

## Critical Thinking Essay: Landscape Perception

by Chris Lerew

Horticulture Major in Sustainable Landscape Design, Installation, and Maintenance Class



The other day in class we learned about landscape perception. Our assignment was to go out to the Agricultural Quad and identify and analyze a location that is perceived as beautiful. My group used the Sustainable Landscape Demonstration Garden. Our claim is that the Agricultural Quad contains beauty which is calming to people. I believe there is much truth that visually beautiful landscapes can positively influence the well-being of the beholder. Viewing natural scenery provides calming and mood enhancing benefits (Larson, 2014).



This idea can be verified using authoritative sources such as the pictures on the Sustainable Landscape Garden's website. This webpage also describes how the garden was designed to help beautify and create a calming place to be admired (Sustainable Landscape Demonstration, 2015). An additional disciplined verification of our claim comes from an article that states that there are positive health benefits from being exposed to landscapes (Thompson, 2012). Another disciplined proof of our claim that landscapes contain beauty and foster well-being comes from my creative inquiry experience conducting surveys of individuals viewing the Sustainable Garden. A majority of people completing the surveys noted that the garden was visually appealing and was also calming.

I learned a long time ago that a walk or ride through my family's orchards, in York Springs, Adams County, Pennsylvania, is not only visually stimulating but also a tremendous stress reliever. Viewing a landscape of trees is a feast for the eyes.

In the spring I see white and pink blossoms on apple, cherry, and peach trees and later all of the fruits during the harvest season. I always feel calm driving around the orchards because the trees really give me a sense of place and belonging in a safe environment. I am home and can let my imagination wander and my worries dwindle. A picture of this orchard landscape hanging in my room allows me to feel this same way every day.

People who are not interested in landscapes, perhaps an urban dweller for instance, may not believe that landscapes are beautiful or that they provide a calming environment. They believe they can achieve a calming environment by looking at a computer or television screen (Larson, 2014). This is probably because not everyone knows how to appreciate the landscape for what it provides or they simply do not take the time to do so. I plan to continue to explore and appreciate different landscapes and how they beautify the environment around us and also reap the positive benefits.

### Literature Cited

- Larson, J. (2014). *How does nature impact our wellbeing?*. Retrieved from <http://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/enhance-your-wellbeing/environment/nature-and-us/how-does-nature-impact-our-wellbeing>.
- Sustainable landscape demonstration* (2015). Retrieved from <http://www.clemson.edu/cafls/demo/index.html>.
- Thompson, C. (2012). *More green space is linked to less stress in deprived communities: evidence from salivary cortisol patterns*. Retrieved from [http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0169204611003665/1-s2.0-S0169204611003665-main.pdf?\\_tid=8200bde4-657a-11e5-ba78-00000aab0f6c&acdnat=1443401434\\_12134daf8708293892fd3f7d1e4d3a41](http://ac.els-cdn.com/S0169204611003665/1-s2.0-S0169204611003665-main.pdf?_tid=8200bde4-657a-11e5-ba78-00000aab0f6c&acdnat=1443401434_12134daf8708293892fd3f7d1e4d3a41).

### Images

Lerew Orchards Photo courtesy of Ben Lerew  
Chris Lerew Photo by Lori Lerew