

The Garden eBook for Persons Living With Dementia

Seasonal activities that nurture
mind, body, and spirit

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Please Note: The activities in this eBook were designed to be used by therapists, activity coordinators, and other dementia care professionals. However, they are also appropriate for use by family members, friends, or anyone who cares for individuals living with Alzheimer’s/dementia.

Before engaging in any activity, you should consider the individual’s cognitive capabilities.



Introduction

For persons living with dementia or other cognitive challenges, purposeful activities that relate to nature and gardening can be very therapeutic. Research has shown that horticultural therapy can help reduce anxiety and depression, and increase self-esteem and competency.

In addition, the collaborative effort of planting seeds or bulbs or creating seasonal decorations can awaken valued memories and elicit joy and laughter. Nurturing mind, body, and spirit in this way can help individuals living with dementia remain engaged with their environment and improve function and quality of life.

This eBook features four seasonal activities from *The Garden Book: Stage-Specific Therapeutic Gardening Activities for Older Adults and Persons With Dementia* by Caryl Gurski, MS, OTR. The complete book contains more than 30 such activities, including recommendations for gardening tools and equipment, and is available for purchase at crisisprevention.com/products.

Winter Activity

Evergreen Swags – Fragrant Door Decoration

(Second week of December)

Supplies

- Branches that are flexible, not rigid. Use a variety so that the colors, though subtle, give it interest
- Wire and wire cutter
- Two large red velvet bows with long streamers
- One metal wreath frame 18" diameter, cut in half to half moon
- Pruning shears
- Have gloves available

Directions: Ask staff to gather a variety of evergreen branches to make two swags for the front entrance. If possible ask the staff who brought them to tie a note to tell us what they are. Layer branches and wire them to the frame. Wire a velvet bow at the center of the arch with streamers hanging down.

Setup: Have branches in the center of the table with bows and arch-shaped frame.

Early Stage	Middle Stage	Late and End Stages
<p>These clients are goal directed and will be able to sequence this task. If a volunteer or staff person can work with these folks, give directions. They will be able to dress the swag.</p> <p>Facilitate conversation with residents about decorating the house during the holidays. How did you use pine boughs to decorate?</p> <p>(Allen Level 4.0–4.6/FAST stage 4/5)</p>	<p>These folks can benefit from the stimulation of familiar scents, colorful ribbon, and decorating the house for the holidays.</p> <p>Help them observe the branches to compare and contrast the variety of textures, color, and scents.</p> <p>Will need some assistance in constructing this decorative swag. Will probably need redirection for sequencing.</p> <p>(Allen Level 3.2–3.8/FAST stage 6)</p>	<p>These persons will be stimulated by the familiar scent of pine and may experience some apparent memory of the family during the holidays. These memories of holiday times are usually very strong.</p> <p>Engage residents in smelling the boughs and listening to sounds of those around them as they share memories. Be sensitive to both happy and/or sad memories that may come to mind.</p> <p><i>Deck the Halls!</i> may be a perfect song to sing about decorating the house.</p> <p>(Allen Level 1.2–2.0 and 2.2–3.0/FAST stages 7 & 8)</p>

Spring Activity

Painting Clay or Plastic Pots

(Mid-April) For transplanting herbs—probably about two to three weeks after planting.

Supplies

- Potting soil
- Clay pots with matching saucers: 4-inch diameter
- Plastic gloves and aprons
- Outdoor paints in small bottles and/or magic markers for narrow lines or letters (craft shops have them—lots of bright colors)
- Paint brushes: two 1-inch sponge brushes; two 1/2-inch sponge brushes; six 1/4-inch flat ones (craft); six 1/2-inch flat ones (craft); several short handled stencil brushes (These are stiff short bristles and great for “stippling” flowers)
- Clay pot sealer spray

Directions: Caregiver needs to seal inside and outside surfaces—at least two coats of paint two days prior to activity. **The pots must be dry before painting!** Make some samples to show the residents. Plastic pots do not have to be sealed.

