

SPRING EQUINOX SUN CATCHERS

Residents get to capture sunbeams through handmade sun catchers using plant parts to celebrate and learn about the Spring Equinox.

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

If you don't have a garden, you can still interact with nature by collecting other bits of nature during a garden courtyard or walk. You can also safely enjoy nature from a window!

Wellness Objectives:

- 1: Resident will use spatial awareness (SA)
- 2: Resident will engage creative expression (CE)
- 3: Resident will engage cognitive stimulation (CS)

Eldergrow offers a **therapeutic connection** to nature where residents engage in meaningful ways – cognitively, socially, spiritually, emotionally, & physically.

MATERIALS: BUDGET: \$6 - \$10



- Pressed flowers and leaves (from approved non-toxic plants, see Approved Plant List on your Nature Connect portal Resources page)
 - Suggestions- geraniums, begonias, lavender, kalanchoe, zinnia, snapdragons, maidenhair fern, also fall maple leaves)
- Contact paper/self-laminating paper (Dollar store, or [Link here](#))
- Embroidery hoops, plastic or wooden (Dollar store, or [Link here](#))
- Safety scissors
- Twine or ribbon to hang sun-catchers
- **Talking Points: "Spring Equinox Traditions"**
- *Optional: sharpies (to draw circle guides for cutting contact paper)*
- *Optional: Brew some Sun Tea [Link Here](#)*

PREPARATION:

- If you have a garden, have residents gather around it, or gather by a window with a view of nature. Have journal ready for garden/nature observations.
- Set out materials and **Talking Points**.
- **Watch our short video** on the Nature Connect portal for tips & tricks on this activity.
- You may want to trace the embroidery loops on the contact paper for cut-out and design guides in advance

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. These are options to connect with nature. Skip to #2 for the Lesson Plan.

- Bring safe scissors for leggy plants 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 & have residents measure plants. Mark their heights in the journal & 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.

2. "SPRING EQUINOX" TALKING POINTS:

- Have residents take turns reading the "**Spring Equinox Tradition**" **Talking Points** aloud. Encourage reminiscing of sitting in the sunshine and conversations that may be sparked by the official start of spring!
- ***Does anyone know what & when the Spring Equinox is?***
- ***Does it feel like spring time here yet? What makes it feel like spring to you?***
- ***Did you know that many cultures have special traditions to mark the start of spring?***
- ***How would you like to celebrate this spring? Let's start by making simple botanical sun catchers.***

3. ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS: BOTANICAL SUN CATCHERS

Now that we know about the day that balances sunshine equal to night time, let's catch some sun beams!

Watch our short video on the Nature Connect portal for tips & tricks on this activity.

- Give residents embroidery hoops and encourage them to open these themselves, assist as needed. Set one section of hoop in front of each resident and give an assortment of pressed leaves and flowers to arrange.
- Peel apart sheets of contact paper and carefully lay one sheet sticky-side up and lay the smaller hoop on top to create a frame to work in for the design.
- Make desired arrangements within the hoop gently before pressing each piece down into the sticky paper, until they have a fun pattern, then pull up the hoop.
- Peel apart a 2nd sheet of contact paper and lay this one over the 1st sheet with plant parts. Let residents have fun pressing out all the bubbles.
- Next sandwich the clear sheets between two sides of the embroidery hoop (smaller one underneath and larger hoop on top). Screw the top fastener tight while pulling out any wrinkles in the contact sheet. Trim the overlap.
- *Optional:* Tie twine/ribbon around the hoop fastener to hang the new sun catchers in a window or Eldergrow garden. If some residents aren't interested in the activity, they can still help pick where to hang them and help create an attractive botanical sun display for spring.
- *Optional:* Serve warm sun tea and/or play spring-time music in the background from the Daily Programming!

CLOSING & AMENDMENTS FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS

Have your **garden / nature journal ready** to write down resident **comments, garden, or activity highlights.**

- Using various herbs, do a “**Scratch & Sniff**” **sensory demo**. Visit our portal video library for this 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.
- **For residents who are visually-impaired**, bring plants and objects to their eyes and describe or place in their hands to explore. Encourage them to do the more tactile tasks like peeling apart the contact paper sheets, and lifting the sheets that were laid over designs up off the table. They can also make designs within the hoops with larger thicker plant parts that have more texture to feel and control placement by feel.
- **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!
- Encourage residents who aren't interested in joining the activity to help make design suggestions, or just explore the pressed plant parts.
- If some residents complete the lesson before others, ask them to **tend to the garden**, e.g. prune dead leaves or till/aerate the soil or help another resident who may be struggling with the activity.
- **For something a little more challenging for IL participants-** Try making an specific shape out of the pressed plant parts like a flower made from leaves, or a bird, or star. Challenge them by suggesting a shape to make so that it's a self-made puzzle.
- Give everyone a round of happy applause for a job well done!

