

# The Scent of Your Garden

## Fragrant Trees, Shrubs, and Vines

*G. Edwin Varner*

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THE SCENT OF YOUR GARDEN: FRAGRANT TREES, SHRUBS, AND VINES

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Written by G. Edwin Varner.

# Preface

This guide helps you learn and discover beautiful flowering trees, shrubs, and vines providing delightful fragrances for your flower garden. This ebook is not the definitive listing of all these types of plants.

The information on each plant may contain inaccuracies about their histories, growing conditions, and hardiness. Each plant has its USDA hardiness zones, best growth conditions, and my recommended varieties to find and grow. Please be aware these plants may not be available, discontinued or replaced for better varieties by nurseries.

The following plants use their Latin name first then by a common name or names.

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

# Introduction

## **No time like the present.**

There is an old Chinese proverb that says: *“The best time to plant a tree is twenty years ago. The second-best time is right now.”* Well, that is nice but not helpful. I mean, I would like a full grown, blooming like mad, fragrant tree right now in my garden. It will not happen, but there’s leeway in that Chinese saying. Many trees, shrubs, and vines can bloom in a short amount of time. And who wants to get out the stepladder to smell the bouquet of blossoms several feet in the air? Not me and not you.

So, what kinds of fragrant trees, shrubs, and vines can we grow in our lawns and gardens and not have to wait a minute before eternity to enjoy their blossoms? Several – with some described in this ebook.

This ebook helps you discover common and rare flowering plants that provide delightful fragrances for your garden. Many are woody and vary in hardiness, but that should not limit you from trying ones ‘a little’ outside their comfort zone. You can always give them some extra loving care to help survive for many years to come.

**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.**

# Abelia – Fragrant Abelia

## *Abelia mosanensis*



### **Doctor tested, and doctor approved.**

Well, that is a direct, and to-the-point common name isn't it? Most *Abelia* species do not have a noticeable perfume. They are also sensitive to cold climates. This species, however, has a great, sweet fragrance and is hardy from Zones 5 (maybe 4) to 9.

Botanists honor Dr. Clarke Abel (1780 -1826) with discovering them in China, and, what is now, North Korea while on vacation from his growing practice at an upscale, suburban medical clinic. That may not be an accurate statement, but most doctors would like such a place.

This honeysuckle-related shrub has dark pink flower buds that open to fragrant, light pink or white flowers. The perfume is lovely with a noticeable lily and lilac aroma. Blooming begins from late spring to mid-summer and will make a great companion to a Lilac. The dark green, glossy leaves change to orange-red in the fall. The shrub grows to five feet tall and becomes bushy as it ages. Gee, this description sounds like a personal ad in a lonely-hearts column. All it needs is a phone number or email address.

Finally, this shrub has little to no insect or disease problems. Plant this bush in full to part sunshine and fertile, well-drained soil.

Look for a new variety called **Sweet Emotion** which has an even more significant sweet perfume and hardiness than the regular species.

# Akebia – Five-Leaf Chocolate Vine

## *Akebia quinata*



Photo courtesy of Morguefile.com

### **Melt-in-your-nose chocolates.**

Native to central China, North and South Korea plus Japan is this popular and much sought after vigorous woody vine. Someone brought it to the United States in 1845 as an ornamental and has since naturalized in the warmer climates of the country. It is hardy from zones 5 to 9 (possibly zone 4 but only well protected from north winds). It requires a well-drained, moisture retentive fertile soil. It also prefers partial shade but succeeds in full sunlight.

Its name refers to the number of leaflets and scent of the flowers. Some people, or some noses, believe the fragrance is of vanilla, but most say it is of creamy milk chocolate. The aroma becomes stronger towards evening.

The chocolate brown to wine-red flowers are two inches wide and bloom from mid spring to early summer. A troubling fact is, the foliage can hide these flowers. It is a fast-growing plant and is excellent for covering trellises or fences.

Most Akebia plants are monoecious, meaning, they have separate male and female flowers. This species has both sexes on the same vine – I guess I can call it a co-ed vine – so it can produce fruit. The fruit that develops during the summer has purple-violet, sausage-like pods, two to four inches long and ripen in late summer or early fall. These fruits are edible, but I am not sure of the flavor.