Setup: Have magazines and seed catalogs available on the tables for the residents to get some ideas of what to paint. Demonstrate some decorative patterns for the pots. Offer choices of colors.

Snack: Soft butter to make herb butter spread with crackers. Use dried basil or rosemary. Make sure there are no restrictions swallowing.

Early Stage	Middle Stage	Late and End Stages
<p>Will express individuality by making choices in design.</p> <p>Will ask for assistance.</p> <p>Will enjoy social interaction.</p> <p>(Allen Level 4.0–4.6/FAST stage 4/5)</p>	<p>Make suggestions for simple designs using repetitive shapes such as dots or bands or color.</p> <p>Use the stencil brush to just “stipple” color that looks like flowers. No artistry required!</p> <p>These residents are aware of familiar plant or nature activity.</p> <p>Though aware of the activity, they may be distracted by conversation around them and need cues to return to finish the project.</p> <p>Provide lots of praise for everyone!</p> <p>(Allen Level 3.2–3.8/FAST stage 6)</p>	<p>These folks will benefit from singing a song with the others. <i>You Are My Sunshine</i> might be a good one, since growing things need sun!</p> <p>Encourage the resident to touch the unpainted pots.</p> <p>Caregiver could do some of the painting of pots for these folks.</p> <p>Try to use one of the larger brushes and use hand-over-hand to paint a pot with one or two colors.</p> <p>The residents may be able to choose a favorite color or two.</p> <p>Paint the resident’s name on the pot(s) and show it to the resident as the painting is done.</p> <p>(Allen Level 1.2–2.0 and 2.2–3.0/FAST stages 7 & 8)</p>

Summer Activity

Garden Walks (June 1 through Labor Day)

Supplies

- Ziplock bags
- Baskets
- Scissors or snippers
- Large telephone book
- Paper towels
- Magazines related to gardening, such as Birds and Blooms. Have summer issues of whatever magazines you use.

Directions: Can be the major activity or an added one when another activity is brief. Do some homework about the plants, so you may be able to name them for the folks. Direct them to collect small flowers, small leaves, and stems to use to make bookmarks as the activity for the last session.

Wear garden hats. Sit down on benches for an occasional rest. Take some photos of residents with the flowers! Pick herbs, radishes, and lettuce that are ready. Water plants.

Bring the gathered flowers into the area where you work with the group. Tear individual sheets of paper towels and fold them in half. Place the flowers carefully on the inside of the fold so that one half of the sheet is folded over the flowers for drying. Place the folded towel carefully into the telephone book to flatten it. Each towel you place should be between 15 to 20 pages of the telephone book. Lay the book flat with a book or two on top. Keep in a safe place so the book is not opened for two weeks.

Snack: Lemonade with mint and shortbread cookies. Outside if possible. Check to make sure there are no restrictions swallowing.

Setup: Summer garden magazines open on the table. A vase of cut flowers from the gardens as samples of plants they will see.

Early Stage	Middle Stage	Late and End Stages
<p>These persons are goal-oriented and can sequence tasks such as watering plants, picking vegetables, or snipping herbs. They can also snip flowers and leaves as directed.</p> <p>You may be surprised that experienced gardeners may recognize the names of some plants!</p> <p>Sensory experiences are natural and awakening: Seeing, smelling, and touching the flowers and leaves.</p> <p>(Allen Level 4.0–4.6/FAST stage 4/5)</p>	<p>Have these folks look in the gardens for three specific, pre-determined, familiar garden items (perhaps seen in the magazines) such as: planters, flowers, ferns, mulch, soil, tools, pathway, benches, or chairs.</p> <p>They will notice familiar objects and distinguish plants and other nature objects by size, shapes, or color. Have these persons gather flowers with assistance.</p> <p>Will enjoy multi-sensory experiences in the gardens.</p> <p>(Allen Level 3.2–3.8/FAST stage 6)</p>	<p>Set up as described to assist these folks to experience many of the sensory experiences in the gardens, especially touching and smelling a variety of growing things.</p> <p>Don't forget shrub and tree bark pieces picked up along the way (or placed there prior to the walk!)</p> <p>Have baskets to gather and hold smaller flowers with stems to use to dry flowers for another activity.</p> <p>Sing a song or just plain hum.</p> <p>(Allen Level 1.2–2.0 and 2.2–3.0/FAST stages 7 & 8)</p>

