

**Activity: Creative Expression Goal: Psychological/Emotional**  
**Populations: Medical Conditions, Seniors**

## TH Activity Plan – Leaf Print Cards: Medical Conditions

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**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will make cards by painting and pressing leaves onto cardstock.

**THERAPEUTIC GOALS:**

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Expand sensation & perception related to cognitive deficits; expand processing speed; acquire horticulture knowledge of leaves

**Physical:** Practice motor skills; practice hand eye coordination focused on functioning with one hand or using other strategies

**Psychological/Emotional:** Participate in round table discussion re giving & receiving; identify challenges like fatigue or other health issues related to cognitive injury or deficit

**Sensory:** Cope with tactile defensiveness & change in sensory inputs

**Social:** Experience the act of giving by donating cards to a craft fair, local fundraiser, or other gift giving

**Materials**

Leaves (artemisia, ferns, elderberry, ivy, geranium, prostranthus, persimmon, viburnum etc.)

For each participant: Water-based paint, brushes, water and container for rinsing

Notecards/envelopes, Scratch/practice paper

Damp towels, table coverings

Wipes, gloves, aprons

Whiteboard and pens

**STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:**

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Session may include a walk to gather plant materials or these may be provided. Decide what leaves work best by practicing activity first. Gather all materials & set up work area suitable for painting/spills. Make a sample leaf print card.
2. Facilitator introduces the activity as a community service project; cards will be given to others.
3. Continue session by talking about giving & receiving (Refer to [THAD Cultivating Gratitude](#)). Ask participants about recent giving and/or receiving they have experienced & how it felt. Write these examples on a white board for all to see. Giving & receiving are two sides of the same coin. Engage in conversation about each. Facilitator prompts can include questions like: Why do you give? How can we graciously receive? How do you respond when someone wants to give you something and you do not want to receive it? Many times for folks who have experienced strokes or other disabilities, people can be too helpful or overbearing in their want/need to help. Discuss if this is true for the participants & how they handle it including strategies participants have used & found effective. It may be helpful to practice some answers: 'Thank you I've got this', 'I'd like to try this on my own', 'Will you check back on me in xx minutes to see if I need help?'
4. Show examples of leaf printing on notecards. Explain the sequential steps including possibly a walk outside to gather materials. Optional - introduce the different leaves and their horticultural significance appropriate for cognitive functioning level.

5. Demonstrate painting a leaf on its underside & turning it over onto scratch paper, pressing gently & removing leaf. Show the difference between a lot of paint & a little paint, as well as multiple uses with same /leaf paint.
6. Pass out scratch paper, paintbrushes, leaves & water cups.
7. Have participants practice & play with the leaves & paint. Some may need hand over hand help, others verbal instruction to hold the leaf by the stem & paint with the other hand. Tape can be used to hold leaves down for participants using one hand. Encourage free exploration!
8. When participants are ready, hand out the cardstock cards & make the cards. The scratch practice sheet may be taken home if participants want.
9. Conclude session by cleaning up all materials & having participants reflect on giving & receiving. Did anyone give or receive during this activity? Remind participants where the cards will be donated & for what purpose (craft fair fundraiser etc.).
10. Follow up activity when cards have dried - bundle with ribbon or twine with a tag indicating the donation was from participants from the HT/TH program. Session participants may do this in a subsequent session when cards are dry, or facilitator/volunteers may do this.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** This TH activity has been used with most populations because it provides a platform for integrating therapeutic goals in multiple domains. This adaptation has been developed for people experiencing cognitive challenges due to stroke, traumatic brain injury (TBI), Parkinson's or other neurocognitive disorders. These might also include Alzheimer's disease, frontotemporal degeneration, Huntington's disease, and dementia. HT practitioner Teresia Hazen and speech language pathologist Cathi Lamoreux, in their article [Defining Cognition](#), provide a concise overview of the component parts of cognition and the five major cognitive skills – attention, sensory motor, visual, social emotion and auditory. They cite the *APA Dictionary of Psychology* definition for cognition: “(n). all forms of knowing and awareness, such as perceiving, conceiving, remembering, reason, judging, imagining, and problem solving. Along with affect and conation, it is one of the three traditionally identified components of mind”. These will be used in an activity like THAD activity Leaf Print Cards.

Impacts on cognitive function, evidenced in TBIs and other injuries or deficits can include “trouble with attention, forgetfulness, repetition, difficulty processing, impaired orientation to people, time or place, and problems with communication” (Hazen & Lamoreux, 2024). Facilitators need to be aware of these challenges, and techniques for adapting TH activity for individuals and groups. Assessments for participants may be shared with the facilitator or not, so understanding the characteristics of cognitive challenges and the types of neurocognitive conditions will ensure more effective delivery of TH services. Some groups may be organized by type of cognitive challenge, others may have a variety of diagnoses within a group. Engaging participants in support of therapeutic goals can span speech, sensory integration, physical and social goals as noted in the goal box above.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:** Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Pre-determine plant sensitivities or allergies to leaves or flowers that will be used in session. Some participants may need close supervision of paints. Gloves can be provided if participants want to use them.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** Leaves that work well for this type of printing - artemisia, ferns, elderberry, ivy, geranium, prostranthus, persimmon, and viburnum. Refer to [THAD Leaf Prints](#). Fresh pliable leaves, ribs on leaves and skeletonized leaves, and a variety of shapes and sizes make leaf prints interesting.

**REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

Fleming, L., & Creus, E. (2024). Cultivating gratitude. *University of Florida Therapeutic Horticulture Activities Database*.

Fleming, L. (2024). A practitioner tool: Therapeutic horticulture goals with THAD activity examples: Cognitive domain. *Cultivate*, 5(1).

Hazen, T., & Lamoreux, C. (2024). Defining cognition. *Cultivate*, 5(1).

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