



封面故事

變色龍為了適應城市生活，把自己也變成了一個忙碌的上班族。然而，熱愛自然的牠卻心念著樹林的美好。打開小冊子，與變色龍一起在繁囂中尋找綠色的慰藉，來一趟身心靈的洗滌之旅……



**Want to learn more?
Come and visit our website!**

Public Mental Health Laboratory 
公共心理健康研究室

@pmhlabb 



香港中文大學
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

SoCUBE 
CUHK Social Innovation 中大社會創新



Supported by Knowledge Transfer Fund at CUHK
香港中文大學知識轉移基金支持項目



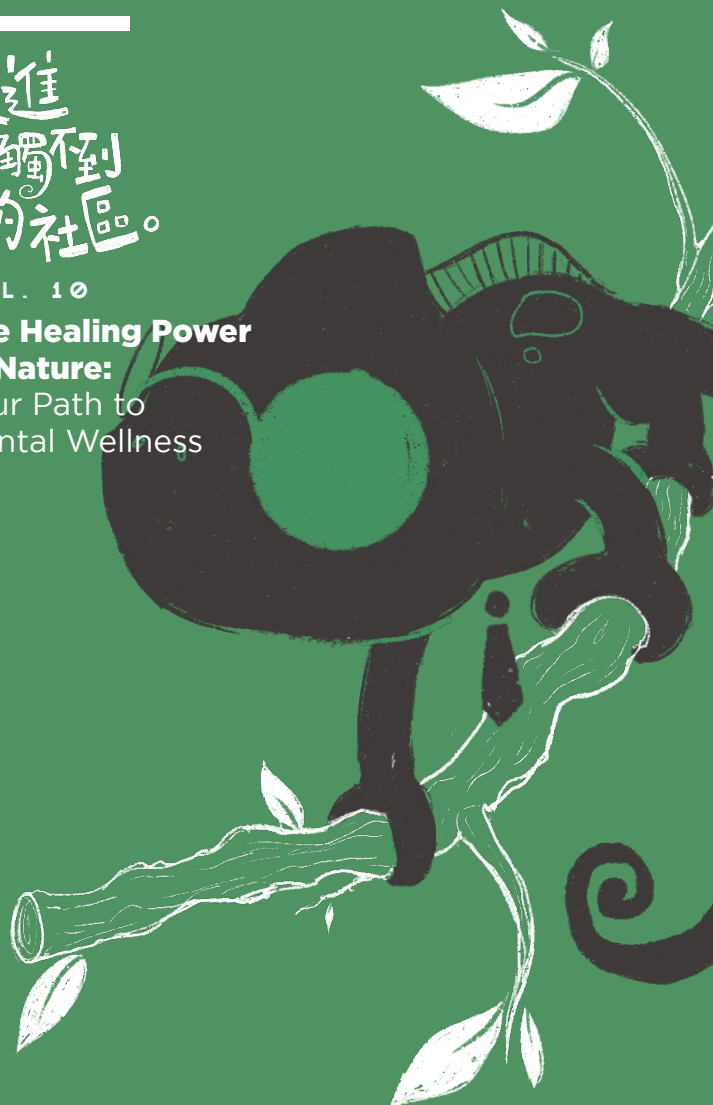
© 2021 版權屬香港中文大學心理學系公共心理健康研究室所有，不得翻印

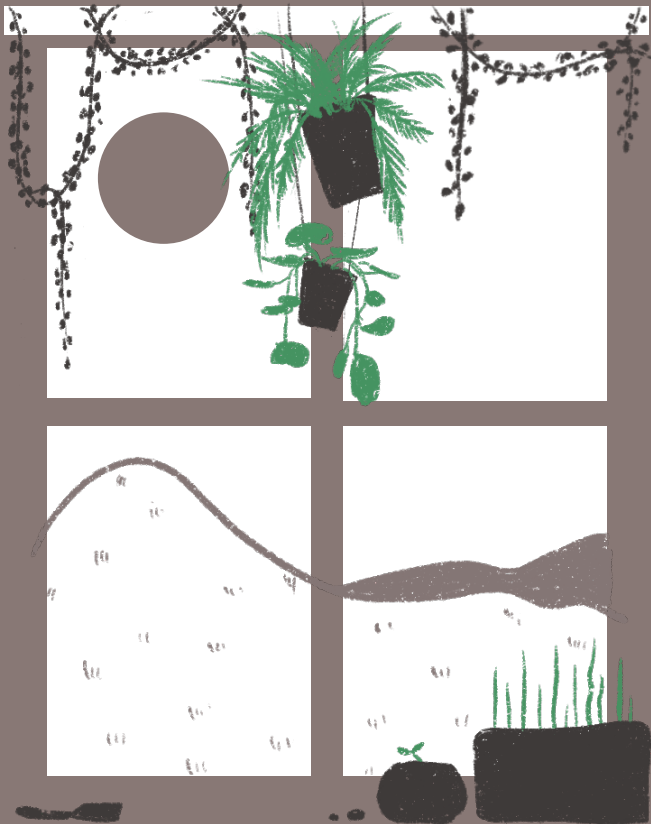
© 2021 Public Mental Health Laboratory, Department of Psychology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong. All rights reserved.

