

The Scent of Your Garden Fragrant Annuals and Bulbs



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THE SCENT OF YOUR GARDEN: FRAGRANT ANNUALS AND BULBS

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Written by G. Edwin Varner.

Preface

This guide helps you learn and discover annual flowering plants that provide delightful fragrances for your garden. This ebook is not the definitive listing of all fragrant annual flowers and bulbs. There are too many to list in a small publication like this.

In this ebook, I have enjoyed smelling the following flowers for their various fragrances. Please understand the sense of smell is different for each person and results may vary.

The information on each plant may contain inaccuracies. I have tried to research each plant as accurately as possible concerning their histories, growing conditions, and hardiness. Each plant has its USDA hardiness zones, best growth conditions, and my recommended varieties to find and grow. These plants may be perennial in some warmer locations. As for my recommended varieties, please be aware they may not be immediately available, discontinued or replaced for better varieties by nurseries.

The plants are listed by their Latin name first then by a common name or names.

The digital photos of the flowers are from my home, public gardens, and many nurseries within my area or by Creative Commons (CC0) licensed images.

Introduction

Cultivate some smiles in your garden.

Hot summer days with flowers of vivid color and fragrance. Quick sprouting, rapid growth, and plenty of bloom. Allow yourself time to enjoy the colorful show that fragrant annual flowers and bulbs provide for you.

The following plants are annuals or tender perennials since frost, or severe cold temperatures will harm or kill them. A few plants listed in this ebook are rare and have a fragrance. Plant them in beds or borders to accent your perennials but also use them in containers to place on patios, decks or anywhere you spend your days and evenings to enjoy the fragrance. Think of all the pleasurable possibilities!

Floral and leaf fragrances add an extra dimension to flower gardening. Although we concentrate on colorful flowers, scent provides added enjoyment.

Gardening is a significant source of fun, comfort, curiosity, and creativity. I hope this ebook helps to educate you on further exploring fragrance gardening.

To find plants, bulbs or seeds of the following species and varieties, please visit your nearby larger garden centers or search online to find specialty nurseries that grow and sell them.

Antirrhinum – Snapdragon

Antirrhinum nanum



Here, there be dragons.

The flowers of this favorite annual provide easy, interactive, fun for children (and us childlike adults.) The “jaws” of the petals will snap shut when you open them with your fingers. It enthralled me, as a child, seeing bumblebees struggle to open the jaws to climb into the floral throat only to disappear and then reappear as they emerge.

I dislike modern varieties for breeders has made Snaps smaller and more “open-mouthed.” Instead of big dragons, they are now little lizards.

Botanists thought Snapdragons never had a fragrance until the early 1960s when a few hybrid varieties developed a noticeable, sweet perfume. Sadly, these types are no longer grown.

A few varieties raised today have real dragon-size stature and some fragrance. The variety **Lipstick Silver** has huge, red and white petals with a sweet, clove perfume. It grows to almost three feet tall. Another fragrant one is **Royal Bride** with pure white flowers.

They all need to grow in plenty of sunlight, fertile soil, and some support stakes to keep them standing tall and proud – as any dragon should.

Berlandiera – Chocolate Daisy

Berlandiera lyrata



Flowers for early morning commuting bees and butterflies.

This rare plant has a noticeable aroma of chocolate or hot cocoa. You can smell the chocolate many feet away when several flowers are in full bloom. Please be aware this plant blooms from early to late morning.

Afterward, it closes its petals for the rest of the day. But why bloom just in the mornings? Who knows? Plan your early morning by visiting with this flower. If your first cup of coffee fails to wake you up, this plant will.

The small daisy-like blossoms are bright yellow with reddish stripes or veins on the underside of the petals. Dark red stamens and silvery-green leaves complement its appearance. The plant height is less than two feet tall.

It grows well in full sunlight but needs well-drained soil and blooms in midsummer. Collect seeds or dig up the tubers before winter if you live in colder locations. Although I list it as an annual, it can be a perennial for zones 7 to 10. Try to protect the tubers for the winter in these locations with mulch. Unfortunately, it's difficult to survive in more northern gardens.

Brugmansia – Angels' Trumpets

Brugmansia suaveolens



How to hit a high note.

This plant, known as “Angels’ Trumpets” for the big horn-like blossoms, hang down from the over 10 feet tall herbaceous tree. Native from the tropical regions of South America, they are very susceptible to frost. By

planting them in large containers, you can move them indoors for the winter. By late spring (after the last frost) place them outside for new growth and they will bloom by late summer. The plants need fertile soil and as much sunlight as possible to grow and bloom well.

The petals have gorgeous colors of peach-orange, yellow, white or pink-red and release their sweet perfume in the evenings and at night. One popular variety is **Charles Grimaldi** with deep yellow to pale orange petals.

