Enjoy fragrance all year long by using dried flowers or leaves in potpourri or a fragrant pillow. And don’t forget your pets - few cats can resist a sock stuffed with catnip.

A Few Fragrant Plants
This is only a sampling. Remember, not all varieties are fragrant.

**Annuals & Tender Perennials:** heliotrope, sweet alyssum, petunia, verbena, sweet pea, mignonette, marigold.

**Evening-scented:** angel’s trumpet (all parts are poisonous), moonflower, evening stock, four o’clock, evening primrose, gas plant.

**Perennials:** dianthus, bee balm, peony, bearded iris, hosta, phlox, daylily, salvia, artemisia, Russian sage.

**Bulbs:** hyacinth, narcissus, Oriental lily, lily-of-the-valley.

**Herbs:** lavender, mint (aggressive - grow in pots), basil, thyme, lemon balm, sage, bronze fennel, pineapple sage, rosemary. Usually grown for fragrant foliage but many have scented flowers as well.

**Ground Cover:** sweet woodruff, violet, thyme (creeping or wooly), Roman chamomile.

**Vines:** honeysuckle, clematis, wisteria, sweet pea.

**Shrubs:** roses (especially old-fashioned types, but always check the particular variety), butterfly bush, lilac, spirea, azalea, rhododendron, viburnum, mock orange, fothergilla, witch hazel, daphne, Carolina allspice, sweetspire.

**Trees:** linden, many fruit trees, magnolia, yellowwood, fringe tree, pines, firs.

**House Plants:** scented geraniums, gardenia, jasmine, citrus, tuberose, freesia, orchid.

Scent is so personal it’s hard to make specific recommendations. Keep alert, smell plants as well as look at them, and you’ll discover what appeals to you and what doesn’t. With a little research, planning, and experimenting, your garden can be filled with fragrance throughout the growing season.

For more information on gardening please visit:
http://web.extension.illinois.edu/state/horticulture/index.php

or call University of Illinois Extension
Knox County Office
309-342-5108

Other information brochures can be found online at http://web.extension.illinois.edu/hkmw/hort.html

Developed and Written by
Knox County Master Gardeners
University of Illinois Extension
February 2015

Knox County Office
180 S. Soangetaha Rd. Suite 108
Galesburg, IL 61401

Phone: 309-342-5108
Fax: 309-342-1768
Email: uiemg-knox@illinois.edu
Besides providing an added dimension and increased enjoyment of our gardens, fragrance can relieve stress, affect our emotions, and calm or energize us, depending on the particular scent and our reaction to it. The scent of a flower can also bring back memories of grandmother’s garden or other happy occasions in our life.

Scent is both subjective and elusive. What is pleasing to one person may be offensive to another. And the fragrance that was so delightful yesterday may be different or completely absent today.

**Fragrance in Plants**

Scent is produced by the evaporation of essential oils contained in the plant. When we think of fragrance we think first of flowers, but scent can be produced by any part of the plant - flowers, leaves, roots, stems, bark, or seeds.

Fragrance strength and quality can be affected by a number of factors. In addition to the plant variety, environmental factors such as temperature, humidity, soil moisture and nutrients, light, time of day, and wind can all affect the fragrance we notice.

Flower petals naturally release their fragrance, while other parts of the plant often need to be disturbed in some way. Lighter colored flowers are generally more fragrant than darker ones. Fragrance can also change as a flower ages. Many fragrances have multiple layers of scent and, depending on conditions, the dominant scent may vary.

Plants don't produce their fragrance for our enjoyment. Scent performs a number of important functions for the plant. Scented flowers attract insects to help pollinate the plant (scent may decrease once the flower is pollinated). The oil in fragrant leaves may help reduce moisture loss in hot dry conditions, and the pungent odors may repel harmful insects. And some oils have antiseptic properties that may help protect the plant from disease.

Plants even use odors to communicate with each other. Plants injured by insects may release chemicals that trigger neighboring plants to produce compounds that repel the insects.

**Designing a Garden for Fragrance**

Take a fresh look at the plants you already have - are you overlooking the fragrance? Many scents are subtle. Sniff the blossom or leaf of a plant you may not have thought of as being scented. If you catch a whiff of fragrance in the garden, try to determine the source.

When adding plants to an existing garden, consider fragrant varieties. Choose plants with similar or complementary fragrances. Combining too many different types of scent can be confusing or overwhelming. And delicately scented flowers can be overpowered when grown next to plants with a strong fragrance. Choose plants with bloom times throughout the season, and add some plants with fragrant foliage.

Wind quickly dissipates fragrance - planting in a protected area allows the scent to linger. Enclose an area with structures or larger plants to create pockets of fragrance.

Foliage must usually be bruised or crushed to release its scent. Place plants along paths where they will be brushed against or stepped on or where you can reach out and grab a leaf.

Place plants where you can appreciate the fragrance - near doors, windows, patios, porches, or other outdoor living areas. But add a little fragrance to every part of the garden. Place at ‘nose’ level - plant small or low growing plants in containers, hanging baskets, raised beds, or window boxes. Let fragrant vines climb up arbors and trellises.

**Choosing Fragrant Plants**

You can't make general statements about which plants are fragrant. Plants thought of as fragrant have non-fragrant varieties, and many plants considered non-fragrant may have fragrance. Many modern varieties have been bred for appearance, size, color, or disease resistance at the expense of fragrance.

If you’re not home during the day, choose plants that release their fragrance during the evening.

Many of these have white or light-colored flowers and are pollinated by nocturnal moths. Plants with daytime fragrance may also continue to release scent at night.

Look for a variety that is specifically listed as fragrant. Lists of fragrant varieties are available online or in books. If possible, find somewhere where you can smell the plant yourself. Some fragrant old-fashioned flowers may be hard to find as transplants, and may need to be ordered or started from seed.

**Not All Scents Are Pleasant**

Not all fragrances are appealing to all people. It’s hard to give specific examples because scent is so subjective. Heavy or cloying scents can be overpowering up close or indoors. You might consider placing these away from places where people gather, where they can be admired from afar.

Some flowers give off an unpleasant odor as the bloom ages. You may become aware of earthy or musty notes. Scents can evoke negative as well as positive memories - some people dislike certain fragrances because of an association with unpleasant experiences.

Foliage can have a pungent or sharp scent, which many people find refreshing but others dislike. Some plants have fragrant flowers but foliage with an unpleasant odor. You might place these in an out-of-the-way spot where the foliage won’t be disturbed.

And then there are the truly foul odors. Some flowers are pollinated by flies that are attracted to the smell of rotting meat. Other plants smell like wet fur, fish, or other substances most find unpleasant.

**Bringing Fragrance Indoors**

Don't leave fragrance out in the garden - bring it inside to enjoy. Place cut flowers in a vase or use in a centerpiece, wreath, or candle ring. Bring cut branches of spring-flowering shrubs indoors and put in water - the warmth of the house will enhance the fragrance.