Therapeutic Horticulture Project

October: Pot-Pourri

Please note: This program requires advance preparation. See text

Materials

1. Clear container with removable lid. Pint-sized, recycled glass jars work well; other sizes can be used; clear plastic jars can also be used, or other container i.e. plastic bowl with lid

2. Dried plant materials including flowers or flower petals, leaves, spices, dried fruits, citrus fruit peel, seed heads, berries, cones, bark, nuts, conifer needles, etc.

Note: Gather fresh ingredients when they are at their best and most fragrant.

Be sure to have some colorful flowers, etc. to make mix visually attractive.

Note: After gathering it is very important that materials be completely dried to avoid mildew.

3. Essential oils (i.e. cinnamon, orange spice, rose, lavender, etc.) and droppers to measure out the oils. Try to get the real essential oils rather than the artificial fragrances, which often smell too strong and “perfumy.”

4. Fixative: any material that will absorb the oils and slowly release the scent, thus making the fragrance last longer. Examples include Orris root (tuber of Iris germanica, expensive, and some people are allergic) citrus peel, cut up corn cob (cellulose fiber) dry twigs, cinnamon stick.
5. **Containers** (gallon size plastic bags work well) to place separated dried plant materials in and place in center of table for participants to choose from for their mix.

6. **Bowls** for making dried material mixes (one for each participant) Kitchen mixing bowls work well (Containers need some depth to make mixing easier.)

7. Small plastic cups and wooden sticks to stir oils into fixative (if done by each participant) or one medium size bowl and stick to mix all fixative and oils for the group and then distribute with a tablespoon to participants.

8. **Measuring spoon** (tablespoon) to measure out fixative

9. Optional: round piece of cloth to cover lid (with short overhang) and ribbon or raffia to tie cloth to lid, or just ribbon to tie around neck of jar (with maybe a few sprigs of lavender tied in)

### Preparation

1. Collect recycled jars or purchase glass containers or other containers with lids.

2. Collect and dry plant materials. This requires preplanning to collect and dry materials during the growing season. **Suggestion**: Have participants save and air dry some of the plant materials you have collected or that they have used at a previous session.

3. Purchase essential oils and droppers.

4. Cut plant materials to size desired. This could also be done by participants during the session; gives them more “hands on.”
5. Practice with a sample. Try to do 2 weeks or more ahead so you have a fragrant mix to show (and smell).

During Program Participants Will

1. Select plant materials they want for their mix and place in a bowl. Have them rub the fragrant materials with their fingers and smell the fragrance. Explain that the rubbing is releasing the fragrant oils of the plant (and this is what is “processed” into the fragrant oil mixes we will be using).

2. Place fixative materials in small plastic cup, drop essential oil by dropper over the fixative and mix together (can be done by participants or helpers). Or this can be done in one medium size bowl and then passed out to participants.

3. Sprinkle fixative over dried ingredients and mix.

4. Pour or use hands to place pot-pourri mix in jar and cover with lid. Keep covered for about 2 weeks for scents to mix. Then can open lid to enjoy fragrance.

Basic Pot-Pourri Mix

4 cups flowers, leaves, herbs, etc.

1-2 tablespoons fixative

8-10 drops essential oils (I usually use a few more; gives more scent to mix)

Discussion

1. Define:

   **Pot-Pourri**: a sweet-smelling mixture of dried flowers, petals, herbs, spices and essential oils used to scent the air

   **Essential Oils**: concentrated liquids containing plant aromas that readily pass off as a vapor or gas.

   An oil is “essential” in the sense that it carries the distinctive scent or “essence” of the plant, such as oil of clove.

   **Fixative**: Any material that will absorb (fragrant) oils and slowly release the scent to make the fragrance last longer

2. Name and tell something about plant materials being used.
3. Explain how flowers are dried, and proper way to collect for drying.
   Air drying easiest; silica gel or glycerin can also be used
   Plant materials should be collected at peak of freshness

Sources for Essential Oils

Bulk Apothecary (or other sources) on line
Smile Herb Shop, College Park or on line
Village Green Apothecary, Bethesda or order by phone

References:

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