



Choice. Respect. independence.

Garden Sensory Bin

CRI, Choice. Respect. independence. (formerly known as Community Residences, Inc.), is a community-based organization with a focused effort on providing people with developmental disabilities and/or mental health needs the resources, supports and services they need to live their lives with purpose, actively engaged in communities of their choosing. CRI's mission fully supports a person's ability to exercise control of their life's choices, and to live in and contribute to communities of their choosing, as young adults through aging in place. We believe in serving individuals within the communities in which they live and supporting the individual's choices and independence.

Part of CRI's wholistic approach includes access to Recreational Therapy, which is "a treatment service designed to restore, remediate and rehabilitate a person's level of functioning and independence in life activities, to promote health and wellness as well as reduce or eliminate the activity limitations and restrictions to participation in life situations caused by an illness or disabling condition". ([About Recreational Therapy - American Therapeutic Recreation Association \(atra-online.com\)](#)). Recreational Therapy utilizes games and fun activities to positively encourage individuals to develop their physical and cognitive skills.

CRI's Recreational Therapists utilize multifaceted activities to help engage an audience with a broad set of skills and abilities. In this case, Sensory Bins are tools that can offer visual, tactile, and olfactory stimulus to promote the use of fine motor skills and increase understanding of the world. Sensory bins can help individuals with mental health needs that rely on their senses to understand and explore the world, such as autism, and developmental disabilities work on directing their focus and practicing their motor skills while using their senses to learn about the world. These individuals are typically non-verbal and may have other sensory impairments (hearing, visual, etc.) who need maximum support to carry out tasks of daily living. Sensory bins present multiple stimuli that are great therapeutic outlet for residents and provide tools to staff to encourage continued development at their fingertips.

This is a great project to complete with children as young as 5 years old.

Our goal is to get 50 individual bins, one for each resident who participates in our Recreational Therapy Program.

Garden Sensory Bin Instructions

Help provide developmental tools to residents with intellectual and developmental disabilities. These tools can be used to provide stimulus in the comfort of their own home. Research has shown we learn better when more than one sense is engaged in the process. It is especially true for the individuals supported by CRI. Some folks are missing one or more of their senses (blind and/or deaf) so its even more critical to engage their strong senses. For those unfamiliar with the disability community, and even for those who are, this project provides insight into how some of our individuals experience the world around them.

Things To Note

- When dying the rice, please be sure to only use food coloring and not paint of any type. Some of the individuals have PICA which means they tend to put nonedible items in their mouth. Other individuals are very food motivated, so if something looks like food or looks yummy, they're going to try to eat it. Even though the residents will have staff supervision when working with the sensory bins, we want to make sure we play it safe.
- Ensure the flowers, leaves, and even the bugs, are not real so the bin can be reused.
- Check out these links for inspiration:
 - [Pom Pom Seed Garden Sensory Bin - Happy Toddler Playtime](#)
 - [Spring and Bugs Sensory Bin \(funwithmama.com\)](#)

Supplies

- Plastic tote with a top to store the items – [Ideally 11"L X 14"W X 3.25"H](#) (6 Quart)
- 3ish cups of rice
- White Vinegar
- Green Food coloring
- Baking sheet
- Assorted plastic/rubber bugs
- Assorted plastic/cloth flowers
- Assorted plastic/cloth leaves
- Assorted pebbles (shape, size, texture, color)
- Gallon/sandwich Ziplock bag for storage
- Small plastic flowerpots
- Toy Shovel and rake (or spoons, forks, etc.)
- Colorful pompoms (make sure they are at least one inch in diameter)
- Colorful feathers
- Floral essential oil

How To Get Started

1. Start by making your colored rice.
 - Add your rice to a gallon size ziplock bag.
 - Add 1 Tablespoon vinegar for each 1 cup of rice.
 - Add quite a few drops of food coloring.
 - Seal the bag and massage the food coloring into the rice.
 - Add more food coloring until all the rice is dyed to the desired color.
 - Spread the rice out evenly onto your baking sheet to dry. This will help prevent mold from building. We suggest a few hours to overnight to be safe as it will depend on how much food coloring was used.
 - Test that the rice is dry by holding a fistful. Does the color come off on your hand? If so, rice isn't dry yet.

***Bonus:** Make a variety of shades of green! You could also use star shaped pastas to dye different colors as flowers.

2. While you wait for your rice to dry. Go on a quest to find all the items you'd like to add to your bin! Are there other Garden items you can think of? You can add as much variety as you'd like! This will help keep the bin engaging.
3. When your rice is dry, add it back to a ziplock bag and add a few drops of the floral essential oil of your choice. Massage the bag to disperse the oils.
4. Test the rice again to make sure it's dry.
5. Once the rice is dry, assemble your bin for testing!
 - Are there enough items?
 - Is there a good variety of sizes, textures, and colors?
6. Add a few drops of essential oil to the rice.
7. Once you are satisfied with your bin, separate all the items into their own ziplock bags and put them in the bin.
8. On the lid of the bin, create a little guide with everything that is in your "Garden Bin" so staff can easily identify the bins and their contents as they get distributed to group homes and reused!

Sensory Bins can be dropped off to the following addresses:

Chantilly HQ

14160 Newbrook Dr, Chantilly, VA 20151

Donation boxes are located in the lobby beyond the double glass doors

Accepting donations Monday – Friday from 8am to 5pm and Saturdays from 10am - 12pm

Arlington/Falls Church Maintenance Office

7297A Lee Hwy, Falls Church, VA 22042

Donation boxes are located in the lobby just inside the front door

Accepting donations Monday – Friday from 10am to 2pm.