



Sensory Garden Program

Introduction (2 minutes)

-Start with group at Sensory Garden-

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

Hello everyone, and welcome to the Osgoode Township Museum. We're so happy to have you all here with us today and hope you're excited to explore our wonderful Sensory Garden, learn about the historic role of flower pressing and plant preservation, and interact with our garden to create some beautiful art. We're going to be stimulating all five of our senses today in a few fun activities and I hope that everyone has a chance to connect more with the beautiful nature around them.

I would like to start by saying that the Osgoode Township Museum acknowledges that our museum is on the traditional unceded ancestral land of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people. Algonquin Anishinaabeg are the original inhabitants of this territory along the Ottawa, Rideau and Castor Rivers and have lived on this land since time immemorial. We are grateful to have the opportunity to be present in this territory.

Discussion:

- Has anyone been to the museum before?
- Does everyone live in the area/Osgoode Township?
- Has anyone visited our Sensory Garden before? Do you know what a Sensory Garden is?
- Do you garden indoors?
- Is there a garden where you are now?
- Did your parents garden/farm? Did you help on the farm as a kid?
- Did you grow your own food or does anyone grow food in a garden now?

5 Senses Activity/ Sensory Walk (20 minutes)

Purpose: To interact with the Sensory Garden using all five senses, while also making connections to history and nature. This activity is dementia-friendly because it is easily adaptable to a wide range of participants and emphasizes the use of your senses, which is important for many living with dementia as they progress through different stages.

Instructions: Depending on the age range, abilities, and interests of participants, optimal activities to complete during the Sensory Walk may vary. Below are a list of a few activities in each category that can be adapted to your group within the "Sensory Walk" activity. These

activities can also be completed in whatever order is most logical depending on the set up of plants in the garden.

Sound

Making a Sound Map

Purpose: Creating a sound map allows participants to connect and become more aware of their surroundings. By slowing down and focusing on the sounds around them, they can become more immersed in their environment, practice visualizing the sources of sounds and understand how natural and man-made sounds make up the auditory landscape.

Materials:

- Writing utensil (pencil, marker, pencil crayon, etc.)
- Piece of paper

Instructions:

1. To make a sound map, choose a space for the group to sit, such as inside the gazebo, in the center area of the garden, or just outside the garden in the grass.
2. Draw a simple depiction of yourself in the middle of your page. Each participant can make it personalized, but keep it simple.
3. Next, instruct everyone to close their eyes and listen to the sounds around them. When they hear a sound, they will draw it on their page (and spell it out if they'd like) relative to their placement.
4. After a few minutes, participants can share their sound maps with the group and compare what they heard to others' maps. If they want to, ask them to imitate the sound they heard. If there is a large group, this could be done in partners.



Modified Version

To modify this activity, create “sound maps” without the paper and pencil. Have participants close their eyes and discuss the sounds you hear as a group. One participant might hear a bird- maybe another is an avid birdwatcher and knows what kind of bird it is? Another

participant might hear water in a fountain- what does this remind people of? A river? A swimming pool? A beach? Rain? You can also lead by asking specific questions: “Do you hear that bird call?”, “Do you hear the leaves rustling in the trees?”, “Can you hear the wind chimes?”.

Smell and Taste

Mystery Plants

Purpose: To use your sense of smell and taste as tools for making connections. With plant specimens from the Sensory Garden, participants can work together to identify the plants and discuss their everyday uses.

Instructions:

1. Gather a few sprigs from the plants in this section of the Sensory Garden.
2. Without letting participants read the labels of each plant, let them smell the samples and make a guess as to what the specimen is. For herb specimens, encourage participants to crush up pieces in their hands to release more of their scent. If possible, allow participants to taste a piece of the specimen if it will help them to identify it (ex. Mint).
3. Once they have made their guesses, ask where participants may have smelled or tasted the specimens before. If a participant guesses the plant based on its appearance, ask them what parts of the specimen allowed them to identify it beyond it’s smell or taste.

Discussion:

We use the smells and taste of many different plants in our everyday lives, particularly in the kitchen.

