

Information...

Supporting the care, health,
education & community sectors
to garden for wellbeing



trellis
gardening for wellbeing

Have a go...

No gardening skills or experience? Gain confidence with our **FREE Activity Demonstration Library** and **Activity Guides**. Available on our website.

Inspiration...

Looking for year-round gardening activity ideas? **FREE Gardening Activities Calendar** available on our website. Try the **Year-round Gardening Activities** book available from the Trellis shop.

Training...

Want to extend your activity repertoire and CPD? Register on our website for **Seasonal Gardening Activities Course** and **TH Essentials Training**. Discounted with the **Trellis Membership**.



Why Gardening Activities?

Gardening activities provide excellent opportunities to support wellbeing in an engaging, fun, and rewarding way.

Use them to:

- **Connect to others & nature**
- **Be active**
- **Take notice**
- **Learn**
- **Give**

(See *5 Ways to Wellbeing* www.mind.org.uk)

Gardening in a care setting in Scotland? The Care Inspectorate's Quality Framework recognises the value of gardening activity. See Key Question 1: How well do we support people's wellbeing, and Key Question 4: How good is our setting?

Trellis Services Tailored for You

We offer a wide range of resources to help you support clients of all ages to enjoy gardening activities. Explore practical guides, inspiration, gardening know-how, and adaptive tips to deliver year-round activities, indoors and out. CPD-certificated. No gardening experience needed — just enthusiasm to get started.

"The explanations were ... easy to follow, I will be able to pass this on & encourage our residents to participate"

"Not having green fingers, you have made it look possible for anyone to achieve"

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Why

This pack provides information on why gardening activities are an invaluable way to support wellbeing

What to do

Step-by-step instructions for easy-to-do activities

How to engage individuals and groups in gardening activities; adapt activities to your clients needs; help with activity planning

When

Gardening activities all year round - choose from a seasonal selection

Where Indoors and out - gardening activities and connecting with nature

Why gardening activities?

Providing gardening activities, indoors and out, creates engaging opportunities for people to take part in the social interaction and physical activity that is so vital to human wellbeing. With the focus on a practical, fun, sensory task, gardening activities draw people in, providing an enjoyable, relaxed but stimulating environment. There are five aspects of wellbeing recognised by MIND*, the mental health charity, which help highlight the benefits that gardening activities can bring:

Connecting Taking part in gardening activities allows social connection and the development of social relationships which act as a buffer against mental ill health.

Being Active Physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression, anxiety and slows cognitive decline. It doesn't need to be intense exercise for you to feel good as slower-paced activities provide opportunities for social connection and exercise for specific muscle groups e.g. hand & eye co-ordination, small finger muscle control. Standing instead of sitting helps blood circulation and core muscle tone.

Taking Notice Living in the moment is good for your mental health, giving respite from anxious thoughts. Using your senses to experience and savour the world around you enables you to immerse yourself in the present. Gardening activities can provide that immersive experience through all the senses - sight, touch, smell, sound and taste.

Learning Gardening activities can provide a range of new skills to learn or old ones to be reacquainted with. Not just gardening skills, but organisational skills, soft social skills and opportunities to practice reading and counting skills. Learning throughout life enhances self esteem, encourages social interaction and can help lift people out of depression.

Giving Happy people report more acts of kindness and giving. Gardening activities can present the perfect opportunity to practice giving and receiving kindness, in its many forms - give a smile, accept a compliment, or share a gardening tip, give encouragement, give your time or give a gift of a plant you've grown!

