

WHAT'S A WEED? DANDELION PAINTING

Residents will learn about the nutritional and historical medicinal benefits of what we call a noxious “weed”, or dandelion, as well as a food source for pollinators. Then they will create dandelion paintings!

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 motor skills (MS)

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



- Dark colored construction paper: [Link Here](#)
- “Flower” stamps: use paper towel rolls cut in half or thirds or use construction paper cut into quarters, roll and tape ends together
- White paint
- Q tips (8 per resident secured together with a **rubber band**)
- Cotton balls
- Paint brushes (or can just use Q tips)
- Safety scissors
- Paint palettes – Plastic lids, plates or aluminum foil for paint
- Spoons
- Plastic bottle lids (1 per resident or several to share) (or use brush)
- Table covering (cloth or newspapers)
- **Talking Points: "What's a Weed"**
- *Optional:* Dandelion root tea [Link Here](#)
- *Optional:* Collect dandelions to make centerpiece decorations (make sure you source them from a pesticide-free area)

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.
- **Watch our short video** on the Nature Connect portal for tips & tricks on this activity.
- Set out materials and **Talking Points**.

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. "WHAT'S A WEED" TALKING POINTS:

- Have residents take turns reading the "What's a Weed" Talking Points aloud. Encourage more conversations that may be sparked by the photos!
- **What is a weed? What plants do you think of when you think of a weed?** (If they don't know the names, they can describe them, or where weeds are often found)
- **Is a dandelion a weed? Why or why not?**
- **Have you ever had to pull up weeds? How else can you get rid of weeds?**
- **Have you ever made a wish by blowing on a dandelion puffball! What did/would you wish for?**

3. ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS: DANDELION PAINTING

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

- Now that we have learned the nutritional & medicinal value of dandelions, along with their importance for pollinators, let's create some beautiful images of them!
- Cover table and distribute supplies. Cut 2" slits from the base all around the paper towel roll (or roll up a piece of construction paper, secure with tape and then cut 2" slits. (See Figure 1- next page)
- Fray out the slits. Pour paint on plastic lid or plate and flatten paint into a wide circle with a spoon. (Figure 2)
- Dip frayed paper roll end into paint and stamp several times onto paper, making the seed puff balls. (Figure 3)
- Dip plastic bottle cap **bottom-down** into paint and stamp inside the dandelion heads. (Figure 4)
- Using the paint brush or q-tips, paint on flower stems to bottom of the page.
- Dip approx 8 q-tips (secured with rubber band) into paint and dot them around flower heads. (Figure 5)
- Brush a cotton ball lightly with paint and lightly stamp around flower heads for the last details. (Figure 6)
- *Optional:* Serve warm dandelion root tea and/or have a dandelion leaf or flower tasting. Make a dandelion art show! Add the Talking Points and make dandelion recipes from the Daily Programming for your guests!
- *Optional:* If dandelions are blooming in your area, make bouquets for the art show!



Figure 1

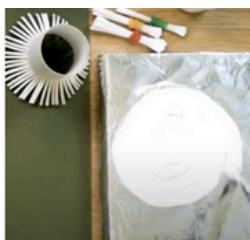


Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6

ACTIVITY 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 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.
- If you have **young dandelion leaves, or dandelion flowers**, do a sensory demo with them!
- For residents who are visually-impaired, **bring plants and objects to their eyes and describe** or place in their hands to explore.
- Assist as minimally as possible to the resident's ability. **This way it's a collaboration that plays to the resident's strengths, allowing them to be successful and fulfilled!**
- **Assist residents with walkers or wheelchairs** to the garden or outside or a window to make nature observations, and tend to the garden. If a resident can't make it to the garden, **bring the garden to them**- Take pruned plant parts in a bowl for them to explore!
- If some residents complete the lesson early, ask them to **tend to the garden**, e.g. prune dead leaves or rake (aerate) the soil, or help another resident who may need some help with the activity.
- **For something a little more challenging for IL participants-** Try painting dandelion puffballs with paint brushes using large photos for reference, attempting to capture the look of all those thin frilly seeds by hand.
- Give everyone a round of happy applause for a job well done!