

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

TH Activity Plan – Dried Herb Wreaths

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Materials

Small, 4-6" diameter grapevine or honeysuckle wreaths (purchase or make from vines collected outdoors)

Dried herbs, such as yarrow, lavender, mint, rosemary, chive flowers or other dried seed pods, flowers, & plant materials (approx. 6-12 cups), sorted in individual bowls

Thick craft glue, such as Mod Podge, which holds as it dries
Bright colored plates or plastic lids to contrast the white glue
Chopsticks or popsicle sticks for glue application

Ribbon for bows, *optional*
Florist wire for hanging wreath (6" length)
Heavy duty pruners (facilitator use only)
Safety scissors
Tray (1 per participant)
Clean-up wipes
Disposable or garden gloves

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will create wreaths using dried plant materials.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Physical: Build hand dexterity; exercise fine motor skills; build stamina

Psychological/Emotional: Express self creatively by engaging in hobby; boost self-esteem; build confidence through choicemaking

Sensory: Engage olfactory and tactile senses with herbal materials; enhance mood through sensory stimulation

Social: Create sense of belonging within peer group; cultivate new social connections; practice sharing materials with others

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Prep:** Harvest and prepare dried herbs (see Drying and Pressing Herbs activity). Make a demonstration wreath so participants have an idea what to expect. Securely attach the florist wire through the wreaths to make hangers. Place glue out on plates for easy access to dipping. Trim herbs and flower stems so they will fit securely against the wreath. Prepare a tray of the following materials for each participant: grapevine wreath with the florist wire already attached as a hanger, glue plates, and several chopsticks for glue application. Set bowls of herbs and flowers on the table. Have cutting tools, such as pruners and safety scissors, on hand (facilitator should supervise use).
2. Facilitator begins by demonstrating how to make a wreath. Show the completed example.
3. Invite participants to choose the plant materials to use for their wreaths and place on their trays. Encourage sharing of materials.
4. Tuck woody-stemmed herbs into the grapevine first to create a backdrop along the grapevine, with largest material at base to give visual balance.
5. Use a chopstick to gather glue from the plate and apply it to the back of these foundational herbs. Or, dip the woodier stemmed herbs into the glue directly before wedging them into the wreath.
6. Next, glue the smaller plant materials and flowers to the wreath at the top and around the larger materials. Reassure participants that the glue will dry clear.
7. Finished wreaths may be covered as much or as little according to personal preference. Allow glue to dry overnight.
8. Add bows if desired.
9. Adjust floral wire hangers as needed.

10. Invite participants to show off their creations and share their intentions for their wreaths (such as gift to someone, hang somewhere, etc.).

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This activity can be adapted to suit various populations and their therapeutic goals. Wreaths can be decorated as simple or elaborate as desired. For higher functioning groups, provide alternative wreath forms, such as straw or metal forms, or offer florist wire, hot glue guns, or floral pins for attaching plant materials onto wreath forms, in addition to the craft glue. Provide additional seasonal embellishments, such as preserved moss, pinecones, and ornaments, for holidays and increased opportunities for creative expression, as appropriate. Present this activity as a multi-session program, where participants grow plant materials for wreath making and floral arranging uses in the garden, harvest and dry these plant materials for use, and then use the plant materials for wreath making. For added inspiration, share online pictures and books on wreathmaking, notably with grapevine type wreaths, with participants to encourage creative expression. Encourage participants to share past knowledge on wreathmaking and floral arranging with others and assist each other with wreath decoration. Display participant-made wreaths in a community area or give participants the option to keep their wreaths in a personal living space.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: For participants with tactile sensitivities or sensitive skin prone to bruising or cuts, use gloves to protect hands. Cutting tools or sharp items may not be approved for some populations (incarcerated, at risk youth, dementia). Supervise safe handling of materials and equipment, particularly glue and cutting tools, during the activity. Monitor participants with tendencies to place non-food items in the mouth.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: The application of the glue can often be a challenging aspect of this activity for participants with fine motor challenges. Have several sticks for each participant so they may throw away old sticks as the glue picks up debris and foliage. For participants with low vision and other visual impairments, using the colored plastic lids/plates/bowls is important so that it will contrast with the white glue. These individuals may have difficulty distinguishing white glue on a white background. Wreaths can be used as gifts for different holidays or events, such as birthdays, caregiver appreciation gifts, Fourth of July, etc. Or, wreaths can be sold at craft fairs or other events, and monies raised from sales can be used to fund garden activities. Participants can be involved in the planning of sales events, as appropriate. Silk or faux flowers and other materials should be used sparingly, with an emphasis on using nature-based materials from the garden right outside. Clean-up following wreathmaking activities can be significant; involve participants in clean-up as possible and/or do this activity in an appropriate outdoor setting on a nice-weather day to minimize clean-up.

Refer to THAD *Drying and Pressing Herbs* activity plan.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Estep, P. (2022). DIY grapevine wreath with wild vines. [Hearthandvine.com](https://hearthandvine.com).

<https://hearthandvine.com/make-wild-grapevine-wreath/>

Martha Stewart Editors. (2022). How to make a wreath in any style, from grapevine to metal.

<https://www.marthastewart.com/8305967/how-make-wreath-any-style>

Murray, B.R. (2022). Door prize wreaths. Martha Stewart.

<https://www.marthastewart.com/8254437/miniature-dried-floral-spring-wreath-how-to>

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.