All parts of Brugmansia are highly toxic and can be fatal if eaten. Let's be content to smell the colorful flowers! A related plant, called Datura (see below), grows smaller and project their flowers upward from the ground. As you may guess, many gardeners call them "Devils' Trumpets."

Cassia – Popcorn Cassia

Cassia didymobotrya or Senna didymobotrya



Now, all we need is an excellent movie to watch.

This unusual and enjoyable African plant has vivid yellow, pea-like blossoms on long spikes. The top of each has black to dark purple, unopened buds. However, the real surprise is the leaves smell of hot buttered popcorn when rubbed with your fingers. You may feel the need to lick your buttery fingers but don't do it.

Although classified as a shrub or small tree (which it is when growing in tropical Africa) in most areas it is a tender perennial but more likely as an annual. It is only hardy to zones 9 to 11. Bugs, bunnies, and deer dislike the leaf odor.

This plant is becoming better well known as more gardeners are requesting (no, let's say demanding) new unusual flowers for their gardens. This one will be at the top of the list to spark "flower lust" at your next garden club meeting. To jumpstart member interest, bring along a bag of hot buttered popcorn.

Centratherum – Brazilian Bachelor Buttons

Centratherum intermedium camporum



Fun, single, Brazilian guy seeks lasting, loving relationship.

If you are familiar with the regular annual Bachelor Buttons, this will look almost the same but with one noticeable exception – the leaves and flower heads have a strong pineapple or fruit punch fragrance. Go ahead – get personal with this unusual, colorful, and rare annual. To release that strong perfume, you need to handle the leaves and flowers.

This bushy Brazilian plant grows to almost two feet tall with ever-blooming, blue to light purple, double-petaled blossoms. It is an

outstanding new annual and is ideal for bedding and containers. Due to the fragrant oils on the leaves, insects and other critters disliked this plant. One recommended variety for growing is **Button Beauty** for the flower heads is much larger than the species.

Grow this plant in full to part sunlight and well-drained, fertile soil. Hardy only to zones 10 and 11, this is annual for most areas. But who cares! It's fun to grow, smell and admire in any garden.

Cosmidium

Cosmidium burridgeanum



A chocolate covered Texan.

This native Texas wildflower has no common name (yet), so we will use the Latin name. The chocolate scented flowers are like the Chocolate Cosmos (described next), but the flowers are yellow-tipped with a purple-red-brown center. Look for the variety called **Philippine** which grows shorter and bushier than the typical species plant.

The intense chocolate fragrance is from all the many, and I mean A LOT of flowers. It is easy to grow from seeds and should appeal to children. Ideal for bedding, rock gardens, and containers, the plant produces so

many flowers it will wear itself out. Clip spent flowers back during the summer to encourage more blooming until a fall frost.

Individual plants can grow to about two feet tall and wide but planting a group of them is more attractive. This plant is a magnet for bees, butterflies, and chocoholics like you and me.

Cosmos – Chocolate Cosmos

Cosmos atrosanguineus



Out of this world fragrance.

From Mexico, this plant was once common but became very rare. What happened? In the past, cultivated plants lost the ability to produce seeds. They became sterile and had to be propagated by cuttings or by tubers – until now. In 2010, someone discovered a productive plant producing viable seed. Now, seeds are slowly being available to commercial seed companies. Never underestimate Mother Nature!

Look out for **Chocamocho** which was first commercially seed-grown in 2012. This attractive plant is a tender perennial that resembles and grows like a small Dahlia but with a flower like the regular Cosmos. The

milk chocolate-scented blossoms are a deep garnet or crimson red but appear almost black. It blooms in mid-summer until a killing frost. It forms small finger-like tubers that can be dug and saved over the winter in slightly moist peat moss.

Plant them in full sunlight, fertile but well-drained soil. These plants can grow in containers so you can place the plants where you can enjoy the delicious fragrance.

Crinum – Giant Spider Lily

Crinum x amabile



No hairy legs and fangs – thank goodness!

Although the name says lily, this bulb is related to the Amaryllis and Hippeastrum (the large, popular bulbs sold at Christmas.) The spider

name is for the long, pink to red petals and stamens that extend several inches away from the flower stalk.

Another stunning feature is the leaves have a dark green to purple coloration. In a shady location, the leaves arch over and can look like a figure of a giant spider. Well, that summarizes tonight's nightmare. A giant spider lily is chasing after me. Never mind. Where was I? Oh, yes. It looks so exotic but, being a tropical plant, it should be!

This bulb and its relations are native to tropical areas of Asia. It is bulb-hardy from zones 9 to 11, but one of those rare winter freeze-ups will kill the top growth. Most gardeners should plant this bulb into large pots or containers and then store indoors over the winter.

