

# WINTER SPRUCE UP! PRUNING, PROPAGATION & PRESSING

**We will prune and propagate plants and/or herbs, tend to some winter garden tasks, and then press flowers and leaves for an upcoming botanical craft!** 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 cognitive stimulation (CS)

Objective 2: Resident will engage motor skills (MS)

Objective 3: Resident will engage sensory stimulation (SS)

## MATERIALS:



- At least 8 herb cuttings from various approved plants\*
- *\*Are your garden herbs/plants too small and nurseries not selling much yet to propagate from?* You can propagate fresh **grocery store herbs!** Herbs sold as sprigs or cuttings (in flat clamshells) can be propagated easily. Basil, rosemary, sage, oregano, thyme, and mint can be rooted in water if the cutting is from green growth.
- Big bowl to collect plant material from the Garden/courtyard
- Watering pitcher, cute mister, and cups/shovels (Eldergrow Garden or Dollar store)
- Twine, sharpies, tape & cleaned safety scissors
- Heavy book\* for pressing the pruned flowers and leaves. Keep in mind that the colors may seep into the pages, so use an unwanted book or protect the pages with paper towels & newspaper layers
- *\*<OR>* Pieces of cardboard (cut ahead of time) and twine or rubber bands to make DIY plant presses
- Plastic cups with optional straw hole lids
- 1-2 paper towels per resident
- Talking Points: “**Propagation Tips**” & “**Embracing the Winter Garden**”
- Print out propagation **label(s)**: (Last page)
- *Optional:* Magnifying glasses
- **\*Easy to propagate plants:** Variety of Herbs, as well as other plants like; Coleus, Kalanchoe, Geranium, Peperomia, Spider Plant, Vick's Plant
- **Flowers and other leaves for pressing:** Gerbera daisy, geranium, standing fuschia, viola, pansy (Please do NOT use a few common plants found in grocery stores like carnations, primroses and lilies which have levels of toxicity to their plant parts.)
- **Watch this video**, *How to Root a Cutting in Water*, from our Expert Eldergrow Educator, Jennifer: [Link Here](#)
- **Safety Note:** Do not use commercial rooting gels or powders which cause eye, skin and respiratory irritation. Homemade “rooting hormones” have not proven to be effective.

## 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. Set out materials and Talking Points to the side.
- Make sure all cutting/propagating tools and propagation containers are thoroughly washed.

## ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS – CHOOSE 1 OR ALL 3 PARTS:

### 1. GARDEN OBSERVATIONS & THE WINTER GARDEN

- Bring any new Plant of the Day if provided, plus scissors, plastic cups, tape, sharpies, garden journal with pen and Talking Points to the garden or a window viewing outside gardens. Ask them if they recognize the new plant (or a current one in the garden or a cutting from outside): *Does anyone know what plant this is?* Give hints and share fun facts!
- Journal about garden changes or nature observations as you ask questions such as: *Do you see a plant that has grown too tall or looks a little “leggy” & needs to be pruned? Anything else need tending to? What is your favorite garden task?*
- Let's talk about the winter garden. While the outdoor winter garden may be drab and bleak, we can tend to a garden even when it's cold outside! An indoor or window garden! Or we can bring bits of nature indoors to observe from inside.
- Let's read “**Embracing the Winter Garden**” Talking Points aloud. Talk about the changes in your indoor garden, or plants in your courtyard seen from a “Garden Sofa”, and write them down in your Garden Journal. *What are some of the tasks that you have to tend to during wintertime? (Examples- shoveling snow, clean roof gutters, splitting firewood, etc.)*
- Plant any new plants into pots or the garden (maybe not outside just yet) and discuss notable traits to help identify them. Give hints! Write those traits in your journal.

