



Sample Horticultural Therapy Activity

“Tussie-Mussies” – Bouquets with Meaning

These little nosegays with meaning or “language” have their origin in England during the Victorian era and were used as coy exchanges of flirtation. They are something that you can make with what you have in your garden. They make delightful gifts. Using plants from the backyard or a nearby field makes the bouquets distinctive and expressive. Every garden has what it needs for a *tussie-mussie*.

Precautions

Consult a list of poison plants. Consider safety issues when adapting tools for cutting.

Target Population

Any individual or group, ages 5 to adult, with an interest in herbs and flowers.

Activity Treatment Goals

The following treatment goals will be addressed by clients performing this activity:

- Stimulate the senses with color, smells, textures
- Provide an opportunity for social interaction
- Increase fine motor skills
- Stimulate mental functioning through choice making
- Provide an opportunity for low impact physical exercise

Completion Time One hour

Materials Needed You will need the following materials and tools to complete this project:

- Tools: scissors or hand pruners
- A variety of herbs, including both flowers and leaves. Include in this collection, colorful flowers that can serve as the centerpiece for the *tussie-mussies*
- Rubber bands
- Paper doilies
- Plastic wrap
- Cotton balls
- Floral tape
- Water

- Glasses to hold tussie-mussies while working
- Narrow curling or satin ribbon
- 4"x6" unlined index cards
- Paper punch
- Colored pens and markers
- List of "Language of Flowers"

Pre-session Preparation You will want to do the following before this activity begins:

- Prepare a finished sample of the *tussie mussie*.
- Cut a hole in the middle of the doily. This can be done 2 ways: fold doily in half, then in half again, and 2-3 more time. With scissors cut off about ¼-inch or less of the point which is formed. This makes a hole in the center of the doily. Unfold and maintain the fold lines for a fluted effect. **Or** Cut and X in the middle of the doily and fold down the points.
- If the collection of herbs and flowers is not a part of the treatment process, pre-cut a variety of plant material and place in water
- Cut ribbon in desired lengths
- Review the "Language of Flowers" list, specifically the plants for activity use.

Placement of Tools and Materials

If participants are not harvesting, cut and place in separate containers of water the sprigs of each type of plant material. This placement enhances choice making. All other materials can be strategically placed on the table. Placement should reflect activity goals.

Step-By-Step Instructions

Almost everyone learns best by watching a demonstration of an activity before trying it. You may want to create a *tussie mussie*, step-by-step.

1. Optional: Guide participants in the garden to collect plant material.
2. Select plants using the "Language of Flowers" list. Cut plants in 8-10" lengths.
3. Place cut plants in water
4. Choose the most important flower to be placed in the center of the *tussie mussie*.
5. While holding the centerpiece plant material in your left hand, add the other flowers and herbs, one at a time. Set them around and slightly lower than the center flower. The stems of each plant should be stripped of leaves up to 4".
6. The number of cuttings for the *tussie mussie* is determined by the doily and hole size.
7. When you have finished your bouquet, cut the stems evenly at the bottom and tie midway with a rubber band.
8. Spread out a square of plastic wrap and put a piece of moist cotton in the center. Fold up the square so that it engulfs the stems of the bouquet, twisting it around the stems like the flaps of a folded umbrella. (Optional: Cover it with a spiral of floral tape).

9. Slip the stripped stems of the bouquet through the precut doillie, up to where the leaves begin.
10. Decorate with ribbon
11. A *tussie mussie* can stay fresh for hours when wrapped this way. To keep it longer, snip off the base of the plastic and set in glass of water.
12. Using the “Language of Flowers” as a reference, create a card to give with the *tussie mussie*. Fold an index card in half, and punch a hole in the upper left corner. Use colored pens and markers to write a loving or sympathetic message.

Enrichment Opportunities

To preserve this bouquet as an “everlasting”—as the bouquet begins to dry, hang upside down for 2 weeks. Ask participants to share with the group, the specific plants selected and the reasons for this selection.

Performance Areas

The following performance areas can be addressed with this activity:

- Education (learning new information) —The history of the *tussie mussie* is extensive and may be of interest to participants. The “ Language of Flowers” list can be discussed and this part of the activity expanded. Each herb or plant can be discussed in term of herbal use.
- Leisure/recreation — This activity offers a wonderful bouquet that can decorate the table.
- Social interaction — The *tussie mussie* can be given as a gift and offer an opportunity of sharing with others.

A Horticultural Therapy Activity from the North Carolina Botanical Garden