



The Eldergrow garden offers a therapeutic connection to nature where residents engage in meaningful ways with the garden – cognitively, socially, spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

Summary: Tend the garden with general maintenance: pruning, cleaning, adding fertilizer & watering.

Activity Objectives:

Objective 1: Resident will engage in sensory stimulus (SS)

Objective 2: Resident will socialize in garden club (S)

Objective 3 Resident will engage motor skills (MS)

Supplies:

1. Safe Scissors
2. Potting soil to replenish (optional)
3. Shallow pan or large plastic pot (for garden trash)
4. New plant, if needed (If so, see “Planting New Plants” in “Self-facilitated Activities” folder)
5. Hand rake or trowel
6. Small watering can
7. Two Info Sheets on pruning
8. Homemade fertilizer & Fertilizer Info Sheets of your choice

Set-Up:

- Move garden into central location so residents can gather around it - *Unplug light/fan and don't forget to reset brakes!*
- Put supplies on table & check the garden to see what type of maintenance might be required.
- Have garden journal ready for any comments, observations.

Directions:

Step 1: Observation (You can enter any observations into your garden journal).

Today we will give the garden lots of TLC, the attention it deserves.

- We'll carefully prune any overgrown plants, tend the soil and water.

As residents gather, encourage residents to look at their garden or you can move the garden closer to the activity tables

Q: *How is the garden doing?*

Q: *Which plant(s) is growing the best?*

Q: *Which plant needs some TLC (tender loving care) or tending?*

Step 2: Pruning:

- Refer to Pruning Info Sheets (2) and have residents read aloud. Hold up for everyone to see.
- We can also prune any plants that are getting too big, or have spent flowers.

Q: *Which plants need a little 'hair cut'?*

Q: *Do any plants look too big or are shading other smaller plants?*

- Have several residents come up to the garden and find plants to trim. Residents can sit while doing maintenance.
- Use the scissors to cut back the longest stems of any plants that need a trim. Put removed stems in the pan for throwing out later.
 - Cut stems between two leaves (or sets of opposite leaves), and close to the lower leaf/leaves (don't leave a long stump of stem). Refer to Pruning Info Sheets.

Step 3: Tending the soil:

- We can tend the soil by churning it up to mix in the perlite & help aerate the soil.
- Have other residents come up to the garden to mix up the soil, and remove any fallen leaves or flowers to clean the soil as well. They can use the hand rake or a trowel to mix the soil.
- If needed, add more potting soil to the garden, especially around plants if they have exposed roots from not being planted deep enough.

Step 4: Apply Your Homemade Fertilizer:

- Refer to any previous Fertilizer Info Sheets you wish and have residents read aloud. Be sensitive to the fact that most memory care residents will not remember making the fertilizer. You can say something like, "Some of you were here when we made this homemade fertilizer." You can describe ingredients.
- Squirt the fertilizer mixture on the soil around the plants to enrich their root area with fresh nutrients

- Remember: Fertilizer feeds the plants (composts feeds the soil).

Step 5: Watering:

- Let's check the soil moisture and water the garden if it's dry.
 - Have a resident come up to the garden and use the soil moisture sensor (usually a ladybug) to test spots around the garden. It flashes if the soil is dry right immediately around it.
 - Have another resident come up to the garden and feel the soil. Is it dry? If so, we'll need to add some water, mainly around the plants.
- Have the residents help each other water, pointing out where it is dry. Use the small watering can to water immediately around each plant that needs water. **Count to three** while pouring water around each plant.

Step 6: Closing: Record in garden journal.

Q: What did you learn today?

Q: What was your favorite part of today's activity?



Residents enjoy tending to the garden! Note how residents can stand or sit while doing maintenance. Ask staff to assist residents to garden, especially in memory care.