It is a favorite landscape plant in warm, frost-free locations. The flower stalk (called an inflorescence) can tower to over five feet when the plant is older. It blooms all summer with a sweet lily-like fragrance. It loves to grow in partial shade, fertile, well-drained soil. Bulbs can be difficult to find in garden centers.

Cymbopogon – Indian Perfume Grass

Cymbopogon citratus and C. martini



CC0 Photo courtesy of Pixabay.com

This grass is a ‘Jack-of-all-trades’!

Who would think grass would have a fragrance? For those of us growing up in the 1960s, I am not referring to that “grass” and its odor. Hey man, Groovy! Imagine what a stir this ebook would create by describing the aroma of Marijuana smoke! No, no, NO! For Pete’s sake, you know what I mean. When I say grass, I mean actual grass.

Anyway, when we think of plant fragrance, we associate it with flowers and to a lesser extent, the leaves. But grass blade leaves can have a scent, especially when they are cut and then dried. Presented below are

two tender, tropical species. They may be difficult to locate. I suggest using an Internet search.

Lemon Grass (*Cymbopogon citratus*) is tender – hardy only to Zones 9 to 10. The long, slender blades contain a powerful fragrance oil that smells of lemons. The grass is native to India and Sri Lanka but also grows in most tropical grasslands throughout southern Asia. Companies use its fragrance oil in many products such as soaps and perfumes. For most chefs, this oil is an essential ingredient in Thai cooking.

Outstanding as a container plant for many gardeners, the grass gives a sense of the tropics when grown on the patio or deck. When someone brushes against the blades, an intense lemony scent is released. In the wild, the plant can grow to over four feet tall, but less when grown in a container.

Like all grasses, it forms clumps you can separate into individual stalks and then replant to develop a new colony. If possible, plant this grass in a sunny area with fertile soil and regular watering. The plant will also tolerate shady areas and short periods of drought. Its primary growing concern is to stay frost-free.

Related to Lemon Grass is **Palmarosa Rose Grass** (*Cymbopogon martini*) having a delightful and robust rose perfume. This grass is of high agricultural importance for being cheaper to grow instead of raising Damask roses to get rose-scented oils. I have not discovered if we can also use this grass for cooking. Let's enjoy it as a potted plant to impress other gardeners. Finding a nursery source for plants or seed may prove difficult.

Datura – Devil’s Trumpets

Datura metal



It’s a suburban jungle out there!

People also call Datura – Jimson Weed (or Jamestown Weed), Thorn Apple, Toloache, Moonflower, Pricklyburr, and Stinkweed. Most of these names refer to the smelly, spiny seed pod.

Unlike their close relatives, the Brugmansia (described above,) Datura plants are smaller growers. They have their single, or double flowers pointed upward. Their colors are pure white to light purple, or yellow. They release an intoxicating lily-like perfume into the summer evening air.

When I had my nursery years ago one of my customers reported that the plants she purchased grew wild, almost jungle-like, near her outdoor hot tub. Over the summer the Datura plants produced a multitude of flowers. The heat and high humidity from the tub made the plants grow wild and produce flower after flower. She wrote that she must have spent most of her summer evenings in that tub enjoying her tropical, perfumed paradise.

Grow them in sunlight to partial shade, fertile, well-drained soil. The plants are hardy only in zones 9 to 10. The varieties to grow are the **Ballerina Series** having white, purple or yellow double blossoms. **Belle Blanche** Datura has single white flowers and an irresistible heady perfume.

Datura and Brugmansia contain highly toxic chemicals fatal in high concentrations but are beneficial at very low levels. In medium doses, well, that's a different story.

Here is an interesting historical side-note. In 1676, a company of British soldiers protecting established colonists in Jamestown, Virginia from Indian attacks ate the young leaves as a salad. Other reports mentioned they also ground the seeds to make a tea or coffee substitute. Anyway, they all took a wild 11-day "out-of-their-freaking-minds" hallucinogenic "trip." They went naked, acted in simian (as in monkey) comical ways. Afterward, they returned to normal but remembered none of their wild 'spaced-out monkey' days. Joking aside, they were all fortunate they did not die from this plant.

Dianthus – Carnations

Dianthus superbus



Feel the need to be wild and crazy?

Members of the Carnation family come in all shapes and sizes. Many varieties are perennial in warmer climates but are annuals in colder areas. Some, like this species, are short lived-perennials for they self-seed and weaken their chances to live another year. But, you will have more plants in your garden each year.

You need to grow the fantastic **Rainbow Loveliness Strain** for your fragrance garden. This species may be the most fragrant with a glorious, heavenly, sinfully delicious, nasal intoxicating, oh so wonderfully sweet lilac perfume that will drift across your garden

throughout many summer evenings. I hope I made my point clear about its fragrance. It has several white, pink, purple or red fringed or feathery, wild-looking, petals. Go wild with this stunner of a plant!

