

Activity: Creative Expression Goal: Social Populations: All

TH Activity Plan –Plants Names with Love, Actually

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Photo by Gardener's Path



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will do several activities involving plants with love themes in their names.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Expand horticultural knowledge & plant identification; discuss love & relationships that are healthy vs unhealthy

Physical: Increase physical exercise walking in outdoor garden; practice visual scanning during walk & bingo game

Psychological/Emotional: Self-reflect on love & unhealthy love

Sensory: Discuss the sensory aspect of plants & how they are used as tokens of love & affection; use sensory stimulation particularly sense of touch with soft plants

Social: Strengthen sense of humor as a communication tool; practice tolerance of others & their perspectives on love; demonstrate good sportsmanship during games

Materials

Plant specimens, photos, flashcards, bingo cards/markers

Optional: plants for transplanting, soil, containers

Photo above: Love Lies Bleeding

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials. Determine love focus for discussion appropriate for group. Make bingo cards.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing the theme of love using plant names that suggest love & affection, referencing the popular movie *Love, Actually*.
3. Vocational training &/or horticultural knowledge can be a focus of the TH session, but can be used with most populations, young & old. Facilitator presents live or photographed plants that have a connection to love (usually in their names). Using flashcards, or [bingo cards](#) to match horticulture facts to plants/ photos can bring some fun elements into the session while reinforcing horticulture knowledge.
4. Other activities might include a walk in the garden to identify “love” plants; playing “I Spy” game observing “love” plants or heart-shaped leaves (refer to THAD Love & Heart-Shaped Leaves); making a group mural using flowers from non-poisonous “love plants”; transplanting “love plants” as a gift; or discussing the language of love & their flower meanings. Flower [kissing balls](#) & tradition of kissing under the mistletoe at Christmas can also be included.
5. Discussion of human love, self-regulation, & sexual relations may be appropriate for some groups, with careful overview & guidance from facilitator or co-leader from allied professions. See comments below for applications.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Plant names can be a vehicle for discussions and activities relating to love. Surprisingly, there are lots of plant names that fall into this category though a good number are poisonous (see *Notes or Other Considerations*). The focus of the TH session and its related therapeutic goals using plant names with love connotations can take any number of directions as noted in #5 above. For some groups this may involve unhealthy relationships which will require facilitator to have professional training and experience in this area (and probably including trauma-informed training). This may be better used as horticultural therapy vs. therapeutic horticulture.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. This session may mention, identify or use toxic plants if the subject matter is pertinent to horticulture knowledge and training, or if the facilitator determines they are appropriate and important for the population. Discretion and sensitivity to safety, trauma, triggers, self-harm tendencies, addictions or mental health challenges is of utmost importance. This topic may be best delivered with professionals from fields of trauma and mental health.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Plants that denote love: Lad's Love (*Artemisia Abrotanum*), String of Hearts (*Ceropegia Woodii*), Love apple (*Lycopersicon esculentum*), and Passion Fruit (*Passiflora edulis*). Red roses (*Rosa* spp.), Purple Lovegrass (*Eragrostis spectabilis*) and Purple Heart (*Tradescantia pallida*) blend color with love. Cupid's Dart (*Catananche Caerulea*), Forget-me-Not (*Myosotis sylvatica*), and Love-lies-Bleeding (*Amaranthus caudatus*) suggest other elements of love that may be effective for prompting discussion.

Communication using flowers can be another plant activity. The language of flowers or floriography, conveys meanings and emotions through flowers, providing insights into Elizabethan era love. Carnations infer fascination and intimacy, orchids mean refinement and luxury, peonies beauty and elegance, and sunflowers adoration and loyalty. Daisies are considered symbols of pure love and innocent love.

Toxic to humans: Kiss me over the Garden Gate (*Persicaria orientalis*), Hearts-a-Burstin (*Euonymus americanus*), Bleeding Heart/Dutchman's Breeches/Squirrel Corn (*Dicentra Spectabilis*), Blue Passionflower (*Passiflora caerulea*), Love-in-a-Cage (*Physalis alkekengi*), and Love in a Mist (*Nigella damascene*), the latter listed as poisonous though not highly toxic to humans - all parts if ingested; sometimes small quantities are used for flavoring.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Bingo Baker. (n.d.). [Plants](#). Bingo Baker.com.

Boeckmann, C. (2025). [Flower meanings: The language of flowers](#). Almanac.com.

Harvard Graduate School of Education. (2024). [How to talk to young people about romantic relationships](#). MCC.gse.harvard.edu.

NC State Extension. (2024). [Dicentra](#). North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox.

VanDerZanden, AM. (2023). Flowers and their meanings: The language of flowers. Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

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