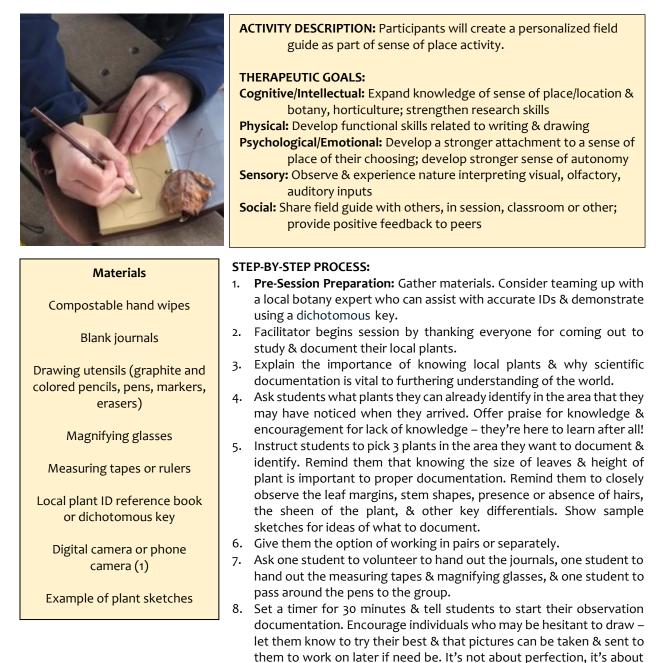
THAD Therapeutic Horticulture Activity Database

Activity: Nature Goal: Sensory Populations: Youth

TH Activity Plan – Teenager's Field Guide

Text by Bree Stark Photo by Carmel, Clay Parks & Recreation



practice!

9. While students are observing & writing, facilitator can walk between groups photo-documenting the plants to later reference if accurate ID

or finished sketch is not possible during session. Offer commentary & praise as they move between students/pairs.

- 10. Gather back together at the end & share findings. Use reference material, consult botany expert or <u>dichotomous key</u> to determine plant IDs.
- 11. Discuss importance of binomial nomenclature for accurate naming of species. Students should write the IDs on their journal pages. Encourage students to also assign their own "common name" for the plants they chose based on their personal observations.
- 12. Activity could be repeated in the same area during different seasons, or in different ecosystem (say, field versus shoreline) to fill out journals for long term classes or programming. Number of plants ID'd can be adjusted for time constraints.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Developing a sense of place by observing and investigating specific areas like forests, meadows or even schoolyards can address a variety of goals – therapeutic, educational, recreational and wellness. Using a TH activity of creating a <u>personal field guide</u> is one approach to expanding an attachment to a physical place, while supporting psychological/emotional connections to nature and plants. By sharing field guides with others, social and educational goals can demonstrate expanded interpersonal and communication connections as well as cognitive skills of knowledge acquisition and research abilities.

This TH activity is written for youth or teenagers but is applicable to other populations. This age group has the intellectual capacity to link research, science-based learning, ecology, and geography to abstract concepts like sense of place. The process of creating a field guide should strengthen their sense of belonging and sense of identity to a geographical area as well, which is considered to be important for "building social and emotional foundations children need and will one day use as adults" (Brillante & Mankiw, 2015).

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Allergies, swallowing issues or contraindications with medication need to be identified prior to session. Session delivery site should be accessible and free of hazards. Sun protection and water should be available while in the field. Closed toed shoes recommended. Depending on location, remind participants to look out for snakes, wasps or other potentially hazardous wildlife.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Several THADS have been written that provide horticulture information with the sense of place theme for specific areas like <u>Ontario Wildflowers</u>, <u>Nova Scotia Plants</u>, <u>Michigan Plant</u> <u>Diversity</u>, and <u>California Native Oaks</u>. These may inform participants and facilitator.

To add to sense of autonomy, students could <u>create DIY journals</u> in a prior activity session.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Brillante, P., & Mankiw, S. (2015). <u>A sense of place: Human geography in the early childhood classroom.</u> National Association for the Education of Young Children.com

Creative Educator. (2025). Fantastic field guides. Creativeeducator.tech4learning.com.

Fleming, L., Stark, B., & Brown, J. (2025). Plants and sense of place: Applications for horticultural therapy. *Journal of Therapeutic Horticulture*, 35.

Stark, B. (2023). <u>Fostering sense of community using native plants.</u> Cultivate, 3(3). University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (2023). <u>Dichotomous key activity.</u> UWSP.edu.

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.