

Activity: Planting Goal: Psychological Populations: All

## TH Activity Plan – Celery Seed & Crown Plantings

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Photo by Meadowlark Journal



**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will learn to grow celery from seeds, crowns & cut-and-come-again growing method.

**THERAPEUTIC GOALS:**

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Expand knowledge of plants, specifically celery

**Physical:** Plant celery seeds or crowns; harvest celery stalks from outdoor garden beds

**Psychological/Emotional:** Recognize personal growth by expanding horticultural knowledge

**Sensory:** Taste celery being mindful of its sensory qualities

**Social:** Participate in group activity; share materials; donate celery to food bank or community group

### Materials

Celery, pre-washed

Napkins

Celery seeds, crowns, potting mix, containers, water

Pruners, harvest container

Gloves, wipes

### STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials. Prepare garden or potting area where planting will occur. Have live mature plants on hand.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing celery as the focus of the TH session, including planting celery in outdoor or indoor settings.
3. Beginning with a tasting of raw celery, participants will describe taste, texture, crunch & color. Facilitator shares nutritional facts.
4. Facilitator describes & demonstrates planting celery seeds in ground or pots, planting a celery crown in soil to re-grow/sprout new leaves, and harvesting mature outer stalks using the *cut-and-come-again* crop method.
5. Participants plant celery using the 3 methods. Watering and on-going plant care is discussed. A schedule is organized if group is recurring & able to manage celery growth and plant care.
6. Session can incorporate horticultural information on celery & plant propagation as appropriate for the age & goals of the participants. If sufficient celery is harvested, group can donate it to local food bank as community service. Safe food handling protocols should be discussed & implemented.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** This TH activity can be done indoors or outside, using pots, grow lights, in-ground or above ground beds. Soil prep is important in all of these (see growing tips below). Therapeutic goals can focus on vocational horticulture training and transfer of plant knowledge. Populations of high school students ready for career exploration or science investigations should find this focus in line with their interests. Individuals and groups working towards new beginnings, and new job opportunities can benefit from the vocational priority. This might include people who are incarcerated or recently released, people with developmental delays, or people recovering from injury in need of, or considering different jobs. *Celery Seed & Crown Plantings* can also compliment psychological goals related to personal growth.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitator is responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.**

As with all TH activities where participants will taste or eat plants, allergies, swallowing issues or contraindications with medication need to be identified prior to session. Some populations should not handle small seeds like celery if there is temptation to put in their mouths (young children, dementia populations). Safe food handling protocols should be used and any food should be pre-washed. Pruners may not be appropriate for all populations and may not be allowed in some facilities.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** Growing celery can be rewarding but can take up to 140 days till harvest. “Plan for a long head start indoors or in a greenhouse with a sunny site using rich, moist soil. Celery seeds of all types are small and may germinate erratically. Celery requires constant moisture so plants’ roots need to be moist at all times. For pale, mild-flavored celery, use an elastic hair scrunchie or strips of cloth to secure the stalks into a bunch after the plants have been growing in the garden for 8-10 weeks. Or try the blanching method—excluding light from the stalks to prevent chlorophyll production — for one to two weeks. This latter technique can be an interesting science experiment.

Celery is a cultivated plant in the *Apiaceae* (A) family most commonly used and considered a vegetable. Many cultures have plants known as celery: Vietnamese celery, Australian celery, Maori celery, Indian celery and water celery all referred to as "wild celery" in various cultures. Celery is native to Greece.

Types of Celery



Stalk celery *Apium graveolens* var. *dulce*: Upright plants yield the familiar form of celery. Light color is associated with mild flavor, darker green and red varieties taste stronger and are good for stocks and stews. In Florida stalk celery is grown as a winter annual.

Cutting celery *A. graveolens*: Considered the easiest celery to grow, it reseeds well. Old outer leaves often taste bitter. Harvest younger stalks for best flavor and to help push out tasty, new growth.



Celeriac *A. graveolens* var. *rapaceum*: With regular water, these rugged plants grow slowly all season, with the best roots harvested after the weather cools in fall. One of the tastiest vegetables for root cellar storage” (Fleming, 2010).

“Nutritional value of celery: A good source of vitamins A, C and K, celery is low in calories and high in fiber. It’s anti-inflammatory health benefits include protection against inflammation in the digestive tract. Some of the unique non-starch polysaccharides in celery—including apiuman—appear especially important in producing anti-inflammatory benefits. The dozen antioxidant nutrients in celery include dihydrostilbenoids like lunularin as well as furanocoumarins like bergapten and psoralen. Try pronouncing these as a group! Note that commercial, non-organic celery continuously ranks near the top of the list of vegetables known to carry chemical residues, with some samples tainted with more than 60 pesticides” (Fleming, 2024).

**REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

- Fleming, L. (2024). [Celery shenanigans](#). Therapeutic Horticulture Activities Database.
- Fleming, L. (2010). Celery. HT Program Book.
- Meadowlark Journal. (2023). Container-grown celery: A step-by-step guide. <https://meadowlarkjournal.com/blog/growing-celery-in-containers>
- West, B. & Drost, D. (2020). How to grow celery in your garden. Utah State University Extension. <https://extension.usu.edu/yardandgarden/research/celery-in-the-garden>

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TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2023.