

Activity: Design Goal: Psychological/Emotional Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Spooky Succulent Gardens

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Materials

Popsicle stick/plant tags

Eco friendly 4" pots

Markers/paints/stickers/glue

Succulent cuttings or large succulent to propagate from

Halloween party favors

Succulent soil

Small stones/gravel for decoration

Succulent care cards (optional)

Squirt bottles for watering

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will create individual mini Halloween-themed succulent gardens.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Practice following step by step instructions; exercise power of choice; practice creative expression

Physical: Practice hand eye coordination & hand dexterity through working with items in a confined space; extend standing & dancing stamina for extended period of time

Psychological/Emotional: Practice being in the present moment; reduce anxiety, depressive symptoms & stress levels

Sensory: Enhance mood through sensory stimulation touching plants, soil & stones, breathing fresh air & listening to music, birds, people laughing

Social: Expand social connections & community building within safe & supportive environment

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Cover tables with disposable tablecloths or newspaper. Set out all materials at a main materials station to pass out (recommended) or place materials at individual place settings. Pre-pour small amounts of soil into bowls if needed to minimize mess.
2. Facilitator begins session by briefly explaining that each participant will create their own "spooky succulent" to celebrate the season. Emphasize creativity — "There's no wrong way to decorate!"
3. Invite participants to decorate their pots first using paint pens, stickers, googly eyes, etc. Allow pots to dry for a few minutes if needed.
4. **Plant the Succulent:** Add soil to the pot, filling about 2/3 full. Place the succulent in the new pot & gently fill-in around it with more soil. Lightly pat the soil down to stabilize the plant (do not over-pack).
5. **Add Spooky Decorations:** Top-dress with pebbles, moss, or sand if desired. Tuck in small spooky decorations (e.g., spider near the base, googly eyes on the soil, mini gravestone signs). Use glue sparingly if attaching decorations to the pot.
6. **Care Instructions:** Briefly explain basic succulent care: Needs bright light & water sparingly (only when soil is fully dry). Optional: Hand out printed care cards for participants to take home. Emphasize simple succulent care = empowerment and success.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: *Spooky Succulents* activity offers a delightful escape into nature's wonders of resilient [succulents](#) with a Halloween twist. This activity was designed specifically for botanic garden settings and for all ages; 2 years and up. It is a simple yet effective wellness activity requiring minimal direction and

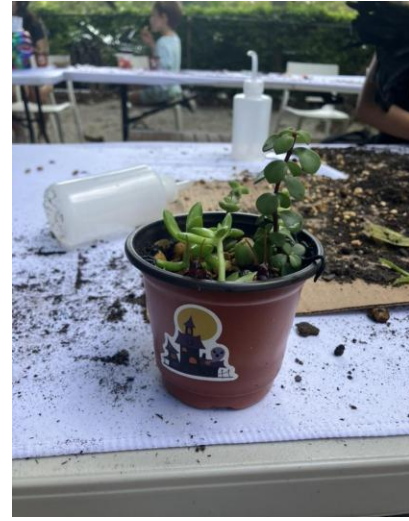
supervision, the ideal combination for delivering wellness TH in an outdoor public garden setting and easily adaptable to accommodate larger numbers of participants.

This activity can incorporate multiple therapeutic goals including a variety of emotional/psychological benefits such as embracing the present moment, exercising creativity, reducing stress levels, enhancing mood, and making social connections in a supportive and safe environment. Connections to nature in this outdoor setting - feeling stones, soil, touching plants, breathing fresh air, and dancing (exercising) to Halloween themed music is fun and healthy, where physical therapeutic goals can be incorporated.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.

This is a children friendly activity and plants should not be toxic, thorny or sharp. [Some succulents are poisonous](#) (Euphorbia and Kalanchoe). To prevent injuries, it is suggested that the facilitator pre-cut succulents if cutting from one large succulent. Small children should be supervised to prevent any items (sand, pebbles, decorations) being put in mouths.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: For large groups keeping track of succulent quantities/supplies can be difficult. Requesting participants take a specific number of cuttings can be difficult as well. An alternative approach is to direct participants to a previously set up supply table and have a volunteer/facilitator hand out supplies to each person. Succulent cuttings are expensive and time consuming to care for prior to the event. Purchasing large full mature succulents from a wholesale nursery then cutting 2 or 3" pieces off the mother plant is the most cost-efficient alternative to purchasing a large amount of succulent cuttings. Spooky Succulents activity is designed to be an ongoing 'free flowing' activity in which participants visiting the garden can drop in and take a time out to create a succulent garden.



REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

- Missouri Poison Center. (2021). [Are succulents poisonous to humans?](#) Missouri Poison Center.org.
- Spengler, T. (2021). [Halloween inspired plants: Learn about plants with a Halloween theme.](#) Gardening Know How.com.
- Steil, A. (2023). [Common and popular succulent species.](#) Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.
- Wesley, D. (2023). [13 Halloween nature crafts and activities for kids.](#) Woodland Trust.org.uk.

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.