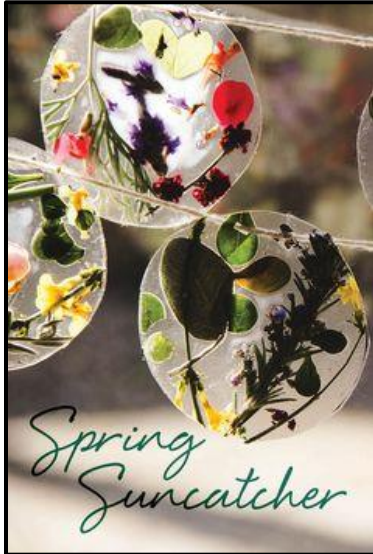


**Activity: Creative Expression/ Arts**   **Goal: Psychological/ Emotional**  
**Populations: All**

## TH Activity Plan – Create a Spring or Summer Suncatcher

Text by Mallory Schroer

Photo by Pinterest



**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will create a handmade suncatcher, using foraged herbs, flowers & imagination.

**THERAPEUTIC GOALS:**

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Learn the physical characteristics of plants through knowledge transfer & hands-on harvesting of herbs

**Physical:** Increase physical exercise searching for foraged & harvested herbs/ flowers from the garden & vegetable garden areas

**Psychological/Emotional:** Utilize methodical thought processes for picking & choosing herbs; strengthen decision making

**Sensory:** Enhance mood using sensory stimulation from various textures, smells & plant materials; address tactile defensiveness

**Social:** Strengthen sense of belonging in a peer group; work together cooperatively sharing materials & space

**Materials:**

Per person:  
A small bag full of herbs and flowers (fresh or dried)

Small pair of snips/scissors

Small harvest basket

4-5 paper towels

10 pieces of contact paper cut in circles

Long piece of twine

For group:  
3 small handheld hole punches

**STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:**

- 1. Pre-Session Preparation:** Cut appropriate length of twine for project. Cut the approximate size of contact paper circles and place in a paper bag for the participant. Pre-session setup: Place required number of bowls for herbs, precut contact paper circles, precut twine & scissors on the table. Provide harvest baskets & small snips for the participants for harvesting outdoors in the vegetable garden & surrounding areas. Make sure the snips have a covered lid.
2. Facilitator begins session by explaining the activity: The harvest baskets & snips are brought outdoors, to find favorite (use your nose) herbs & flowers. Smells and textures, among other senses are encouraged for picking out favorite herbs and flowers to use in this project.
3. Once inside everyone washes their hands. Items are placed in each participant's work area.
3. Clean paper towels wipe herbs that may contain unwanted items such as bugs, not so good-looking foliage, such as brown/ diseased/ discolored leaves. Shake out the flowers before pressing in the contact paper.
4. Participants choose contact paper circles & herbs they'd like to incorporate into their suncatcher project.
5. Take two of the same size contact paper circles, peel off the back making sure they are placed with the sticky side up (so the sticky end doesn't end up sticking to the table). Place the herbs or flowers in a design.

6. Press the two contact sheets together creating one circle, creating as many of these as you'd like to add to a string of suncatchers.
7. Using a small, handheld hole punch add one small hole in the tops of the circles, stringing twine through the suncatcher strand, adding a knot to secure all of the circles. Hang up in a sunny window and enjoy.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** This TH activity and its intent is to provide a pleasant sensory experience for all populations. Youth who may suffer from emotional distress, trauma or previous abuse or who are diagnosed with schizophrenia can benefit for this activity and its mood enhancing attributes. Herbs and plant materials are very tactile, particularly useful for goals associated with addressing sensory issues. The activity may also be suitable for people in memory care where the activity of picking favorite herbs such as lavender, chamomile, rosemary, and basil among others may prompt memories from earlier moments in their lives, hopefully triggering pleasant thoughts.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: The facilitator is responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.** It is not recommended that participants taste items. Staff/guardian information must be obtained for participants' allergies, swallowing issues or contraindications with medication. Safety considerations for this activity include walking and taking care when traveling to and from the vegetable garden as well as vigilance for animals, snakes, rodents and fire ant hills on trails and gardens. Safety should be discussed with participants re snips and scissors. They may not be appropriate for some populations who may self-harm or harm others.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** Fresh or dried flowers and herbs are suitable for this project. Dried flowers and herbs will become dull and won't let as much light through the suncatcher. Plant material should be flat. Items can be pressed in previous session. If the items are wet or damp, mildew may form in suncatcher. Harvest at a time of day, or previous days when plant material will be drier.

**REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

Ascencio, J. (2019). Horticultural therapy as an intervention for schizophrenia: A review. *Alternative and Complementary Therapies*, 25(4), 194-200.

Crafting with Laura. (2023). [How to make a pressed flower suncatcher](#). [YouTube].

National Institute of Mental Health. (2024). Schizophrenia. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/schizophrenia>

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.