

Making Potpourri



The fixative is a vital element in a potpourri recipe. It absorbs and retains the volatile scented essences. Essential oils are used to reinforce the natural perfumes and to boost the fragrance. Without adequate fixative the life goes out of

potpourri very quickly.

Include other petals of flowers like lavender, tulips, freesia and marigolds for added color and fragrance. Ingredients such as dried citrus peel, seeds, bark and tiny pinecones add variety to the texture and character of the potpourri. Small, whole dried flowers like baby rosebuds give depth and variety of size. Potpourri made only with petals tends to look like textured fabric. While there is nothing wrong with this, (rainbow like layers of different kinds of flowers can be very beautiful), combining petals with other floral material gives a more three-dimensional result.

Originally, potpourris were stored in closed ceramic jars which were opened when people used the room. The jars were placed near a heat source, so the perfume would expand in the warm air and fill the room with fragrance. When the people went out, the lids went back on. Nowadays, the beauty of potpourri is also considered to be part of its charm. Displayed in various ways, dried petals, whether scented or not, can be layered in glass containers, placed in baskets, decoupage boxes, ceramic or silver dishes.

A little potpourri can go a long way if you layer it over a base of floral foam, sphagnum moss or tissue paper. Store the bulk of your recipe in a closed container and sprinkle out

a little at a time on a need to replenish basis. The fragrance lasts longer and the visual impact is the same.

Roses

Show someone a rose and the natural impulse is to close the eyes and drink in the perfume. The appeal of roses is universal; they are perfect in every way. Roses hold their color and scent throughout the life of the petals, and are readily available in large quantities. They make a wonderful base for potpourri.

Roses produce perfume in minute glands located on the surface of the petals. Geraniol, a volatile oily liquid, is the primary perfume, although more than a dozen other compounds may combine with it to produce varying scents.

Some fragrances are linked to color. The basic rose scent is found in red and pink roses. Subtle scents of violet, orris and nasturtiums are found in white and yellow roses. Clove, tea, citrus and fruity scents are linked to orange-tinted roses. Combinations of these scents are common and additional scents can be found in other varieties of roses. For instance: the Hawaii rose, tuberose, produces a raspberry scent. Lesser scents like parsley, wine, honey, anise, hyacinth, jonquil, lily-of-the-valley, bay and bananas are found in other scented beauties.

Some roses have interesting traits. Modern hybrid tea roses, which are usually bred for form, color, substance and resistance to disease are found lacking in perfume. This is because fragrance in roses has a recessive character. On the other hand some scentless hybrid roses impart fragrance to their progeny. The oil extracted from 32,000 damask roses produces one ounce of the legendary essential oil, Attar of Roses. The deep pink Kazanlik rose releases such intense perfume that the fragrance exterminates insects such as aphids within miles of the rose fields. The fragrance of the

Rose of Miletus increases when the petals are dried.

Basic recipe for potpourri

(Yields one quart)

- 3 Cups pink rose petals
- 3 Cups red rose petals
- 2 Cups miniature rosebuds
- 2 Cups lavender
- 1 Cup rose leaves
- 2 Tablespoons powdered orris root
- 15 Drops rose oil

1. Spread the fresh petals on a mesh screen or on a large tray; place them in a warm, dry place, and stir or spread them around a little everyday until they are dry. Put dried petals in a large glass or metal bowl.

2. Add a fixative such as powdered orris root, oak moss, cellulose or ground gum benzoin or fiberfix. Use a ratio of two tablespoons of fixative to about four cups of dried material. Add the essential oils and mix with your hands.

3. Place the mixture in a paper bag and seal the top with clothespins or clips. Turn the bag over several times to distribute the fixative. Store it away from direct sunlight, and allow the mix to season for four to six weeks. Shake up the bag from time to time.

4. When the potpourri is "seasoned" place in open containers in warm places. Add a few drops of essential oils and mix with your hands from time to time as the fragrance diminishes.

Potpourri Projects

Small packets of potpourri can find a home in lingerie and sweater drawers, mixed in with linens, in the folds of

clothing inside suitcases, on coat hangers in the closet, at the party table as favors... almost anywhere a fragrant perfume is invited.

Potpourri bags used for linens look good in crisp stripes and fresh colors. Those placed among lingerie and delicate clothes can be made of satin, lace or silk. Use readymade lace handkerchiefs for a quick, fragrant fix.

Basic Potpourri Bag

1. Cut a strip of fabric, lace or ribbon 20" x 4". Fold the strip in half wrong side out and seam the sides with fabric glue, hot glue or use a needle and thread.
2. Turn the bag right side out and tuck in the top. If the fabric frays, run a line of fabric glue along the top edge before tucking it inside.
3. Fill with potpourri and tie a ribbon tightly around the neck, or secure the top with glue and glue a tiny ribbon rose on the front of the bag.