*MIND <https://www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-yourself/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>

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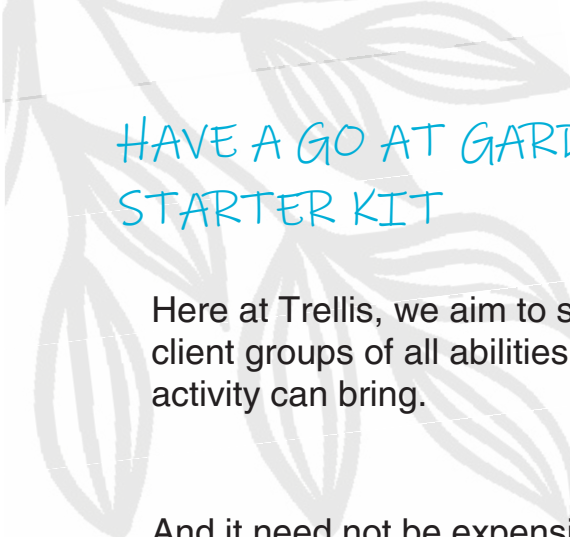
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HAVE A GO AT GARDEN STARTER KIT

Here at Trellis, we aim to support all client groups of all abilities and the activity can bring.

And it need not be expensive



Here at Trellis, we aim to support and inspire folks to 'have a go', to engage with client groups of all abilities - sharing the fun, learning and creativity that gardening activity can bring.

And it need not be expensive. We have drawn up a list of items that will be used time and time again. Invest in a sturdy lidded box to wheel/carry safely in, for ease of handling and storing if a permanent gardening activity table or shed is not readily available.'



Suggested start up kit for having a go at gardening activity. See list overleaf for more detail.

HAVE A GO AT GARDENING STARTER KIT



All of the following items are sat inside a potting tray— ideal for keeping a tidier work place/identifying individual work spaces. Search for 'Garland Potting Tray' for further detail. Alternatively, re-use a wash basin, or underbed storage box. 'Foldaway' potting trays are also available.

Back L—R: Yoghurt pot—pierce little holes into the base and substitute for little garden pots for sowing seeds into/growing young plants.

Jam jars/ice cream tubs/coffee cups— use for indoor flower displays/floristry/succulent growing.

The above are all sitting on top of a black '**bedding plant section**' - garden centres sell summer annuals grown in these—recycle them—wash them out, then re-use for sowing seeds into.

Bottle top waterer on top of recycled juice bottle. This lightweight alternative to a watering can assist those with poor wrist strength and poorer hand-eye co-ordination— it takes up less space sitting on a windowsill to remind folks to water! See <https://www.garden-innovations.co.uk/bottletop.html>

Small watering can—lightweight, easier to direct spout for flow of water

Middle L-R: Recycle food trays—use these as saucers to sit small pots of seedlings/young plants in, to prevent water seepage onto windowsills.

Small garden pots—various sizes are readily available online/in garden centres/supermarkets.

Small plastic dish—to hold seeds in, helping make handling smaller, trickier seeds easier.

Small tumbler and spoons—scooping compost is easier with appropriate client sized scoops.

Compost - a good quality, general purpose bag will cover most growing tasks.

Only keep a small bag as compost can go 'off' if not used within a year. Store it in a cool, dark spot with the open bag closed over

Front L-R: Permanent pen and labels— good practice to always name and date the seeds/plants being grown, and a good way of identifying the gardener, encouraging ownership of their produce.

String and Scissors-use a degradable garden string and invest in a quality pair of garden scissors that will tackle most lighter weighted garden snipping tasks with ease

Activity Title	Outcome e.g. create a paper plate picture
Benefits of the activity e.g. Physical – large motor movement, hand-eye co-ordination, stimulate senses. Social – group activity, conversation. Emotional benefits – sense of pride, accomplishment, enjoyment, achievement.	Physical Social Emotional
Where, Time e.g. greenhouse, 11am	
No. of Staff taking part	No. of Clients taking part
Specific Client Notes e.g. any likes dislikes/additional support needs to be considered	
Materials required:	

THIS SHEET CAN BE PHOTOCOPIED & SHARED

REFLECTION ON ACTIVITY

Activity Title
Observations (General)
What worked?
What didn't work?
How to improve the activity for next time:
Jobs to be done following on from this activity e.g. Support clients to check if plants need watering on Friday.
Suggested follow-up activities e.g. Seed Bomb Making (following seed gathering activity)

THIS SHEET CAN BE PHOTOCOPIED & SHARED

Handling Herbs



Handling herbs makes for a great sensory experience - from strong scented mints to tactile chamomile and dill. Along with being multi-sensory, handling herbs can be enjoyed as a tabletop activity.

