

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

## TH Activity Plan – Michigan Plant Diversity: Sense of Place

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Photo by Biozenic



**ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION:** Participants will participate in one workshop with the theme Michigan Sense of Place, where plants play a role in this identity. Three workshop ideas are shared.

**THERAPEUTIC GOALS:**

**Cognitive/Intellectual:** Expand horticultural knowledge; discuss benefits of plant & human diversity in communities

**Physical:** Strengthen & develop visual memory; strengthen dexterity & fine motor skills

**Psychological/Emotional:** Understand & explore a sense of place; discuss quest for excellence & national rankings for plants or other accomplishments

**Sensory:** Taste varieties of vegetables & fruits

**Social:** Discuss geographical areas within Michigan & what plants flourish there; compare growing conditions & optimal conditions for specific plants & personal preferences for growing & eating Michigan grown plants

**Materials**

Floriculture Workshop:  
propagating/planting materials  
for geraniums, petunias etc.

Christmas Tree Party: white  
pine tree, materials for  
ornaments (refer to linked  
THADS)

Vegetable Workshop: variety of  
vegetables, seeds, soil,  
containers, water

**STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:**

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Facilitator selects one of the three workshop ideas presented in this THAD & gathers materials. Publicity & registration for the workshops should be done at least 3 months ahead of scheduled date.
2. Facilitator begins session by defining sense of place and asking participants what plants in Michigan remind them of where they are.
3. Depending on the theme of the workshop, the facilitator leads participants through hands-on activities, interspersing these with facts about Michigan's plant diversity. Facts & references are listed below. Each workshop will probably be 1 hour & can be a wellness session with therapeutic goals, recreation in nature or educational.
4. Each workshop should conclude with brief discussion/feedback from participants where sense of place involving plants summarizes their experiences, & expanding their personal sense of identity.

**APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS:** Michigan is known for plant diversity second only to California. Both commercial growers and home gardeners recognize and have very favorable growing conditions for its broad range of plants and commercial production of trees, flowers and vegetables. Michigan's national ranking for plant production has been important to the state, the economy, and its inhabitants for many years.

Humanistic geographers and others identify plants and landscapes as having the power to create a sense of place, and for Michigan residents it is the diversity of plants that thrive in the state that create this sense of place.

As in other states that grow diverse types of plants, there is a uniqueness in Michigan's fertile soil, historical success in agriculture and plant production, weather that provides both dormant and growing seasons resulting in nationally known bounty of plants, both edible and ornamental, from white pine trees to petunias, and its strong agricultural universities that are part of the culture of the state.

Michigan's diverse plant environment can provide a sense of identity for people living in Michigan, this often linked to sense of place. Wellness workshops, part of TH interventions can be offered in a number of ways where plants are the keystone for understanding and exploring a sense of place.

**Workshop 1: Floriculture**, using flowers popular in Michigan, can provide hands-on planting and propagation activities for all ages, strengthening plant care knowledge and experience. Michigan is the number one national producer of begonias, Easter lilies, geraniums, impatiens and petunias, and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the nation for other floriculture including marigolds (USDA, 2024).

**Workshop 2: A Christmas Tree Party** where participants learn about the state's prominent white pine tree (*Pinus strobus*) and its exports of 2 million trees annually (Stacker, 2022). This could include making wreaths from white pine boughs, or decorating trees to be donated to a charity(s). Refer to THADs [Xmas Ornament Walnut to Strawberry](#), [Cinnamon Stick Holiday Ornament](#), and [Tree Shaped Ornaments from Buttons](#).

**Workshop 3: Vegetable workshops** are always popular, and this third idea, hands-on gardening with tips on growing and harvesting dry black and cranberry beans, cucumbers (for pickling or not), squash and asparagus—these vegetables grown in Michigan and ranked number one in production nationally—can inform and expand horticultural knowledge and experience.

Expanding workshop participants' knowledge about planting, caring for, propagating and harvesting plants that thrive in Michigan can focus on cognitive therapeutic goals - acquiring new skills or knowledge. Psychological goals can focus on the sense of place that Michigan offers, relating the origin and successful growing of these plants to this particular area in the country, known nationally for large production of diverse plants. Integrating themes of diversity and tolerance of plants and people, importance of doing things (gardening or other) with excellence, and where leadership can be a valuable trait, can lead to discussions of human traits drawn from the Michigan sense of place examples.

**SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.** As with all TH activities where participants will taste or eat plants, allergies, swallowing issues or contraindications with medication need to be identified prior to session. Gloves should be available for people with sensitivities to touching plants.

**NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:** Resources on plants common in Michigan can be found at Michigan State University's online resources. [Courses and curriculum on floriculture production](#) outline essential topics. [Eastern white pine tree information](#) including coloring book, scavenger hunt and animations are available. Michigan State University [Extension's vegetable gardening resources](#) include articles, newsletters, classes and podcasts.

#### REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

- Fink, M. (2024). [Must visit places in Michigan for flower lovers: Bloom guide to flower festivals, botanical gardens and flower fields](#). *Discoveringanew.com*.
- Michigan State University. (2025). [Smart gardening with vegetables 101 online course](#). MSU Extension.
- Stacker. (2022). [Top 10 states that produce the most Christmas trees](#). *The Lansing Journal*.
- USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service. (2024). [Michigan agricultural statistics 2024 annual bulletin](#). Michigan Department of Agriculture & USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service.

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