

Sensory Exploration

Sensory Exploration is an activity whereby participants experience familiar smells, sights and textures from the garden that inspire pleasant memories. This activity is inclusive for all levels of dementia.

Materials

- Fragrant, colorful plants - Choose 4" pots for easy handling
- Non-toxic plant cuttings from the garden
- Garden tools – Be sure to consider safety
- Fruit and herbs from the market or harvested from the garden
- Bulbs
- Seed packages and catalogs
- Simple garden books with beautiful photos and colorful illustrations
- Puzzles

Steps

In a quiet, comfortable activity area, arrange your materials on a table to create a beautiful display. Invite your garden partner to explore the materials by encouraging them to feel the plants and smell the flowers and herbs. Shake the seed packet and let your partner hear the rattle. Show them the cheerful illustrations in the seed catalogs. Explore books with colorful garden or fruit and vegetable images and easy-to-read text. Build simple puzzles designed specifically for adults with dementia. Merely holding a vintage garden tool can evoke memories of watering the yard or planting bulbs. The goal is to stimulate memories and conversation. Express your own garden memories. "I had a fragrant rosemary shrub in my garden." "I remember growing zucchini when I was a child."

Sensory exploration is a good way to connect and can be used as a lead-in to any Reminiscence Gardening planting activity. At first, your garden partner may not want to participate. They may prefer to observe the activity. That's okay! Remember to use good judgment and tune into their abilities. Enjoy!