

TH Activity Plan – Fall Leaf Luminaries

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Photo by The Bedford Tribune, Community District Library & Merriment Design



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will make a luminary for themselves using fall colored fabric, paper or pressed leaves.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Practice listening skills during poem reading & other's reminiscences

Physical: Use fine motor skills; manipulate a small glass jar in various positions during activity

Psychological/Emotional: Practice patience; demonstrate ability to pivot when things are challenging

Sensory: Cope with tactile defensiveness using sticky materials

Social: Share materials with group members; cooperatively distribute materials to others; compliment others on their luminary

Materials

Fabric, paper or pressed leaves

Assortment of glass jars, twine, modge podge/glue, paint brushes, table protection

Battery candles/1 per person

Gloves, wipes

Fall or leaf poems

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Pressing leaves can be done in a prior session. Gather/upcycle glass jars in all shapes ahead of session. Gather other materials.
2. Facilitator begins session by reading a poem about fall leaves. Encourage participants to reminisce, share stories about their home towns and fall colors. Share colorful photos of fall colors & leaves, passing these around the group, promoting engagement/socializing.
3. Lay leaves on table so participants can choose the ones they like. Participants organize the pattern they want on their luminary.
4. Begin attaching leaves to glass jar by slathering on modge podge/glue. It works best to do one section or side of container at a time. Once attached, apply another layer of modge podge overtop leaf to secure it. Flat leaves are easiest to adhere. Tip-use twine to hold leaf in place or have bowl with warm water to rinse fingers for stickiness.
5. To allow candle to shine through luminary, suggest leaving some open spaces where no leaves are glued on. Distribute battery candles.
6. Let luminaries dry. Read another fall leaves poem. Discuss themes of season celebrations, horticultural information on why leaves turn colors, comparisons between leaves (size, color, shape).

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: People of all ages and abilities will enjoy the fall leaf luminary activity. Integrating therapeutic goals can enrich the session whether the goals are overtly identified or not. These can include sensory defensiveness (to sticky glue), hand-eye motor integration, or use of tactile work with a vision impairment. Intellectual/cognitive skills can run the gamut of improving listening and communication skills during/reading poems or telling fall colors stories. Or learning about horticultural facts re leaves lacking chlorophyll hence their color change. This activity requires patience when applying the leaves to the glass

container. A discussion point could cover strategies for calming down, being patient, helping others be patient with verbal support, hands-on assistance or mindfulness.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing **poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.** Modge podge should not be put in mouths; it may have an odor that should not be inhaled for prolonged periods of time. Pressed leaves should be non-toxic. Some facilities will not allow glass containers; plastic can be substituted. Battery candles should be used.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Recommended leaves for pressing can include maples (orange, scarlet, yellow), elm, hickory (golden bronze), dogwood (purplish), beech (light tan), oaks (russet, brown and red). Leaf pressing can be done in a previous session with this group or another.

Luminaries can be made with other plant items like pansies, coleus leaves, nasturtium as well as leaves other than in the fall. Flat plant materials work best. Hosting a special event in the evening when it is dark can be illuminating, showing off participants' handiwork of fall leaf luminaries. Poems by John Clare and Robert Frost.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

USDA Forest Service. (n.d.). Science of fall colors.
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/visit/fall-colors/science-of-fall-colors>



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.

Nothing Gold Can Stay

Robert Frost

“Nature’s first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf’s a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.”

Pleasant Sounds

John Clare

“The rustling of leaves under the feet in woods
and under hedges;
The crumpling of cat-ice and snow down wood-
rides, narrow lanes and every street causeway;
Rustling through a wood or rather rushing, while
the wind halloos in the oak-toop like thunder;
The rustle of birds' wings startled from their nests
or flying unseen into the bushes;
The whizzing of larger birds overhead in a wood,
such as crows, puddocks, buzzards;
The trample of robins and woodlarks on the
brown leaves. and the patter of squirrels on the
green moss;
The fall of an acorn on the ground, the pattering
of nuts on the hazel branches as they fall from
ripeness;
The flirt of the groundlark's wing from the
stubbles –how sweet such pictures on dewy
mornings, when the
dew flashes from its brown feathers.”