You don't need a large planter or patch to successfully grow a selection of herbs. In fact, a confined growing space works better for most herbs. Harvesting their leaves regularly promotes fresh tender growth and deters the herbs from becoming leggy, woody, less palatable and unsightly. And don't despair if growing herbs is not possible—supermarket shelves regularly stock a good selection of little pots of herbs or packs of cut herbs.



When handling herbs, the first sense to be evoked is **SIGHT**. The foliage of herbs is generally 'green', but look closer and you will see thin green stems, frothy green leaves, flat crinkly green leaves, greenish purple and gold variegated leaves, and everything in between.

Now that we're looking closer, our hands will be desperately wanting to **TOUCH**. Some stems and leaves are smooth, some are curly or wrinkled, and now that we're touching the leaves, their scents will be released via the plant's essential oils.

Our noses will be working over-time as we **SMELL** the fresh scents of mint, the zinginess of lemon balm or scrunch the foliage of dill at your nose, and smell its aniseed scent. I've mentioned crinkly leaves. Scrunch thyme close to your ears and you'll **HEAR** that it's not just its scent that is sensory.

But what a joy for the **TASTE** buds. We smelt the mint—now let's try it chopped finely over a delicious Italian ice cream, or in a cheeky mocktail. Lavender flowers folded into a cake mix or used as decoration adds a subtle flavour that will get folks guessing what's in the sweet cake delight. And of course, Parsley—the kitchen cook's go-to herb. A must-have in a door step pot. Although herbs are edible, it is advisable to check to ensure that any herbs you taste do not mis-interact with medications. Gather the herbs, gather around and start passing around the herbs!



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Handling Herbs



If time and concentration allows, try this activity after passing around the little pots of herbs. Or save it for another day. Spread the benefits of the soothing effects of handling over many sessions!

Step 1. Gather lots of stems from as many different herbs as you can — remember that herb plants benefit greatly from being harvested regularly, which promotes fresh new growth — ideal for making teas or just immersing yourself in.

Step 2. Have jam jars filled two-thirds with cold water and/ or small drinks coasters (charity shops are a good source, or cut up thick card), with some elastic bands and scissors to hand.

Step 3. Cut herb stems to size to be twice the height of the jam jar and/or cut stems to the length and/or height of the coaster.

Step 4. For clients who may be overwhelmed by choice and/or decision making, prepare individual plates holding a selection of pre-cut herb stems, along with a coaster with elastic bands crisscrossed to make a lattice.

Step 5. Encourage and support if necessary, clients to insert the stems through the lattice. A simple, scented display is now theirs to give as a gift, or keep by their bed-side, benefiting from the herbs' natural calming qualities.

Step 6. The more steady handed, or those looking for a fuller challenge, may enjoy creating a vase display of herb stems. Many herbs produce flowers if not harvested—mint flowers are particularly pleasantly scented too. A simple ribbon tied around a jam jar's neck, gives the finishing touch.



Extension activities include taking a walk to gather in the herbs, making herbal teas and infusions, making herbal bath tea bags and of course, sharing with the kitchen cook, and enjoying fresh flavours with dinner. See these Trellis Activity Sheets for inspiration: **How to Take Tea in the Garden** and **How to make Herbal Bath Tea Bag** both available to download at www.trellisscotland.org.uk

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Grow a 'multi headed' Sunflower



Tall, single-headed sunflowers are a popular and cheery sign of summer, but they require a sheltered spot, staking and are mostly best viewed from a distance—so try growing multi-headed sunflowers instead.

These varieties are more compact in height and bushy so are an ideal choice for a patio pot ensuring their many blooms are more visible and accessible for all. And even better, cutting the shorter stemmed branching flowers to bring indoors for a vase display, actually encourages the plant to make even more flowers!

Like their very tall relatives, these plants also attract pest patrolling garden birds, beneficial insects and bees, and generate a harvest of edible seeds



Sunflowers are popular with young and old alike, simple to grow and have fairly large seeds to handle making them an ideal growing activity for many client groups. Extension activities can include 'growing the most flower heads' challenge, cutting the flowers for indoor arrangements or for selling as single stems at a garden party and harvesting the seeds. No special kit is required—just some good quality general purpose compost, small plant pots or yoghurt pots with drainage holes pierced in the base, and a packet of seeds. We have used the variety Sunflower Little Leo.