- Does anyone recognize where they may have smelled or tasted this plant before?
- Do you have any recipes where you usually use this plant or flower?
- Which one smells or tastes the best to you? Which is the worst?
- What’s your favourite way to eat this plant?

Lavender: Records of lavender use date back to ancient civilizations where it was often used for its fragrance in perfumes, and soaps, and for cooking. People began to wash their clothing and linens in lavender, and would bathe in it as well. Lavender also has a long history of being used as a medicinal ingredient for a variety of afflictions and is popular today in aromatherapy for its calming effects. You might come across lavender in several kinds of teas and in baking or cooking recipes.

Mint: Nowadays, when you think of mint you probably think of toothpaste, or chewing gum. But similarly to lavender, the use of mint also dates back to ancient times and has been widely used as a medicine throughout history for a large variety of ailments including headaches, vomiting, and digestive issues. In North America, mint and mint-oil have been a large commercial business since the 1700s.

Rosemary: This herb also has a long medical and aromatic history, but today you might recognize it the most by its taste in cooking. You might have had rosemary on chicken, roasted potatoes, in breads, or on fish.

Sight

I See...

Purpose: To use your sense of sight beyond just looking at the different colours in the garden. This activity will encourage participants to become more aware of the textures, shapes, and sizes that are also prevalent in nature.

Instructions:

1. At the “Sight” area of the Sensory Garden, there are many different kinds of plants intended to be visually appealing. With the group, play a variation of the popular “I Spy” game. However, instead of just using colours as the basis for the game, use shapes, textures, numbers or even sizes. Give an example such as, “I spy something that is round” (A flower), “I spy something that has crinkled leaves” (Kale), “I spy something with five petals” (A flower), or “I spy something that is only an inch tall” (Some moss). Encourage participants to use a different basis each time.
2. Depending on the size of the group, give each participant a turn to be the leader and let everyone else guess. If the group is large, this can be done in smaller groups or partners.

Discussion:

- Which characteristics were the easiest to guess? Which was the hardest? Why?

Modified Version

Depending on the age range of your group, this activity may need to be adapted. Instead of using “I Spy” as the basis for discussion, talk about the different things you see in a more open format.

- Ask participants if they know the name of the plants based on their appearance.

- Discuss how the function of a plant can be attributed to its appearance (bright colours attract pollinators).
- If your group is interested in birds, take some time to “birdwatch” and see what kinds of birds they can spot around the garden.
- If the group is interested in gardening, see if they can spot any plants that they would usually plant.
- Encourage participants to share their own personal experiences and uses regarding the plants.

Touch and Sight

Magnifying Glass Search

Purpose: To make connections between the textures you see compared to what you feel. Using your sense of sight, explore the textures of the Sensory Garden “Touch” area. Afterwards, participants can take a closer look at what creates texture and why, and explore the textures of gardening.

Materials:

- Magnifying glasses

Instructions:

1. Focus on one plant at a time. Have participants feel the various textures of the plant (flowers, stem, leaves, fruit, etc.) and share what word first comes to mind. Is it soft? Smooth? Bumpy? Encourage them to share what the texture reminds them of (“Lamb’s ear is soft like velvet...”) If your group is large, you may want to pass around a small specimen from the plant so that everyone gets a chance to feel it.
2. Afterwards, pass out some magnifying glasses and allow participants to take a closer look at the “Touch” area. Do they see little hairs on the stems that might have made a plant feel prickly? Does the flower they felt have hard seeds like a sunflower, or is it soft inside? Encourage participants to use their magnifying glasses to look at the dirt as well.
3. Using the Touch and Feel stations, ask participants if they can spot any of the insects that they can feel on the board.

Modified Version

This activity may be modified to exclude the use of magnifying glasses. Instead, complete Step 1 in more depth. If the group is interested in gardening, discuss the different textures involved in gardening. Have participants feel the dirt and its different textures (soft,

rocky, dry, etc...), feel the different textures of planting (a seed, a bloom, a husk of a plant, etc...), or the texture of watering the plants with a small container.

