

Activity: Creative Expression Goal: Physical Populations: All

## TH Activity Plan – Don't Pick the Flowers, Draw Them

Text by Maureen Bethel, BA, Bed, CAE & Lesley Fleming, HTR

Photo by Science Photo Library



**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will spend time in nature, drawing a plant that appeals to them.

**THERAPEUTIC GOALS:**

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Translate visual information into artwork; expand knowledge about botanical art

**Physical:** Strengthen pincer grip; strengthen fine motor skills

**Psychological/Emotional:** Identify a plant of interest; communicate why it is appealing; connect with nature

**Sensory:** Practice being outside & tolerating outdoor weather conditions; lengthen time/stamina using pincer grip; use a variety of art mediums with varying textures

**Social:** Share artwork with group; communicate why plant resonated with them; compliment others on their artwork

**Materials**

Paper, pencils, pencil crayons, markers, charcoal, paint + brushes,

Plant specimens (if unable to access outdoor green space)

Wipes

**STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:**

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Facilitator identifies and confirms safety & accessibility for outdoor session in garden, meadow, forest or lawn. Art kits can be assembled prior to session.
2. Facilitator begins session by enthusiastically introducing the artwork-focus of drawing plants. Participants are guided around the green space and introduced to various plants for sensory engagement (touching, viewing, smelling). Facilitators can pass around potted plants, as sample specimens including their plant parts for ease of accessibility or due to weather need to meet indoors.
3. Facilitator presents a variety of art mediums like pencils, charcoal, paint (in individual cases), markers. Or kits with art media, paper previously prepared & given to participants.
4. Facilitator asks participants to share ideas about how art materials can be used to provide opportunities for communicating & problem-solving. Prompts can include how to create art effects & ideas for art techniques like shadowing, color gradation, steps in completing an art piece (drawing first, painting later).
5. The discussion of botanical artwork can include realistic vs abstract art & why creating art vs picking plants/flowers can be good for the planet.
6. A review of session rules re boundaries, session's duration, goal of completing the artwork in session, & avoidance of toxic plants should occur prior to having participants begin their plant-art experience. An indoor option may be advisable in inclement, cold weather or where natural areas are inaccessible.
7. Concluding the session, participants share their artwork with the group. Facilitator asks each person what attracted them to the particular plant they drew. Participants are encouraged to listen politely, provide positive comments & compliments to group members.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** Botanical art has a long history. Incorporating it into therapeutic sessions can provide creative avenues for the hard work of therapy including addressing mental health and well-being

objectives. Art can help create a space for self-reflection and mindfulness. A plant art experience can help restore mind-body-spirit balance, further supporting the ongoing healing process.

Goals in the physical health domain can include strengthening pincer grip, hand muscles, and hand-eye-motor integration which may be applicable for people recovering from stroke, hand injuries, or those with other physiological needs. Accommodations may be appropriate including wide diameter pencils and paintbrushes, hand-on hand drawing with therapist, and shorter duration for drawing activity based on stamina and therapeutic goals. Other THAD activities that include physical therapeutic goals and accommodation may be informative. Refer to [Adaptive Gardening: Repetitive Motion Disorders](#), and [Origami Calendar with Seeds and Pressed Flowers](#),

Artwork can be a sensory-focused platform for therapeutic interventions. Expanding sensory tolerance to textures, outdoor weather conditions, different art mediums (paint, charcoal) or expanding duration for holding art tools and stress they may have on hands, fingers, or joints can be an adjunct intervention to physical or occupational therapy.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:** Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Art materials should be non-toxic (paint). Nature area should be free of hazards. Sun protection is recommended, particularly for people on medication, some of which cause sensitivity to sunlight.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** Botanical art is described as both artistic and scientific using different types of media. It can include any type of plant and any part of the plant – seeds, leaves, flowers, or roots. Botanical illustration vs botanical art, the former typically a realistic rendering of the plant and it's color and form, can be adapted to suit the session, artist or plant. The [American Society of Botanical Artists](#) is a good source of information as is [Botanical Arts & Artists website](#) which identifies women as important botanical artists – Maria Sibylla Merian (16-47-1717), Amazon rainforest artist Margaret Mee (1909-1998), and Marianne North (1830-1890).

Accommodations and related activities: For participants who may find it frustrating to draw a plant, the use of pre-drawn or adult coloring book pages may be helpful. Related activities that can be used in this session or subsequent ones might include an art show, a workshop(s) on botanical arts, or use of notecards for artwork that can be sold for fundraising or given as a thank-you to someone special (examples below).

#### REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Canadian Art Therapy Association (2024). [What is art therapy?](#)

Hammond, L. (2024). [Drawing flowers: A helpful hint for beautiful florals](#). Artists Network.

Wlodarczyk, A. (2022). [18 helpful fine motor ideas and 4 ways to reinforce quality craftsmanship in art](#). The Art of Education University.



Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2024.

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