

Activity: Planting Goal: Sensory Populations: All but dementia

TH Activity Plan – Easter Baskets with Ryegrass

Text by Lesley Fleming, HTR

Photo by L. Fleming



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will celebrate the Easter season by planting an Easter basket with ryegrass seed and then care for the basket watching ryegrass grow.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Expand plant knowledge; experience curiosity

Physical: Strengthen range of motion; enhance fine motor control

Psychological/Emotional: Modulate behavior; manage trust & anger (self-regulation); enhance empathy through caring/nurturing

Sensory: Engage all the senses touching, smelling, viewing & listening to Easter plants; expand tolerance for engaging in sensory activities

Social: Increase social interactions (sharing materials, pass plants plant materials around group); improve communication skills; introduce the use of humor to engage others

Materials

Grass seed (ryegrass, wheat grass seed or wheat berry seed)

Plastic dish, potting medium, spoons, water, printed plant care instructions

Optional: grass sod (St. Augustine or other), Easter glasses or hats, plastic eggs, printed jokes, Easter lily

Gloves, wipes

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Gather materials & purchase [ryegrass seed](#), wheatgrass seed, wheat berries seed (*Triticum aestivum*) or other fast-growing varieties. Make a sample Easter basket with grass.
2. Facilitator begins the session by having Easter decorations on the table including the Easter basket with ryegrass. Sharing some Easter jokes, facilitator passes around plastic Easter eggs for participants to select the color they like. Introducing the plant activity as growing live grass in containers for Easter, the sample with grass, grass seed, & potting mix are passed from person to person for sensory stimulation & social interaction.
3. Facilitator leads the group through the steps of planting: filling container with potting mix (soil), sprinkling a handful of grass seed in container, covering seed with light dusting of “soil”, & watering. Names on baskets should be attached with tape. Eggs can be set in basket awaiting the grass to grow.
4. The seeds should germinate within a week. Instructions for grass care are provided verbally & in writing, suggesting grass baskets be set on windowsill to get some light. Facility may choose a site. Schedule TH session so that containers are ready for Easter.
5. As a closing, facilitator can distribute more [printed jokes](#) to individuals to read aloud to group, using humor to encourage positive group dynamics.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Who doesn't like an Easter basket? Sensitivity to individual and group cultural and religious affiliations should be exercised. Many in today's society are aware of Easter and have

secular non-religious “candy” affiliations to this spring holiday. Other spring holidays like Passover Festival of Liberation can be celebrated concurrently or in other sessions.

The sensory therapeutic goals aligned with this activity can include sensory stimulation, important for populations that may have compromised sensory integration, diminished sense of touch (diabetes), vision (macular degeneration, low vision) or smell (cancer treatment). For those with sensory defensiveness, touching the soil and seeds can expand tolerance and an opportunity to practice taking sensory breaks when needed. Gloves may be an adaptation appropriate for some individuals. Non-latex gloves will allow some tactile sensations.

Therapeutic goals in the psychological/emotional domain related to this activity can include modulating behavior where participants cooperatively pass materials to one another, wait their turn for materials, (self-regulation and impulse control), and use restraint with verbal communication. Managing anger and trust issues can be addressed by facilitator prompts and verbal guidance assuring participants they will have their turn to gather seed and potting medium. Allow those who need more time to complete tasks. Prompts for managing impatience and anger can be used for guidance. Should seeds not effectively germinate, the facilitator can work with individuals to manage anger or disappointment (reflecting empathy and regulation). It can be helpful to have extra plantings that can be substituted or offered in this situation. These self-regulatory challenges are evident across populations.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. People with dementia, intellectual disabilities or very young children may be tempted to put items in mouths. Some hospitals and senior facilities may not allow soil or potting mix.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: As a counterpoint to ryegrass, a piece of sod (St. Augustine or other grass variety) can be included in session for sensory engagement. The sample Easter basket with ryegrass will feel and look different. This can be a focus, asking if participants feel or see any differences. Asking questions about walking on grass barefooted can be engaging, where reminiscing recalls previous experiences. Having other Easter plants to view, touch and smell can increase social interactions and enhance the session as can having Easter glasses or hats for people to try on and laugh about.

And don't forget Easter jokes. What kind of jewelry do rabbits wear? 14 carrot gold. What do you call two best friends on Easter? Two peeps in a pod. What did the Easter Bunny say to the carrot? It's been nice gnawing you. How do you get the Easter Bunny to stay past Sunday? Simple raise its celery. (Some of these play on words will be best delivered verbally and with visual answer cards).

It is recommended that plastic containers without drainage holes be used either as the container or as a liner in a basket. Small plastic containers used by grocery stores for cut fruit are ideal and can often be donated or purchased at reasonable prices. Do not overwater. Have staff water grass containers that are too dry, and watch for the first signs of sprouts, alerting participants to the grass growth. This is a good process for passage of time, distraction from boredom, and opportunity to talk with others.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

- Ballard, J., & O'Sullivan, A. (2025). [110 Funny Easer puns that will make this holiday extra hoppy](#). *Good Housekeeping.com*.
- Fleming, L., & Miyuake, Y. (2023). [TH activity plan – Grass seed heads](#). *University of Florida Therapeutic Horticulture Activities Database*.
- Pennington. (2023). [All you need to know about perennial ryegrass](#). *Pennington.com*.
- Tillias, K. (2024). [How to grow real Easter grass for your basket](#). *Southern Living.com*.

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.