

THAD Therapeutic Horticulture Activity Database

Activity: Plant Care Goal: Cognitive Populations: All

TH Activity Plan – Scalloped Edges

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ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: Participants will identify plants with scalloped edges to expand their horticultural knowledge.

THERAPEUTIC GOALS:

Cognitive/Intellectual: Expand horticultural knowledge for personal or career growth; learn about plant typology, parts, characteristics

Physical: Monitor fatigue, stamina & strength during session

Psychological/Emotional: Develop strategies for coping with fatigue or frustration; calm an anxious brain

Sensory: Strengthen sense & use of vision & touch to identify plants with scalloped edges; self-select appropriate breaks from sensory activities

Social: Work cooperatively in pairs or small groups; practice communication skills with partner or group describing plants

Materials

Samples of plants/leaves/flowers with scalloped edges

Optional: gathering bags, personal phones, drawing materials

Gloves, wipes

STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS:

1. **Pre-Session Preparation:** Grow some of the plants. Identify & confirm availability & safety of outdoor area to be used during session. Gather a few samples of plants with scalloped edges. Make alternate plans in case of rain.
2. Facilitator begins session by asking participants what scallops are, where they have seen scallops before (clothing, ribbon, flowers), and if they find scallops pretty or interesting. A few plant samples are presented with discussion/prompts re scallops, their size, scallop numbers per leaf, coloring & shape.
3. Facilitator introduces session activity as a walk outdoors to identify plants with scalloped edges, with options (based on setting/program/plant availability) of picking specimens, taking photos on personal phones, or describing/drawing plants. Review of safety rules re phones (no photos of individuals etc.) should be included as well as boundaries & timeline for walk.
4. Facilitator may choose to use small group or partner format, allowing participants to select these if appropriate.
5. Calling participants back together, discussing & showing scalloped edged plants can encourage any number of themes including beauty in nature, horticultural attributes, horticultural knowledge as career skill, plant identification, sensory inputs (sensitivity to or avoidance of sensory inputs). See points below.

APPLICATIONS FOR POPULATIONS: Plant identification and observation are fundamental parts of HT and TH. Hands-on activities where these are used are diverse and can be adapted to all populations. Scalloped edged leaves or flowers can be one theme where this aspect of plant identification and activities is the focus. Scalloped

edges are defined as leaves with a margin or edge with a series of rounded undulating curves, known as [crenate edge](#) with small rounded teeth rather than sharp points (Harper, 2013). Flower blooms can also have scalloped edges, more often referred to as ruffled or fluted.

TH activity focus:

Young Children: Basic exploratory tasks of gathering scalloped leaves, sorting and counting fosters key developmental skills.

Career Exploration/Horticultural Training: Focusing on a specific horticultural attribute like plants with scalloped edges can foster interest, knowledge acquisition and group work activities.

Trauma Survivor Populations: Finding beauty in nature, like scalloped plants can provide respite from difficult experiences, including challenging therapeutic sessions while providing connections to nature.

Populations with Physical Disabilities: Investigating and observing plants that are “different”—plants with scalloped edges for example, can provide a theme for discussion and introspection, where unusual or different physical appearances are represented and valued. Relating plant characteristics to human characteristics can be positive and impactful.

Food Insecure Populations: Asking people to find or share their plant knowledge of plants with scalloped edges provides an opportunity to share knowledge/gardening experience/culturally important plants, as well as build self-esteem, and exposure to edible and other plants, for individuals who may not be experiencing positive interactions in their current situation of being food insecure.

SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS: Facilitators are responsible for knowing poisonous and toxic plants and plant parts.

Facilitator should mark poisonous plants with scalloped edges prior to session to indicate these should not be touched or picked. Cell phone rules should be reviewed (no photos of people).

NOTES OR OTHER CONSIDERATIONS: Plants, leaves and flowers with scalloped edges offer opportunities to expand and understand horticultural characteristics including propagating for specific plant characteristics, types of flower petals and leaf margins.

Leaves with scalloped edges: *Geranium macrorrhizum*, *Hosta* ‘Spring Fling’, *Plectranthus oertendahlii*, *Kanlanchoe fedtschenkoi* ‘Variegata’, zucchini, *sedum* spp.

Flowers have a variety of petal types including single, double, fringed, ruffled, spiked, tubular, recurved, reflexed and bracts. Flowers described as having scalloped edges: tulips, hibiscus, peonies, petunias, gladiolas, camelia ‘Rose of Autumn’. Annual Solar Flare coleus (*Solenostemon scutellarioides*) and camellia tree Just Chill Red Tip (*Camellia* x ‘FARROWCKRF’) are identified by *The American Gardener* (American Horticultural Society) (Jan 2024) as newer plants with scalloped plant parts.

Ruffled or fluted flower edges include *Camellia sasanqua* var. Jessica Ruffles, *Dianthus* spp., lisianthus, ranunculus, sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*), ruffled pink morning glory, and coral bells.

Expanding the activity: Participants can research plants, leaves or flowers with scalloped, ruffled or fluted edges. Or include a blind “feel test”. After close observation and sensory stimulation with the plants, use a blindfold or closed eyes to try to guess the name of the plant. This also could be expanded to vocational or more intensive cognitive learning by taking cuttings and rooting of the plants.

REFERENCES/ RESOURCES:

Splan, C. (2024, Jan). New plants for 2024. *The American Gardener*.

Britannica. (2025). [Leaf anatomy](#). Britannica.com.

Lizzie Harper Natural History Illustration for Books, Magazines & Packaging. (2013). [Leaf shape: Margins, venation and position](#). Lizzieharper.co.uk.

Edits were made for THAD purposes in 2025.

TH Activity Plan form developed by Lesley Fleming, Susan Morgan and Kathy Brechner (2012), revised in 2025.