# Aloysia – Lemon Verbena

## *Aloysia triphylla*



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### **How lemon trees develop an inferiority complex.**

This tender, semi-tropical woody shrub native to the northern parts of Chile has an older name called “Lippia.” Discovered by 17th-century

Spanish explorers, and later introduced to Spanish nobility, they named it for Maria Louisa, wife of King Carlos IV of Spain.

Its long, and slender leaves have an intense lemony aroma. By touching the leaves, they release this overwhelming citrus scent. They are an essential ingredient in potpourri.

This shrub is hardy only to zones 9 to 10, so this makes a good candidate for growing in a container (especially if you wish to keep it indoors over the winter.) Plant this shrub in full sunlight and fertile potting soil. It loves a hot location to concentrate and intensify the fragrance. The stem height is over three feet tall but cut it back to encourage bushiness.

Its name resembles a Verbena floret but not related to true Verbenas. The tiny white flowers bloom in the late summer or early fall but are not the main attraction of this shrub.

# Aster – Climbing Carolina Aster

*Aster carolinianus* or *Ampelaster carolinianus*



**Look! Up in the sky! It's a bird; it's a plane; it's Superaster!**

It's the botanical equivalent of Superman; for it climbs and, if given enough time, will leap tall buildings in a single bound. No, not really – on all counts. This late fall blooming Aster does not climb. It produces long, woody stems that weave in among shrubs, tall perennials, fences or other forms of support. It cannot wrap around objects like a vine but it grows-like-mad during the summer having help standing up by its neighbors.

Then, in the late fall, it blooms. It produces a mass of pinkish-lavender flowers highlighted by yellow stamens. The blossoms have a sweet,

honey fragrance. I was skeptical at first, but I smelled a tart, wild honey scent. It's not overpowering, but is very noticeable, and surprising, coming from an Aster.

It is a native of the Southeastern areas of the United States. If Superman's weakness is Kryptonite, then this Aster's weakness is with cold temperatures. It is only hardy from zones 7 to 10. In lesser zones, it will die back to the ground resulting in a loss of heavy blooming later in the fall. Not so powerful after all are you Superaster? (Insert evil, maniacal laughter here.) Like all Asters, it would love as much sunshine and fertile soil as possible.

Due to a recent naming revision of the Aster family, the Climbing Aster has a new genus called Ampelaster. Don't lose sleep over this but it can become confusing.

# Azaleas and Rhododendrons

## Rhododendron species



**An azalea by any other name would smell as sweet.**

Ask gardeners what the difference is between an azalea and a rhododendron, and you may get different replies. One way to explain “who from what” is by their leaves. Azaleas have smaller leaves and are deciduous; they drop them in the fall. “Rhodies” have larger, evergreen leaves. There are exceptions.

They can be a challenge to grow for most northerner gardeners, being very fussy about their growing conditions. Most, if not all, require acidic, moist, loamy soil with excellent drainage. They also cannot tolerate intense sunshine and extreme cold. Please do some research

before planting these shrubs. Make sure they can grow in your area before purchasing them.

Gardeners see these plants and never let their noses near them. Most “rhodies” are scentless (gorgeous, though) but some have varying degrees of a sweet, lily-like perfume. Many larger garden centers have an enormous variety of these shrubs so let your nose find them.

For an incredible selection of exceptionally hardy and fragrant azaleas, the **Northern Lights Series** is excellent for northern gardeners. The flower colors range from orange and yellow to pink, rose and white varieties.

# **Buddleia – Butterfly Bush**

## **Buddleia davidii**



### **Spread your wings and flutter around the Buddlebush.**

The Reverend Adam Buddle was the first person credited with “discovering” this shrub for our gardens (sometime in the 1600s) while touring Chile. He found a Chilean species but most of the varieties today are descendants of Chinese species.

The early name of this shrub was “Buddlebush” but later substituted with the word butterfly. Gardeners observed that our large-winged insects react to the colorful and fragrant flowers. Are some butterflies attracted to specific colors of Buddleia? Scientists discovered it

depends on the species of butterfly – some prefer white, others pink while others like blue.

