

Gardening for the Senses / The Sensual Garden

A Garden You Can Taste

Fruits, vegetables, and some herbs are perfect for stimulating your sense of taste. As long as you're not spraying your crops with pesticides, you can munch your way across the garden any time during the growing season. If you do spray, check the label to find out how soon you can safely re-enter the garden, and when you can harvest the crops. Sprayed crops should be thoroughly washed (only with water) before eating.

A Garden You Can Smell

Every plant has its own scent. Different scents can subtly alter your mood, and your garden can help you take advantage of this. Try to create different "rooms," or pockets in the garden. An area surrounded by the scents of lilacs, roses, or lily-of-the-valley is a relaxing place to set up a hammock or lawn chair.

Some heavy scents, like honeysuckle, jasmine and wisteria, can make you feel sleepy, while herbs such as lavender, rosemary and lemon verbena energize and invigorate you. A stroll through a section of culinary herbs, like oregano, sage and thyme, will often help whet your appetite.

Some fragrant plants release their scents when they are touched or crushed. Herbs like chamomile or creeping thyme can be used as groundcovers for pathways and will release their fragrances as you walk across them. Different herbal paths can lead to various "rooms" in your garden. People using canes or who otherwise are at risk of falling may not want to use scented ground covers for pathways.

Scented geraniums and other aromatic herbs can be planted along pathways and will release their scents when touched by garden visitors. Raised beds can be planted with fragrant ground covers, providing an aromatic resting area/

As you discover the wonders of the scented garden, you may feel the urge to keep adding to your collection. You should try not to use too many scented plants together, however because their different scents tend to blend together and become confusing. If you garden with the different "mood rooms," as described above, you can include many more scented plants, as they will be scattered in different parts of the garden.

A Garden You Can Feel

Our sense of touch can make the garden an exciting place to explore the different plant textures. Place plants with interesting textures in a small, enclosed garden with comfortable garden seats or mossy places

to sit. Garden beds raised to a height of two feet and constructed with edges top sit on bring touchable plants within reach. Choose only nonpoisonous and non-prickly plants for the petting garden.

There are many different textures that you can include in the garden. Some plants have soft, fuzzy leaves or flowers, like lamb's-ear, wooly thyme, and pussy willow. Many ornamental grasses, especially hare's tail grass, have fluffy flower heads. The blossoms on some plants, such as hibiscus, gardenia, and most lilies, feel silky to the touch. Blossoms of static and globe amaranth have a papery feel, as do the seed pods of honesty (also called the money plant).

A Garden You Can Hear

The sounds that a garden makes can create subtle moods in visitors. The whisper of weeping plants, such as willows and birch, has a calming influence. The rustling of ornamental grasses and bamboo can create a sense of excitement and activity, and make excellent audio signals to help gardeners orient themselves.

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