

Create an Aroma Bar

Use the Spirit of Plants to Delight the Senses

by Linda Bertaut

Nature heals in many ways. Most of us have felt the sense of renewal that comes from walking through a garden filled with fragrant flowers, or sitting under a massive tree, shaded from the burning rays of the sun. Indigenous peoples worldwide believe that each plant has a spirit we can communicate with, to ask for their help in healing.

Tap into “plant spirit” in your spa with an herbal aroma bar. Spring represents new beginnings, as nature entices us with vibrant colors, new growth, and an urge to go outside. Your clients will be equally enticed when you provide some of nature’s simple pleasures to delight the senses. All you need are jars filled with fragrant herbs and dried flowers, along with colorful organza bags. Invite clients to sniff and select their favorites, creating their own aroma sachet. People love this small gift to take home as a reminder of their visit.

Choose Your Herbs

To begin building your aroma bar, find a local store that sells dried herbs. You can use the list of herbs on page 20, or simply experiment until you find the right variety for your aroma bar. Based on scent and your own intuition, choose five to eight aromatic dried herbs and one or two types of aromatic dried flowers. Rose petals and jasmine are good choices for the flowers; roses will also add beauty and color to the finished jars and sachets.

The selection process is wonderful in itself. Use your sense of smell to connect with the plant’s essence, breathing in the aroma, asking “What do you do for me?” until you get a feeling or insight about the message in each herb. Keep a journal of your results and before long you will have a list of favorites to share.

After you get to know your aroma bar, you will understand which scents are the most popular with your clients. When you need to replenish your jars, you can save money by ordering the most popular herbs by the pound directly from a botanical farm or other bulk supplier.



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Please Sample the Aroma Bar: Mother Nature's Gift to You!

Take a few minutes to breathe in the scents of these herbs and choose your favorites to combine in your aroma sachet. Please take one of the small bags provided and fill it with any combination of herbs to take home. Enjoy the scent of your fragrant herbal sachet to connect to your sensory nature.

Caution: Aroma sachets can create a euphoric feeling, but if you have plant allergies, some herbs may cause a reaction.

Chamomile: Euphoric

Soothes nerves, aids digestion, and improves appetite. Good for circulation to skin surface. Induces perspiration. Good as an overall tonic.

Jasmine: Magical

Helps menopause symptoms. Antibacterial, antioxidant, and aphrodisiac. May lower bad cholesterol when used in teas.

Lavender: Healing

Calming and sedative. Relieves anxiety, depression, and exhaustion. Helps with digestion, headaches, and skin problems. Antiseptic, antibiotic, and a natural detoxifier.

Lemon Balm: Joyful

A member of the mint family, used for centuries to treat melancholy. Soothes the nerves and helps with indigestion. May be used topically to reduce redness and swelling.

Peppermint: Uplifting

Calms the stomach and helps with digestion. Increases secretion of bile. Antifungal, highly nutritive, and can alleviate symptoms of allergies and asthma.

Red Clover: Cleansing

Blood purifier, sedative, and good for the nerves. May be used topically to help acne, psoriasis, and skin sores.

Rose Hips: Fortitude

High in vitamin C and bioflavonoids. Antioxidant. Also contains vitamins A and B, essential fatty acids, and lycopene.

Rose Petals: Beautiful

Antibacterial, antidepressant, and aphrodisiac. Rose water is beneficial to the skin.

Rosemary: Awakening

Highly nutritive, with vitamins A, C, and B complex. Boosts the immune system. Antifungal, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and antiseptic.

Sage: Wisdom

Grounding. Antibacterial and astringent. Helps with digestion; good as a gargle for sore throats; relieves sore gums; helps reduce hot flashes. Can be used as a rinse to darken grey hair.



Set Up a Space

Designate countertop space that is easy to access. The sign provided on page 20 can be framed or laminated to guide clients, or used as a starting point to create your own sign.

Purchase attractive glass jars or bottles with lids, one for each herb, and label them with the herbs' names. You may want to add a descriptive word for how each aroma makes you feel. The look of the jars is what makes your aroma bar appealing to clients. If you can't find interesting containers locally, I recommend Sunburst Bottle (www.sunburstbottle.com/glass-bottles/decorative) or General Bottle Supply (www.bottlesetc.com). You can also search online for "wholesale jars" or "decorative jars" to find more sources. Remember that whatever containers you choose must have a wide mouth so clients can easily scoop out the herbs.

Purchase 4" x 3" drawstring organza bags in a range of colors and display them in a small basket or decorative dish. These bags are inexpensive and can be found in many colors and patterns at craft, fabric, and party supply stores, or purchase them online at Pouch Depot (www.pouchdepotinc.com). The more varied and colorful, the better; this makes the aroma bar more personal for your clients because choosing the bag they like best is part of the experience.

Finally, provide spoons or wooden scoops to take the herbs out of the jars.

Promote Your Aroma Bar

Direct your clients to the aroma bar when they arrive. Invite them to make an aroma sachet as a personalized addition to their treatment, to take home later as a gift from you. Breathing in the herbal aromas prior to a treatment is a grounding and relaxing experience.

Your Herbal Aroma Bar may also be used to make delicious and healthy beverages. Use stevia leaf as a natural sweetener. Brew your tea in a French press or purchase large "press-n-brew" tea bags to create your own tea combinations. A 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 5 $\frac{5}{16}$ " bag will hold enough herbs to make an entire pot of tea for your clients. Fill the bag two-thirds full and seal the open side with a clean iron. Try these recipes:

- Chamomile/Sage Tea: 3 parts chamomile, 1 part sage.
- Jasmine/Red Clover Tea: 1 part jasmine, 3 parts red clover.
- Lavender/Lemon Balm Tea: 1 part lavender, 3 parts lemon balm.
- Peppermint/Rosemary Tea: 3 parts peppermint, 1 part rosemary.
- Rose Petal Tea: 2 parts red clover, 1 part rose hips, 1 part rose petals.

Optionally, add 1 tablespoon rose water, available at Middle Eastern groceries or natural food stores.

See "Winter Holiday Hideout" (*Skin Deep*, November/December 2012, page 12) for more ideas on teas and natural treats for your waiting area.

This spring, get energized and become one with nature. The plant world awaits you, offering its fragrant spirit. Your new aroma bar will give the gift of nature to your clients, healing and delighting their senses. §

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