

Activity: Design Goal: Physical Populations: Specialized Populations

TH Activity Plan – Cut Flower Arrangement in a Meaningful Container

Text by Lesley Fleming, HTR & Erin O'Connor

Photo by L. Fleming



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will create a cut flower arrangement using a container that has personal meaning to them.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Improve quality of life; expand understanding of loved one's connections to flowers & gardens; learn about flowers & cut flower care

Physical: Practice gentle controlled movement with water-filled vase making & transporting arrangement

Psychological/Emotional: Experience moments/interactions that bring joy, fond memories; create new memories with loved ones

Sensory: Experience sensory stimulation from flowers

Social: Make a cut flower arrangement with others; learn about meaningful items like vase, trophy; be mindful of limited resources & how best to share flowers with others in group

Materials

Container (urn, teacup, mug, antique bucket, trophy, tin container)

Flowers & greenery sized to suit containers

Wet floral foam, bucket, water, floral preservative, scissors or pruners, plastic or glass cup

Wipes

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Request ahead of session that participants bring containers or vases that have meaning to them, with specific diameter or size guidelines. Gather materials. Estimate the number of flowers & greenery based on the size of group. Condition stems using floral preservative prior to session. Use greenery as a cost-effective space filler.
2. Facilitator begins session by introducing the activity, and relevant therapeutic goals if appropriate. Do a demonstration with verbal tips on stem selection based on container size, re-cutting stems, arrangement design styles, and cut flower care.
3. Previous instructions were given to participants to bring pretty vases or containers that have meaning to them... collectable urn, grandmother's silver champagne bucket or aunt's vase. Discuss how to gauge the number of flowers for containers, so that they can make other arrangements (in different or same vessel) in the future.
4. Place a plastic cup or glass (or smaller glass vase) into the larger container & fill with water. Add floral preservative. Inner watertight container may need to be secured using double sided tape, paper or foam stuffing around it. Be careful when moving & transporting it.
5. Participants select flowers & greenery for their arrangement. Refer to THAD activity *Flower Vase Bouquet: Hand Held Method* for tips on creating the cut flower arrangement. Measure and cut stems to fit container. Facilitator will need to guide participants re number of stems available based on size of group.

6. Session should provide environment for interactions & compliments within group. Discussions can include sharing flower information between participants, suggestions for floral design or sharing the memories related to each person's container.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: This activity has applications across populations. It can be a more expensive TH activity due to cost of flowers. Option – cutting some or all greenery and/or flowers from facility garden, or purchasing from local urban farms or community gardens, which typically have reasonable prices. Containers/vases with smaller mouths require fewer stems, this a cost-saving tip.

Hospice patients & health goals: Connecting with flowers, particularly from their past can provide moments of joy, reminiscence and distraction during a difficult time. The activity can be one undertaken jointly with family or visitors with an added element of sensory appeal depending on flowers that are selected. When family is involved in bringing a meaningful vase or container (to them or patient), this can provide a positive moment that may be cherished long afterwards. It can address quality of life goals for both patient and family.

Mental health clients & health goals: Practice being gentle, using gentle movements and being kind and considerate when interacting with other group members may be relevant for some treatment settings, journeys involving emotionally difficult therapy, or individuals who have experienced harsh, abusive relationships. Participating in a hands-on activity that creates beauty will be uplifting psychologically and spiritually. Clients may not have or have access to treasured family vases. Program can provide a variety from which participants can choose creating new positive memories with flowers and their own creative expression.

Veteran and active military & health goals: For people accustomed to being disciplined, non-reactive and calm in the face of challenges, with both hard exteriors and internal fortitude, this TH activity can address creating balance in their lives, allowing softness and beauty to emerge as an antidote to other parts of their lives. Learning about plants, specifically flowers, may offer ideas for positive leisure hobbies in areas not previously considered, and quite different from occupational interests in firearms, the color green (khaki) and conformity.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. All plants should be non-toxic, without thorns or excessive sap. Some participants may have allergies to plants and pollen. Some facilities request no breakable items; plastic or metal containers can be substituted. Some populations should not use sharps (scissors, pruners) or floral preservative.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitator needs to be specific about size and proportion of containers in pre-session directions to participants if possible. Containers can be brought in ahead of the flower arranging session, allowing better estimate for floral supplies and how many supplemental containers may be required. Information on types of flowers that will be available in session can also provide pre-session input and planning by participants. Flowers may be small, medium or large, this impacting selection of container, type of arrangement and number of stems needed for the group. Teacup arrangements for example use small blossoms like miniature roses or carnations. Different size roses would be suitable for different size containers. Less expensive flowers include mums, daisies, catmint, flowers in season and greenery cut from home or facility gardens. Most shrubbery like Indian hawthorn, forsythia, weigela, hydrangea, beautyberry (small berries which may be unsuitable for people tempted to put items in mouths) along with flowering shrubs (lilac, viburnum, azaleas, butterfly bush) can provide interest in the cut flower arrangement.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Fleming, L. & O'Connor, E. (2024). [TH activity plan – flower vase bouquet: Hand held method](#). Therapeutic Horticulture Activities Database.

McIndoe, A. (2023). Top ten shrubs for flower arranging in winter.

<https://www.learningwithexperts.com/gardening/blog/top-ten-shrubs-for-flower-arranging-in-winter>

Outdoor Dreams. (2023). [Landscape plants that create stunning bouquets](#).

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.