterior section (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.11: *Kiosk exterior 3d image (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.12: *Stepped seating and sleeping area section (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.13: *Stepped seating and sleeping area plan (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.14: *Stepped seating and sleeping area 3d image (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.15: *Horticultural therapy garden plan (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.16: *Horticultural therapy garden section (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.17: *Horticultural therapy 3d image (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.18: *Plan showing the different colour pockets (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.19: *Section through the red colour pocket (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.20: *Colour pocket 3d image (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.21: *Plan of the outdoor room at the male ward (Author, 2009)*
- Figure 8.22: *Section of the semi private outdoor room at the male ward. Retaining walls form a visual boundary (Author, 2009)*
- Figure 8.23: *Male ward 3d image (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 8.24: *The design matrix illustrates how the sketch plan satisfies the design guidelines as set out in chapter 5 (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 9.1: *Collage of technical drawings (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 9.2: *Planting and paving plan (Author, 2009).*
- Figure 9.3: *Bolusanthus speciosus (BS) (Venter, 1998)*
- Figure 9.4: *Pterocarpus rotundifolius (PR)(Venter, 1998)*
- Figure 9.5: *Erythrina lysistemon (EL) (Venter, 1998)*
- Figure 9.6: *Combretum erythrophyllum (CE) (Venter, 1998)*
- Figure 9.7: *Celtis africana (CA) (Venter, 1998)*
- Figure 9.8: *Acacia xantophloea (AX) (Venter, 1998)*
- Figure 9.9: *Barleria obtusa (Joffe, 2003)*
- Figure 9.10: *Hypoestes aristata (Joffe, 2003)*
- Figure 9.11: *Plectranthus fruticosus (Joffe, 2003)*
- Figure 9.12: *Plectranthus neochilus (Joffe, 2003)*
- Figure 9.13: *Plumbago auriculata (Joffe, 2003)*
- Figure 9.14: *Dietes grandiflora (Joffe, 2003)*
- Figure 9.15: *Euryops pectinatus (Joffe, 2003)*
- Figure 9.16: *Tecomaria capensis (Joffe, 2003)*
- Figure 9.17: *Strelizia reginae (Joffe, 2003)*
- Figure 9.18: *Bauhinia galpinii (Joffe, 2003)*
- Figure 9.19: *Thyme (www.howdoyoucook.com/.../Thyme2.jpg, 2009)*
- Figure 9.20: *Woolly yarrow (www.stepables.com/store/ProdImages/large/Achi..., 2009)*
- Figure 9.21: *Pennyroyal (www.blossomfarm.com/images/pennyroyal.JPG, 2009)*
- Figure 9.22: *Corsican mint (www.jekcasherbfarm.com/images/products/PM24.jpg, 2009)*
- Figure 9.23: *Blue star creeper (www.popsignage.com/.../COMP-005698.jpg, 2009)*
- Figure 9.24: *Sweet woodruff (www.plantcare.com/.../Asperula_Odorata.jpg, 2009)*
- Figure 9.25: *Jasmine (www.plantzafrica.com/.../jaminmulti.jpg, 2009)*
- Figure 9.26: *Black-eyed susan (gstuff.co.nz/.../images/thunbergia_alata.jpg, 2009)*
- Figure 9.27: *Golden shower (www.indianetzone.com/.../Golden-Shower_2196.jpg, 2009)*

Figure 9.28: *Wisteria* (www.sloatgardens.com/images/wisteria.jpg)

Figure 9.29: *Graspedia globosa* (De Beer, 2009)

Figure 9.30: *Helianthus annuus* (De Beer, 2009)

Figure 9.31: *Bupleurum griffithii* (De Beer, 2009)

Figure 9.33: *Delphinium belladonna* (Author, 2009)

Figure 9.34: *Cynoglossum amabile* (www.dkimages.com/discover/previews/993/718981.JPG, 2009)

Figure 9.35: *Calendula officinalis* (www.mobot.org/.../images/low/A566-0701032.jpg, 2009)

Figure 9.36: *Crocoshia paniculata* (www.senecahillperennials.com/uploads/images/p..., 2009)

Figure 9.37: *Watsonia* (www.weedsrc.org.au/main/images/ig_watsonia_m..., 2009)

Figure 9.38: *Sparaxis elegans* (www.bulbsociety.org/.../Sparaxis_elegans4.jpg, 2009)

Figure 9.39: *Antrirrhinum majes* (De Beer, 2009)

Figure 9.40: *Lathyrus odorata* (www.bh-froe.com/ZC/images/lathyrus_kneehigh.jpg, 2009)

Figure 9.41: *Freesia* (www.naturehills.com/images/productImages/Free., 2009)

Figure 9.42: *Gypsophila elegans* (image.gardening.eu/.../gypsophila/gypsophila.jpg, 2009)

Figure 9.43: Section A-A includes the multifunctional sport area with the stepped sleeping and seating area, primary walkway and kiosk exterior (Author, 2009)

Figure 9.44: Section C-C includes the multifunctional sport area, steps, primary walkway horticultural therapy garden and flower fields with colour pockets (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.45: Detail 1- stepped seating and sleeping area (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.46: Horticultural planter with pre-cast concrete slab with holes for pots (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.47: Detail 3- Detail of proposed pergola fixed to existing kiosk structure (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.48: Detail 4- Step and inter planted concrete paving detail (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.49: Detail 5a- Pergola plan (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.50: Detail 5b- Section trough pergola column (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.51: Detail 6- Horticultural therapy planter with wooden waved sleeping bench (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.52: Detail 7A- The fastening of the waved sleeping bench to planter the planter (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.53: Detail 7B- Detail of a wooden sleeping bench attached to a facebrick planter (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.54: Storm water management plan with catchment area and retention dams (Author, 2009)

Figure 9.55: Table illustrating the rational method of determining peak flow and determining the capacity of Retention dam 1 (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.56: Graph indicating the volume of run-off per month from the catchment area and the required volume of water needed for irrigating 2Ha (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.57: Retention dam 1 plan (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.58: Irrigation control room plan (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.59: Section through pump room (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.60: Retention dam outlets and retaining wall (Author, 2009)

Figure 9.61: Retention dam inlet with bird hide in background (Author, 2009).

Figure 9.62: Section through Retention dam 1 (Author, 2009)