

Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian

Making scents

By Cynthia Brian

"If you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need." – Marcus Cicero



Pick narcissus to add sweet scents to indoor spaces.

Photo Cynthia Brian

With all of the disasters and tragedies of this year, logic seems to have disappeared. The senseless shootings of innocent people and the devastating California fires have rendered so many of us feeling helpless and hopeless. But in times of turbulence, besides the consolation of close relationships with family and friends, I advise my clients to turn to two things: gardens and books.

The smoke from the Camp and Paradise fires has been so thick and suffocating, that spending time in the garden has been impossible. Continued alerts have been pinging on my cell phone warning me of the dangers of breathing toxins. The alerts advise to avoid being outdoors as the air quality is hazardous to our health. The sky is gray and gloomy with harmful haze reminiscent of Beijing. When the sun pokes through the smoke, it is a roiling red.

To combat the noxious air, I have been freshening my home with the calming aromas of hand crafted potpourri and herbal sachets. Although making scents does require time and considerable clean up, potpourri,

wreaths, and sachets make beautiful hostess gifts and holiday décor. Be prepared for magnificent earthy scents wafting to your nostrils as you style your ingredients. To fashion your own rustic creations, choose sweet smelling botanicals with strong colors that will dry well. If you enjoy burying your nose in a flower or herb, these are specimens for your project.

My recommendations for making lovely potpourri include:

rose	rosemary	yarrow
lavender	bay	eucalyptus
chamomile	tulip	amaranth
nigella	orchid	lemon leaves
sage	bougainvillea	marigold
thyme	daffodil	nasturtium
liquid amber	oregano	

I also like to dry citrus rinds and add whole buds of small flowers to the mix. Remove petals from stems and dry on a cookie sheet. If you are in a hurry, you can heat your oven to 150-200 F and put the pan in the oven until

the flowers are dry, but not cooked. I prefer to allow them to dry naturally on a counter in my garage as I find the fragrance is fuller and lasts longer.

Once all the leaves, flowers and herbs are dry, it's time to design various "flavors" of potpourri. I make seasonal potpourri in varying color schemes and smells. For holiday scents, add cinnamon sticks, shaved nutmeg or other spices. You can also spritz the mixture with a few drops of your favorite essential oil and toss with your hands before adding the ingredients to jars, bowls, netting or clear wrap to give as gifts.

With the sweet perfume of my garden inside my house, I can turn my attention to books.

As you've probably read, I published my seventh and eighth books recently, an extreme endeavor to publish two books in one year while still working on numerous other projects, yet somehow the task was accomplished. Book One in the Garden Shorts Series, "Growing with the Goddess Gardener" is filled with 24 months of inspiration, tips, photos and stories that you can use now in times of distress.

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Finished potpourri is ready for gifting.