Famous British gardening expert, Christopher Lloyd once stated he would never want to be without this plant in his gardens. Garden writer and author, Rosemary Verey, in her book *The Scented Garden*, declared this plant as “... *the ultimate in perfection in garden scents...*” Wow! What better referrals can you ask for in hiring this plant to bloom in your garden?

The plants can grow to almost two feet tall but are bushy. Try to grow as many plants as possible (from seed) to perfume the entire garden.

Gladiolus – Fragrant Gladiolus

**Gladiolus callianthus murielae; Acidanthera
murielae**



I'd be glad if we could agree on a name.

This plant is an East African relative of our common garden Gladiolus. Unlike the familiar Glad, this species has a lovely lily, gardenia, jasmine,

and clove blended perfume released in the warm evening and night air beginning in late summer. It has the familiar names of Peacock Orchid, Sword Lily, Fragrant Glad, and Abyssinian Lily. Let's all agree it is a fragrant Glad and be satisfied with it.

Like the regular garden Glad, it grows from corms or small bulbs. It makes a great container subject (which I highly recommend), so you plant the corms earlier plus you can move the containers anywhere you spend the evenings. The more corms you plant, the more perfume you will enjoy.

It is hardy to zone 9 to 10. Grow in full to part sunlight and well-drained soil. Dig up the corms in late fall in colder locations and store in a cool, dry area. For a very rare and fragrant hybrid of this species try the variety called **Lucky Star**.

Hedychium – Ginger Lily

Hedychium flavum, H. coccineum and hybrids



Photo courtesy of Morguefile.com

These flowers will not fly away.

These native Asian tropical plants are known as Butterfly Ginger Lilies or Garland Lilies. First, let's make something clear – this group of plants is not the source of ginger-spice for cooking. That is another type of plant (*Zingiber officinale*).

Ginger will grow two types of stems; the first is a thick, fleshy rhizome that develops at or just below the soil surface. The second stem is the main leafy shoot that emerges from the rhizome and produces the fragrant, showy flowers above a shaft of canna-like dark green leaves.

These blossoms flaunt all colorful shades of white, yellow, red, and orange.

They prefer warm, partly shaded areas with very moist, fertile soil. If you have a partly shady corner in your garden, this will be a great place to grow it, and you will have an instant 'illusion' of being in the tropics. The plants can grow to a height of five feet or more in ideal settings and the exotic blossoms release a beautiful perfume – something like gardenia and honeysuckle from mid-summer to frost. You can grow it outdoors in a bed or border, but I recommend planting it in a large container. When it blooms, you can move it to where you spend your days and evenings.

Several species are available to gardeners, and many larger garden centers should have them available. Try to locate the variety **Vanilla Ice** – unique with variegated leaves. Beginning in late August, it blooms with gorgeous peach or light orange flowers with a darker orange throat, all perfumed of lily and honeysuckle! It is a very vigorous grower to four feet tall or more.

Gingers are hardy from zones 8 to 11, but for most areas, is considered an annual. Propagate them by separation of the rhizome joints and store in slightly moist peat moss for the winter. Replant them outside after the last spring frost.

Heliotrope

Heliotropium peruvianum



A big slice of milk covered cherry pie.

This attractive garden annual grows well in the hot, summer sun. The heat makes a strong vanilla, almond or 'baby powder' perfume spread across your garden.

Heliotrope had the honor of being "The Annual of the Year" ... but in 1898. I think it is long overdue for more tributes. Native to Peru, it became trendy in the late 19th century because of the flower color and fragrance. British reference books called it the "Cherry Pie Plant" for the color of the flowers. The color is supposedly similar to pouring milk on a slice of wild black cherry pie. The mixing of the dark red fruit with

the milk forms a dark blue or purple slurry. I think it ruins a delicious cherry pie.

Heliotrope also make excellent container subjects so remember to pot up a few for the patio. It loves to grow in full sunlight, well-drained, fertile soil. By all means, protect this plant from frost for it is susceptible to cold.

The best varieties to grow are **Old Fashion Purple** having a dark blue to light blue flower clusters and a superb fragrance. **Fragrant Delight** has deeper purple flowers while **White Heliotrope** has powder-blue flowers when young and then changes to pure white when older.

Matthiola – Stocks

Matthiola incana, longipetala bicornis



The legal garden version of insider trading.

Some people have stock in the perfume industry. For a gardener, take Stock in providing plenty of fragrance in your garden. These plants are sure to be your best investment for a happier summer!

