

## Scented Gardens

For centuries, gardeners have used a variety of techniques to take advantage of the unseen dimension of scent in their landscapes.

Fragrant, low-growing plants were used as pathway edgings, so that they could be easily brushed or stepped on to release their fragrance.

Aromatic plants were often grown in tall urns, hanging baskets or raised beds, in order to be easily accessible to touch and smell.

Scented shrubs and climbers were placed near windows, courtyards and patios to be enjoyed by all. Gardens were often walled or hedged to trap fragrant breezes.

Today's gardeners can choose to create "scent pockets" by isolating scented plants in strategic locations, or they can mix the plants up in a jumble of aromas, creating a living potpourri.

The essential oils responsible for the scents of many plants are the result of complex chemical compounds stored in tiny sacs or glands. There appears to be no single reason why some plants are scented, but it is often suggested that fragrant oils can attract pollinators, defend against pests and grazing animals, reduce competition from other plants, or protect from drought.



*Gardenia*

## TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

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Dallas County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers  
supporting Texas A&M AgriLife Extension -  
Dallas County Horticulture programming.  
[www.dallascountymastergardeners.org](http://www.dallascountymastergardeners.org)

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## TEXAS A&M AGRI LIFE EXTENSION

# Scented Gardens



*Chempak from Michelia Campaca tree*

**Dallas County Master Gardener**



## Best Gardening Practices

**Planning and Design:** Consider function, location, size, appearance, amount of sunlight, water requirements, budget and maintenance.

**Bed Preparation:** Remove existing plants, incorporate 3" of compost into the top 8" of soil and mound the bed higher in the center to allow for drainage. Adding 3" of expanded shale will improve the soil even more.

**Soil Analysis:** Take soil samples in several locations and send them to a reliable lab for testing. Use the results to determine the best fertilizer for your garden. This will probably be nitrogen.

**Appropriate Plant Selection:** Choose native and adapted plants because they thrive in our climate and soil without excessive watering, fertilization and pesticides. Pay careful attention to the mature size of the plant and follow the suggested spacing. Use a variety of plants that suit the location and function of your garden and that suit each other. Mix perennials and annuals to create blooms in each season. Perennials come back each year but usually have a short blooming season; choose ones with a Plant Hardiness Zone of 8 or less. Annuals are planted each year but bloom for longer periods.

**Efficient Irrigation:** Grouping your plants by their water needs makes the garden much easier to maintain. Ground level watering like soaker hoses, drip irrigation and hand-watering are most efficient and economical. New plants will need regular irrigation for the first two growing seasons

then the water can be reduced. Water deeply once a week in the absence of rain. This encourages good root systems and increases the plants' resistance to pests and diseases.

**Mulch your garden:** Applying at least 3" of mulch each year will help the soil to retain moisture, moderate the temperature of the soil in winter and summer, and help prevent weeds. As the mulch breaks down, it provides organic material to enrich the soil. Avoid piling mulch directly on to plant stems.

**Appropriate Maintenance:** If you follow these recommendations, there will be little or no need for pesticides. If you must use one, read the label to make sure it is the correct product for your problem and follow the directions as written. Remove weeds as you see them.

These are the principles of Earth-Kind® gardening, a program developed by the Texas A&M System. The objective of Earth-Kind® is to combine the best of organic and traditional gardening and landscaping principles to create a new horticultural system for the 21st Century, a research-proven system based on real-world effectiveness and environmental responsibility. It provides maximum gardening and landscape enjoyment while preserving and protecting our fragile environment. Putting Earth-Kind® techniques into everyday practice will help your family, your community and your environment. To find out more about Earth-Kind® go to <http://earthkind.tamu.edu>.

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## Scent Plants to Consider

Since the sense of smell is closely associated with memory and emotion, each gardener will have different preferences for certain scents. The following list will help you get started:

1. Familiar Mediterranean herbs—Rosemary, Thyme, Garden Sage, Oregano, Savory—are often used in cooking and may evoke memories of good food and good times.
2. Lemon scented herbs are universal favorites: Lemon Balm, Lemon Basils, Lemon Grass, Lemon Verbena
3. Good container plants needing frost protection include tropical or tender plants like Plumeria, ornamental Gingers, Jasmynes, Patchouli, and the vast array of Scented Pelargoniums. Potted plants can be moved to areas where people gather.
4. Fragrant shrubs and trees shouldn't be overlooked. Southern Magnolia, Butterfly Bush, Abelia, Winter Honeysuckle and many others.
5. Roses top the list of beloved scents. Consider fragrant Earth-Kind® and antique roses for easier cultivation.
6. No garden with any "scents" can forget the power of Lavender to refresh the weary gardener. It is worth every effort to provide for the cultural needs—sun, good air circulation and excellent drainage—of this demanding genus.

**Scent can transform an ordinary garden into an extraordinary one.**

**Scented Gardens  
Make Sense**