



Redding Garden Club

Garden Tips

Herbs, Part 2 With a Recipe for Potpourri

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Medicinal herbs have been used for centuries. Chinese medicine goes far back, and the most recent pharmacopoeia contains over 5,700 entries that include common and uncommon herbs as well as medicinal minerals and animal parts.

Today there are more than 500 herbal formulas. Herbs are made up into infusions, teas, decoctions, tinctures, compresses, plasters, liniments, herbal oils, healing salves, herbal baths for gentle healing, sunburn lotions, massage oils, and creams. If you are interested in making up some of these lovely combinations, I can steer you to some web sites—try www.learningherbs.com and herbalmedicine.suite101.com - or books. A book that I have used for years is *Growing & Using the Healing Herbs* by Gaea and Shandor Weiss.

Fragrant herbs are used by perfumeries; mixing and blending has become a science in which billions of dollars have been made. A few herbs and flowers that can be combined to make sachets and pillows are lavender, scented geranium, lemon balm, mints, rosemary, wild ginger, anise, raspberry leaves and calendula. Scented drawer liners filled with herbs and flowers keep linens and clothes fresh.

Making lotions and creams can be more complex and involves heating and a few weeks of work. **Herbal waters** are easier:

Take 1 ounce of lavender and put it in a mason jar
Add enough boiling water to fill it up to the top. Let it steep for 3 to 4 hours.
Strain out the lavender flowers, and you have herbal water.

The interest in herbs keeps growing, and there is endless information online. ehow.com and earthnotesweb.com are web sites that give you the directions. (I have not followed any of these recipes. Take caution if there is any heating of oil and bee wax.)

I want to add this information about wild herbs: It's interesting to see how plants survive. Wild plants have to compete for nutrients, light, and space. Left to themselves, wild plants also tend to grow in places that are ideally suited for them, with just the right soil and growth conditions. This makes them very strong. Wild herbs are stronger in flavor, with higher concentrations of minerals, vitamins, resins and oils, than domesticated herbs. Most of the wild herbs are inedible. A wild sage may be too strong to use in cooking. Cultivating herbs makes them milder very much like our vegetables are today, milder than what they used to be.

Potpourri Recipe

This is a recipe I have used for potpourri: Lavender, rose petals, cinnamon bark (in pieces), dried flowers from your garden, lemon balm, star anise, and bay leaves. Essential oils are a must; make sure that the oils you are using are pure essential oils. You need a fixative to maintain the fragrance or it dissipates very quickly. Orris root (comes from the rhizome root of the blue iris) and Calamus, also a root, are fixatives. To make eight cups of potpourri, this is what you will need.

2 Cups lavender,
3 Cups rose petals
3 Cups flowers from your garden

1 Cup lemon balm (it seems like a lot but it settles down)
4 Tbsp. orris root
10 drops of rose geranium oil
10 drops of lemon oil,
Cinnamon bark pieces
1 Cup cloves

Place mixture in plastic bags and store for two weeks in a dry, dark place. Take a sniff. If you are happy with the fragrance, mix it up and let it set another week. You can add more fragrances if you want to change it. This is your base for making sachets, scented pillows or just a bowl filled with potpourri. ♦