For many people, the scent varies from vanilla, nutmeg, spring hyacinths and lilacs to lilies and Jasmine. Having those fragrances is shocking for Stock is related to members of the smelly Mustard family (as in, cooked Broccoli).

The common name of **Ten Week Stock** in the USA is for the approximate time to bloom from seed – give or take a few days. It is a

garden annual, heavily perfumed and available in many colors. Some mixes included the **Double-Flowered Stocks**. They are a favorite since the flowers are sterile, and they keep producing more flowers. Grow them in sunlight to partial shade, fertile but well-drained soil. Many seed catalogs offer the single and double-flowered varieties.

Another recommended variety is the **Night-Scented Stock** (*Matthiola longipetala bicornis*). The small flowers close up and droop during the day but by evening open to a blend of white and light lavender blue colors. They release all evening and night a fantastic sweet perfume. The plants are weedy in appearance and grow to about two feet tall but can become bushy. This Stock is native to Europe and has been a favorite for generations of gardeners, but is now difficult to find.

Mirabilis – Four O'Clock

Mirabilis jalapa and Mirabilis longiflora



Well, it's 4 o'clock in the afternoon somewhere in the world.

The other name for these flowers is “Marvel of Peru” for they originate in this region of South America. An old-fashion fragrance garden would not be complete without these delightful, colorful and wonderfully scented flowers. Do they bloom at 4 O'clock? If they get sunny conditions, they wait until the evening to bloom, but if grown in more partly shaded areas they can bloom late in the afternoon. One thing is for sure – don't set your watch by them!

The plants can grow over two feet tall, are bushy and covered with hundreds of white, yellow, red and multicolored flowers over the

summer. The sweet, citrus perfume from all those flowers in the evening air will be heavenly!

It can be a perennial in zones 8 to 10 if protected from frozen or soggy winter soil. Each plant can re-grow from the thick, woody taproot or tuber. You can dig these up before winter and store in damp peat moss over the winter. Replant them in the spring after the last frost, or get a head start by allowing them to begin their new growth in containers, inside your house. By summer, they will be larger with thousands of blossoms.

One variety to enjoy, called **Limelight**, is shockingly decadent. The leaves are pale green almost chartreuse or yellowish green. The real star of the show is the flower color – a bright, neon, rose-pink. Put on your sunglasses for this one!

A rare species of Four O'clock is *Mirabilis longiflora*. The common name for this unique plant is **Angels' Trumpets** but should not be confused with Brugmansia (listed earlier.) A reason for this beautiful name refers to the extraordinary length of the individual flowers. Each plant can grow to almost two feet tall and is bushy with hundreds of four to six-inch-long, tubular, white flowers. The blossoms bloom all summer and into the fall releasing a beautiful, sweet jasmine-like perfume into the evening air. Enjoying your garden in warm summer evenings with this scent is a match made in heaven.

Nemesia

Nemesia hybrida



The newborn smell of baby dragons.

Each year these colorful annuals are showing up more in garden centers. They have been around for several years, but no one paid any attention to them until recently.

Nemesia is native to the southern grassland areas of Africa, and have large clusters of small to medium-size, snapdragon-like flowers on the low growing but bushy plants. They are hardy to zones 9 to 10, but appearances can deceive for even though the plants look like a frost will kill them they can survive temperatures well below freezing – for a while.

As for fragrance, the colorful flowers have a spicy-lily or vanilla perfume, some very much so. In newer varieties, growers breed the flowers for largeness and especially for fragrance. The abundance of these sweetly scented blooms fills the air with their fragrant aroma when the sun hits the flowers.

You can grow these in patio containers, including hanging baskets or in front of a border. They prefer full sunlight to partial shade and fertile, well-drained soil to thrive and bloom. Unlike old seed grown varieties, new hybrid types are now more heat, high humidity, and cold tolerant.

It is difficult to choose which varieties to recommend for they sell new, colorful hybrids to the public each year. My best advice is to visit your garden center to sniff-them-out or perform an internet search for the best fragrant varieties now available.

Nicotiana – Fragrant Tobacco

Nicotiana alata and Nicotiana sylvestris



The no-smoking section of this ebook.

Even when first introduced to Europe from the New World, people considered tobacco plants a foul-smelling health hazard. Future generations never learned – or cared. However, what got many people's attention were the species that provided fragrant flowers.

To enjoy the mental health benefits of tobacco, grow these species for their addictive evening fragrance. One excellent variety is **Fragrant Cloud** (*Nicotiana alata*). This one is essential for any fragrance garden for the myriads of pure white flowers that emit an addictive jasmine-like perfume into the summer evening air.

