

MARDIS GRAS NATURE MASKS & CROWNS

Residents will learn about the celebrations and history around Mardi Gras, and then create nature masks or crowns to prepare for the festivities! 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 cognitive and physical abilities of your residents. If you don't have an Eldergrow garden, you can collect flowers and leaves during a garden courtyard or nature walk.

Wellness Objectives:

Objective 1: Resident will engage cognitive stimulation (CS)

Objective 2: Resident will engage socialization (S)

Objective 3: Resident will engage motor skills (MS)

MATERIALS:



***Note:** For all botanical crafting projects, please use Eldergrow approved plant materials from the Eldergrow or outside garden, a florist or nursery. Consult the [Approved Plant](#) list in your resources page to find out if your plant material options are safe.

For mask making option:

- Collection of pretty, colorful leaves and flowers (either press ahead of time or from a previous class to wear masks right away, or sandwich masks made with fresh flowers and leaves between paper towels and a book for a week or two until dry (See "[Pressing Leaves & Flowers Lesson](#)" for instructions if you didn't conduct that prior class.)
- 19" wooden stick: a wooden kebab (cut off the spiky ends) a woody plant stem, or a chopstick (to make the mask holder) (Dollar store)
- Thick card stock, paper or thin cardboard (Dollar store)
- Tape, glue sticks / Elmer's glue and paint brushes (Dollar store)

For crown making option:

- Floral wire (or pipe cleaners) and floral tape: Dollar store, from a previous lesson, or [Link here](#)
- 2-3" long herb or flower cuttings (Eldergrow Garden or florist)
- *Advanced Option:* Review this tutorial: [Link here](#)
- *Optional:* Feathers and ribbon (Dollar store or [Link here](#))
- Safety scissors and *optional* wax paper (Dollar store)
- Talking Points: "**Mardi Gras Celebrations and History**"
- Mask templates (print out onto card stock or glue ahead and allow to dry ahead of time on thin cardboard.) [Link here](#)
- *Optional:* Colorful ribbons & faux flowers (Dollar store)
- *Optional:* Mardi Gras beads (Dollar store or [Link here](#)).
- *Optional:* Sparkling cider or tea, with King Cake or Masquerade Cookies (Share Daily Programming recipes with your chef!)
- *Optional:* Classic Dixieland Jazz (See Daily Programming)
- *Optional:* During Mardi Gras celebrations, some folks might enjoy having Palm Readings! Here's a beginner's guide to follow along: [Link here](#)

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.
- Present a finished demo product mask or crown or a photo to show residents what they will be making.

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS – CHOOSE 1 OR ALL 3 PARTS:

Eldergrow Lesson Plans are guides only. To maximize resident engagement, customize these plans to the various interests, cognitive levels and physical abilities of residents.

1. GARDEN OBSERVATIONS & "SCRATCH & SNIFF" STIMULATION:

- Have a resident write plant growth and plant health observations in the garden journal. Pinch off any dead flowers or brown leaves for some quick garden care tasks. Consider bringing in a plant or two for residents to plant in the Garden. Collect fresh leaves and flowers from the Garden for today's projects.
- Ask residents if they can find the herbs in the garden. Pinch off a leaf from an herb and ask: *What does this leaf feel like? Is it smooth? Thick or Thin? What does it smell like? Do you know what its name is?*

2. TALKING POINTS & CONVERSATION STARTERS

- Have residents take turns reading the Talking Points, "**Mardi Gras Celebrations and History**". *Have you ever celebrated Mardi Gras? How did you celebrate? Have you been to New Orleans for Mardi Gras?*
- This might be a fun time to lead some Palm Readings and don some Mardi Gras beads!
- *Now that we have learned about the celebrations and history of Mardi Gras, let's create our own decorations to prepare for the celebrations!*

3. MAKING NATURE MASKS & CROWNS

Nature Masks (Easier craft, but some will need assistance):



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

- Choose one of the mask templates that is printed on card stock and cut it out. (Residents may need help cutting out the eyes, so you might consider cutting them out ahead of time.) You can also glue a couple of pages together to make a homemade thicker paper stock to hold the mask shape.
- Distribute collections of flowers, herbs and optional feathers, along with glue and paint brushes.
- Apply glue to mask with paint brush. Add various leaves, flowers, ribbon and feathers to the mask.
- Attach masking tape to the wooden skewer or chopstick on back middle or side of mask as a holder.
- Allow masks to dry. (You may need to rest under wax paper with a few rocks or heavy book to keep flat.)

OR Nature Crowns (Moderately Difficult):

- Form wire into a circle and attach ends together by wrapping them around each other and securing with floral tape to the size of your head (16-20"). Make sure there are no sharp edges sticking out. Bend over and tape sharp pointy wire ends to avoid scratching your skin.
- Decide on your design if using more than just herb cuttings. Wrap wire with floral tape ([tutorial](#)).
- Cut a piece of floral tape about 3" long. Take your first cutting and wrap the end with floral tape around the wire. Make sure your herbs are on the outside of the crown. Take your next cutting and place it slightly below the first, hiding the floral tape from the last cutting. Continue cutting pieces of floral tape and wrapping the herbs until you have filled the entire crown.
- Feel free to add different herbs, fresh flowers, feathers or ribbon along the way.
- When finished, place your crown upon your head and be the Queen/King of Mardi Gras that you are!
- Feel free to create a larger wreath in lieu of a crown and hang it up so everyone can enjoy it!
- Turn on some Dixieland Jazz music, distribute sparkling cider and cookies (or Kings Cake!) to celebrate!!

CLOSING & AMENDMENTS FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS

- Consider taping the mask temporarily to the table so it stays in place while the resident glues down the embellishments. Please do not use items that could pose a choking hazard.
- Residents may need hand support assistance wrapping the floral tape around the herbs, tying them to the wire, cutting out the masks and taping or gluing the sticks to the masks.
- For a **simpler crown craft**, take a long stemmed flower & wrap it around the wire & add ribbon.
- Perhaps a resident who **doesn't want to create the craft may enjoy planting new plants** in the Eldergrow Garden, or an outside or window pots. If this is too difficult for them, have one resident choose where your new plants can be planted and then another can plant it for them! Or simply have them explore a bowl of leaves and flowers to stimulate their senses.
- Assist as minimally as possible to the particular resident's ability. This way it's a collaboration that plays to the resident's strengths, allowing them to be successful and fulfilled with the work they do!
- Residents who would like more activities or something **more challenging**: Access the Daily Programming on your Nature Connect Portal to sprinkle in your calendar throughout the month.
- Changes in the Eldergrow or an outside garden can help stimulate short term memories, so do encourage residents to make nature observations as well as reflect back on previous observations so they can see how their garden is changing over time.
- If you added a new plant to the garden today, some people like to write the "plant of the day" on a chalkboard, dry erase board or piece of paper for residents to read about in the future (and to use when creating the plant labels). 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 copies of the talking points around the room or onto the garden after class for future 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.