Many tiny flowers are in a spike and begin to bloom in mid-summer. Their delightful fragrance is a heavenly blend of citrus, honey, and pine but you may smell something else.

They are woody shrubs, but in northern climates, the top growth dies back to the ground during each winter but quickly re-grows from underground shoots in early summer. These plants appear to experience no insect or disease problems; their only concern is severe cold temperatures.

Grow these shrubs in the sunshine and fertile, well-drained soil. They are hardy from zones 5 to 10.

# **Calycanthus – Carolina Allspice**

## **Calycanthus floridus**



### **My sweet bubby smells of vinegar!**

This beautiful, fragrant shrub has a few more interesting nicknames such as Common Sweetshrub, Strawberry Shrub, Bubby Blossom, Sweet Bubby, and Carolina Spicebush. Wait, a minute. Bubby Blossom? BUBBY? Okay, fine. Next time you see your neighbor shout out “Want to come over and see my sweet Bubby Blossom?” On second thought, you better not. Your neighbor may misinterpret what you mean.

Anyway, before I got sidetracked by the bubby name, this is a favorite shrub for the large blossoms are dark reddish-brown to maroon and even to a blood red. They are two inches in diameter and release a

sweet, fruity perfume into the warm, early to mid-summer air. That smell can even be of vinegar so prepare yourself for a shock. It depends on the mood of the plant; I guess. The perfume is best in the evening, which is not surprising since a multitude of scented flowers releases their aromas into the evening air.

The shrub can grow to nine feet tall and spread to 12 feet so expect to give this one some room for future expansion. It is a native shrub and in the wild has to compete with other trees and shrubs, so it has to become tall and wide. It loves the sunshine to part shade and fertile soil. The leaves are dark green, but in the fall, they turn brownish yellow. This shrub is hardy from zones 4 to 9.

# Cephalanthus – Buttonbush

## *Cephalanthus occidentalis*



**The shrub where pincushions nest in summer.**

The other common names for this shrub are Honeybells, Honeyball, and Buttonwillow. This mouthful of a name comes from the Greek words *cephalo* meaning head and *anthos* meaning flower.

It produces these remarkable spherical, pincushion-like or head-like flower clusters composed of hundreds of tiny, tubular florets looking like pins.

They bloom from early summer until early fall. These flower spheres have a sweet, honey-like fragrance which attracts butterflies, bees, and our noses.

Buttonbush is a deciduous shrub but wants to become a tree. It typically grows up to eight feet tall but may grow much taller. You can prune it to control height and spread.

Common throughout the eastern parts of the United States, we usually find it growing in wet or moist thickets, swamps, roadside ditches, and edges of ponds. I know – you think this is not the ideal conditions in your garden. You are correct, but all you have to do is water this shrub more often. Yes, give it lots of water in the summer. A recommended variety to grow is **Sugar Shack** and found in many larger garden centers.

# Cestrum – Night Blooming Jasmine

## Cestrum nocturnum



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### **Alright, who spilled the bottle of perfume?**

This tropical, woody shrub has the most fragrant flowers in the world. There, that's all you need to know. Well, maybe a little more information can't hurt. The other names for it are Lady of the Night, Queen of the Night and Night Jessamine. Although the name says jasmine, it is far from being related to an actual Jasmine but is more related to Nicotiana (Tobacco) and Petunias.

This plant is a shrub or small tree native of tropical America and the West Indies thus its hardiness is only from Zones 9 to 10. It blooms in cycles throughout the summer. How many times it re-flowers depends

on the length of your summer, but even in the far north, it can re-bloom about three times.

Although the pale-yellow flowers are not exceptionally pretty, their lovely perfume can be potent – especially in close quarters. It is best this plant stay outside, for the fragrance can cause dizziness, nausea, and asthma for some people if placed indoors. On warm summer evenings this sweet, mysterious, hypnotic perfume can spread to a considerable distance. Your neighbors will wonder who spilled a large bottle of perfume – and where? Even you may not know where the aroma is coming from until... yes, it's from that Cestrum plant!

