

TH Activity Plan – Combination Planting in Container

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will create a mixed planting in a container for themselves.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Promote creativity; learn new skills & horticultural knowledge about plants & their needs

Physical: Develop steadiness in hands (by pouring, measuring, layering materials)

Psychological/Emotional: Develop sense of self-worth; complete assigned activity/tasks

Sensory: Develop greater awareness of reality/sense of time & seasonal events; touch plant textures as practice for reducing defensiveness

Social: Promote socialization as group activity; share materials

Materials

Plants

Glass container –cylindrical, spherical, square or plastic or clay pots as well as baskets and ceramic dishes to hold mediums

Planting soil for tropical or desert plants

Perlite and vermiculite

Coloured gravel or sand

Soup spoon or small trowel

Florist pick (seasonal accent)

Driftwood

Gloves, wipes

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials. Determine if all plants (like cactus) are suitable for participants.
2. Facilitator begins session by explaining process & materials with step 1 - spooning 1” of perlite into the bottom of the container, gently flattening by shaking container.
3. Using a small amount of coloured gravel or sand, cover the perlite and in between each layer. Gently spoon this medium around the inside edge of the container to provide a thin line of colour. Continue this procedure by using other coloured gravels or sand to give a layered effect (refer to photo).
4. Spoon soil medium on top approximately 3-4 inches and gently press into place, until one or two inches from the top of the rim.
5. Arrange plants beside the container to get an idea of how the finished design should look. Gently tap soil off the roots of the plants before planting. Tall plants should be planted in the center and shorter, pendulous ones to the outside.
6. Add decorative picks and ribbons to complement the planting. Driftwood pieces also add texture and natural appeal.
7. After planting, water sparingly. Repeat when soil dries out, approximately once every two weeks (depending on dryness of environment). Exercise care as glass containers do not have drainage and over-watering will cause plants to die. This project is ideal for a table or window area.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This activity is appropriate for most populations. Its applications can address a variety of therapeutic goals. **Procedural testing:** the project can be divided into different tasks to facilitate both the assessment and development of participants' abilities. This project can be used for task analysis for simple or more complex procedural testing. Concentration, retention, method interpretation can be scored. **Instant gratification:** this project provides participants with immediate success (instant gratification). Plant container can be completed in one hour or less. **Developing self-worth:** a sense of self-worth is achieved in completing a project that is meaningful and can be used to beautify the hospital or home. **Innately satisfying:** this is an inexpensive project. Container can be obtained from the dietary department. Small plants can be purchased at a nominal cost. Rooted cuttings may be used for this project. **Promoting socialization:** this activity provides an excellent vehicle for group activity and interaction. **Promoting creativity and imagination:** this project is an ideal outlet to stimulate individual creativity and imagination using colorful potting materials and selecting from a variety of plants. **Promoting intellectual stimulation:** this horticultural project promotes intellectual stimulation through learning a new skill. **Reality Awareness:** these projects can provide an awareness of the time and special seasonal events (ie. usage of a seasonal florist pick). The use of textures and scented plant material can also enhance this objective.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: This activity may not be appropriate for populations that may put potting medium or plants in their mouths. Some plants, like cactus may not be appropriate for all populations; for other populations this may be fine with therapeutic concepts attributed to thorny, rough plants.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Growing a variety of plants in special containers provides participants with an interesting collection of plants, while at the same time eliminating the need for many smaller pots with individual plants. The finished product provides interest by its multidimensional shape, size and variety of growth. The product is also an ideal gift because of the diversity of creative style which makes each container a special representation of its creator's vision.

Choose plants with a variety of shapes and textures. This will create visual interest. Select plants that are compatible for light source and care. Suggested plants:

Fittonia, also called nerve plant (red or green)
Peperomia marble queen, miniature rippled variety recommended
Sanseveria, also called snake plant
African Violet
Small cacti and succulents are great for a desert garden!

Pilea, also called creeping Charlie
Pteris ferns or any dwarf ferns
Dracena, also called corn plant
Kalanchoe

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Hewson, M.L. (1994). *Horticulture as Therapy*.

Sullivan, C. (2021). *The Houseplants Guide for Beginners and Plant Lovers: A Comprehensive Book to Choose, Grow, and Live Better with Your Indoor Plants*.



Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2023.

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