

## HORTICULTURE THERAPY- GLOUCESTER, VIRGINIA STYLE

Since the 1930's, Gloucester, Virginia has owned the title: "Daffodil Capital Of America" thanks to the countless fields of daffodils that grew wild in the fields of the county. In more recent years' bulb production turned daffodils into a cottage industry. The first Daffodil Festival was held in 1939 and continues today with a 3 day celebration featuring tours of extensive daffodil fields, a parade, a daffodil contest, music, and artisan booths. With this history, it is no surprise that the Gloucester Master Gardener (GMG) Horticulture Therapy program includes lots of projects including painting, arranging, coloring, stenciling and of course, planting daffodils.

The Gloucester Master Gardener's mission states in part, "to provide horticultural educational opportunities to the public... to enhance the environment and lives of residents in our community " a Horticulture Therapy program is a key component through which some of the often forgotten residents of the county can be reached and their lives enriched.



### WHAT IS HORTICULTURE THERAPY?

The definition of Horticulture, according to Webster, is "the cultivation of a garden, orchard, or nursery; the cultivation of flowers, fruits, vegetables, and ornamental plants; the science and art of cultivating such plants". Looking again to Webster, a definition of Therapy is: "...a curative power or quality..." Horticulture Therapy, then, is the use of plants and plant-related activity to improve the psychological and/or social frame of mind of people. Much has been written about this approach to assisting individuals to gain skills, better their moods, or enhance the quality of their lives. The Gloucester Master Gardeners (GMG) sought to translate theory into substance in a practical manner.

For the past 17 years, the Gloucester Master Gardeners have conducted Horticultural Therapy sessions at one nursing home in Gloucester. Recently a second assisted living facility was added to the program.

Volunteer Gloucester Master Gardeners conduct activities with approximately 12 residents for an hour each week. Many of the residents have limitations in sight, hearing and use of limbs or memory. Regardless of their capabilities, the Horticultural Therapy program allows them to retain touch with gardening, feel a sense of accomplishment, have fun and enjoy companionship. At the same time, the volunteers report they feel better about themselves because they have improved the quality of life for some oft neglected members of the community.

In the sections below, the Indoor/Outdoor and Holiday activities are described. Interwoven into these activities are references to music and poetry readings which are supplements to the plant related projects. Lastly some of the materials used to produce the projects are listed.



## INDOOR PROJECTS/ACTIVITIES

The projects or activities presented here are a handful from a much longer listing and grouped according to the four seasons. The items in this section are offered to give a sense of the variety, level, and creativity involved in the program.





#### SPRING – MARCH, APRIL, MAY

- Caterpillars (egg cartons) and butterflies (coffee filters/magic markers)
- Spring flowers on grapevine wreaths
- Vegetable and/or flower seeds in small cups
- Kaleidoscopes (cut out paper plates & tissue paper)
- Spring scene painted on Styrofoam blocks
- Daffodils painted on paper
- Flowers pressed and covered in acrylic
- Bookmarks
- Wooden window panes with tree showing spring buds/leaves

#### SUMMER – JUNE, JULY, AUGUST

- Pine cone flowers painted and arranged in small pots
- Beach scenes with sand, shells, tiny umbrellas in jars
- Terrarium with small plants, moss, and twigs in jars
- Summer flowers on grapevines wreaths
- Daylilies arranged in containers
- Guess the Fruit/Vegetable contest
- Celebration of County Fair with games/animal judging
- Wooden window panes with tree in full bloom

#### FALL- SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER

- Leaves pressed and arranged in a design
- Guess the leaves/Pine cones/Pods contest
- Fall Flowers and leaves on grapevine wreaths
- Turkeys made out of pine cones/feathers, nuts
- Paper leaves painted and made into mobile
- Wooden window panes showing tree in fall colors
- Fall potpourri with autumn scents

#### WINTER –December, January, February

- Sun-chasers painted and hung
- Birdfeeders out of pine cones/peanut butter/seeds
- Winter flowers/ pines arranged on grapevine wreaths
- Cardinals out of pine cones painted red; hung on tree
- Dream winter getaway painted on particle board
- Tube surprises out of toilet paper holders/tissue paper
- Wooden window panes showing winter scene/bare tree

## CELEBRATION OF SPECIAL DAYS

Valentine's Day –Decorate Hearts (paper, putty) with glitter glue-hang on branch tree; make valentines for loved ones

St. Patrick's Day – Make Shamrocks with Irish sayings for tree; sing Irish songs

Easter – Make Eggs out of paper with punched hole designs, contest for giveaway of Easter stuffed animals (everyone gets one)

Memorial Day – Decorate branch tree with flags and tinfoil hearts, play patriotic music for sing-along.

Fourth of July – Make a flag garland out of folded red/white and blue paper, sing patriotic songs

Halloween – make ghosts of out sheets/tennis balls for tree, make masks out of cardboard and paint

Thanksgiving – Make praying hands of paper with notes for what they are thankful.

Christmas – Make ornaments out of old Christmas cards, Make cards for loved ones, make tree out of old bows/Styrofoam.

## MATERIALS

The Horticultural Therapy program has a small budget supplemented by the nursing home but many of the projects/activities are completed with used or recycled materials. Examples of materials below illustrate that many of the supplies come from thrift shops and donations from GMG and others.

### NEW

Use molds to make objects out of putty dough e.g. hearts, acorns, ghosts, snowmen; colored construction paper; paint; glitter glue sun-chasers, magic markers; bulbs, calendars

### USED

Wooden signs to be painted, baskets, spring hats, yarn, ribbon, twine, baby dolls

### RECYCLED

Pine cones, paper towel holders, toilet paper holders, cardboard, peanut butter/ nuts plastic jars, netting, Christmas cards, Christmas bows, egg cartons.

## OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

For many of the participants in Horticultural Therapy, it is difficult to engage in activities outside because of the weather and their physical limitations (wheelchairs). Whenever possible, outside events are scheduled. Often the visits are brief such as a tour of spring flowers or a scavenger hunt just outside in the nursing home garden. On occasion a visit to a nearby garden of a GMG has taken place with the assistance of the nursing home personnel.



## FEEDBACK

Many of you probably have Horticulture Therapy programs from which we could learn. Please give us feedback on your projects/activities and we will keep you up to date as we progress. For details on any of the projects/activities listed in this paper, please contact the web master.

Thanks for your interest in this subject.  
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