

Activity: Creative Expression Goal: Sensory Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Holiday Pine Bough Door Swag

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Photo by Twainspireyou & Farm House 5540



Materials

Greenery that will keep for at least a week (pine, cedar, wax myrtle, holly)

Recycled twine, floral wire

Variety of bows, ribbons, non-breakable ornaments



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will create a holiday door swag using live pine branches and other greenery.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Follow verbal & visual directions in multi-step activity

Physical: Improve physical performance handling plant materials

Psychological/Emotional: Use reminiscing as a tool for emotional wellbeing & joy

Sensory: Practice hand-eye coordination; strengthen sense of proprioception (body awareness)

Social: Create a sense of belonging participating in a group activity; renew connections to holidays/family memories, group members

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials & decorate work area with greenery that will be used in session. Make bows.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing & explaining the steps for making holiday pine door swags. Each person will make their own door swag using 3 types of greenery, twine, non-breakable ornament & ribbon.
3. Distributing each type of greenery one at a time, and discussing, touching, smelling each, (pine bough, cedar, wax myrtle or other) the 3 pieces of greenery are laid one on top of another, placing the exposed stems together at “top” of the swag farthest from person, with the smallest greenery on top. Tie the stem ends at the top using twine. Make a loop with the excess twine (for hanging on a door).
4. Arrange bows & ornaments on a tray or flat box & have participants select the ones they like. Pass each person a pre-cut piece of thin floral wire.
5. Demonstrate how to thread the wire through the ornament & attach the bow/ribbons to the pine door swag. Recommendation- pre-wire bows for ease of attaching to greenery.
6. With the group, have each participant hold up their completed door swag showing off their creation. Because of the variety of bows, ribbons & ornaments, each will be unique. Hang the door swags in the residential facilities, dining halls or on participant’s walkers, wheelchairs, or have each person take theirs home or gift to a friend.

7. Promote social interactions through a group discussion of holiday traditions, decorating family Christmas trees or other related stories can.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Appropriate for most populations, there may be some facilities that will not allow wire or twine (jails, some school settings, mental health secured units, memory care centers). The fragrance, colors and textures of the various greens stimulate the senses, prompting fond memories of holidays past. Though this activity may seem easy with few decorative items, for people living in facilities and who have limited access to craft materials, their sense of pride and accomplishment making a pretty swag is strong and it can be very rewarding for them.

Avoid greenery that has sharp points (same for pinecones if they are used) or sticky sap. Accommodations for some populations: lay greenery on table so work is done on the flat surface. If materials slip, lay materials on top of a towel to prevent it from moving around. Also easier to tie pieces together, attach ornament and bow. For people with visual impairments, encourage them to use sense of touch to place items in place and to wire decorations. This also supports proprioception awareness when visual cues are not used or available.

Incorporating other activities into session like listening to or singing holiday songs (*Oh Christmas Tree Oh Christmas Tree, Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree, O Tannenbaum*), making tree ornaments, passing around and modeling a Christmas tree hat, arranging left-over boughs into a vase, bucket or basket, or making doorknob greenery decorations (photo p.1) can be fun. Or host a holiday party with cranberry juice and pinecone shaped cookies to further the plant connections.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitator should have pruners available in case boughs need to be cut but restrict use. Pre-cut floral wire may be sharp for some. Verbal warning of this can be made in session and for seniors or others with fragile skin, assistance can be given to prevent skin injury. Obtain prior identification of participants with allergies to pine or other greenery. Fake greenery can be substituted but being in same room with greenery may cause flare-ups. Check that greenery itself does not have sharp pieces (holly for example can be sharp). Do not use greenery with berries; some may be toxic or tempting to put in mouths.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: A variety of pine trees are used for Christmas trees including Scotch pine, Norfolk pine, Eastern White pine, Ponderosa pine, Jack pine, as well as spruce, fir and even houseplants. The *Junior Master Gardener* handbook (p.112) describes conifer's three main categories as firs (with short blunt needles), pines (bundles at the base), and spruce (with 4 sided sharp ended needles).

Free pine bough off-cuts are usually available at stores selling the trees. Twine is usually on the ground, available for recycling.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Art Therapy (2023). How art therapy helps people with dementia and Alzheimer's.

<http://www.arttherapyblog.com/art-therapy-seniors/art-therapy-helps-people-with-dementia-alzheimers/#.VIMsj3arSUK>

Coniferous Forest. (2023). Pine. <https://www.coniferousforest.com/plants-trees/pine>

Lindberg, B. & Cregg, B. (2023). Real Christmas trees: Which one is right for you? *Michigan State University MSU Extension*. https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/choosing_the_right_christmas_tree

Nix, S. (2022). 13 most common North American pine species. *Treehugger*.

<https://www.treehugger.com/most-common-north-american-pine-species-1341866>

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TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2023.