

## TH Activity Plan – Transplanting Herbs to the Outdoor Garden

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Photo by Diane Relf



**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will plant herb transplants in the outdoor garden.

**THERAPEUTIC GOALS:**

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Improve spatial awareness; increase focus & concentration; practice sequencing & decision making skills

**Physical:** Strengthen fine & gross motor skills; practice hand-eye coordination

**Psychological/Emotional:** Increase sense of belonging/caring for tender plants; monitor impulsive thoughts & behaviors/self regulation

**Sensory:** Practice interoception body awareness & hand-eye coordination

**Social:** Practice problem solving & collaboration within a small group' develop awareness/strategies for communicating needs with others

**Materials**

8-12 week old herb transplants (based on planned space & planning distance)

Bed with prepared soil

Trowels

Brightly colored labels for each herb

Lightweight watering cans or garden hose w/watering wand & turn-off valve

Ruler, yardstick, or other measuring device

Gloves, aprons, hats, sunscreen, hand sanitizer

**STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:**

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Prepare soil for transplants. Based on the intended garden design, decide where the herbs should be planted. Have ready brightly colored labels for each herb that is to be planted. Harden off transplants a few days in advance of planting. Water plants the day before planting. Have supplies ready in the planting area.
2. Facilitator presents planting plan and working as a team, the group determines plant locations putting labels where the plants should be planted. Measure the plant spacing distance with a ruler or use a pre-measured spacing guide. Follow spacing information on back of seed packet or plant tag.
3. Demonstrate the process of planting one transplant for the participants. Using hands or a trowel, prepare a hole in the soil where the herb is to be placed. The hole should be the same depth and a bit wider than the transplant's root ball.
4. Remove the transplant from its container by turning the container upside down with one hand and holding with the other hand the plant stem at soil level. Gently squeeze the container to loosen the plant from the pot. For cell packs, gently press on the base of each cell.
5. Place the transplant's root ball into the hole and cover the root ball with soil. Gently press the soil, firm but not packed, around the transplant to ensure that it is secure in place. Make sure that the transplant is vertical and not leaning.

6. Give each participant one plant at a time to avoid confusion. Following the demonstration, each participant should take turns setting out their plants.
7. Continue to plant herb transplants (steps 1-5), spacing plants according to the garden plan.
8. When all transplants have been planted, water using a watering can or a garden hose. Apply water until the soil is wet to a depth of 5 to 6 inches (check with a finger or trowel).

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** Have participants identify the herbs they are planting. Ask if they have ever grown this herb before and how they used it. Many participants enjoy sharing stories about their own gardens and gardening methods. Encourage discussion about the herbs' needs in order to thrive in the garden (healthy soil, water, sun vs shade, maintenance). Strategize about how the transplants will be cared for in the first few weeks after planting and ongoing – identify who (rotating individuals/facilitator or partners/facilitator or group/facilitator) will water/check on transplants, what will be the frequency of check-ins, and how the group will track progress and participant responsibilities (checklist, check-in sheet, record-keeping notebook, etc.). Consider using a group approach for planting: divide participants into three groups, each with a specific task to complete in the process. For example, the first group lays out the planting pattern and makes holes in the soil. The second group removes the plants from containers and places them in the holes, and the third group covers the roots with soil. When the group is satisfied that the plants are correctly planted, they can water. Employ task sharing, demonstrations/modeling, and other adaptive techniques for engaging participants with fine motor, cognitive, and other challenges during activity.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS:** Use sun protection, gardening gloves, and other seasonally appropriate outdoor gear. Wash hands and/or use hand sanitizer after completing digging activities. For participants who may be prone to tripping, falling, or becoming off balance, provide adaptive tools and equipment that reduce this risk. This includes: (1) doing planting activities in a raised bed that is sturdy for participants to lean on and/or has handles/grips firmly attached to the raised bed for extra stability, (2) reduce, remove, or clearly mark (with safety cones) potential trip hazards, such as garden hoses, in the garden, (3) offer chairs for sitting while working in the raised bed, and (4) using extended reach garden tools to reduce the likelihood of bending/stooping. Supervise careful handling of tools and equipment as well as maneuvering through the garden.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** Present this activity as an intergenerational program, where adults and youth assist each other in planting, watering, planning the harvest, and sharing stories with one another. Consider how the plants will be moved from another location, such as indoors or a plant nursery/growing space, to the garden space where the transplants will be planted. Have participants load plants onto a wagon or cart for easier transport. Or move plants to the planting location prior to the session.

Refer to THAD *Designing an Herb Garden, Preparing Soil for Outdoor Planting, Making Herb Labels, Hardening Off Plants, Watering Raised Beds and Outdoor Planters* activity plans.

#### **REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:**

MacKenzie, J. & Kooyman, S.M. (2021). Growing herbs in home gardens. University of Minnesota Extension. <https://extension.umn.edu/vegetables/growing-herbs#watering-930511>

Reiners, S. (2021). Avoid transplant shock. Cornell University/Cornell AgriTech. <https://cals.cornell.edu/school-integrative-plant-science/school-sections/horticulture-section/outreach-and-extension/pandemic-vegetable-gardening/pandemic-vegetable-gardening-2021-archive/avoid-transplant-shock>

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.