

The fragrant home

Natural scents can transform the atmosphere in your home and enhance your mood and wellbeing. Victoria McCulloch explains

Incense, smudge sticks, essential oils and herbs have all been used for centuries to enhance people's moods. Using scent in the home helps to create an atmosphere, whether it's the comforting smell of cakes baking, the clean aroma of pine or the festive fragrance of cinnamon and cloves. Each room in your home can benefit from an aromatherapy lift and we can use natural scents to evoke different moods.

MAKE A SANCTUARY

A good first step is to scent the house for protection. You can create a sacred space within your home by burning sage or 'smudging'. Used in Native American traditions, smudge sticks are usually a combination of dried sage, cedarwood, sweetgrass or juniper – all known for their cleansing and protective properties. Starting

MAKING A POTPOURRI

In *The Complete Illustrated Guide to Aromatherapy* (Element, £12.99. Special HH Bookshop offer 10.99 plus 99p p&p), Julia Lawless suggests making your own potpourri. Put 25g of dried rose petals, 6g each of dried lavender and mint leaves in a container and add 15 drops each of rose and lavender oils. Grind together half a grated nutmeg and half a teaspoon of orris root powder. Add 15 drops each of rose oil and lavender oil. Put this powdered mix to the dried petals and leaves, and stir. Place in a bowl wherever you want to fragrance your home – you can revive the potpourri by adding more oils.

at the centre of your space, light your smudge stick and walk around your home, paying particular attention to corners, and consciously think about protecting the space. You can buy smudge sticks in a variety of shops. For more rituals, read Jane Alexander's *The Smudge Pack* (Thorsons, £16.99. Special HH Bookshop offer £13.95 plus 99p p&p).

Gwydion O'Hara, author of *The Magick of Aromatherapy* (Llewellyn, distributed by Airlift, £11.99. Special HH Bookshop offer £9.99 plus 99p p&p), suggests using five drops of lotus and frankincense, and two of amber and cedarwood to cleanse your home and get rid of any negative energy – good if you're moving into a new house or have been burgled. Another blend she calls Happy Home can be used to maintain or restore peace in the home.

Mix four drops each of rose, gardenia, myrrh and mimosa and two of eucalyptus and put in an oil burner, rub onto a candle or mix with water and put into a plant spray.

THINKING CLEARLY

Whether you work from home, have revising teenagers or are trying to complete the crossword, there are many natural scents that can be used to help improve mental clarity and enhance concentration. Rosemary, for example, is excellent for keeping your mind in gear, while grapefruit is great if you are a procrastinator.

GREET YOUR GUESTS

'The first thing to greet your guests as they enter your home is the aroma,' says Valerie Ann Worwood, author of *The Fragrant Pharmacy* (Bantam, £8.99. Special HH Bookshop offer £6.99 plus 99p p&p), 'and the impression the scent creates may be more enduring than that made by fixtures and fittings.' Whether having friends round to dinner, turning your lounge into a disco or holding a children's party, essential oils can create a hospitable mood.

'Jasmine is a great welcomer and geranium is a very friendly oil,' says Jane Alexander in *Spirit of the Home* (Thorsons, £12.99. Special HH Bookshop offer £10.99 plus 99p p&p). If you are having people over and you want to create a subtle fragrance, add a few drops of your chosen oils to a bowl of

water – this isn't as overpowering as burning essential oils.

In *The Book of Aromatherapy Blends* (Thorsons, £5.99), Chrissie Wildwood suggests adding three drops each of geranium, lavender and mandarin to a bowl of water if you're having a children's party.

WINDING DOWN

In order to create a relaxing atmosphere in your home, use oils such as camomile, clary sage, frankincense, lavender, cedarwood and neroli. To create a gentle atmosphere in your living room, light a candle, burn for a few minutes and then blow out. Then add a couple of drops of your favourite essential oil to the melted wax around the wick and relight. Some essential oils are flammable so do not add the oil while the candle is lit and be

FRAGRANCES FOR THE CAR

It's not practical to burn essential oils as you drive along the motorway, so Earth Solutions has come up with a gadget that plugs into the cigarette lighter of your car and works as a mini diffuser. If heavy traffic and road rage are getting you down, try lavender or patchouli, or if you are having trouble staying awake, try Good Day Sunshine (£9.50) – a blend of spruce, fir, oakmoss and frankincense. Tisserand also does a Car Vaporiser (£12.99), which uses a mix of lemon and bergamot to help you feel recharged.

ALTERNATIVE AIR FRESHENERS

Many people are allergic to synthetic air fresheners and recent research has also shown that some air fresheners may even be carcinogenic. So opt for essential oils to keep the air fresh.

- To make your own scented spray, choose your favourite essential oils and add 20 drops to about 125ml of water, and put in a plant spray. Then squirt around the room.
- Air Scent is a range of natural, non-aerosol air fresheners (£3.35/30ml) which use aromatherapy oils such as vanilla and lime. They are great for getting rid of lingering cigarette smoke.
- L'Occitane also has a wide range of home fragrances with scents such as Lavender Amber and Frankincense Myrrh (£9.95/75ml). Call 020 7290 1421.

careful not to get oil on the wick. To instil a relaxing atmosphere in the bedroom, blend two drops each of camomile, clary sage and lavender and put in a burner. This is also suitable for a child's room, but use only a few drops in an electric diffuser.

SENSUAL SCENTS

If you want the bedroom to be more erotic than sleep-inducing, light plenty of candles and mix a few drops each of sandalwood and ylang ylang essential oils, then add to candles as above. Aromatherapy and massage are also a perfect aphrodisiac; simply mix together seven drops each of the above oils to 25ml of sweet almond oil.

Gwydion O'Hara has created a blend she calls All Night Long: Use five drops of jasmine and three each of vanilla and musk to eliminate sexual inhibition and increase stamina.

SELLING YOUR HOUSE

If you're selling your home, Valerie Ann Worwood suggests adding a few drops of clary sage or lemon to a bowl of water to make buyers more at ease. And estate agents swear by the smell of baking cakes.

Where to buy it

- For stockists and mail order details for Earth Solutions and Air Scent, call 0800 0260220, or dial www.21stcenturyhealth.co.uk. Tisserand Car Vaporiser is available by mail order on 01273 325666.
- All books are available from HH Bookshop, see page 87 for details.

Photography Camera Press, Andrew Sydenham



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FRESHEN UP YOUR HOME

Taoists, Hindus and the Japanese value the use of incense in their temples and homes to engender whatever atmosphere, energetic or therapeutic effect they desired. Choose fragrances to suit your mood. Incense and essential oils are also good for removing pet or cigarette smoke odours: burn or add juniper, peppermint or lemongrass to a diffuser. Add a couple of drops of essential oil to your washing liquid to get laundry smelling fresh. Or, try Herbal Laundry Sachets from Earth Solutions (£7.10) in your tumble dryer.