Another variety is **Only the Lonely** (*Nicotiana sylvestris*). I guess someone was listening to the Ray Orbison song when trying to come up with a name. This species is the towering chandelier-like variety that always draws in curious non-gardeners. It grows tall with clusters of pure white flowers that hang or dangle downward. They produce a sweet perfume that spreads for yards and yards (as in your yard and your neighbor's yard.)

Grow these plants in as much sunlight as possible, and fertile, well-drained soil. Avoid adding too much fertilizer for you want more flowers than the large leaves – unless you are the neighborhood tobacco farmer.

Pelargonium – Scented Geraniums

Pelargonium tomentosum, graveolens



How to end up smelling like a rose.

These beautiful plants provide great smelling leaf fragrances. Please do not confuse them with the common bedding geraniums. The flowers are showy and colorful, but it is the leaves when handled, release powerful aromas. They make great indoor container plants, but they grow to their full potential when grown outside. People use the leaves to flavor food and scent any object.

They are hardy only to zones 9 to 10. Plant them in full sunlight and fertile, well-drained soil. Heights vary but snip them back to make them bushy. A few recommended varieties to grow are the **Peppermint**

Scented, which is one of the most popular, especially to children. Its large leaves are fuzzy and smell strongly of mint. Another favorite variety is the **Attar of Roses**. Without question, it is the one most enjoyed. This plant is the real, old-fashioned species scented of Damask roses. It was (and still is) used for potpourri, flavoring cakes, and jellies plus scenting clothes and linen.

The fragrance oils are potent, so once you handle this plant, your fingers will smell like roses until you wash your hands. When I operated my nursery a few years ago, this plant fascinated my regular UPS driver. One day, he carried around a sprig in his pocket. He did not realize he smelled like a rose everywhere he went. Much to his chagrin, his fellow drivers teased him about his “French perfume.” He decided never to touch the plants again. Enjoy smelling them – if you dare!

Petunia

Petunia axillaris



Fortunately, we don't have to say 'Stimoryne.'

Petunias surprise many gardeners for it belongs in the Tomato family where their closest cousins are Nicotiana (Tobacco) and Peppers. In 1985, the genus name of Petunia was not valid and that a correct name should be Stimoryne. Yeah, try pronouncing that! To prevent massive gardener protests and riots on a global scale, the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature (yes – it's real) allowed the not-so-correct name of Petunia to remain as Petunia. Whew! That was a close call. Now I can sleep better.

A recommended variety to grow is **Rain Master** (*Petunia axillaris*.) This species is the wild petunia from Argentina but with an added catchy name. The name suggests the white petals are not damaged by torrential rains, unlike some modern, large-petal varieties. The lovely jasmine-like perfume is strong all evening.

This wild petunia is one of the original parent species breeders used to create all the hundreds (well, let's say millions to be on the safe side) of *Petunia* varieties for our gardens. It also contributes the pleasant fragrance for some of these varieties. Let's go wild and grow this perfumed Pampas beauty.

Grow all petunias in plenty of sunlight and fertile soil. They make excellent container subjects to place anywhere you want to enjoy the perfume. I am happy to report breeders finally recognize that *Petunias* have a fragrance and are making strides to create new varieties having great color and outstanding scent.

Polianthus – Tuberose

Polianthus tuberosa



Beds, pots and funeral homes.

From Mexico comes this delightfully fragrant plant. In late summer until frost, a spike of medium-sized, single to double, waxy, rosebud-like flowers open in the warm evening air. They release one of nature's most potent, syrupy-sweet perfumes – like that of gardenia, hyacinth, lily, and jasmine combined.

A long time ago, funeral arrangements extensively used these flowers. The reason was to help mask the smell of – you know... the dear departed. Well, it eventually lost its popularity. You don't want someone to mention your garden smells like a funeral home. Over time, (and

with better techniques to preserve a dead body) Tuberose eventually became a favorite garden plant once again.

This plant grows well in a sunny location, in well-drained, fertile soil but also makes an excellent container subject – especially important for northern growers to extend the blooming season past early frosts. Speaking of which, Tuberose is sensitive to cold temperatures; they like it hot.

They are hardy only to zones 9 and 10. Two forms are available – the single or the double petal flowers. Both types have the beautiful perfume, but the single-flowered variety blooms earlier.

Reseda – Mignonette

Reseda odorata machete



Oh, you little darling!

The name 'Mignonette' is French for little darling, and 'reseda' means to calm down or have a calming influence. Napoleon Bonaparte, while on his conquest of various countries, came across this plant growing wild in northern Africa. He eventually shipped seeds to his beloved Josephine. Long before text messaging, Facebook and email, he probably sent an archaic form of communications called "a letter" to her. Here, it may have read (in French):

"My dearest Jo, – I marched across Northern Africa. OMG, what an exhausting trip! I happened to find this wonderfully fragrant flower. I

*thought of you. Enclosing some seeds. Love from your little darling, –
Nappy. XXX”*

Well, he may have sent a note like that. Probably not... but moving right along, Empress Josie loved the perfume so much she called the flowers “mignonettes.”

