

## TH Activity Plan – Lavender Labyrinth: Multi-Session, Multi-Group Installation

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Photo by Dabah Designs, Houzz & The Farm Stand



**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will plan & plant a labyrinth using lavender plants on the facility's property.

### THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Research labyrinth patterns; determine with group what pattern will work in the settings; plan & organize materials for installation

**Physical:** Plant lavender plants in the labyrinth design; maintain plants once installed (watering, weeding, IPM)

**Psychological/Emotional:** Walk the labyrinth experiencing its calming effect; consider how others will use this outdoor plant experience

**Sensory:** Handle fragrant lavender plants; use gloves if sensory defensiveness exists for soil, water, plants

**Social:** Work cooperatively to select a labyrinth plan as a group decision; construct & install labyrinth as a service project;

### Materials

Plans for the labyrinth installation, permits if required

Lavender plants, path materials per plan

Shovels, water source, trowels, compost

Gloves, wipes

### STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Extensive planning for this garden installation is required: plans, permits, plant selection, budget etc.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing labyrinth project to group(s), and its multi-session installation. Having a lavender plant on hand will interest participants and provide sensory stimulation, giving some idea of the beauty, fragrance and health benefits of both lavender and labyrinths. Discussion of these can be in the first session or interspersed throughout the work/therapeutic sessions.
3. Participants help with researching labyrinth designs, phases of installation, & plant care using a realistic schedule. Work begins following the plan, schedule and adapting to weather constraints. Schedules/materials for multi-sessions and multiple groups need to be well organized like any garden installation.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** Planning and installing a lavender labyrinth is a more complex, multi-session, multi-group undertaking where TH goals can be incorporated. It can be broken into smaller parts (planning phase, planting phase, maintenance phase), with multiple TH groups participating. It would be most impactful if the same participants were involved in all phases, or it can be a project involving many, building sense of community, or undertaken as a service project. This may be feasible for programs where the same participants attend TH sessions over a period of time and where facilitator has experience installing gardens.

The calming effects of labyrinths are well documented. Labyrinths are not mazes, rather a path of circles that lead the participant to the center of the nature installation, providing time to ponder, reflect, free oneself from distractions, and then walk back the same way. It has spiritual connections for some; children and young at heart enjoy the physical exercise and mastery of the labyrinth puzzle with no dead ends. Psychologist Carl Jung described labyrinths as opportunities to rekindle creativity, transition to calmer places, bereaved time to deal with their loss, and a centering activity. There is no one experience but rather many ways to enjoy a labyrinth.

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

Some tools may have sharp components and not appropriate for some populations (pruners, shovels). Some participants may have sensitivity or allergies to lavender so pre-checking this is wise. Gloves should be available particularly for digging, using compost or amendments. Security for tools and plants during the installation should be considered as well as security for the physical space to prevent vandalism or damage. If multiple groups will be working on the site concurrently, ensure adequate supervision, rules in place, and interactions between groups will be cooperative, compatible and free of friction.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** This TH activity will require extensive pre-planning by the facilitator and probably other staff members at the facility (maintenance staff, budget office). The horticultural focus - determine if [lavender](#) (variety of lavender) will thrive in the garden zone with its full sun requirement; the design is workable; plants will be available; irrigation requirements can be met/installed (drip irrigation or other); optimal soil for lavender - sandy loam with good drainage and alkalinity levels; the surface will be level and not a mobility hazard; and other garden installation elements have been considered. Lavender can be damaged by root disease, [phytophthora](#). Consideration: lavender is a fairly short-lived plant of 3-4 years. Grass, pebbles or pea gravel may be selected for the path and this too will require installation and maintenance. Year one of the labyrinth will require plants to mature. Subsequent years will provide more fragrance, color and mature plants.

Lavender has medicinal, cosmetic, olfactory and therapeutic benefits, is drought tolerant, insect resistant, though it is known for attracting butterflies and bees. Participants can research lavender, inputs, maintenance, soil requirements etc. Note that other plants can be substituted however lavender offers sensory attributes that other plants may not. Select a labyrinth that is not too complicated a design and one that does not require too many plants for the available budget. Spacing plants a bit farther apart can ease budget costs. Where no budget for plants exist, labyrinths can be laid out using spray paint, hoses, stones or mulch, these more temporary. Note that the page 1 photo is not using lavender but gives a visual representation of a labyrinth using plants.

**REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

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Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2024.

TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2024.