

## TH Activity Plan – Foliage Bouquet

Text by Lesley Fleming, HTR

Photo by J. Fleming & Thursd



**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will design & make a bouquet from leaves & other foliage.

**THERAPEUTIC GOALS:**

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Expand knowledge of plants, variegation in plants; learn new skill

**Physical:** Maintain hand strength, pincer grip & muscles used for cutting

**Psychological/Emotional:** Expand personal creativity; enhance mood

**Sensory:** Process sensory inputs from foliage stems; practice self-regulation limiting the amount of materials collected

**Social:** Work cooperatively with others or partner; share garden space

**Materials**

Vases, bottle (glass or plastic)  
& containers to gather plants

Snips, pruners, scissors,  
disinfectant

Water can, gloves, wipes



**STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:**

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Grow & maintain plants where possible, ahead of session. Identify outdoor site where foliage can be cut & gathered. Gather other materials. Make a sample bouquet.
2. Facilitator begins session by having sample foliage bouquet on table. Individual stems & leaves can be available for participants to touch, smell & look at as they arrive. Facilitator has group pass stems to each other, asking for descriptions of style, form, color of each as a prompt for thinking about design elements (wispy, weeping, dark green, feathery). Other design principles can be shared.
3. Facilitator describes, then demonstrates bouquet-making technique of [hand-held bouquet](#) where holding stems together, then cutting all stems the same length are placed in a vase.
4. Prior to going outside to cut foliage, preferably from plants grown by participants at facility, tips on disinfecting snips are reviewed as are tips for foliage preparation (remove lower leaves so not in water, place in water quickly, cut into woody stems to allow water to be absorbed). Snips, vases, plastic containers & gloves are distributed.
5. Outdoor walk begins, with set time limit on segment where foliage is gathered. Other restrictions are mentioned if appropriate (stay on facility grounds, do not cut flowers, avoid poisonous plants).
6. Once back at work area, participants begin the design of foliage bouquets, then the finished bouquet are placed in vases. Group admires each other's creations, sharing tips on plants & design. Positive reinforcement encouraged from participants to each other.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** Functional physical requirements for this TH session includes use of hands manipulating and cutting plant stems, pincer grip, and wrist strength. These involve fine motor skills. Gripping and manipulating snips or foliage branches requires strength and endurance, then coordination and stability as cutting occurs. Each of these use precise movements. Biceps, triceps, forearms, shoulders and back will also be used when cutting plant materials growing in gardens.

Physical therapists use the term activity modification, a strategy for preventing injury, especially from [repetitive motion tasks](#) (Bembry, 2025). These may be appropriate during this TH session including minimizing time spent in one position or task, changing positions frequently, stretching throughout task, using a claw technique where the non-dominant hand stabilizes the cutting hand, use of universal cuffs to provide extra support, and using proper tools (sharp tools for example). Other accommodations for compromised hand functions can include working with a partner, selecting thinner diameter stems that are easier to cut, placing cut stems in container to avoid holding multiple stems or causing muscles to tire, or using pre-cut stems.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.**

Avoid poisonous plants and their foliage, or ones with thorns or excessive sap. Monstera, eucalyptus, crotons, and nandina are poisonous to humans. Myrtle spurge and some types of myrtles can cause skin irritation. Use of gloves is recommended. Some facilities will not allow glass containers; substitute with plastic ones. Sharps may not be appropriate for all populations; pre-cut stems or have facilitator cut ends of stem.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** Budget-friendly foliage bouquets can provide an effective TH session. Most facilities will have plants from which greenery can be cut and used for bouquets. Foliage bouquets tend to last longer than floral bouquets, another budget-friendly benefit.

Tips on selecting foliage for bouquets, and cutting from shrubs, trees and other plants can integrate horticultural knowledge on plants, growth and regrowth cycles and pruning techniques. Using woody ornamental stems should be included. Florists suggest making a cut up the woody stem to increase surface area for absorbing water, not smashing stems which can cause harm to plant.

Greenery from the garden can be all sizes and shapes as can the bouquets. Foliage used in these bouquets can include: sage, fennel, ferns, laurel, rosemary, Italian ruscus, tree fern, scented geraniums, magnolia, camelia, gardenia, forsythia, cedar and conifers. [Foliage with interesting green markings](#): calathea, bok choy (pale & dark green leaves), and variegated leaves from pittosporum, dogwood, and *salvia officinalis* 'tricolor'. [Foliage with color](#) – dusty miller, kale, purple cabbage, Japanese maples, Chinese pistache, Eastern redbud, fescue grass, lamb's ear, licorice plant, sweet potato, blood leaf, polka dot plant, and blue spruce branches.

Design tips can include using a variety of colors, leaf shapes, use of upright and weeping stems, or bouquets made of monochromatic color or one type of stem. Introduction of bouquet and [flower arrangement styles](#) like geometric, circular, round, asymmetrical, and equilateral can extend this session and may appeal to wellness groups or as knowledge for floral career exploration. Discussion might include how to incorporate items like flowers, vegetables, dried grasses or other decorative elements and use of floral picks.

Tips for caring for cut flowers, applicable to foliage bouquets, 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). The foliage bouquet session can be held indoors, using pre-cut, purchased or dried foliage.

**REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

American Institute of Floral Designers. (2025). [Resource center – design techniques](#). AIFDSite.org.  
Bembry, E. (2025). [Repetitive motion injuries: Simple stretches for flower farmers](#). Rooted Farmer.com.  
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services. (2012). [Assessment of functional skills occupational therapy and physical therapy](#). Florida Department of Education.  
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TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2025.