The plant likes to grow in sunlight and moderately dry, lime-based soil. It is weed-like; being lanky in growth. It grows to two feet tall and becomes bushy. The flowers are not especially colorful or attractive, but they release a highly enjoyable, raspberry perfume into the air – both day and night. You can detect the fragrance yards away. They make excellent cut flowers and container-grown plants. Be a darling and grow this!

Salvia – Ornamental Sage

Salvia elegans



Wise advice from hummingbirds.

Salvias have been growing in popularity over recent years for their profuse blooming all summer. Plus, they provide an incredible variety of flower colors that attract hummingbirds. Anything to draw in the “hummers” is welcome in my garden.

One other outstanding quality is the differing leaf fragrances. Some species and varieties have unique scents such as melon, burnt bacon, mint, and others. Burnt bacon? That sounds intriguing. The flowers are red, pink, white and the ever popular dark blue.

They grow best in the sunshine and fertile but well-drained soil. The height of the plants and flower spikes varies. The higher the hardiness zone number you live in, the better the odds of winter survival.

One recommended variety to grow is the **Honeydew Melon Sage** (*Salvia elegans*). It is an excellent annual having a beautiful cantaloupe melon perfume when you rub the leaves. I love this variety for its yummy scent and the bright, red, tubular flowers. It blooms all summer and attracts the hummingbirds from all over the county – or should that be country? Well, you never know! It is an excellent plant for bedding and containers. I prefer this variety over the typical **Pineapple Sage**, which is a similar type but blooms late in the year for my area. It smells just like its name but, for me, blooms a day before a killing frost. It never fails!

Silene – Night Flowering Catchfly

Silene noctiflora



Night of the Clammy Cockles!

This English wildflower (a relative in the Dianthus or Carnation family) became naturalized in many areas of the world and is considered a weed.

The name of Catchfly refers to the adhesive properties of the stems and leaves. The little hairs on them, botanically called trichomes, have a sticky substance that repels or traps little bugs like aphids, whitefly, and other wee beasties to their death.

To make matters worse, Catchfly has, in some locations, a nickname of “clammy cockle.” Don’t get me started on that name! I can’t stop

laughing. Although classified as an annual, it can be a perennial in warmer areas.

The small flowers are pure white and release a powerful, but sweet perfume into the evening and night air for most of the summer. Clip off the spent flower stalks to encourage more bloom and to prevent excess seed production. They grow over two feet tall but become bushy.

My above photo does not give its beauty justice. I took it in the morning when all the petals were drooping. Well, we don't look our best in the morning after a wild night of killing little bugs, do we? Seeds are difficult to come by since this is a weed.

Tagetes – Signet Marigold

Tagetes tenuifolia



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A gold rush to your garden ...

Before I began my mail-order nursery, and a few years afterward, I would, like any other nursery that sold bedding plants, offered Marigolds. I always had a difficult time selling these annual plants – not because of their colorful flowers but because of the leaf odor.

Marigolds have a characteristic odor that many people find horrible. The usual excuse given by customers was they hated to handle the plants and “get that stinking smell” on their fingers. I always wanted to scream, “you will not roll around in bed with them, are you?” but I

always held back from saying it. A large table of blooming plants was untouched and unsold by early June. How depressing and wasteful.

Well, for all you critics, here is something to ease your marigold phobia. **Lemon Gem** and **Orange Gem** are dwarf varieties. They have been around for many years. The laced or fern-like green leaves have a strong fragrance of lemons when handled. The small, single bright yellow or orange blossoms cover the plant during most of the summer. Many people, including those who dislike most marigolds, enjoy the delicate nature of this species.

They make an excellent container, window box, and bedding display. Plant these Marigolds where you can occasionally brush against the leaves to release that wonderfully strong citrus perfume. They grow to about 12 inches tall and wide. Plant them in full to partial sunlight and fertile soil.

Tropaeolum – Nasturtium

Tropaeolum majus



Come on baby let's do the nose twist.

Chubby Checker did not have this lyric in mind when singing his Twist song. These common flowers are always popular to grow for their colorful petals and bright green, oval leaves. Most Nasturtium flowers have a sweet but tangy or stringent odor. The fragrance is delightful yet a little questionable.

*In her book, *The Fragrant Path*, Louise Beebe Wilder writes, "The name Nasturtium, an old Latin word used by Pliny, was derived by him from narsus, the nose, and tortus, twisted, in reference to the supposed*

contortions of the nose caused by the hot, pungent odor and taste of these flowers.”

