

Environment



Group members will learn about the importance of preserving and appreciating the environment by planting a flower garden in a local park.



OBJECTIVES:

1. Group members will be reacquainted through a warm up activity.
2. Group members will learn about various environmental hazards and pollution.
3. Group members will learn ways to protect and preserve the environment.
4. Group members will plant a flower garden in a local park.

NOTE: Make sure you have received permission to plant your flower garden from your local Parks and Recreation department.

NOTE: Make sure to remind the group members in advance to wear appropriate gardening clothing for this activity, and to bring their own gardening gloves to wear!



ACTIVITIES:

I. INTRODUCTIONS AND WARM-UP ACTIVITY

- a. Introductions of new F.I.I.V.E. group members, staff, and guest speakers (if applicable)
- b. Warm-Up Activity (See Appendix A: Warm-Up Activities)

NOTE: Don't forget to pass out nametags!

II. PRESENTATION

(See Appendix B: Volunteer Activity Session Scripts for presentation materials on *Environment*.)

III. PROJECT: FLOWER GARDEN

INSTRUCTIONS:

NOTE: Many home improvement stores offer detailed instructions and tips on their websites regarding best practices for planting flower gardens.

1. Remove the plant from its pot, keeping as much of the rootball as you can. If the plant's roots are heavily entwined, you may want to cut through them with a knife or pull them apart with your hand. This encourages them to spread out into the surrounding soil.





MATERIALS:

1. Gardening tools (ground rakes, spades, trowels, buckets, garden hose or watering can, garden shears, etc.)
2. NOTE: Choose a park where you have easy access to water!
3. NOTE: Ask group members to bring garden tools from home to share for the day's activity.
4. Assortment of flowers (Tip: look for short, stocky plants with few flowers and healthy, disease-free foliage. Avoid plants that are spindly, discolored, or wilted.)
5. Mulch (Tip: use aged wood chips (fresh chips stunt growth), bark, grass clippings, pine needles or any other organic mulch. Do not use gravel or stone.)
6. Organic matter (e.g., compost, sphagnum peat moss, rotted manure, or other organic matter)
7. Garbage bags
8. Plastic gloves

2. Pinch off any blooms. The plant needs to put its energy into developing a good root system, not flowering. Pinching encourages healthier plants with more flowers later on.
3. Prepare the bed with a spade, working in at least 1 inch of organic matter. The soil should be loosened to a depth of at least 12 inches for annuals; 18 inches for perennials.
4. Smooth the soil with a ground rake.
5. Plant the flowers at the same soil level they were in the container.
6. Mulch the bed between 1 and 3 inches. Mulch suppresses weeds, conserves moisture, and prevents many soil-borne diseases.
7. If time allows, have group members pick up trash and debris around the park.

IV. REFRESHMENTS AND DEBRIEFING

While group members enjoy a small snack or refreshment, use the following questions to facilitate a debriefing discussion about the day's activity:

NOTE: Ask another staff member or an older adult volunteer to take notes!

1. What is something new that you learned today about the environment?
2. How will our flower garden help the environment?
3. Why is it important for us to care for our environment?
4. What was your favorite part of today's activity?
5. What new skill did you learn today?

V. CALENDAR CORNER/ANNOUNCEMENTS

a. Prepare the group for the next F.I.I.V.E. volunteer activity session.

~ Date/Time/Location

~ Advertise guest speaker (if applicable)

~ Supplies (if applicable)

~ Recommend appropriate attire (if applicable)

VI. RECORDKEEPING

(See Appendix C: Recordkeeping Materials to use with each volunteer activity session.)



Additional Tips or Suggestions:

- It works well to break up the various gardening tasks into intergenerational pairs or small mixed aged groups. Assign racking/preparing the soil to one group/pair, removing the flowers from their containers to another pair/group, planting to one pair/group, watering to one pair/group, and so on.
- When preparing for an outdoor activity like this one, make sure you have a back up activity planned, or a rain date reserved, in case of bad weather.
- Bring plenty of water to keep everyone hydrated!
- Bring extra sunscreen!
- Request donations of supplies from home improvement stores and gardening centers. The city Parks and Recreation department may be able to donate mulch.
- Invite an employee from the local Parks and Recreation department, or an environmental scientist, to give a presentation. If you are located in a rural area, consider asking a representative from your local Natural Resources Division office.
- This is a great activity to secure additional helping hands! Invite family members and local master gardeners from the local community, especially those who may neighbor the park.
- Incorporate this activity into Earth Day (April 22).
- Alternative or additional activities:
 - Plant trees or shrubs in a local park or cemetery.
 - Organize a river or beach clean-up.
 - Volunteer to do yard work for members of the community who are