No fragrance garden should be without this shrub for those warm, sultry summer evenings. It makes a great container subject so place it on patios, decks, or anywhere you spend your evenings, including outside your bedroom window. Sweet dreams – and I mean it!

# Citrus Trees – Oranges, Lemons, Limes, and others

*Citrus × sinensis, × limon, × paradisi and more*



## **Having a zest for life.**

The next time you visit the fruit aisle in your local grocery store stop and admire these essential fruits. They are an agricultural marvel in how they have changed in size over millennia. If only we could also enjoy their heavenly, sweetly scented flowers while shopping. Well, off we go to visit an orangery or conservatory and even a large nursery that grows them.

One item on my “bucket list” is to stand in a large grove of citrus trees in Florida and inhale the plethora of fragrant blossoms. I know, it’s not exciting or adventuresome like climbing Everest but to each his own list.

Recent botanical and historical research has determined these fruits originated in the southern Pacific regions such as Australia, New Guinea, Southeast Asia, India, Myanmar, and China. It was from these areas where they were first extensively cultivated and traded since ancient times. Eventually, they grew in other tropical and subtropical regions of the world.

These trees are hardy from zones 9 and higher for freezing temperatures (even for a short period) can damage or kill them. For most of us, we can only grow some of them in containers, purchased as small potted trees in garden centers. These trees can be a challenge to raise. The fertile soil needs to have a constant balance of necessary elements to keep the leaves dark green. Plus, the plant has to have excellent light, warmth and proper watering all year round. The problems of weak growth, due to poor lighting or over-watering, arise when growing indoors for the winter. But, they are worth raising to experience the lovely, heavy perfume of the blossoms.

As for what to grow – choose “**Meyer’s Improved**” Lemon (*Citrus ×meyerii*), and any dwarf sour oranges and limes. If you harvest ripe fruit, blimey, you have a green thumb!

# Clematis – Autumn Flowering Clematis

## *Clematis paniculata*



**There is power in numbers.**

Did you know that Clematis is a member of the Buttercup family? It's true! Think of them as climbing buttercups. Nurseries offer several cultivated varieties with large, colorful flowers but they are scentless.

Most varieties are hardy from zones 4 to 10 and need a structure to climb on such as a trellis, fence or even a tall post.

The **Autumn Flowering Clematis** (from New Zealand) is one of the most popular, small-flowered, fragrant Clematis grown throughout the world. This vine blooms in the late summer and throughout the fall with masses – and I mean A LOT – of small, pure white, single blossoms. All these flowers release a sweet almond perfume into the air. A fragrance garden is incomplete without this beautiful vine.

Most plants are slow to wake up in the spring after a winter slumber. This lethargy can cause concern for new gardeners so let them grow when they wake up in late spring. If the plants become overgrown, clip the vines back only in the winter or early spring. Blooming occurs on new growth so clipping back now will not hurt fall blooming.

Unlike many of the larger-flowered Clematis varieties, many species will thrive in partly shaded areas. All types love to grow in regular, well-drained soil, and rich compost in the spring. They will reward your kindness with many flowers.

# Clethra – Summersweet Bush

## *Clethra alnifolia*



**Meanwhile, a few nautical miles away ...**

This magnificent native shrub has many familiar names such as Sweet Pepper Bush or Honey Sweet Bush. My favorite is Sailor's Delight Bush, named by the early citizens of Gloucester, Massachusetts. They called it

this because sailors in the Atlantic Ocean would smell these shrubs and know they were close to home. I doubt that happens now on a Navy aircraft carrier but a sailing ship, over 150 years ago, that could be true.

This shrub has large panicles of white to rose-pink 'bottlebrush' flowers which release a sweet root beer or licorice perfume into the air during the summer. The dried fruits resembling that of peppercorns is the reason for the nickname of Pepper Bush.

It blooms in midsummer for about a month and grows from three to six feet tall and is bushy. Grow it in the sunshine to partial shade and moist, fertile soil. It is hardy from zones 3 to 9.

