

Activity: Plant Care Goal: Cognitive/Intellectual Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Memory Recall – Flower Names

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Photos by L. Fleming, SouthFloridaPlantGuide, Wisconsin Horticulture, FastGrowingTrees.com, Greencover



ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants take part in a guided garden walk, being introduced to flowers, flower names & horticultural facts.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Practice memory recall; improve attention span

Physical: Practice walking on uneven surfaces; increase time outdoors for increased melatonin production & fresh air intake

Psychological/Emotional: Calm an anxious brain; use or enjoy humor as a mood enhancer

Sensory: Practice sensory stimulation as mechanism for joy; develop autonomic & appropriate responses to sensations

Social: Practice social cues; develop new social connections

Materials

Blossoms from flowers, trees & shrubs in their natural setting

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Prepare tour registration process or structure as a drop-in session with designated date & time.
2. Facilitator begins session by welcoming everyone & sharing purpose of introducing flowers, flower names & some horticultural facts. Each participant will be asked to identify their favorite flower at the tour's conclusion. Facilitator states that memory recall will be involved.
3. The walk begins along a garden path, stopping at multiple locations to observe flowers, different stages of bloom, & sharing of fun facts, with humor thrown in. Facilitator picks some flowers for participants to smell & touch as sensory stimulation.
4. Blossoms from shrubs, trees & flowers are included in the tour. Tropical flowers are appealing but all types of blooms would work.
5. At conclusion of the tour, participants are seated in shade & facilitator engages each person, asking what their favorite flower was, along with a few personal questions that engaged them, injecting humor & making the social dynamics fun for all.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Public gardens and botanical gardens would be plant-rich locations for this type of TH or garden tour session. A garden tour where blossoms from all types of plants are introduced to participants can be a wellness, therapeutic or educational session appropriate across all populations. Delivered with a cognitive/intellectual focus where memory recall and attentional focus are the priorities, it is helpful that the facilitator alert participants to this, and the intention to ask them for their favorite flower at the session's conclusion. This allows participants with varying cognitive abilities to successfully and fully participate. Some may not recall all of the flower names but should be able to remember one flower name. Others will recall and retain multiple flower names and horticultural facts that are shared in session. Facilitator can support memory recall using various techniques like photos or live plants for the recall segment, verbalizing the starting sound of

the plant name (hi... hibiscus), letting other participants help name the plant, or giving names of two flowers for person to choose from.

Other therapeutic goals can be selected for the session based on group goals or needs. Physical goals relating to improving and strengthening walking/standing stamina, walking on uneven surfaces and increasing outdoor activity for expanding fresh air intake and melatonin production, or sensory stimulation from flowers and nature that contributes to joy and positive moods. Practicing autonomic and appropriate responses to flower smell and tactile sensations may be a sensory goal for people with self-regulation, mood or behavior goals.

Curt Angol, Grounds Supervisor at Galley Bay Antigua delivers garden tours to wellness groups as described. Well-received by participants because of his humor, horticultural fact-sharing (not too many facts that can't be remembered), ability to engage each and every person, and maximizing the beautiful garden he works in provides a memorable garden tour that can be enjoyed with or without educational or therapeutic goals. He shared a hibiscus tradition that brought laughter to everyone—ladies wearing hibiscus blossoms behind right ear are indicating they are single; left ear not looking to meet a new love interest. He gave the men a flower they could present to their loved one, recognizing the power of flowers, and perhaps some men's reluctance to use flowers as a sensory token.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts. Sun protection and water for staying hydrated is recommended. Assessment of participants' mobility should be undertaken at beginning of tour, with consideration for path's surfaces and duration for standing and walking.

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Tropical flowers can invoke moments of awe while introducing flowers that may not be as familiar to participants from colder climates. Photos or purchased flowers can be substituted where the garden does not grow or have available tropical plants like hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinesis*), [ixora](#) (*Ixora coccinea*), soft textured [powderpuff plant](#) (*Calliandra haematocephala*), spider lily (*Hymenocallis littoralis*), thorny bougainvillea (*Bougainvillea* spp.), [fragrant frangipani](#) (*Plumeria* spp.), [water hyacinth](#) (*Pontederia crassipes*), yellow thryallis (*Galphimia glauca*), multi-colored croton (*Codiaeum variegatum*), [clerodendrum](#) (Genus *Clerodendrum*), red blooming geiger tree (*Cordia sebestena*), and blue plumbago (*Plumbago auriculata*).



powderpuff



chandelier hibiscus



multi-colored hibiscus



geiger tree

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

iNaturalist. (n.d.). [Clerodendrums \(Genus Clerodendrum\)](#). iNaturalist.org.

Neal, E. (2012). *Gardener's guide to tropical plants: Cool ways to add hot colors, bold foliage, and striking textures (Gardener's guides)*. Cool Springs Press.

Rasmussen, L. (2021). [Retrieval practice: A memory exercise with surprising benefits](#). Global Cognition.org. The Learning Center University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (n.d.). [Memorization strategies](#).

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TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2024.