走進
觸不到的
社區。

VOL. 10

**The Healing Power
of Nature:**
Your Path to
Mental Wellness





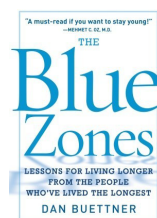
Do you have potted plants in your home or office?
Do you take walks in the suburbs on holidays?

The Blue Zones

In previous booklets, we discussed Blue Zones, where people live healthy and long lives, even into old age. Regardless of whether they are middle-aged individuals or centenarians, they can maintain health and vitality. Experts have found common characteristics among residents of Blue Zones in different parts of the world. Let's review them together:

- ▶ **Have good stress reduction habits.**
- ▶ **Maintain a balanced diet.**
- ▶ **Avoid prolonged sitting.**
- ▶ **Maintain close social interactions with friends and family.**

We have detailed beneficial dietary and exercise habits in previous booklets and introduced stress and relaxation techniques. Now, we present a lifestyle that can increase activity and alleviate stress – **getting closer to nature.**



Interested in learning more? You can read "The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who've Lived the Longest" by Dan Buettner's team, where they summarize the "Power 9" principles for a long and healthy life, categorized into four themes: physical activity, life outlook, diet, and social relationships.

Impact of Urbanization on Mental and Physical Well-being

It's well known that nature is the cradle of life, including human ancestors. Today, despite our migration from green forests to "concrete jungles," our innate nature still yearns for the natural environment, resisting the pressures of urban life. Living in cities for an extended period naturally accumulates stress and a sense of oppression.

Research has proven that enjoying nature brings various benefits,¹ including:

- ▶ **Lowering blood pressure and blood sugar.**
- ▶ **Slowing down a rapid heartbeat.**
- ▶ **Reducing stress hormone levels.**
- ▶ **Enhancing the immune system.**
- ▶ **Improving mood and overall well-being.**

Nature and forest therapy²

Nature and forest therapy are natural therapies based on academic research that utilizes nature and forests to enhance physical, mental, and spiritual health. Forest bathing (shinrin-yoku), originating in Japan in the 1980s, involves immersing oneself in the atmosphere of the forest, using the five senses to experience the forest, with the goal of promoting health and happiness.

The American Association of Nature and Forest Therapy Guides and Programs provides guide training to promote forest therapy. Trained guides lead individuals to experience the forest, slow down, and heal in the natural environment.

Forest bathing can broaden one's perspective and help understand oneself and relationships with others better. Currently, there are also forest therapy guides in Hong Kong. Those interested can visit the website of the American Association of Nature and Forest Therapy for more information.



