

Activity: Herbs Goal: Sensory Populations: All

## TH Activity Plan – Making Herbal Oils

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**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will make herbal oils using plant ingredients. *These products are for external use only & should not be ingested.*

### THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Practice following instructions; work independently

**Physical:** Practice physical skills of pouring & measuring, involving hand movements; lift light weighted items

**Psychological/Emotional:** Practice healthy lifestyle choices using natural products made from plants

**Sensory:** Demonstrate decreased tactile defensiveness by tolerating activity without adverse reactions

**Social:** Make plant products as a social activity

### Materials

Plastic container (8 oz) with tight lid per person

Plant materials: herb flowers: calendula, chamomile, lavender, lemon verbena, rosemary

Spouted containers with oil: olive, almond, grape seed, apricot, hemp, jojoba

Extra jar(s), strainer

Labels, pens, markers

### STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Grow & harvest plant material prior to session if possible (see list above). Pour oil into sprouted containers for easy use by participants.
2. Facilitator begins session by having participants assist in setting up work areas: each person gathers a tray lined with paper towel & a pint container with lid. The oil is set off to one side for later use.
3. Plant materials are introduced, some of which may have been previously grown by participants. Discuss the herbs & pass them around to smell, touch, (possibly) taste and look at.
4. Participants choose the herbal materials they want in their herbal oil, lightly packing their jars to within 1" of top.
5. Label jars with plant names and participant's name.
6. Participants take turns pouring oil over herbs in their jar. All plant materials should be covered by oil. Facilitator may need to assist with topping off oil in jars.
7. Cover jars tightly & place in a dark place for 2-4 weeks. After this time take jars out & filter herbal material from them using an extra container with strainer. Keep finished herbal oil out of direct sunlight. Shelf life varies depending on the type of oil used.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** Activities that focus on physical skills including hand-eye coordination, hand pincer grip, finger flexibility, and movement of light weight objects can improve & maintain these skills. The activity is appropriate for most populations though may not be as interesting for children. Sensory therapeutic goals with this horticulture theme can include building tolerance to touch & smell senses, demonstrating decreased tactile defensiveness by tolerating activity without adverse reactions & increasing tolerance to non-preferred activities. Individuals with physical or sensory processing sensitivity to oils may prefer to do a different herbal activity that aligns with their therapeutic goals.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:** *These products are for external use only & should not be ingested.* Individuals or populations tempted to put items in mouths should be closely supervised or selected to participate in other activities. Use of gloves will provide protection from oils; some participants may prefer to use gloves if uncomfortable with the tactile sensory inputs involved.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** Shelf life of herbal oil will vary. Indicators that the herbal oil should no longer be used include visual & fragrant changes to oil and cloudy appearance. Discussion of herbs used for a variety of purposes - culinary, medicinal, health products & craft can extend this activity.

Related THAD activities include *Making Herbal Lip Balm, Making Herbal Cream & Making Herbal Bath Salts.*

**REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

Bremness, L. (1994). *The Complete Book of Herbs: A Practical Guide to Growing and Using Herbs.* Studio.  
Goyal, A., Sharma, A., Kaur, J. et al., (2022 Feb). Bioactive-based cosmeceuticals: An update on emerging trends. *Molecules*, 27(3), 828. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8837976/>  
Visser, M. (2018). What every herbalist should know about herbal preparation shelf life. The Herbal Academy. <https://theherbalacademy.com/herbal-preparation-shelf-life/#:~:text=The%20shelf%20life%20of%20oil%2Dbased%20preparations%20made%20with%20dried,6%20months%20to%203%20years.>



Calendula



Chamomile



Lavender

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.