

Making homemade potpourri

Making homemade potpourri: Everyone loves potpourri, whether for aromatherapy or just a pleasant scent.

The Oxford dictionary definition of potpourri is a scented blend of dried petals and spices. The use of potpourri is nothing new. For centuries people have relied on scents to do many things, from repelling home odor to attracting a suitor. Although our reasons for using scents may be the same, or even completely different, the popular method for making potpourri has changed.

The old, popular way to make potpourri is commonly referred to as the moist method, while the easier, new way of making potpourri is the dry method.

When making potpourri, gather your flowers early in the day. The best time is right after they have opened but when the moisture, such as dew, has dried off them. After plucking the petals off from the flowers, spread them out on newspapers or non-metallic screens.

To make moist potpourri you can let your petals dry for approximately two to three days. They should feel rubbery but not fully dry. Using a wide mouthed crock, ceramic or glass container (just be sure it is not clear), place a layer of the flower petals on the bottom. Then cover the layer of petals with a layer of non-iodized salt. Continue alternating layers like this until your container is two-thirds full.

Now you will need to cover and compress your petals. One way to do this is to put a plate on top of them and weight the plate down. A can of fruit or soup works good for this. Every two to three days you must stir the pot, breaking up the crusty layer that forms on top and mixing it in with the petal and salt mixture. You need to do this for two weeks, after which you may add your choice of spices and/or aromatic oils or fixative oil such as musk oil or sandalwood oil.

Once you have experimented until you have the scent you desire the mixture needs to be covered again, and stirred every other day for another two weeks. When the two weeks are up you are ready to enjoy your scent, which may be initially overpowering but will mellow out in time.

The dry method of making potpourri is preferred not only because it is simpler, but because the finished product is more decorative. Drying the petals keeps the colors, and often the shape, of the flowers whereas the moist method bleaches them out.

Making dry potpourri requires the same method for gathering the petals as used in the moist method. Once you pluck the petals from the flowers you need to spread them out again. For dry potpourri it is best to use only the nonmetallic screen when drying the petals as it allows for greater air flow and that helps release trapped moisture. You can leave a few small flowers whole (such as small rosebuds) to make the potpourri more attractive. The petal screens should be kept in a dry, warm place away from direct sunlight. Every two days the petals should be turned.

When the petals are crisp they are completely dry. Now they can be put in a glass jar and you can experiment with your desired scent by adding spices, aromatic oils and a teaspoon of fixative (musk, cedar or sandalwood oil) per two cups of petals. Cover the jar tightly for four weeks before placing dry potpourri out in containers. Cover all potpourri containers when you have no need for them as this will make their scent last longer.

It is not only fun to experiment with different scents when making potpourri, whether dry or moist, but it is also relaxing when you sit back and enjoy the aroma you have created.