THAD Therapeutic Horticulture Activity Database

Activity: Creative Expression Goal: Sensory Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Hapa-zome Leaf Dye

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Photo by S. Sterling, String & Twig, & Southeast Fiber Arts Alliance

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will create prints and patterns using a Japanese technique Hapa-zome by pounding flowers that dye the fabric or paper.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Learn about plants as dyes; research dye-rich plants or make hypotheses & experiment with available items

Physical: Exercise fine motor skills & hand-eye coordination; build muscle control; enhance focus *note this is a loud activity

Psychological/Emotional: Raise self-esteem; increase physical activity to increase endorphins & boost mood, energize & reduce stress

Sensory: Build tactile sensitivity from hammering feedback/noise; practice response to loud auditory inputs & olfactory stimulation from crushed plants

Social: Expand collaborative skills through group problem-solving/experimentation; give & take advise as mechanisms for developing & maintaining relationships

Materials

Collected dye-rich flowers & leaves in various colors

White or light-colored natural fabric (linen, hemp, jute work best)

Rubber mallets

Scissors

White note cards or cardstock

Optional for adaptations: ear muffs, rulers, chopsticks

Wipes

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing hapa-zome concept & technique. Participants go outdoors to collect flowers & leaves that can be used for natural plant dyes.
3. Beginning with light colored fabric with good absorbency (linen, hemp or jute… cotton not as absorbent), participants lay plants on fabric and begin pounding, using rubber mallets. Using hands, chopsticks or rulers can assist in holding fabric or plants in place.
4. Paper can also be used for making cards or artwork.
5. Discussions related to noise sensitivities, self-regulation, connections to nature, plants providing materials for housing/food/art/medicine, sense of self, normalizing feelings of inadequacies can be explored.
6. Completing artwork after drying can include hanging art, notecards, bookmarks, framed work or other. Sharing completed work can support self-esteem, inclusion and group dynamics.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This therapeutic horticulture activity provides opportunities for educational and therapeutic elements and is appropriate for all ages. It can also be multi-sessions if gathering the plant materials is done in one session and then the plant pounding/creation of hapa-zome a second session.

Adaptations can include holding fabric or plants in place with rulers or chopsticks. Working in pairs can promote cooperation. Working on flat surfaces, standing or seated, and height of working surface depending on mobility or other physical challenges can be modified to suit participants.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Plants should be non-toxic, avoiding ones with excessive sap that can cause sensitivity to some. Safety protocols for the pounding action should include mindfulness about hitting fingers or hands and the use of tape, chopsticks or rulers can be encouraged. The loud noises may be difficult for some (earmuffs available), and consideration for others re prolonged pounding noises can be part of consideration for others.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: The history of hapa-zome is part of this activity, allowing for cognitive educational component where connecting with plants includes understanding how plants are used in various capacities in addition to enjoying a plant-rich environment. The sensory elements can provide flexibility to include practice responding to loud noises, or the other extreme, being considerate of others re auditory disturbances. The olfactory sensory stimulation is heightened when plants are pounded releasing stronger scent from their oils. This can address olfactory dysfunction where participants may have diminished sense of smell and can introduce memory-scent connections. Plants that are rich in fragrance and natural dye compounds include geraniums, chrysanthemums, marigolds, aster, nasturtium, hibiscus and fall leaves (maples, red oak etc.).

Integrating the historical context of this technique can provide discussion points for tolerance, learning from others, how to creatively express oneself, the physical release of endorphins through physical activity and positive leisure pursuits.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Behan, B. (2018). *Botanical Inks; Plant-to-Print Dyes, Techniques and Projects.* Quadrille.
Fleming, L. (2022). The relevancy of memory-smell connections to people-plant programming. *Cultivate* 2(2). https://www.flhhn.com/uploads/1/3/8/6/138696150/spring_2022.cultivate.flhhn.pdf

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.