

Activity: Creative Expression Goal: Cognitive Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Pansies in Pumpkins

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will de-seed a pumpkin and plant cold hardy pansies inside the pumpkin.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Practice creative decision-making; practice spatial reasoning; increase focus

Physical: Exercise fine and gross motor skills; strengthen hand muscles

Psychological/Emotional: Increased confidence in abilities; increase stress management

Sensory: Engage visual, olfactory, and tactile stimulation

Social: Increase opportunity for social interaction; increase teamwork skills

Materials

Pansies (3 per participant)
Pumpkin (1 per participant)
Ice cream scoop
(1 per participant)
Potting Soil
Plastic tablecloth (1 per table)
Apron (1 per participant)
Gloves (1 pair per participant)
Paper towels
Vaseline
Spoon for Vaseline
(1 per participant)
Bin for potting soil
Bowl for seeds
(1 per participant)
Bin for washing seeds
Strainer for seeds
Small plastic plate (1 per
pumpkin) to use as saucer for
finished pumpkin.
Watering can or water bottle

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

Pre-Session Preparation:

1. Gather materials.
2. Prepare a sample pansy pumpkin planter.
3. Pre-cut tops of pumpkins (if desired).
4. Poke 3-4 drainage holes into the bottom of each pumpkin.
5. Bottom-water pansies thoroughly the day before the activity.
6. Pre-moisten potting soil.

Placement of Tools and Materials:

- Give each participant an apron.
 - Cover tables with tablecloths.
 - Place pumpkin, scoop, and seed bowl on table in front of each participant.
 - Provide a spoonful of Vaseline on the table within reach of each participant at the appropriate time.
 - Provide potting soil in a bin and pansies in cell packs and place in front of each participant when needed.
1. Facilitator begins session by demonstrating activity to participants.
 2. Using the ice cream scoop or hands, participants will remove seeds and stringy flesh from inside of each pumpkin.
 3. Use paper towels to dry the inside of the pumpkin.
 4. Spread the Vaseline evenly on the inside bottom and sides of each pumpkin. (The Vaseline provides a moisture barrier which will help keep the pumpkin from decomposing rapidly.)
 5. Use ice cream scoop or hands to move pre-moistened potting soil from the soil bin into the pumpkin.
 6. Firm the soil on the bottom and up the sides of the pumpkin to remove air pockets.
 7. Plant 3 pansies in each pumpkin and add potting soil to the rim of the pumpkin.
 8. Gently water the pansies with a watering can or water bottle.
 9. Wipe off the pumpkin and set it on a small plastic plate to serve as a plant saucer.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This activity is excellent for a wide variety of populations, especially those who may have decreased mobility/standing endurance and would benefit from participating in a TH activity from a seated position. This activity orients participants to the fall season/time of year and creates an excellent conversation point about how each participant remembers spending their time in the fall. The activity can be staged and prepared to match the abilities and safety needs of any population.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: The facilitator is responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Using a sharp utensil to cut the top off the pumpkins (or poke drainage holes) should only be permitted with populations who do not pose a threat to themselves or others. Slippery pumpkins can easily slip from someone's hands while cutting it and cause inadvertent injury - especially for people who have diminished hand or upper body strength. Avoid use of Vaseline if there is any chance that your population could inadvertently ingest it (dementia) or use it to harm themselves or others.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: For those with reduced strength in arms and hands, have a volunteer loosen the seeds and stringy flesh so the participant can scoop them out. Placing supplies on each table as needed will help those with cognitive impairments to follow the proper steps. If wrist movement is limited, the pumpkin can be rotated around the participant's hand when spreading the Vaseline. Send the planted pumpkins home with participants or use them to decorate the participant's room or facility for a festive flare!

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

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.