Step 1 Use a good quality general purpose compost, and break up any clumps of compost to ensure a friable compost structure for the seeds to grow in. Use a small plant pot, or a pierced yoghurt pot—roughly the size of a teacup. Fill it four-fifths full of compost, tapping the pot firmly on a surface, knocking out any excess air holes in the compost.

Step 2 Take 2 seeds and press them no more than 2cm down into the compost (approximately to the depth of the first joint of your finger) — at opposite sides of the pot. The 2nd seed is for insurance—if both grow, double success



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Grow a 'multi headed' Sunflower



Step 3 Initially, use the fine spray of a small watering can rose or a bottle top waterer, to give the newly sown seeds a thorough watering from the top. Then, keep the compost damp at all times, and water into a saucer, allowing the compost to absorb the water from the bottom up. Write a label with the plant name, and today's date for good record keeping.



Step 4 The seed should germinate (sprout through the compost) in 14-21 days. Continue with regular watering, into the saucer to prevent the young seedling's stem from rotting on contact with too damp compost.

Step 5 Depending on the variety grown (the individual packet will give clear instruction), you will 'pinch out' the young plant when it is around 35cm tall, to encourage it to branch out. Use two fingers, or a pair of sharp scissors to nip/cut out the growing tip.



Step 6 When small white fibrous roots start to appear out the base of the small pot, it's time to 'pot on' - plant the young sunflower into a larger pot that it will grow in for the duration of the summer. Sunflowers can be top heavy, so ensure that the pot is fairly wide to counterbalance the weight. We used a 30cm diameter /15L pot.



Step 7 Fill the large pot with good quality general purpose compost to approx. 2cm below the rim or where you see the waterline marked on the pot. This allows for water to soak through the whole pot.

TOP TIP Create a hole in the centre of the compost, place the young plant and its pot into this space, ensuring compost of this pot is level with that of the larger pot, firm the compost gently around the smaller pot. Then lift both the little pot and plant out, remove the plant from its pot, and place it back into the hole you have created. Firm the soil gently. This relieves the trickiness of placing the plant; and ensures the stem is not smothered in compost, potentially causing it to rot.



Step 8 Regular watering and weekly feeding once buds start to develop will ensure healthy growth. Cutting the individual heads for an indoor vase will promote and prolong the development of more flower heads over the coming months. More sunny joy for all!

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Making an Autumn Planter



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Summer planters are a familiar cheery welcome at our doorsteps, but as Autumn approaches these tend to be discarded, with no more thought of the happy, nature based welcome until the following year. Yet there are plenty of colourful and hardy plants readily available that will deliver a pleasing welcome in Autumn and through the Winter seasons. Re-use a summer planter or basket, visit the garden centre / supermarket for a colourful selection of plants, and organise a table top activity rejuvenating not only the tired Summer containers, but engaging clients in light exercise that can support stress reduction, maintain motor and cognitive skills and spark creativity and the chance for relaxed conversation around the table.



Step 1. Plan the activity. Identify the containers to be rejuvenated, and empty out the compost and tired plants—preferably composting them if possible. Give the container a wash out to be rid of any bugs.

Step 2. Visit the garden centre (supermarkets also have good choices) and enjoy making your selection. Winter bedding plants—violas and pansies are the cheeriest sight in Winter, along with winter flowering heathers (erica), and small evergreen shrubs for structure such as ferns, euonymus, and dinky conifers. And, pop in a handful of small spring flowering bulbs such as dwarf daffodils (narcissi).



Step 3. Set up the table with your clean container (we've re-used a plastic hanging basket), plants and bulbs, and a some general purpose compost. Break up any clumpy bits of compost.

Step 4. Have the tallest pot of the new plants to hand. Part fill the clean container with compost so that once the tallest pot is placed on top of this compost, the pot itself will not be higher than the container's rim. Place the other potted plants such as heathers, conifers, or shrubs on top of the compost—keeping the plants inside their pots.

