

TH Activity Plan – Bush Tea

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will make & drink bush tea based on Caribbean cultural traditions.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Learn & practice strategies addressing impulsivity taking turns in group setting; acquire plant knowledge

Physical: Reinforce mind-body connection through taste experience

Psychological/Emotional: Practice recognizing hypervigilance or stress; demonstrate reduced agitation

Sensory: Complete day to day sensory experiences with confidence; practice sensory integration

Social: Make & consume food/tea as a group social activity; practice interpreting social cues; expand tolerance of other cultures

Materials

Edible herb plants

Scissors, bowls

Teapots, teacups, sugar, milk, spoons, hot water

Paper towels, wipes

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing Caribbean culture of drinking bush tea & its historical roots. A quick [overview of tea drinking around the globe across many cultures](#) provides a context. Samples of dry tea ingredients are passed around for smelling, touching & viewing.
3. Participants select what bush (plant) ingredients they would like to include in their pot of tea (thyme, basil, hibiscus, sage, wild grass, lemongrass, mint, soursop or papaya leaves, vervine, cerasee (leaves and stems from the bitter melon plant)). Hot water is poured overtop of the leaves. Allow 5 min. for tea to steep. Drink & enjoy.
4. Participants discuss flavors of bush tea & experiences they may have had with bush tea when travelling in the Caribbean. Different countries have different traditions related to bush tea.
5. This may be a stand-alone session or one part of the session. Other related THAD tea activities: [harvesting herbs grown for leaves](#), [planting a tea pot garden](#), [herbal tea party](#), [herbal heating bags](#), or [lavender cookies](#).

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: A range of therapeutic goals can be incorporated into the bush tea TH session. For individuals or groups who have self-regulation challenges, learning about and practicing strategies for impulsivity or hypervigilance can be addressed by taking turns, being patient, and recognizing signals for maladaptive behaviors. The sensory aspect of drinking bush tea can focus on sensory integration and mind-body connections by slowing down tea making and tasting, taking time to process and think about taste, flavor, smell and related physical sensations of these, and consuming warm tea.

The social facet of this session can address deficits related to social interactions, social cues, social emotional learning and self-awareness. The discussion about cultural tea traditions can introduce social, cultural and group elements of tea drinking, putting this everyday activity of tea preparation and drinking in a different context that can support individuals slowing down, taking time to feel physical sensations from warm drinks, and tea drinking as a strategy for social interactions or personal calming. Discussion can also include tolerance of other cultures.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.

Some caution should be exercised in consuming more than 3 cups of hibiscus tea a day due to interactions with some medications. TH session should not offer herbal medicine advice and as with anything consumed in session, allergies, swallowing issues or contraindications with medication need to be identified prior to session. Caution with hot water is advised; facilitator may choose to handle and pour the hot water.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Caribbean bush tea is made from local plants and herbs, based on traditions passed down from generation to generation. Infusing the plants in hot water has historic and cultural significance. Based on ancestral healing and health practices, bush tea has been used for daily consumption, as well as for treating sunburn, fever, diabetes and high blood pressure. Limited research exists substantiating these claims though [herbal medicine is practiced extensively throughout the world](#).

Many of the plants for bush tea, identified previously, are grown and available in many climates. Others like vervine (*Verben officinalis*), [soursop](#) (*Annona muricata*), [papaya](#) (*Carica papaya*), and wild grass are not as readily available in N. America. [Cerasee](#) or bitter melon (*Momordica charantia*) has numerous names, also known as goya, bitter squash, bitter gourd, balsam-pear, karela, and karavila. In Cuba it is called cundeamor, in Haiti associ, sorossie, or asorosi, and in Mexico pepino cimarron. This vine is grown for its edible fruit in the Caribbean, Asia and Africa, with its leaves used for bush tea.



Cerasee



Soursop



Hibiscus

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Camellios. (2025). [10 global tea traditions: A journey through culture and history](#). Camellios.com.

Fortune Business Insights. (2025). [Herbal medicine market size, share & industry analysis, and regional forecast, 2025-2032](#). Fortune Business Insights.com.

World Health Organization. (2025). [Traditional medicine has a long history of contributing to conventional medicine and continues to hold promise](#). Who.int.

Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2025.

TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2024.