

## **Horticultural Therapy Activity Plan** **“Pizza Garden”**

**Purpose/Goal:** To learn creative ways family members/caretakers can engage children with disabilities in meaningful horticultural activity and connect children to the natural environment and rhythms. To learn to use horticultural activity as a teaching and learning modality through which a child with a disability can improve self-sufficiency.

**General Comments:** Gardening or horticultural activity is considered an age appropriate activity no matter where a person falls on the age spectrum. Children, however, may not view traditional horticultural activity as a leisurely, therapeutic activity, and may perceive gardening as “work” or a “chore.” Children with Intellectual/Development Disabilities may find traditional gardening challenging a result of the many functional limitations they may experience. A pizza garden is a container planting in which many of the herbs and vegetables used to make homemade pizza are grown all together in one planter. This gardening activity is an excellent, meaningful, easy, affordable activity to engage a child in horticultural activity so that they may experience the therapeutic benefits of gardening for themselves.

### **Supplies:**

1. 1 Large plastic planter with drainage holes (13 x 12)
2. 2 Bags of potting mix
3. 1 Hand trowel
4. 1 Watering can filled with water
5. 1 Roma tomato plant
6. 1 Basil plant
7. 1 Oregano plant
8. 1 3ft Tomato stake (Optional)
9. String (Optional)
10. Scissors (Optional)

### **Procedure:**

1. Lay out all supplies so that everything is visible to the child
2. Add enough potting soil to the container so that the base of the plants will sit an inch from the top of your pot
3. One-by-one gently remove each plant from their container, loosen the roots with fingers.
4. Place plants in the container. Make sure plants are standing upright and are spaced evenly since many herbs enjoy air circulation
  - a. Basil grows taller and upright
  - b. Oregano will drape over the edge of the container
5. Once you decide on plant arrangement, gently add additional potting mix to fill in around the roots and cover approximately 1 inch above the roots.
6. Gently water the potting mix of the pizza garden being as careful as possible to avoid getting water on the leaves.

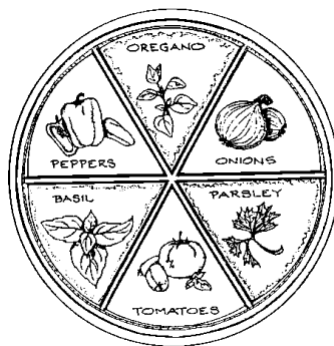
7. You may choose to use a garden stake to give your tomato plant a support as it grows however, this depends on the variety of tomato you are growing and is optional. Place the stake in the soil next to the tomato plant, and as the tomato grows, use scissors and string to tie the tomato loosely to the stake to prevent the plant from falling over.
8. Place pizza garden planter in a place outdoors where it will receive full sunlight for at least eight hours a day during the summer growing season.

### Tips for Growing/Maintenance:

1. Water generously whenever the potting mix feels dry to the touch
  - a. Hot, sunny weather will make the plants use up the water in the potting mix more frequently
2. Add diluted liquid fertilizer (i.e. Miracle Grow) to see better growth and better tasting herbs and tomatoes
  - a. Avoid using manure or fertilizers that contain manures as a safety precaution
3. As basil grows, pinch back or cut off flowers to avoid the basil from developing a bitter taste

### Alternative/Modifications/Accommodations:

1. The child may not be familiar with using gardening tools and avoid using tools that are unfamiliar. Tools such as watering cans and hand trowels may be supplemented with household kitchen utensils such as cooking spoons and pitchers.
2. The pizza garden concept can be done on a larger scale using multiple containers with each herb having its own container or in a raised garden bed. The pizza garden can be designed in a circle design to resemble a pizza



3. This activity may be supplemented with other themed gardens such as “salsa garden”, a “burrito” garden, a “Scratch and Sniff” sensory garden, or a “Rainbow” color garden. Get creative and think outside of the box!