

LUNAR NEW YEAR BLOSSOMS & LANTERNS

Residents will learn about the Lunar New Year, the characteristics of their zodiac signs and then create Lunar New Year vegetable print lantern decorations or gifts to celebrate! Eldergrow offers a therapeutic connection to nature where residents engage in meaningful ways – cognitively, socially, spiritually, emotionally, & physically.

Please amend this lesson to adapt to the abilities and interest of your residents. You know your residents best!

If you don't have an Eldergrow garden, you can still interact with nature by collecting flowers and leaves during a garden courtyard or nature walk. You can also safely enjoy nature from a window!

Wellness Objectives:

Objective 1: Resident will engage socialization (S)

Objective 2: Resident will engage creative expression (CE)

Objective 3: Resident will engage motor skills (MS)

MATERIALS:



Option 1: Decorative Vege Print Paper Lanterns

- Round paper lanterns: (white) [Link here](#) or (colors) [Link here](#) (or craft store)
- **and/or** Colorful construction or origami paper to [make your own](#) (Dollar Tree)

And/or Option 2: Vege Print Lunar New Years Gifts & Cards

- Chinese to-go containers and *optional* chopsticks (Craft store, donations from restaurant or [Link here](#))
- Tissue wrapping paper / Construction Paper (Dollar Tree)
- Paper to create stamped gift cards
- Tangerines, mandarins, Meyers lemons and/or fortune cookie gifts (Grocery store)

For Both Options:

- Cups for water to dilute paint
- Veggie stamps: Celery stalks, bok choy or small sweet peppers (Grocery)
- Red and white paint & foam brushes
- Paint palettes, like plastic yogurt lids or plates
- Twine to hang lanterns and/or tie together veggies
- Table covering and paper towels
- Talking Points: “Lunar New Year” & “The Luckiest Plants And Flowers”
- Individual Zodiac picture cards: [Link here](#)
- New Year's gift card notes (last page of this lesson plan)
- *Optional*: Electric tea lights (Dollar Tree or [Link here](#))
- *Optional*: Chinese tea

PREPARATION:

- If you have a garden, have residents gather around it or at table by a window with a view of nature. Have journal ready for garden/nature observations.
- Cut veggies ahead of time and if needed, wrap twine around stalks to keep them together for interesting imprint.
- If making the construction paper for lanterns (etc), consider cutting those out ahead of time, then printing & taping.
- Present a finished lantern/gift or photos to show residents what they will be making.

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS – CHOOSE 1 OR ALL 3 PARTS:

1. GARDEN OBSERVATIONS & CONVERSATION

- If you have a garden, gather around it so residents can make observations, or gather around a window.
- Bring safe scissors and garden tools, journal with pen, and half full watering can (keep it light).
- Jot down 3 things in the journal (or ask for a volunteer resident to be today's garden/nature secretary)
- Bring a ruler and have residents help measure plants. Mark their heights in the journal and observe their growth over time!
- Do you notice anything different or new about the garden? There are no wrong answers.
- How does the soil feel - Too wet? Too dry? If too dry, ask a volunteer to water.
- Do you see any expired flowers or leaves that we could remove?
- Are there any overgrown plants? Have a resident use a bowl to collect expired plant materials & prunings.

2. CONVERSATION STARTERS & TALKING POINTS

- Today we are starting the celebrations for the Lunar New Year. First let's learn a little about the traditional celebrations and take turns reading the "Lunar New Year" Talking Points out loud to get into the holiday spirit! *How do you like to celebrate the New Year? Did you know there are special plants that can help celebrate the Lunar New Year?*
- Help folks read aloud the Talking Points, "**The Luckiest Plants and Flowers**".
- Ask folks if they have any lucky or favorite plants or flowers. Make a favorite plant list in the garden journal! (Consider bringing in someone's favorites next time if it's one of our Eldergrow Approved Plants - on the Nature Portal resources page)
- Encourage discussion! This is a great opportunity to learn more about each other and laugh out loud!
 - **When is your birth year? What is your Chinese zodiac sign? What are your personality traits, according to the zodiac sign? What is the same or different about your personality?**
- Read the zodiac traits from the last page for everyone.
- We often see cherry blossoms and lanterns decorating homes this time of year. The blossoms represent perseverance, courage, and reliability and the lanterns signify a wish for a better and brighter future.

3. MAKING LUNAR NEW YEAR'S DECORATIONS OR GIFTS:

Please see the short video on the Nature Connect portal for activity tips & tricks on this activity.

Option 1: Decorative Veggie Print Paper Lanterns (Round paper and/or construction/origami paper lanterns in Daily Prog.)

- You can do single color or combine red and white paint prints on lanterns (or different colors if desired!)
- Dip pre-cut veggies' ends into paint (or paint onto veggie ends with a foam brush)
- Stamp onto pre-cut/flat construction paper or expanded purchased lanterns to make floral rosettes. Someone can place their hand inside the round paper lantern (work in pairs) or temporarily stuff with towels for resistance when stamping.
- Once the lantern is covered in stamped flowers, take a black sharpie and lightly draw branches to connect the rosettes.
- Insert the wire support piece into the round lantern and/or assemble the origami paper lanterns. Ask residents where they would like to hang the lanterns around the garden and have fun decorating!

