

Activity: Creative Expression Goal: Sensory Populations: All

## TH Activity Plan – Flower Vase Bouquet: Hand Held Method

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Photo by J. Fleming



**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will make an easy flower bouquet for their personal use and enjoyment.

**THERAPEUTIC GOALS:**

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Learn about specific flowers & how to easily arrange them in a cut flower arrangement; career exploration in the floral industry

**Physical:** Use pruners; maintain pincer grip and hand strength

**Psychological/Emotional:** Improve mood; experience joy from nature

**Sensory:** Select flowers with sensory qualities (visual, olfactory, tactile)

**Social:** Share the hand held bouquet flower arrangement with others; improve the mood of a friend by gifting the flowers to them; compliment group members on their creative arrangement

**Materials**

Cutting garden, pruners, pails w water

Cut flowers:  
daisies, roses, salvia, echinacea,  
mums, wildflowers, snap  
dragon, stock, delphinium

Greenery: ferns, eucalyptus,  
ruscus, dusty miller

Floral preservative,  
water/watering can, individual  
vases

Latex/non-latex gloves, wipes

**STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:**

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials. Have sample vase arrangement in work area. Prepare flowers if they are cut ahead of session using floral preservative in water.
2. Facilitator begins session by emphasizing the ease of making this flower arrangement which will look beautiful. If the session includes cutting the flowers in a garden, this step is described, pruners & pails distributed, flowers that will work well in the arrangement are identified, and the harvesting walk takes place.
3. When flowers/greenery arrive at work area, each participant is given a vase to which they add water & floral preservative.
4. The group observes & discusses the assortment of plant materials, noticing that they have varying lengths of stems. Facilitator describes the method of arranging the plants. Each person puts into their hand the flowers & greenery they like, arranging them so that the height of each is the way they want it to sit in the vase.
5. Holding the bouquet, it is measured to the vase, determining the height the bouquet will sit in the vase, identifying stems that are too long. Stems are cut to the length that will allow them to sit in the vase as they are arranged in participant's hand. Remove leaves below water.
6. Group admires each bouquet/arrangement, commenting on the variety of plants, the combinations of colors/heights/visual impact & complimenting the creator.
7. Facilitator shares cut flower care tips (see below) and describes best method of transporting vase in a vehicle to avoid spills.
8. Discussions on relevant topics to the group can conclude the session: careers in the floral industry, creating bouquets on limited budgets, flowers that are fragrant/soft/tall, and nature elements that can be included in bouquets like pinecones, seed pods.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** Creating beauty can be a powerful activity appropriate for most populations. This activity can integrate therapeutic goals into it with the most obvious one being improving mood and finding joy in nature, these offering emotional/psychological outcomes. As a tabletop TH activity or one delivered from a plant cart in a hospital, hospice or senior residence, it can be done one on one in a short period of time (if necessary and based on client's attention span) or extended to include discussion or reminiscing about flowers. Making the bouquet in a vase can be passive or active depending on the participant. For those confined to bed, they can verbally select flowers or point to their preferred stems, with facilitator holding the stems, bringing them to the participant to hold and manipulate, working together to determine ideal height measuring it for the vase, then cutting - hand on hand, or by facilitator. Small arrangements with a few stems work well in these settings as do plastic or non-breakable vases.

Social goals can focus on harvesting flowers as a group, consideration for not overharvesting, and sharing available plants in the cutting garden or as offered in the session, as well as gifting the bouquet to others.

For youth, people incarcerated or with developmental delays, this activity can start discussions of career paths in the flower industry, retail horticulture nurseries or stores. Limited number of jobs are available as floral designers however, other jobs in the industry exist such as floriculturist, production manager, garden associate, floral merchandiser and wholesale vendor (American Floral Endowment, n.d.). Discussions can lead to ideas for positive hobbies like gardening and growing flowers, or the cost of making or gifting a bouquet, using recycled containers like mason jars, pickle jars, pitchers or other interesting glassware. Cost of these bouquets can be reasonable even when flowers are purchased at grocery stores.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:** Care with floral preservative, flowers with excessive sap or sharp leaves should be discussed. Toxic plants should not be included. If plants are cut from the garden as part of the session, look for insects and remove them prior to use in bouquets.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** **Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.** The ideal scenario would be to have a garden from which participants can cut flowers for their bouquets. Many urban farms and community gardens offer a cutting garden with reasonably priced flowers. Alternatively, farmers' markets, participant's home gardens or facility gardens may be able to provide some, not necessarily all items (greenery and flowers) for these vase arrangements. Select flowers that last well as cut flowers and do not drop excessive petals and consider cosmos, gladiolus, sunflowers, zinnias, asters, strawflower, catmint, snap dragon, stock, delphinium and mums.

Bouquets with a showstopping flower that can be the star of the bouquet can reduce the number of stems in the bouquet because they are typically larger in size. These can include alliums, ornamental lilies, hydrangea, dahlias and peonies, the latter often has ants in blossoms and need to be submerged in water to remove them. Suggested greenery – ferns (tree fern, sword fern, plumosa), eucalyptus (popular but some may be sensitive to the scent, some may have sap), ruscus, and dusty miller (silver color very popular in holiday arrangements).

Tips for caring for cut flowers include: “using a clean vase, refreshing/changing water daily, re-cutting or removing stems that are spent/past, keeping out of direct sunlight or hot conditions and careful transportation of arrangement so that it doesn't tip and spill water in vehicle” (O'Connor & Fleming, 2024).

#### **REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

American Floral Endowment. (n.d.). Careers in floriculture. <https://endowment.org/careers/>

Mattia, N. & Baker, N. (2023). [The best flowers to plant in your cutting garden to create stunning homegrown bouquets](#). Martha Stewart.com.

O'Connor, E. & Fleming, L. (2024). [Garden style floral arrangement](#). *Therapeutic Horticulture Activities Database*. 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.