

Aromatherapy for All

By Kami McBride

My herb gardens are full of herbs that help to bring a sense of peace and calm to my daily life. Lavender, rose geranium and lemon balm are herbs that have been used for centuries to calm the mind and lift the spirit. These are simple garden herbs that don't have a lot of clinical trials, scientific evidence and media hype to back them up. They are herbs that are easy to grow and just make you feel better when you have them around.

I plant aromatic and uplifting herbs along pathways in my garden and walkways into my house so that I can grab a piece and sniff it daily as I come and go. Other herbs that I plant close to where I walk are peppermint, spearmint, rosemary and mugwort. Aromatherapy isn't only using essential oils in little bottles. Enjoying the smell of plants on a daily basis is very therapeutic. You know the old saying, "take time to stop and smell the roses" Well expand your healing scent environment to include more than roses. The aromatic properties of these herbs not only calm the mind but they are very anti-bacterial and help to keep away colds and flu.

If you don't have a garden or a green thumb, plant some rose geranium or lemon balm in a pot and grow it outside your front door. If you still forget to water it, bring it in as a houseplant. You can find creative ways to have good smelling plants in your life. Rosemary topiaries are nice on the kitchen table and spearmint does well in the bathroom. Peppermint will grow on any window sill and make doing the dishes more pleasant. We have lemon and rose geranium growing in pots on the steps to the front door so we always get a nice smell coming into the house. If you live on the third floor, planter boxes are the answer. Old European herbal books talk about having lavender and other healing herbs growing outside the windows. The heat of the sun and the wind would bring the therapeutic scent into the hospital room.

Think about how you could bring aromatic plants into your life. I often give rosemary, rose geranium and lavender planted in beautiful pots as gifts. They provide years of aromatherapeutic benefit. Part of my flowering the world includes giving these plants as cut flowers. Even if you buy a bouquet of flowers, rosemary, mugwort and lemon verbena make nice additions to practically any arrangement.

Do you have a small patch of your lawn that you could rip out and plant herbs in? If your child's elementary school is like most, it could use some beautification and scent enhancement. What about that strip of dirt in the middle of the sidewalk? Many stores and businesses have empty planter boxes or empty dirt space on the side of the buildings. Having aromatic plants in front of the store is good for business.

My herb classes are registered for nurses to receive continuing education units for their herbal studies at my school. I have many nurses in class that are always trying to find ways to include herbs into their work. One of my students has creatively incorporated herbs into the doctors' office by planting lavender plants throughout the facility where she works. She says that not a day goes by when people don't sigh, breathe deep and say how wonderful the lavender is. Taking a deep breath in the doctors' office is worth a lot!

Recently I taught an herb class at an elder persons' home. I had fifteen women students all over seventy years old. After class they decided to get permission to take out some of the very boring landscape in front of their place and plant rosemary and lavender! I have also taught at many elementary schools that have planted aromatic herb gardens. The kids love taking care of the plants. Some of the schools now use their herbs in class projects and salve making.

These aromatic herbs are considered mood elevators. They give us the opportunity to take a deep breath and feel good even if only for a moment. The plant world can help us in so many ways that seem so simple yet are very powerful. Take a moment to see if there is some way for you to bring the healing medicine of the earth deeper into your life.

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