Educational Activity (15 minutes)

Pressing Flowers and Plant Specimens

Purpose: To learn about the history and purpose of pressing flowers/plants while interacting with the garden. This activity also allows participants to make deeper connections while completing the Take-Home Activity, as they will have been involved in the process of pressing flowers as they use pressed specimens to create their crafts.

Materials:

- Large books x 4
- Parchment paper
- A variety of plant specimens from the garden

Discussion:

Pressing flowers or plants is an easy way to preserve them without the use of any chemicals or expensive equipment. All you need are some books and some time!

People have been pressing flowers and other plants for a very long time. The practice of flower pressing dates all the way back to ancient times, where dried flowers and plants were used to make perfumes, in funeral rituals, and for medicinal uses. A form of Japanese art, called Oshibana, where pressed flowers were used to create pictures, became popular in the 1500s and spread throughout Europe during the Victorian era. During this time, flower pressing became a very popular activity and people would press them for scrapbooks, picture frames, gifts, and scientific study.

When we press flowers and plants from our Sensory Garden to preserve them, we are able to make art like as was done in the past, but we are also preserving them as many people did and still do for food. The practice of drying herbs and plants is very, very old, and was often

used to preserve the plants for cooking, medicine, or fragrances. In more recent history, early settlers in the Osgoode Township would have been drying produce from their gardens for similar uses. It was important for early settlers to dry their produce to us throughout the winter when they could not grow a garden. So, they would hang things like apples, herbs, and even some vegetables from the ceiling, around their fireplaces, or in the sun to dry them out to use in the winter. If you smell some of the dried plants we have here today, especially the herbs, you'll notice that they still smell fairly strong as they have been preserved. You might also use lots of dried herbs in cooking or enjoy dried snacks like raisins. While we are pressing our plants in order to use them for art today, remember that preserving plants by drying them out is a practice that has been important for many different reasons and has been done in many different ways over time depending on what they were being used for.

- Has anyone ever pressed flowers before?
- Has anyone ever dried plants as a method of preserving them (such as dried herbs)?
- What did you do with these dried plants/use them for?
- Did you dry plants for decoration or to eat?

Instructions:

1. Bring out the books filled with pressed flowers/plants and gently open some pages to show the group.
2. After discussing the history and purpose of pressing flowers and plants, allow participants to walk around the sensory garden and gather their own specimens to press. Make sure to explain which plant would be best for pressing if they are not sure- thin (not thick like trying to press a large flower such as a lily), small, without blemishes, etc.) Depending on the participants, you may want to do this step as a group so that no damage is done to plants if children try to collect large specimens or remove important parts of the plant. If a participant needs help collecting their specimens, allow them to choose which ones they would like and assist them in picking them from the plants.
3. Once each participant has collected five to six specimens, regroup in the gazebo.
4. Pass out two sheets of printer paper or one larger sheet of parchment paper that can be folded in half to each participant. Demonstrate how to lay out their specimens on one sheet of paper (or half their parchment paper) so that they are as flat as possible in whichever configuration they would like them to be pressed.
5. Lay their second sheet of paper on top of their specimens (or fold the parchment in half). Allow participants to place their folded "package" of specimens in between two pages of a book, or allow them to choose which page in the book they would like their specimens pressed and place it inside for them.

6. Gently close all the books, making sure that all specimens remain inside the pages and can be properly pressed. Make sure to stack the books on top of each other when you return them to the program tote.

Note: When you go to use these specimens for the next group of participants, begin with the books at the base of the stack and continue from the bottom up. If you only need to use one or two books, the ones at the bottom will be pressed more than those on top because of the added weight. If you can, cycle through the books in this manner.

Take-Home Activity (20 minutes)

Making Cards Using Pressed Flowers

Purpose: This activity will allow participants to apply what they have learned from the previous activity and create unique art that they can use as decoration or send to a loved one. This activity is intended to be dementia-friendly because it can be completed at any pace and intensity, the emphasis on sending a card to a loved one can create opportunities for reminiscing and connecting with family, and numerous resources discuss the benefits of flower arranging with a person living with dementia. This activity puts a spin on traditional flower arranging while maintaining the nature of this calming activity and its potential to encourage creativity, sensory stimulation, and the maintenance of fine motor skills.