Fall Activity

Pansy Faces (Early September)

Supplies

- Three dozen pansies, mixed colors
- 3" pots or containers (any shape will be fine)
- Potting soil
- Slow release fertilizer pellets
- Indoor small shovels
- Seed catalogs
- Packing peanuts

Directions: Look for a type of pansy called ice pansies. They have huge and plentiful blossoms and can withstand close to freezing temperatures late into fall. In mild climates, they can survive through the winter. They also can reseed themselves and bloom in early spring.

Use two large pots and fill with pansy plants. We suggest you not use clay pots because they absorb water and dehydrate plants. Large containers are usually tall enough to be accessed by persons in wheelchairs or seated in straight chairs. Planting in the ground requires great flexibility and strong knees. Recommended containers are large plastic or lightweight Styrofoam (look like ceramic 24" diameter); cedar wood box planters (24"–30") cubes, cedar rectangle planters (36" L by 12"–18" W) on 36"–42" legs.

The residents will recognize these pretty plants. Some may have memories of planting them with a mom or grandma. Assist clients to plant as many of the plants as possible, even hand-over-hand if needed. Use larger shovels to fill large planters with soil after filling a third full with packing peanuts. Let them feel and smell the soil prior to planting.

Early Stage	Middle Stage	Late and End Stages
<p>Place seed catalogs at each seating place and open to the variety of pansies available. Center of the table—Pansy plants set in a basket.</p> <p>Ask the group: "Does anyone know the name of the plants? Look at the flowers . . . are they all alike? How are they different from one another? Does anyone remember planting them at their home or with a relative?"</p> <p>These clients are goal-directed and will be able to sequence the planting task. They will request assistance if needed and can make choice of color.</p> <p>(Allen Level 4.0–4.6/FAST stage 4/5)</p>	<p>Be sure that each person in the group has the opportunity to look closely at the pictures in the catalogs and to touch and smell the real plants. Have them touch and smell the soil prior to actually planting. Offer each person two choices of specific plants by color.</p> <p>They will use short phrases to talk about memories of gardening and/or about planting pansies. Some may need hand-over-hand assistance in adding enough soil around the plants. They will need assistance with sequencing and may say, "I'm done."</p> <p>(Allen Level 3.2–3.8/FAST stage 6)</p>	<p>Assist these persons to look at, touch, and smell the pansies. Have them touch and smell the soil. Be careful that they do not put it in their mouths, though pansies are technically edible and would not harm the clients.</p> <p>These clients would benefit from singing a song such as <i>This is the way we . . . (make up the verses!) plant the pansies . . . early in the morning</i> or <i>You Are My Sunshine</i>.</p> <p>Assist the client to dig a hole in the soil in the pot. Use hand-over-hand to place the plant into the hole they dug.</p> <p>(Allen Level 1.2–2.0 and 2.2–3.0/FAST stages 7 & 8)</p>

Thank you! We hope you found this information helpful.

Please feel free to share this resource with a friend or colleague.

Have questions? We're here for you!

Give us a call at **877.816.4524** or email
dcssolutions@crisisprevention.com

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Click here to order *The Garden Book* from DCS/CPI or call 877.816.4524.



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CPI Dementia Care Specialists, provides abilities-based, person-centered consultation and training for all dementia care professionals. We educate, empower, and enrich the lives of these professionals and those in their care living with dementia.

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