THAD Therapeutic Horticulture Activity Database

Activity: Plant Care Goal: Social Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Watering Large Pots

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Photo by D. Relf, Rejuvenation.com, Wayfair, Greenhouse Megastore, Carpathen

ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will practice plant care watering large pots 6-12" in diameter.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:
Cognitive/Intellectual: Explore horticulture career requirements; mastery of watering skills & plant care
Physical: Strengthen capacity to lift containers using safe lifting practices
Psychological/Emotional: Learn & practice mechanisms for coping
Sensory: Practice sensory integration
Social: Demonstrate sense of responsibility

Materials

large pots with plants that need watering
plastic saucers (flat bottom and large enough to hold the pots)
small, lightweight watering cans, squeeze bottles, or watering bulbs
water
watering cans and cups

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Prep:** Gather materials & set up work area.
2. Demonstrate & discuss techniques for watering containers sized 6-12", described here as larger pots.
3. Practice techniques including moving pots onto saucer to catch water run-off (indoors or outside), using watering can outside with containers staying in place, using saucers under pot that stay in place, & elevating pot on "feet" where drainage holes allow for water run-off. Pots in greenhouses may be watered differently where water run-off can drain onto gravel floor.
4. Practice watering appropriately using water meters, sense of touch, visual cues, climate & weather inputs, and using facility watering schedules if appropriate.
5. Return pots to desired locations & clean-up to conclude the activity.
6. A watering schedule may be created as a mechanism for regular plant care, for encouraging task performance, vocational training & sense of responsibility.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This activity may be an important lesson within vocational horticulture programs, providing hands-on application of theory & pre-employment experience. There can be a physical component & therapeutic goals integrated into this activity if strengthening physical abilities is appropriate for individuals. People with developmental delays or other cognitive challenges may find this activity engaging and sensory-appealing, particularly when other tasks may be too difficult; watering tasks can provide inclusion. Coping with challenges, some of which may be related to pots that are too heavy to lift, watering using lateral reach, or difficulty assessing moisture levels of pots can provide opportunities for learning & for practicing mechanisms for dealing with issues in sessions or at potential work placements.

In hot weather climates, watering can be a refreshing garden activity and address the more frequent watering needs for outdoor plants. This activity is appropriate for most populations including very young children where a focus might be on learning appropriate behavior working with others & not on mastering horticultural skills.

Adaptive gardening techniques of hand-on-hand watering, and use of lighter smaller watering cans ensure all participants are able to undertake the watering task.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Sun protection is recommended for outdoor sessions. Potable water should be used. Review of safety practices for lifting heavy items is suggested. Physical abilities of participants should be determined prior to lifting containers, some of which would be heavy due to soil and plant materials in pot.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Related therapeutic horticulture sessions can include learning about drip irrigation, drought tolerant & salt tolerant plants, greenhouse & plant production set-ups re watering & fertilization via water systems, tasks assignments in greenhouse & plant production facilities & career exploration in the horticulture industry.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Stanford University. (n.d.). Safe lifting. *Stanford Environmental Health & Safety.* https://ehs.stanford.edu/topic/ergonomics/safe-lifting

Stein, L. & Welsh, D. (n.d.). Efficient use of water in the garden and landscape. *Texas A&M Agrilife Extension.* https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/earthkind/drought/efficient-use-of-water-in-the-garden-and-landscape/

Yasalonis, A. & Dukes, M. (2023). Micro irrigation for home landscapes. *University of Florida|IFAS Extension.* https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/AE524

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.