Materials:

- [Card template sheets](#)



- Dried flowers from previous participant groups
- Mod-Podge
- Colouring pencils, stickers, etc. for decorating vases/cards (optional)

Discussion: Today, we're going to combine the practices of early flower pressing artists and the Victorian craze of using flowers to send messages, by creating our own plant art to share with whoever you'd like. When the flower pressing craze was big during the late 1800s, different flowers were used to convey different messages in notes or cards. A Victorian emphasis on manners and etiquette limited the ways in which people could "properly" communicate and something called "the language of flowers" or "floriography" came to be. Some flowers came to symbolize whole sentences, while others could just mean "yes" or "no".

Instructions:

1. Gather the books containing the pressed specimens of previous participants and open them on the tables. Remove the packets of specimens and lay them out. Make sure to emphasize that they need to be handled very gently or else they could rip and there is a limited quantity without waiting for more plants to dry out.
2. Pass out a card template to each participant and allow them to choose which design they would like for their craft.
3. Show them the example card from the program tote.
4. If participants are interested in further decorating their cards or the flower vases, bring out colouring pencils and stickers as well.
5. While participants craft, topics of discussion could include:
 - a. Who are you making your card for? Who do you want to send it to?
 - b. What role does this person play in their lives?
 - c. Why did they choose those specimens for their card?
 - d. Which is their favourite specimen? Why?

Discussion: Today, we don't often use our plants and flowers to deliver secret messages in the same way that many Victorians did and many aren't assigned a symbolic meaning that we usually are aware of. (If you're curious, you can take a look at these lists we have to learn about what some of the flowers in your garden might have meant back in the Victorian era.?? Or would a group of younger kids have more fun just making the cards without meaning or making up their own meanings? Not sure)

Note: Everyone may not want to participate in a particular activity at a particular time or some may want to remain seated in the garden for a longer period. If a caretaker believes the participant may enjoy an activity at a later time, allow them to take home the required supplies, if possible, to complete later (ex.- A card template and a few pressed flowers tucked inside).

In Case of Inclement Weather

If the weather is not appropriate to run the program effectively outdoors, the following adjustments can be made if necessary:

Presentation

Instead of conducting the lesson outside, in the sensory garden, the lesson may be delivered indoors if the necessary supplies are collected beforehand. This will include a collection of plants from the sensory garden (preferably one that functions for each of the five senses). Ex. Collect a few mint leaves prior to running the program and discuss its smell and properties as you would if the group was in the garden. If the weather is too severe to collect any plant specimens from outside beforehand, staff could try and bring a few from home that could still be discussed in a similar manner (ex.- A few dried herbs could still be felt, smelled, and even tasted. A cutting of aloe vera could be felt and discussed...etc.).

Educational Activity

If the weather is too severe to be outside, focus primarily on discussing the historical purpose and uses for pressing/drying flowers and herbs. Instead of having the group collect and

press a lot of plants that they will not have access to, you may demonstrate how pressing is done with one or two specimens collected or brought in prior to the inclement weather.

Take-Home Activity

This activity can be completed indoors without adjustment. All necessary supplies are located within the program tote, but you may need to set up a table and chairs for participants to use.

Website Blurb

Our new Sensory Garden is open to the public! Come join us for our dementia-friendly program “Bloom”, where we’ll emphasize the use of our senses to interact with the garden in a Sensory Walk and complete a variety of immersive activities. Learn about the origins of preserving flowers and plants through pressing and try your own hand at this historical pastime. We’ll conclude our program using what we’ve learned to create unique, botanical cards that are sure to bring a smile to anyone’s face!

Bloom Supplies List

- Program script
- Printer Paper
- Heavy books x 4 (with pressed plant specimens inside)
- Parchment or printer paper
- Card template sheets
- Dried flowers from previous participant groups
- Mod-Podge bottles x 3

To Gather Before Running Program:

- Colouring pencils, stickers, etc. for decorating vases (optional)
- Pencils to write in cards