

Activity: Creative Expression Goal: Cognitive Populations: All but dementia

## TH Activity Plan – Houseplant Beading

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**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants choose a plant they wish to take care of and watch grow, placing beads at each node of plant, creating their own “plant jewelry” for houseplants.

### THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Choose the proper size bead that will fit appropriately over the stem and allow for plant growth

**Physical:** Use fingers to pick up beads from the bowl/table then carefully thread the bead onto the plant stem

**Psychological/Emotional:** Recall special memories of houseplants or herbs from the past where family or friends were involved; nurture plant growth

**Sensory:** Stimulate tactile and visual senses by selecting colorful and textural beads of choice; touch plants

**Social:** Participate or initiate conversations about this plant jewelry activity; participate in storytelling

### Materials

Non-toxic house plants or herbs

Multi-colored beads

Bowl

Gloves, wipes

### STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials, considering safety of participants working who will be working with small beads.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing house plants including herbs in the work area that will be used. An explanation of plant beading takes place, with participants touching the plants for sensory & suppleness testing.
3. Participants choose the plant they will work with. Multi-colored beads are distributed.
4. Participants begin threading beads onto plants being careful not to break stems.
5. Once completed, the group shows & shares stories about their plant jewelry, reminisces of family-plant connections, or stories/storytelling about plants.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** Houseplants and herbs kept in indoor spaces are easy to find plant specimens and can often bring joy to those around them. The TH activity can be presented as an optional session, where inviting people to join informally can provide a sense of ease, individual empowerment or decision-making, and community building without pressure. For settings where socialization, getting to know others in residential or recreational facilities, or feeling comfortable in their surroundings can be challenging. People who are shy, introverted, not as verbal, or lacking social skills may find this format of participation appealing. Passive engagement – watching the activity, listening to others share their stories may be the extent of their interactions, and may be a first step in subsequent TH activities. Having the option of participating in the activity and choosing to decorate the houseplant or herb used indoors with various bead options offers a relatively easy

physical project, one that is easy to understand cognitively while providing a chance to express themselves creatively. The participant may choose to take the plant home with extra beads and continue working on the project as it continues to grow. Plant beading is not recommended for people living with dementia (stage where putting items in mouth is a possibility). Young children may also be tempted to put beads in mouth.

Physical goals: Using fingers and hands to touch and choose the bead for the activity as well as using hand/eye co-ordination to thread the bead onto the stem of the plant.

Social health goals: Conversations created among others in the group in regards to favorite plants, smells, colors from a time gone by. Plants can remind people of natural items that bring joy and experiences where people-plant connections were special and important (grandma's African violet, amaryllis bulb planted in garden after Christmas, rosemary herb used in bread making).

Psychological health goals: Memory recall by stimulating the senses and practice nurturing skills while watching growth of plant.

Emotional health goals: Positive conversations, creating positive mood, participating in TH event with others.

Vocational health goals: Growing/harvesting/grafting own plants and selling at markets.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:** Facilitator needs to select non-toxic plants, and ensure there are no skin sensitivities or allergies to plants, checking with staff prior to session. Latex or non-latex gloves can be used so that everyone can participate. Facilitator should offer an alternative activity to participants with PICA or other ailments where digesting the materials may be an issue or where beads may be a temptation to put in mouths (dementia or young children).

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** Plant toxicity is defined as producing a harmful reaction in humans or animals if ingested or touched in moderate amounts. Reactions can include skin irritation, allergic reaction, dermatitis or internal poisoning. People react differently when coming in contact with a toxic plant with each person having their own level of sensitivity.

This activity has been done with goldfish plant (*Columnnea nematanthus*) purchased at a grocery store. Its pliable stems allow the beads to be threaded onto it, and its goldfish shaped blossoms invite discussion and observation. Herbs are also recommended for this therapeutic horticulture activity. They are available throughout the year at grocery and plant stores, often used indoors as decor and for cooking, and have pliable stems and leaves. Herbs like rosemary, thyme, cilantro, dill and others can be used for houseplant beading.

Houseplants like bamboo, corn plant, jade plant and others may lack the pliability to be used in this context.

**REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

University of Connecticut. (2016). Houseplants: Safe and toxic varieties. College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources. <https://homegarden.cahnr.uconn.edu/factsheets/houseplants-safe-and-toxic-varieties/>

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.