The American Association of Nature and
Forest Therapy Guides and Programs



Wellness Travellers
Forest Bathing Services





Green Spaces³

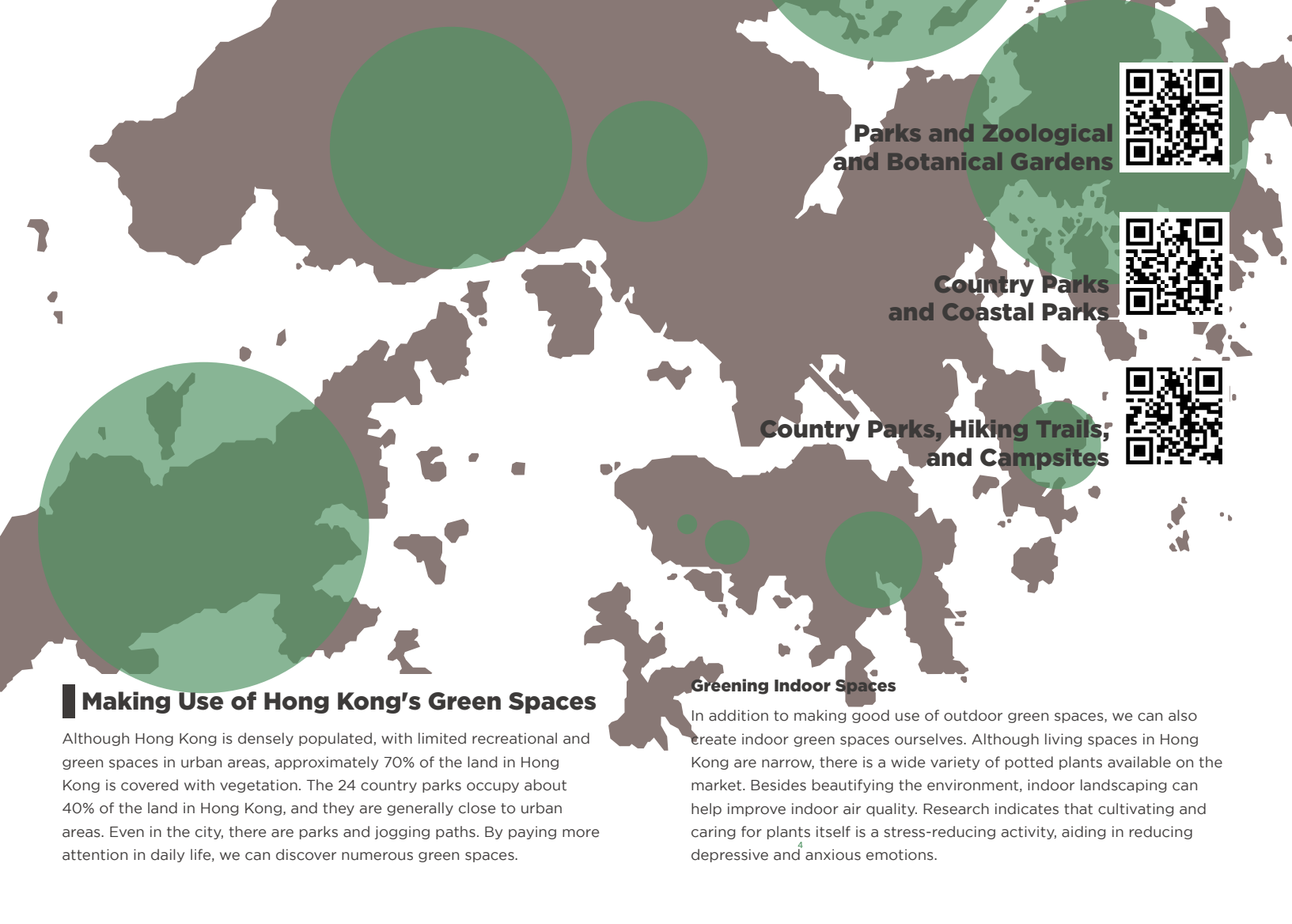
But how can people who grew up in big cities incorporate elements of nature into their lives?

A nationwide study in Denmark showed that the presence of green spaces during childhood significantly influences future mental health. Therefore, green spaces in urban areas are particularly important.

Research indicates that green spaces have many benefits:

- ▶ **Effectively prevent emotional illnesses such as depression and stress.**
- ▶ **Encourage physical activity.**
- ▶ **Provide social venues.**
- ▶ **Reduce noise and air pollution.**
- ▶ **Enhance the immune system.**
- ▶ **Contact with natural environments after fatigue can restore attention.**

Try drawing your ideal green space. How would you spend pleasant moments in this space?



**Parks and Zoological
and Botanical Gardens**



**Country Parks
and Coastal Parks**



**Country Parks, Hiking Trails,
and Campsites**



Making Use of Hong Kong's Green Spaces

Although Hong Kong is densely populated, with limited recreational and green spaces in urban areas, approximately 70% of the land in Hong Kong is covered with vegetation. The 24 country parks occupy about 40% of the land in Hong Kong, and they are generally close to urban areas. Even in the city, there are parks and jogging paths. By paying more attention in daily life, we can discover numerous green spaces.

Greening Indoor Spaces

In addition to making good use of outdoor green spaces, we can also create indoor green spaces ourselves. Although living spaces in Hong Kong are narrow, there is a wide variety of potted plants available on the market. Besides beautifying the environment, indoor landscaping can help improve indoor air quality. Research indicates that cultivating and caring for plants itself is a stress-reducing activity, aiding in reducing depressive and anxious emotions.

Setting Goals

Long-term Goal



I, [Your Name], aim to achieve [Specific Goal] within
 [Number of Months].

Short-term Goals:

Plan your activities for the next month:

● **Date/Time:** _ _ _ _ _

● **Location:** _ _ _ _ _

● **Duration and Activity:** _ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _

● **Companions (if any):** _ _ _ _ _

Nature and green spaces help us balance our busy city lives, bringing significant benefits. In this introduction, we emphasized the importance of enjoying nature. We hope that while embracing nature and taking care of our physical, mental, and spiritual health, everyone will also cherish the natural environment.