

Potpourri How-To

The best potpourris have a subtle, natural scent that comes from the thoughtful pairing of ingredients like: dried flowers, leaves, seeds, roots, barks, woods, resins, spices and essential oils.

Choosing a fixative:

Fixatives consist of a substance that is added to a potpourri mixture to reduce the evaporation rate of the natural plant scents. The fixative will absorb and retain the essential oils and will help perpetuate the aroma. Without fixatives in a potpourri, the volatile scent essences would flee quickly.

Popular fixatives include orris root, calamus root, angelica root, frankincense tears, myrrh gum, benzoin gum, balsam of Peru, oak moss, and vanilla beans. It's fine to put more than one fixative to work in a potpourri.

Choosing a base:

The base is used to create depth of color and natural scent to your potpourri blend. A dry base is good - try using dried herbs, fruits and leaves with your fixative at a ratio of about 2 tablespoons fixative to 3 to 4 cups of dried flower material.

Dried flowers, such as, calendula petals, chamomile flowers, jasmine flowers, lavender flowers and rosebuds and petals make a beautiful, fragrant base while enhancing the color and texture of the fixative.

Choosing the right aroma:

Essential oils enhance the scent of a potpourri and refresh it when it begins to lose its oomph. Choose oils that duplicate one of your ingredients or that underline a theme. Spruce and pine would be good choices for an outdoorsy blend, for example, while jasmine or rose would enhance a sweetly floral blend. Use approximately 20 drops essential oil per cup of dry material. Here are some combinations to try:

- * Coriander, nutmeg, cinnamon leaf and tangerine
- * Vanilla, clove bud, patchouli
- * Rosemary, frankincense, bay and peppermint
- * Anise, vanilla, patchouli and cinnamon leaf
- * Frankincense, myrrh, sandalwood and patchouli (or vetiver)

Storage & Placement:

If the essential oils are added directly to the fixative and also to the dried material (and shaken periodically) it can last up to 4 weeks without being refreshed. To refresh the aroma, just add more essential oils.

Container possibilities include glass or wood bowls, baskets (use a doily or pretty napkin as a liner), shells, tins, even canning jars.