

Fragrance in your Garden

When we plan or design a garden, visual impact usually takes priority, but it is important to remember the emotional response that our sense of smell can provide. Scents trigger memories, create moods and give us pleasure.

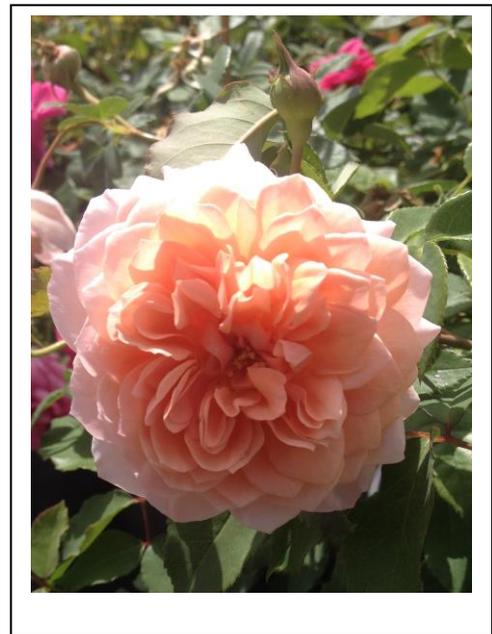
A garden is full of smells – ants, freshly dug earth, manure, compost, cut grass, the air after rain, rotting matter, foliage and flowers. Fragrance in plants serves a vital purpose. It helps plants to attract pollinators and beneficial insects and it helps to deter creatures which might destroy the plant by eating or crushing it.

Plants vary in how and when they give off their fragrance, with some, such as roses, changing as they develop and others, such as nicotiana, releasing their perfume at night. Weather conditions impact on intensity, dispersing the scent on a windy day or evaporating it if the air is dry and hot. This means that you need to plan to create best conditions for experiencing fragrance. Seemingly unrelated activities such as putting in windbreaks, creating shade and enclosing some areas are all part of fragrant garden design.

Selecting plants needs to go hand in hand with how you are going to use your garden. Don't forget to match up with which time of the year and day a particular plant is giving out fragrance. Pathways and garden edges give opportunities for scents to be enjoyed as they are brushed past, or, if they are close to nose height, fully enjoyed. I can't resist picking a lemon scented verbena leaf and crushing it or pausing to savour the strong honey perfume of a buddleia in full bloom.

Pergolas, verandahs and patios used as rooms or connected to the house need thought because one person's favourite perfume may be a cloying stink to someone else. I found the jasmine on our verandah too overpowering but love it out in the garden, where it is not quite so intense. Scents entering the house can be a real delight – I love lilac, roses and the mock orange philadelphus.

It is possible to have many scented plants near each other, creating a blended effect, which can be enjoyed en masse or by walking around savouring each plant's contribution. Try to include plants that flower at different seasons to ensure that you have fragrance throughout the year. You could plant lots of one



variety, such as old fashioned cream fresias, to create a feature of that scent in one part of the garden. Don't forget foliage – crushing a leaf in your fingers or underfoot can take you to other places and other times. I remember crushing a eucalypt leaf when I was overseas and being overwhelmed with a tide of homesickness.

Scents evoke very subjective responses, so find a flowering plant or crush a leaf to test before you plant, if you are unsure. Keep an easily moveable seat on hand so that you can sit and savour wherever a fragrance takes you.

Some plants which are known for their scents are: Lavender, Artemisia, Dianthus, Gardenia, Nicotiana (night perfume), Autumn clematis, Oriental lillies, Phlox, Rose, Sweet pea, Lily of the Valley, Hyacinth, Iris, Lilac, Crabapples, Sweet Alyssum, Moon flower (Datura – evening scent), Magnolia grandiflora, Camelias, Philadelphus (mock orange), Lemon scented verbena, Philadelphus Burkwoodii, Jasmine, Honeysuckle, Wisteria, Scented geraniums, Chocolate cosmos (atrosanguineus), Citrus, Wattle, Star jasmine, Buddlejia, Lemon Myrtle, Nicotiana, Cestrum nocturnum (nights), Rosemary, Thyme, Sage, Fresias, Tagetes Nelsonii, Baronia, Prostranthera, Yellow Pittosperom, Lemon scented gum and Lemon Myrtle.

Happy gardening,
Christine Windle,

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