Option 2: Veggie Print Lunar New Years Gift Boxes, Tissue Paper & Cards

- The same idea applies to the Chinese take out container gift boxes. Cover veggie ends in paint and stamp all over box.
- Create floral veggie-stamped patterns on folded note paper as well for New Year's cards. Help residents determine whom the Lunar New Year gift is for. Consider printing New Year's notes page at the end of this lesson and cut out then glue messages to the inside of the cards. *Optional:* attach origami lanterns to chopsticks for more gift decor.
- Add citrus fruit or fortune cookies. Have residents sign their names to the cards and gift to family/staff!
- Toast to the new year with tea and turn up festive music and admire the garden decor! (see Daily Programming)

CLOSING & AMENDMENTS FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS

- For a more **advanced paper lantern** project, consider making your own paper mache lanterns first to stamp.
- Ask your residents if they'd like to add the recent "Lucky Bamboo Gifts" to the take-out gift boxes. Simply tie the lucky bamboo together into one of the lucky groupings (mentioned in the Talking Points), with a red or gold ribbon, wrap temporarily in a moist paper towel in a plastic baggy (tied to the bamboo to avoid leaking) and place into the decorated Chinese container gift boxes. Source to purchase more Lucky Bamboo if needed: [Link here](#)
- **Working together in teams/groups** creates great socialization and engagement. Hand assistance works well when helping a resident stamp the paint on the various mediums. Assist as minimally as possible to the resident's ability. This way it's a collaboration that plays to their strengths, allowing them to be successful and fulfilled with the work they can do! Meet them where they are!
- Perhaps a resident would like to simply decorate the garden or room with finished lanterns, so give them the task of deciding where they'd like to hang them and assist with cutting tape sections, etc.
- **For those not so inclined to do the craft activity**, focus on connecting with them and engaging in memories of their favorite New Year's celebrations. Read the Talking Points with them as you underline the words with your finger. Even if someone is not verbally or physically participating, they can still be engaged! Listen to the music or play a video in the background of a virtual walk through a cherry blossom tree park in Japan. (Daily Programming)
- **Changes in the garden can help stimulate short term memories**, so do encourage residents to make these observations as well as reflect back on previous observations so they can see how their garden is changing over time. Consider adding a couple of noteworthy aspects of your choice plant for them to continue to learn and remember about their garden's plant collection. Tape talking points around the room or onto the garden after class for reference.
- Some residents prefer to only assist with **gross motor garden care**. One may enjoy hand tilling the soil or adding new soil around the plants. Someone else may like to water each plant to the count of three or dust off the shelves and garden structure. Having such responsibilities creates purpose! We do recommend that you bring in a demo of the lesson and have them read the Talking Points so that they get a diversity of engagement and the chance to learn.
- **For IL or more independent participants**- They may benefit from assisting others to complete tasks, and gain the sense of purpose and fulfillment that brings. You could also have a lantern lighting ceremony that evening with electric tea lights and send positive wishes for the new year out into the world.
- Using various herbs, do a "Scratch & Sniff" sensory demo. Visit our portal video library for a demo. This sensory stimulation is not only a good cognitive and sensory stimulation that encourages engagement, it is a great way to use a garden as a redirect tool for those exhibiting unwanted behaviors. All 5 senses are activated! Pick off a leaf from one of the herbs and ask questions such as:
 - **Touch:** Feel the leaf. Is it smooth or bumpy? Thick or thin?
 - **Smell:** Smell the leaf after rubbing it. Do you know what that scent is? What does it remind you of?
 - **Sight:** Do you know what herb this is? Notice the leaf shape. Is it a wide or narrow leaf? Does it have a smooth or jagged edge?
 - **Taste:** Have you tasted this herb before? Do you have any favorite dishes that use this herb? (If you would like to taste the leaf, please wash first.)
 - **Sound:** This conversation activates the auditory cortex (hearing) part of the brain.

LIST OF ZODIAC ANIMALS/YEARS

(Individual Zodiac picture cards: [Link here](#))

1. Rat: quick-witted, smart, charming, and persuasive
 - 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008, 2020
2. Ox: patient, kind, stubborn, and conservative
 - 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009, 2021
3. Tiger: authoritative, emotional, courageous, and intense
 - 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010, 2022
4. Rabbit: popular, compassionate, and sincere
 - 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011, 2023
5. Dragon: energetic, fearless, warm-hearted, and charismatic
 - 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012, 2024
6. Snake: charming, gregarious, introverted, generous, and smart
 - 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001, 2013, 2025
7. Horse: energetic, independent, impatient, and enjoy traveling
 - 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002, 2014, 2026
8. Sheep: mild-mannered, shy, kind, and peace-loving
 - 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015, 2027
9. Monkey: fun, energetic, and active
 - 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016, 2028
10. Rooster: independent, practical, hard-working, and observant
 - 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005, 2017, 2029
11. Dog: patient, diligent, generous, faithful, and kind
 - 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006, 2018, 2030
12. Pig: loving, tolerant, honest, and appreciative of luxury
 - 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007, 2019, 2031

WISHING YOU LOTS OF LUCK AND
HAPPINESS IN THE YEAR AHEAD.

*May this new year bring you
good health and good fortune.*

Happy New Year!

*You make our family so proud,
and we wish you nothing but
continued success and happiness.*

Hope this new year brings you
good fortune, peace and prosperity.

Thinking of you and your family
and wishing you all a year
that outshines the rest.

*It's that time of year for feasting,
celebrating and looking forward
to a happy and prosperous year ahead.*

Enjoy every moment!

Health, wealth and endless joy
is what I wish for you
and your family this year.