Cooperative Extension’s Ability Garden presents

Plant Pounding

This activity sounds high energy and perhaps a little destructive and part of the fun is just that! By pounding flowers and plant materials participants learn about plant pigments, creating pictures on cloth and paper. Different plants produce different colors, and it is not always easy to guess what kind of 'paint' will come out. Collecting materials together encourages conversation and comparisons. The use of mallets, hammers and smooth rocks is a creative tension reliever.

Precautions: This can be a noisy project. A room full of 10 plant pounding enthusiasts can be a little too much for anyone, but it is especially difficult for participants with acute hearing sensitivities. Padding each work surface with a thick wad of newspaper and providing a range of ear plugs / muffs can help reduce the impact.

Target population: 4 years to adulthood

Activity Treatment Goals: Goals and outcomes can be tailored to different populations and individual participants and can include:

- Promotes increased gross and fine motor skills
- Promotes increased cognitive awareness
- Promotes increased sensory awareness
- Provides an opportunity for positive social interaction

Completion Time: 45 - 60 minutes
Materials Needed: You will need the following materials to complete this project:
- Newspapers (one thick section each)
- Thick paper or absorbent card stock slightly larger than cloth surfaces
- Squares of cloth / cotton handkerchiefs
- Rubber mallets, wooden hammers and collection of easily held rocks
- Markers / pencils to label work and write plant names when appropriate
- Plant material: plants that lend themselves well to this activity include: phlox, black-eyed susan, zinnia, coreopsis, begonia, coleus and maple leaves
- Earmuffs, ear plugs
- Jars / buckets to hold plant material
- Scissors/ child-safe scissors
- Small baskets
- Plates / dishes
- Materials to clean up work spaces at end of program
- Wet wipes or hand wash station

Pre-session Preparation: In some situations it may be appropriate for participants to select and cut plant material, following visual and verbal cues. The process requires good focus and concentration, fine motor skills and the ability to follow multi-step instructions. Have a good range of tried-and-true flowers already prepared; add to this stock as a group. You will also need to have an example with plant names written below their print.

Step-by-Step Instructions:
1. Collect plant materials in small baskets as you walk around the garden.
2. Cut stems and place in jars/ buckets half filled with water.
3. Return to work area and create individual work spaces – define areas with a thick wad of newspaper. This pads the work surface and reduces hammering noise.
4. Lay cloth/ handkerchief on newspaper. This will be the primary print of your pounding.
5. Select flowers and leaves. Lay them down on the cloth, either creating a whole picture or experimenting one at a time.
6. Lay paper/ card over the design, lightly pressing plants into place. A black dot on the reverse side can be used to demonstrate where flowers are placed; it can act as a bull’s-eye.
7. Demonstrate safe pounding techniques (keep fingers clear) and lift paper up to see colors/ shapes that have been created.
8. Write plant names on paper print, leaving cloth as a self standing picture.
9. Every pounding is unique. Label with participant’s name and display.
10. Clean work area. Extra plant materials can be offered as a bouquet to take home.
Enrichment Opportunities:
- Discuss basic plant parts: leaf, stem, roots, petals, seeds, etc.
- The activity provides the opportunity to introduce plant families, genus and species.
- What common dyes are used to make our clothing?
- How are pigments traditionally used?

Performance Areas:
- **Education:** The activity presents the opportunity for participants to experience a 'gathering walk' in order to collect materials for the activity. This activity promotes direct engagement with nature through color, texture, shape, etc.
- **Vocation:** This activity presents an opportunity to experience choosing, cutting (if appropriate), and carrying (in small baskets) plant material.
- **Rehabilitation:** The activity can be used to promote use of fine motor skills: selecting plant material, placing it on paper, etc. Plant pounding exercises gross motor function. The activity provides an opportunity for self expression and creativity.
- **Leisure/Recreation:** The "hunting and gathering" aspect of this activity promotes a fun, leisurely engagement with nature. The activity encourages personal choice, sharing, partnering, ownership and self esteem building.

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