Two excellent varieties to grow are **Ruby Spice** with beautiful dark pink flower spikes and **Hummingbird**, a dwarf plant with pure white flowers.

# Daphne

## Daphne x burkwoodii



### **Just a spoiled rotten Greek nymph.**

This shrub is named after a Greek nymph who changed herself into a laurel tree to escape the love advances (let's call it stalking) from the god, Apollo. Maybe getting a restraining order would be more prudent for Daphne but the tree trick worked.

One of the most fragrant woody plants available for gardeners is this semi-evergreen shrub. Many nursery people believe the ultra-sweet perfume of Daphne can scent your entire garden. The small, tubular, pink to white flowers are in clusters and bloom from mid-spring until early summer.

So, this should be an excellent shrub, shouldn't it? Well, the jury is still out. This shrub is the most expensive, slow growing, and is also particular about being in ideal light and soil conditions. You can give it all the right stuff but can drop dead in a snap of your fingers. Purchasing a larger booming specimen can be costly. So, you decide.

It is hardy from zones 5 to 9 (but dislikes humidity and heat). Two varieties to grow are, **Carol Mackie** with beautiful, variegated foliage having white flowers and **Somerset** with regular green foliage with pale pink blossoms. A few larger garden centers will have these two varieties available, but they can be costly.

# **Elaeagnus – Silverberry Shrub**

## **Elaeagnus commutata**



### **Silver mining the easy way.**

Few people know about this shrub even though it has been around for many years. Of all the bushes, this one may be the most perfect regarding its ease in growing.

Elaeagnus can grow in full sunlight to light shade, in any soil, withstand drought, high winds, and salty conditions if you live near the coast. It is a fast-growing shrub (to about 12 feet tall) and in mid to late spring produces an abundance of white to pale yellow, small flowers that have a sweet to spicy perfume. The leaves are shiny silver and sparkle in the sunshine.

Officials consider this *Elaeagnus* invasive in some areas, but it makes an excellent garden addition, and the fruit is a valuable wildlife food resource. If this were a resume for a job, I would hire this shrub on the spot for full-time pleasure in your garden.

It is hardy from zones 3 to 9. It is not an absolute certainty, but larger garden centers may have this shrub available.

# **Eucalyptus – Silver Dollar Eucalyptus**

## **Eucalyptus cinerea**



**Money does grow on trees!**

G'day mate! These Australian native plants have that unique fragrance we can identify with when having a cold or the flu. They are one of the

main ingredients for the medications to ease a sore throat, stuffy nose or a persistent cough.

Let's think more positive as in using this plant for festive home decorations. This species is famous for the cut flower industry. The tree makes fantastic dried filler material for wreaths and centerpieces with its rounded, dull gray, silver dollar sized leaves and stems. When dried, we can smell that characteristic fragrance.

All Eucalyptus needs full sunlight, well-drained soil, but not being pampered with kindness. Unfortunately, most are not hardy – only zones 9 or 10. In ideal Australian conditions, trees can grow to 50 feet tall or more. You can plant them into a large container or in the flower bed but make sure you cut a few stems in the summer and air dry them for creating displays in the fall.

Are you ready to bring a “down under” look to your “up-scale” garden? Well, take a deep breath and plant them! Seeds and plants are available in some garden centers and catalogs.

# Gardenia

## Gardenia jasminoides



**It's time to have a Mad Hatter tea party.**

Historians recognize Alexander Garden, a late 18th-century US physician, as the discoverer of this shrub for our gardens. He found them growing wild in China under the thick, moist and decayed leaf litter of trees. So, Dr. Alex dug some up and brought them back home to Charleston, South Carolina for his garden. Good luck doing that today with Customs, Dr. Alex!

When his plants bloomed, the whole neighborhood smelled the lovely perfume released from the large, waxy white blossoms. Since then, this shrub has been popular growing in southern gardens and as

houseplants for northern homes – but, you can't compare that to real, garden-grown enjoyment.

One recommended variety to grow is **August Beauty**. It is easy to grow and is long-blooming. The large, waxy, double petaled, white flowers can resemble a rose and release a syrupy sweet perfume into the air.

