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An "Oasis of Calm"

On a sunny afternoon, a contented bee meanders through the softly rolling sea of purple thyme in the Wellness Garden next to the Duluth Clinic First Street Building. Over the past two years, the garden has matured into a relaxing place to enjoy nature's beauty without leaving SMDC's Duluth campus.

The Wellness Garden, which opened in July 2006, was designed to enhance the first Street Building's goal of creating a healing environment for patients. "It's a valuable resource for their overall wellbeing," says Marcy Kernez, manager of the Caring Ways Cancer Resource Center. "It's a wonderful chance to relax and recharge."

Jocelyn Heid, who helped coordinate the dozen volunteers who maintain the space, agrees. "It's an oasis of calm and peace in what can be a stressful environment, explains Hied, a manager in Physician and Practitioner Recruitment. "That's why the garden group is so important, because the garden is a living thing," she adds. "It should change and grow." They've had some challenges to overcome, like the sandy soil and the hot dry conditions last summer.

The Wellness Garden was carefully designed "to restore the spirit and delight the senses," according to landscape architect Derek Young. Healing plants, such as Echinacea and sweetsmelling Lavender, support that theme. From flowering trees to swaying grasses, the plants were chosen to both please the eye and to withstand the Northland climate. Feng Shui input completed the process of creating an oasis of calm amidst the bustle of medical technology.

"We're looking at it as a place of contemplation, a place to become centered," says Cathy Berendts, Executive Director of the Duluth Clinic Cancer Center and Digestive Health Center. "We really want the garden to be a place for reflection."