

Activity: Propagation Goal: Sensory Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Geranium Propagation

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Materials

Pruners, scissors
Small plastic tub/vase
Room temperature water
Gloves, wipes
Clear plastic drink cups
Plastic 3” pots
Container soil with added perlite
Small trowel
Pencil
Source of geraniums
Optional: grow light

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will propagate geranium from pre-existing plants to have flowers inside during the winter months.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Become informed about different methods of plant propagation observing how roots are formed in water

Physical: Strengthen muscles & fitness walking to retrieve plants for propagation; maintain fine motor hand skills by handling & cutting stems

Psychological/Emotional: Reminisce about flowers & past events enjoying fresh air, outdoor time, nature & gardens

Sensory: Experience colors, smells & textures of different flowers in the garden

Social: Talk about the horticultural technique with group; consider forming a garden club; or plan a plant sale.

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Locate a source of geraniums already growing in planters or in garden areas. Obtain pictures of geraniums to show to participants. Fill small plastic tub with lukewarm water.
2. Facilitator begins session by inviting participants to go for a nature walk looking for geraniums. Show pictures of flower and plant so participants can identify geraniums.
3. Facilitator explains the reason for the walk and helps participants set up a propagation station - clear plastic cup with water half filled, soil and pots set up for transplanting.
4. Begin the walk looking for the target plants. When selecting a stem for cutting make sure there is at least 2 leaf nodes, at least 4” long. Cut just above a leaf node and immediately place cutting in water.
5. After gathering sufficient cuttings for each participant (at least two each) bring clippings back to work area that was set up earlier. Remove all but top leaves.
6. Each participant will have clippings to divide for both water propagation and soil propagation.
7. Help participants remove bottom leaves and place clippings in water filled plastic cups, making sure that leaves do not come in contact with the water.
8. Fill 3” pots with soil mixture, using the end of a pencil to make a hole for cutting. Place clipping in soil and gently tap soil around the cutting. Gently water the cutting so soil is saturated but not soggy.
9. Place cups and soil near a light source but not in direct sunlight. Optional to use a grow light.

10. Once the roots of the water propagated stems have grown (2 to 3 weeks), they can be planted in 3” pots taking care in handling the new roots.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Activity is appropriate for all populations except for people living with mid to late-stage dementia where handling sharp pruners/scissors, and/or placing items in mouths are a concern.

As the activity is progressing, interweave discussions of how the two different methods of propagation lead to the same end result - a healthy new plant. This can be extrapolated to how different people learn and live in different ways. Checking in on the growth of roots can help foster discussions on how people don't often see themselves growing emotionally/socially/cognitively just as we don't see roots growing in the soil but roots growing in the water can be seen. Transferring this knowledge to what is happening with the soil-based plants can be a verbal and cognitive exercise, strengthening cognitive function with an abstract concept. If measuring outcomes is part of this therapeutic horticulture session, facilitator can measure the degree of comprehension by asking participant to explain or repeat the root growth concept in water and soil, one visually obvious the other not.

Accommodations may be necessary for some individuals and groups. These can include lowering hanging baskets to the participant's level, seated at tables or wheelchairs. Larger scissors can ease grip issues, arthritis or hand weakness. Visual impairments – facilitator can encourage sense of touch for finding nodes, determining length of stem, finding water in cup then placing cutting in it. Use of a tray where all materials and equipment are contained for people with vision challenges will support their propagation work. For people with mobility impairments, the walk locating the mother geraniums can be done indoors, with container plants located closer at hand, requiring some physical exertion walking or using walker or wheelchair without over-exertion, in environment participants are comfortable walking about.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Take care in handling sharp pruners/scissors. Ensure outdoor pathways are free of tripping hazards.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: The activity may give rise to discussion of other gardening methods and perhaps the formation of a gardening club or regular program for likeminded gardeners to get together and socialize. Propagation of plants may have the objective of making gifts for loved ones or for plant sales.

Geraniums are considered easy-to-propagate plants and are visually appealing because of their shapes and many colors - pink, red, orange, purple, white. There are many types - ivy geraniums, scented geraniums, zonal and regal geraniums, all part of the genus *Pelargonium*. The genus *Geranium* is a related group of plants known as cranesbill or hardy geraniums. It was botanist Charles L'Heritier who distinguished the two species 250 years ago, adapting Linnaeus' classification. Typically grown as annuals in USDA hardiness zones 1-9, they can be propagated and cared for indoors making this TH activity a live plant session in winter months.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

McCollom, H. (2023). How to plant and grow scented geraniums. Better Homes & Gardens.

<https://www.bhg.com/gardening/plant-dictionary/herb/scented-geranium/>

My Geranium.com. (n.d.). The world of geraniums: Their varieties and uses. *Pelargonium* for Europe GbR.

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Nicols, M. (2023). Are geraniums perennials? Plus how to overwinter them. Better Homes & Gardens.

<https://www.bhg.com/are-geraniums-perennial-7557188>

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.