Gardenias are hardy from zones 8 to 11. Grow them in the sunshine to part shade and make sure your garden or potting soil is moist and acidic. Landscapes recommend adding well-rotted compost as a soil additive. Another cultivating method can work and is more fun to do.

I once read to have a few tea parties with Gardenias. No, not compost tea (well, you can, but will make you seriously ill) but use black or orange pekoe tea. Incorporate the spent tea bag contents (including coffee grounds) into the soil. This method is ideal for houseplant Gardenias for the spent grounds (containing tannic acid) makes the plants develop darker green leaves and bloom more often over the summer, and, with luck, into the early winter.

When having a tea party, remind your guests what you are doing for your Gardenias – otherwise, they will think you have gone 'mad-as-a-hatter' by dumping the tea grounds into the potting soil.

# **Ipomoea – Moonflower Vine**

## **Ipomoea alba bona-nox**



### **Natural, solar powered night lights.**

This popular climbing annual, a cousin of the Morning-glory, blooms in the evening until morning with large, velvety white blossoms. As the petals unfurl, they release a sweet, clove or lily-like perfume into the summer night air. Morning shade helps to prolong blooming even into late morning. The perfect place for this beautiful vine is near a patio or deck where you can enjoy the perfume in the evenings.

Growing in sunlight and poor soil also help to form more flowers than leaves. Having too much fertile ground causes the plant to develop

more stems and leaves instead of flowers. Put this vine on a low nitrogen diet to allow it to become a lean, mean, blooming machine.

A gardening friend once told me that Moonflowers, unlike Morning-glories, will not bloom while they are climbing but only when they reach the top of a structure and bend over will it activate the flowering response. I never knew this which explains why my plants climbed to the moon and had to wait for eons for a single blossom – before the first fall frost. If you also had this problem, try letting them climb a shorter structure and then let the tops flop over.

They bloom in mid-summer and are easy to grow from seed. Their large seeds are common to find in many garden centers and catalogs.

# Jasminum – Jasmine

**Jasminum officinale; sambac**



**This flower suits you to a T.**

How many souls have experienced euphoria from inhaling these sweetly perfumed, white blossoms in the warm, humid air?

These plants love partial shade with some sun – but not harsh sunlight. They make excellent container subjects that can thrive in your home over the winter and outdoors for the summer.

Jasmine can be bushy and then launch into a vine-growth surge. Make sure you have something for the vines to wrap around when this happens. Hardiness for most Jasmine plants is from zones 9 to 10, but

they make excellent houseplants if given plenty of light and high humidity.

Recommended species and varieties to grow include: **Poet's Jasmine** (*Jasminum officinale*) for it is a semi-climbing vine; It twists and turns upward then settles down and become bushy. Another favorite is **Maid of Orleans** (*Jasminum sambac*). It grows best as a house or patio plant in partial sunlight. It has pure white, fully double, multi-folded blossoms releasing a potent and delightful perfume into the air. This variety will bloom all year long if it receives enough light. Its other name is '**Arabian Tea Jasmine**,' famous for scenting and flavoring tea. It is also valuable for adding perfume to religious observations in the Middle East, the Orient, and Southeast Asia.

Try looking in larger garden centers to find these and other scented Jasmines.

# Lathyrus – Sweet Pea

## Lathyrus odorata



### **Terms of endearment for the Queen.**

These are the most popular climbing annuals known for their beautiful colors and unique perfume. First grown by a Sicilian Monk named Father Francis Cupani back in 1699, he later sent seeds to friends in England.

Not long afterward these peas become must-have garden vines. So popular that English gardeners call them the “Queen of Annuals.”

Sweet Peas prefer cool growing conditions, but they can develop well even in warm temperatures if the soil does not dry out. Grow them on a

trellis or other fixture so they can wrap their tendrils around it. They prefer to grow in sunlight to partial shade.

Please remember one important fact – the seeds are very poisonous so eat none for dinner! Grow the regular garden peas instead.

