

Activity: Planting **Goal: Psychological/Emotional** **Populations: All but children, intellectually disabled**

TH Activity Plan – Planting with Patience & Daffodil Bulbs

Text by Shauna Farmer

Photo by S. Farmer & Sowing the Seeds.com



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will plant daffodil bulbs to take home, and create “reminder stones” to help them remember their bulbs and activity goals.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Learn about bulbs & other bulb-like plants that propagate underground

Physical: Practice gross & fine motor movements needed to plant; attend to activity

Psychological/Emotional: Consider coping strategies & importance of patience & “interior work” when facing challenges

Sensory: Experience differing textures: soil, smooth stone, paper-y bulbs

Social: Work collaboratively with materials; share verbally if desired

Materials

Pots, potting soil, tools for planting OR outdoor space for planting and appropriate tools

Small, flat 2-3 inch stones – can often be found in landscape section of large home improvement stores

Pencils and 1” x 4” pieces of paper

Washable acrylic craft paints, small brushes, painting supplies (water, rags, etc) OR permanent markers: sealer if stones will be placed outside

Daffodil bulbs

Garden or disposable gloves

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials. Prepare outdoor space if bulbs are to be planted outside.
2. Facilitator begins session by leading discussion of bulbs & other plants that are propagated underground.
3. Discussion transitions to patience required to grow a bulb & that a lot of growth is happening underground where it cannot be seen. This is then related to “interior” work that people do, that is not always visible.
4. Facilitator explains that the group will plant bulbs, as well as a piece of paper that represents a personal goal that they hope will “grow” while their bulbs are growing. Group members individually identify a goal that they hope to achieve in the next 3-4 months, & write it on a piece of paper. Examples – learn to decrease negative thinking; develop a habit of regular exercise. Set paper aside temporarily during next activity.
5. Facilitator explains that since participants cannot see inside the pot at all times to know what is happening with their bulb or to be reminded of that bulb & their goal, they will individually identify a word or image to serve as a “stand-in” for bulb, to help remember goal AND need for patience & inner work. Participants will paint/decorate rock with their word/image to take home.
6. While the rock is drying, group members go outside to plant daffodil bulbs in a pot to take home (OR in a garden space as part of long-term programming) AND papers listing their goals (wrapped around bulbs).
7. Return to inside space. Facilitator closes session with closing statements & discussion.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: As described here, this is a useful activity to use as a metaphor for interior, personal work on themselves including patience. However, there are other metaphors (transformation, when participants write down something they would like to see transformed [good>better or bad>good]; hope; growth and change) that could be applicable. It can be used across age spans, and as a stand-alone activity or as part of long-term programming. The cognitive/horticultural component can be covered in detail, or the facilitator can limit the discussion to a simple review of true bulbs.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. All parts of a daffodil including the bulb are poisonous if ingested. Facilitator needs to assess who will be participating in the TH session and the danger, risk and liability related to using these materials. This activity is not recommended for children, people with compromised intellectual capabilities (intellectually disabled, dementia), or corrections populations. Note that many different flower bulbs contain the compound calcium oxalate, which can cause contact dermatitis when the bulbs are handled. This is rarely an issue when planting daffodil bulbs, as most of the calcium oxalate is in the sap, but it can be seen often when hyacinth bulbs are handled. Gloves should be used. Ask participants if they have allergies or reactions when handling bulbs.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: [The American Daffodil Society](#) provides scientific information on the plants that symbolize the arrival of spring. Several terms are used for this plant including daffodil, narcissus and jonquil. The first two are synonyms and correct, but jonquil species and hybrids are confined to Division 7 or 13 and not true daffodils. Daffodils have more than 32,000 registered cultivars among the 13 divisions. They are dependable perennial bulbs, with most cultivars cold tolerant, requiring some cold treatment for flower bud initiation. Flowers bloom from 6 weeks to 6 months depending on location, multiply by asexual cloning or bulb division or sexually from seed. Daffodils grown from seed take 5 years to bloom.



REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Friend, J. (2022). [Using bulbs to beautify your garden](#). West Virginia Extension.
Longfield Gardens. (n.d.). [How to grow spring bulbs in containers](#). Longfield Gardens.com.
Mekonnen, S. (n.d.). [Daffodils – Beautiful but potentially toxic](#). National Capital Poison Center.
Royal Horticultural Society. (n.d.). [How to plant bulbs in a pot](#). RHS.org.UK. (pictorial guide).
University of Florida IFAS. (n.d.). [Bulbs](#).

Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2025.

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