One added feature noted above is all parts of the plant is edible. The leaves and flowers have a peppery taste and look festive when added to salads.

Nasturtiums need to grow in full to part sunlight. Avoid making the soil too fertile for it will make the plants produce more vegetation instead of flowers.

Excellent varieties include **Golden Gleam** and **Scarlet Gleam**. The flowers are semi-double (they have a few extra petals) and the color is a dark golden yellow or bright orange-red. They have a warm, peppery aroma that produces that characteristic nose-crinkling behavior. They are suitable to grow in hanging baskets to help bring the flowers closer to your nose.

Verbena

Verbena hybrida



Being happily verbal over these flowers.

A few Verbenas have a pleasant fragrance as compared to the many scentless varieties grown today. Many have vivid colors, but some have a lovely perfume. That outstanding scent reminds me of 'Lily of the Valley.'

They have small, tubular flowers arranged into ball-like clusters and produced throughout the summer and well into the fall. They make excellent cut flowers, bedding and hanging basket subjects plus can be a hardy perennial if you live in zones 9 to 10. Lucky you! Grow them in sunlight to partial shade and fertile soil.

Seed-grown varieties rarely have scented flowers. Look for the cutting grown types which include **Blue Princess** having large, purple blossoms that can attract all the butterflies in your area. Well, not all of them but at least some! The flowers have a sweet 'Lily of the Valley' fragrance and are seductive – making you sniff more.

The leaves are dark green and are highly resistant to mildew. It has a vigorous spreading or trailing growth habit so it will be suitable as a groundcover. You can also grow it in hanging baskets or patio containers. I love the color of the blossoms that seem to glow in partial shade.

Zaluzianskya – Night Phlox

Zaluzianskya capensis



Tooth decay via the nose.

One of my favorite fragrant annuals is this distant relative of the common snapdragon. It is native to South Africa and named in honor of Dr. Adam Zaluziansky von Zaluzian of Prague back in 1592. Let's call him Doc Adam. He was a physician but also dabbled in all things botanical.

This plant is small (about one foot tall) with rosemary, or spruce needle-like leaves and many spikes of small flowers. These blossoms are tubular shaped with bright white, feathery or snowflake shaped petals with the undersides being brick red. They remain closed during

the day but once evening arrives they slowly open to release a strange, exotic perfume. It's sweet, tart, tangy, sharp, seductive yet powerful, but oh-so-delightful. Beware, for it will keep you awake at night if you plant a bed of these flowers outside your bedroom window for the perfume is very potent. You don't need all that sleep, do you?

One available variety is **Midnight Candy**. It is easy to grow, but sow many seeds to provide plenty of perfume for the summer. This plant prefers full sunlight to part shade in beds or containers. Northern gardeners need to plant the seeds early indoors to get maximum blooming for the summer.

Conclusion

Grow yourself some happiness!

This publication has only scratched the surface on what fragrant annual flowers and plants you can grow in your beds and borders. I haven't even touched about many tropical flowers and orchids.

New varieties of plants are pushing aside older varieties. These older forms are in danger of being forgotten. Let's try to prevent this from happening. If you love a particular plant, try to learn how to propagate it. By doing so, you keep it alive and, if you have gardening friends or relatives, you can expand its growth into new areas. Be generous and share your plants.

Finally, I leave you with a summary of this ebook. No, it's not all about floral fragrance but also the historical appreciation of all the different varieties of plants to grow in your garden. There is some fascinating history in all those petals, and it's time for your garden to be part of that history. Enjoy every minute (and fragrance) of it!

Thank you for reading this ebook.

I hope you have enjoyed learning something new about fragrant annual plants and bulbs. I have two other companion ebooks on fragrance gardening. They are part of *The Scent of Your Garden* series. One is entitled, *Fragrant Perennials and Bulbs*, and the other is *Fragrant Trees, Shrubs, and Vines*.

Please visit my author website at <https://gedwinvarner.com> for my other gardening ebooks and contact information.

About the Author

G. Edwin Varner grew up on a farm, helping his father in the crop fields and assisting his mother in the flower and vegetable gardens. This early experience and learning led him to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology with a minor in Botany.

For twenty years he successfully owned and operated a fragrant flower mail-order nursery. Unlike most mail-order nurseries publishing colorful but expensive pictorial catalogs, his frugal catalog extensively described the flowers he grew. He once said, "I write a thousand words worth a picture in my catalogs." Today, he has the same style of writing (thankfully with fewer words) through a variety of enjoyable and informative ebooks. This time, the ebooks include color photos of each flower.

He encourages you to cultivate something unique and beautiful in your gardens. His motto is "read about it, see it, grow it and enjoy it!"

G. Edwin Varner lives in a rural area of northeastern Ohio, USA.