

The Sandy Post

Home & Garden

Geraniums do it best

Experiment to find best potpourri mix

by JUDE RAMSAY JENSEN

If you enjoy the heady aroma of rose, the clean fragrance of mint, the fruity scents of lime, lemon and apple, or the pungence of nutmeg or ginger, scented geraniums are for you.

Pelargoniums, the botanical name for all geraniums, are native to South Africa. Discovered there in the 17th and 18th centuries by sailors rounding the Cape of Good Hope, they were carried home to Europe where their popularity quickly spread as Victorian housewives established them as houseplants in the colder, northern climate.

Scented geraniums became the most popular of the pelargoniums and reached the peak of their glory during that time. Householders revered them for their long-lasting fragrant properties and used them to freshen and perfume drawers, linens and living quarters.

During the same era, the French perfume industry discovered the versatility of the plants and began producing perfume oils distilled from the leaves of scented geraniums. Eventually the plants made their way across the Atlantic to America. In the last decade, herb fanciers have rediscovered them and scented geraniums are making a comeback in home gardens.

The named varieties number in the hundreds. The range of scents is almost as varied as the types themselves. There are floral and fruity, herbal and spicy and earthy. Some varieties offer a combination of

scents, aromatic puzzles for the nose to decipher.

For the herb crafter interested in fragrant herbs, scented geraniums are worth the investment. The scents suggest many imaginative combinations for sachet, potpourri and other fragrant projects, as well as old-time geranium jellies. Let your imagination lead you and experiment with different combinations.

The following recipes for potpourri grew out of such experimentation. The recipes for potpourri can be used for sachet bags simply by grinding the aged mixture finer with a mortar and pestle.

To prepare potpourri, mix together dried leaves and blossoms and set aside. In a separate bowl, mix the spices with the fixative (a natural preservative that "fixes" the scent) and oil. Add to the leaf and blossom mixture and toss thoroughly. Age for at least one month in sealed jars away from light and heat. Shake daily to mix the scents.

For potpourri, fill pretty decanters with whole, aged mixture and seal with stopper. To use, shake contents and remove stopper to perfume a small room. For sachet, grind aged mixture coarsely; lay 1 heaping tablespoonful on a small piece of cotton batting; top with another small piece; stuff into a handsewn bag of fine material to perfume drawers, linens, or tie on a hanger to scent closets.

ROSE POTPOURRI: 2 qts. lemon rose geranium, 1 qt. rosebuds, 1 qt. rose-scented geranium ("Attar of

Roses," "Gray Lady Plymouth"), 1 pt. minty-rose geranium ("Joy Lucille," "Lady Plymouth"), 1 cup each phlox and bachelor button blossoms, 1 chopped vanilla bean, 1 crushed cinnamon stick, 2 tsps. crushed allspice, 1 tsp. each crushed anise and cardamom seed, 1 heaping

tsp. powdered orris root (fixative), 15 drops oil of rose. Makes 1 gallon.

MINTED SPICE (men seem to enjoy this one): 2 qts. spearmint, 1 qt. peppermint geranium, 1 qt. nutmeg geranium, 1 cup each lemon balm geranium, orange mint and chamomile blossoms, 2 tbsp. mixed,

crushed spices (cinnamon, clove, allspice), 1 heaping tsp. powdered orris root, 3 drops oil of almond, 5 drops oil of musk. Makes 1 gallon.

CITRUS BLEND: 1 qt. each lemon, lime and apricot geranium, 1 cup each apple and lemon balm geranium, 1 cup each pineapple and

orange mint, 1/4 cup each lemon, lime and orange peel (dried), 1/4 cup orange or linden blossom, 1 cup whole yellow yarrow blossom and leaf, 1 chopped vanilla bean, 20 whole cloves, 1 tbsp. powdered sandalwood (fixative), 20 drops oil of orange. Makes 1 gallon.

Indicators tell when to pick fruit

Unusually warm weather in many parts of Oregon this summer has brought on an early apple and pear harvest season, says Ray McNeilan, Oregon State University Extension home gardening agent.

"Indicators for determining when to pick apples are fruit color, ease of separation, fruit drop, softness, and flavor," he said.

Apples may be yellow, red, green or combinations of these colors at harvest. A yellow variety such as Golden Delicious or Lodi is mature when the green has almost completely given way to yellow.

With red blush or striped apples such as Jonathan or Spitzenburg, the area where there is no red color usually changes from green to yellow at maturity. This method of determining maturity does not work well with new strains of apples, McNeilan says, as they are red all over long before maturity.

The change in the color of the "flesh" between the skin and the core of the apple is another indicator. When the apple's flesh changes from green to white, the apple has matured.

Unless a stop-drop spray has been applied, mature apples are easily separated from the tree. Do not pull the apple down, but twist it upward with a rotating motion when picking it.

Fruit drop is an indication of apple maturity only when sound, non-

wormy apples fall to the ground. When a few healthy apples drop off, the ones still on the tree are ready to be picked.

A mature apple should also be just slightly soft and taste sweet and juicy.

Unlike apples, most varieties of pears do not ripen well while still on the tree. Pears that become over-mature or ripen on the tree develop a coarse, mealy texture.

Maturity in pears is that stage of development when, if picked, the fruit will ripen satisfactorily after a given period of cold storage, McNeilan explains.

As with apples, knowing the color and size the fruit should be at maturity helps determine when to pick it.

With Bartlett, D'Anjou, Comice and other yellow pear varieties, a slight change in skin color to a lighter shade of green occurs at maturity. The flesh of a mature pear should be white and juicy.

Mature pears, except for the Seckel variety, should also be at least two inches in diameter at the widest portion of the fruit. Pick the largest pears first, McNeilan advises, and the smaller ones a week later.

"Mature pears usually detach from the tree when tilted to a horizontal position," says McNeilan, except for Bosc pears, which are often difficult to separate even when they have matured.

Sandy Prime Cuts do well at Clackamas County Fair

The Sandy Prime Cuts 4-H Club walked away with the top honors at the Clackamas County Fair. The 12 members took 15 animals to the fair, earning at least blue ribbons in each class entered.

Amy Brewster, a freshman at Sandy High School, showed the grand champion market hog, which was raised by Roz Geren, 9.

Aaron Ballou earned reserve grand

champion showmanship honors in the intermediate division, and had the junior champion breeding gilt.

Christine Gesdahl earned grand champion junior swine showman honors.

David Fleming had the reserve champion heavyweight hog.

The club also brought home the swine herdsman award for having the most well-maintained area.



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