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Step 5. To support dexterity and hand-eye co-Ordination, use a small tumbler /large spoon, to scoop compost and fill in the voids around the potted plants. Gently firm the compost to squash out excess air.

Step 6. Remove the first potted plant and pot, which should leave an indentation in the compost.

Step 7. Carefully remove the plant from its pot, then pop the plant and its root ball back into the compost hole. Repeat the same with any remaining potted plants.

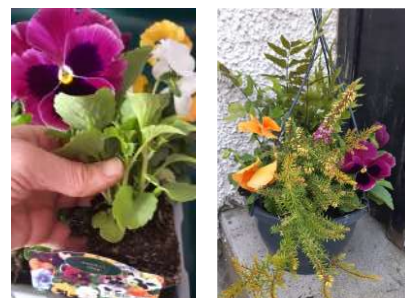
Step 8. Planting Spring flowering bulbs now is an added bonus. We tend to forget that we have done this, until the wee stems appear almost miraculously, from the compost in Spring! To plant them, press the bulbs down into the compost, flatter end first, to a depth approximately 3 times the height of the bulb.

Step 9. Our chosen evergreen heather and fern provide interesting shape and colour with their foliage - now add in bright violas and pansies. Pop the small root ball directly on top of the bulbs -don't worry about the bulbs finding their way through the roots and stems of their neighbouring plants – they will!

Step 10. Water well to settle the compost, but do be wary of watering too much as there tends to be plenty of rainfall throughout the Scottish Autumn/Winter months! Now, enjoy that cheery welcome!

Top tip: If selecting heathers, ensure you choose an Erica—these are the Winter/Spring flowering heathers—avoid 'Callunas', which will finish flowering after Summer/early Autumn.

Extension activity: deadheading (using small scissors or your fingers) to nip off dying flowers from the pansies and violas will encourage the plant to continually produce a constant supply of flowers. Doing this weekly keeps the plant compact, healthy and productive.



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Making a Festive Decoration



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From the earliest of times in Northern Europe, evergreen foliage such as holly, laurel and ivy were seen as representing eternal life, and that's because these evergreens' foliage never appears to 'die', as they retain leaves on their branches all year around. And decorating homes with fresh evergreens has become a Christmas tradition. Have a go with festive floristry—ideal for groups or 1:1 sessions, it's a simple table top activity that promotes fine motor and cognitive skills, supports reminiscence and social inclusion. Make two decorations! One to keep and enjoy the fresh foliage scents indoors and one to share as a gift.



What you need

Oasis—florist foam, or use gravel or sand

Container—yoghurt pots, ice cream tubs work well

Knife and board Christmas tags, stickers or cones to decorate



Step 1 Plan the activity: Gather all the materials together. More able clients can be supported to help collect foliage from the garden—conifers, holly, ivy, and dogwoods are ideal and are common garden plants.

Step 2. Soak the oasis in water, or use gravel/sand as an eco alternative. Cut the oasis to fit snugly inside your chosen pot, leaving the height of oasis 2cm proud of the pot.

Step 3 Cut stems to approx. 1 and half times the size of the pot with oasis. Use scissors or your fingers to remove the lower third of the foliage on the stems.



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Making a Festive Decoration



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Step 4 If clients are less able, prepare the trimmed stems in advance of the session.

Step 5 Support clients to select 5 different pieces of foliage—contrasting colours and shapes of leaf help create an impact.



Now it's time to get creative!

Step 6 Try creating a triangular shape with the foliage. Insert taller stems to the rear, followed by shorter, more fuller foliage to the middle section.

Step 7 Insert a final piece of fuller foliage at an angle coming out from the front of the oasis.

Step 8 Add in a home made christmas decoration - we have used a sparkly Robin sticker stuck onto a coloured lollipop stick. Add on a festive tag— share a gift of festive foliage love.



Top Tip We have suggested a triangular shape. Try a mound of foliage with a battery operated candle light in the centre for a different effect. Be creative—there is no right or wrong way!

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