### 2. DISCUSS “PRUNING & PROPAGATION TIPS” TALKING POINTS

- Let's review the “**Pruning & Propagation**” Talking Points so we know to trim plants correctly. Instead of using seeds to make new plants, today we are going to **grow new clone plants (aka propagating)**, from stem cuttings. While we take pruned cuttings, we can place them in cups of water to propagate more plants and help keep our garden looking lush! Have any of you grown plants this way before?
- Take turns reading the Talking Points “**Pruning & Propagation Tips**” aloud. **Encourage conversations and memories** that may come up – This is crucial for memory care folks who may need such encouragement.
- Any trimmed plant parts can also be saved in our DIY pressing book for an upcoming botanical craft.

### 3. TAKING CUTTINGS & WINTER GARDEN SPRUCE UP

- Choose a plant stem that's about 3-5” long and has at least 2-3 leaves or 3-4 nodes (review what a node is from the “**Pruning & Propagation**” Talking Points as necessary).
- Cut just below where a leaf attaches to the stem (the node) at a 45° angle (use clean safety scissors so no bacteria is transferred). Roots grow easiest from this location. If you leave a long section of stem below the node, it may rot in water.
- A cutting that has new growth at the top of the stem is ideal. Remove half of the lower leaves and any flowers as well, since these will use up the cutting's energy, preventing the cutting from growing roots.
- Fill up the cups (3/4) with water for 1-2 cuttings of each type of plant. Ideally, two nodes will be submerged in the water and 1-2 nodes with leaves will be above it. Cut very large leaves in half & don't submerge any leaves (they will rot).
- Tape instructions (last page of this lesson plan) to the side of the cups or display next to them. We can transplant these plants during a future lesson or once they have an inch or so of new roots, either into the garden or in a window pot.
- If other plants need pruning, this would be a great time to put those freshly learned pruning skills to work to give shape, increase air circulation and even harvest some herbs to dry and use later.
- Let's make predictions about our cuttings and record them in the garden journal:
  - *How many days will it take our new cuttings to get roots? Which plant will have visible roots first?*
  - *Which plant do you think will have the most root growth by our next class in two weeks?*
  - *What was your favorite part of this class today?*

# THERE'S A TASK FOR EVERYONE DURING WINTER SPRUCE UP!



## ELDERGROW PLANT PROPAGATION CARE INSTRUCTIONS

**Start Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Plants:** \_\_\_\_\_

- Place in a sunny window or in the indoor garden, nestled into the soil.
- Refresh and/or add water 2-3 times a week.
- Examine new root growth with a magnifying glass to track growth.
- Rooted cuttings will be transplanted in an upcoming Eldergrow lesson!

## CLOSING & AMENDMENTS FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS

- If residents are tired or sleepy, **warm up the crowd** before you start observing the garden or reading the Talking Points. In the Daily Programming, you'll find some silly garden jokes or ask residents what their favorite songs are and create a playlist to start each lesson!
- **Hand Support Assistance:** for taking cuttings of plants and pouring water into the cups.
- **Use magnifying glasses** to help see where the nodes are and to examine plants up close. Some folks may need larger type font and images on the Talking Points. Print larger copies if so.
- Even if a resident isn't verbally or physically participating, they can still be engaged! Some may use only their gaze to indicate interest, or could feel leaf textures when given to them.
- Assist as minimally as possible to the resident's ability. This way it's a **collaboration that plays to that resident's strengths**, allowing them to be successful and fulfilled with the work they can do!
- 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 pots or the garden structure. Having such responsibilities creates purpose! We do recommend that you bring in a demo for the lesson and read the Talking Points so residents can see something tangible to draw their interest to participate.
- Use **sensory stimulation** from the herbs that you harvested today. Even if someone is not verbally or physically participating, they can still be engaged & smell! See if they can "Guess That Herb!"
- **For something a little more challenging for IL participants-** Try testing leaf-cutting propagation (using leaves with long leaf-stems tucked into water, or into soil and kept moist) to see if they root. Independent individuals can also help others for as added sense of purpose and fulfillment.
- Give everyone a round of happy applause for a job well done!