A recommended variety to grow is the first discovered pea now called **Cupani** – named for Father Cupani. The petals are a bicolor of dark purple-blue and reddish rose. Also recommended is a newer variety called **April in Paris** (or **High Scent** – the same variety but with a different name – don't ask me why). It has large, wavy blossoms colored creamy white to light yellow and with lilac-blue edges on each petal. It is ultra-fragrant! I always plant seeds of this variety each spring for the color and perfume are divine.

Many larger seed catalogs offer several varieties of fragrant Sweet Peas to grow in your garden but try to locate the above varieties.

# Leptodermis

## Leptodermis oblonga



**Please don't make any rash decisions.**

This shrub is so new it does not have a nickname. Unfortunately, its Latin name sounds more like some infectious skin disease. "My doctor says I have a bad case of Leptodermis oblonga." That would scare anybody!

This little shrub is slowly becoming better known to the gardening public. It is native to northern China and is a reliable bloomer; flowing off-and-on from early summer into the fall. It is also a vigorous plant which produces many new-growth suckers around the parent plant to spread outward.

The closest relative of it is Daphne, so it should have a pleasant scent and is much easier to grow. It produces many clusters of small, trumpet-shaped lavender-pink, lilac-like flower clusters which, depending on other grower's descriptions, range from fragrant of Daphne or Lilac to no scent at all. For my nose, I detect a slight Lily fragrance, during the heat of the day. Maybe your nose will recognize a stronger perfume than mine.

Some nurseries have described this shrub as a 'blooming machine' so it should become a permanent feature for your garden. It grows to three feet tall and becomes bushy as it ages. It loves as much sunlight as possible to bloom well and is hardy from zones 5 to 8.

# Lonicera – Honeysuckle

**Lonicera japonica; heckrottii; fragrantissima**



**Allow your nose to suckle on this.**

The next time you become very thirsty this summer head on over to your nearest honeysuckle vine, pluck a flower, nip off the tube end and suckle the sweet honey-like nectar from within it. Do this for several thousand blossoms or get yourself a cold can of *Pepsi* to quench your thirst.

Not all Honeysuckles are fragrant, but those listed here are highly perfumed. They bloom throughout the summer and release their fragrance beginning in the evening and throughout the night. Grow

these plants in full sunlight to partial shade. Hardiness for most species is from zones 4 to 9.

What should we grow? First, try **Hall's Honeysuckle** (*Lonicera japonica* shown above.) If you need a fast-growing climber for any fence, arbor, trellis or any other sturdy support, this is the best climbing shrub. It blooms almost all summer and fall with a sweet perfume – the fragrance we all associate as being ‘Honeysuckle.’

These flowers change from pure white when young to dark yellow when old. Fast growing, you can twine the vines around other shrubs and trees or use as a groundcover. The leaves are evergreen in warmer growing zones but are deciduous in freezing locations. Check your local agricultural laws before purchasing and planting this honeysuckle for it can be invasive.

Another honeysuckle to grow is **Gold Flame** (*Lonicera heckrottii*). It is hardy from zones 4 to 9. This magnificent, woody vine blooms most of the summer and into the fall. The large blossoms are red-pink on the outside, and the interiors are white or yellow depending on the age of the flowers. White is for the young blossoms, and the yellow signifies an old or a pollinated flower. These blossoms release a very potent and enjoyable, sweet perfume into the evening and night air. The fragrance gets stronger and stronger during the night.

Once upon a time, I awoke at 2:00 am one summer morning after a severe thunderstorm. While outside checking for any damage (yes, in my jammies – with a flashlight – how startling) a strong perfume overwhelmed me coming from this vine. If you have nothing better to do at 2:00 am, this is an excellent time to inhale this fragrance.

As a vigorous climber, these flowers attract the hummingbirds during the day. Grow this vine in full to part sunlight for best blooming.

**Winter Honeysuckle** (*Lonicera fragrantissima*), hardy from zones 4 to 9, is a rare shrub species and blooms in the late winter. Oh, come on! No way! Yes, it's true! Blooming begins while snow is on the ground and continues until early May in northern gardens. The beautiful small

white or translucent flowers, produced in many clusters, release into the frigid air a strong lemony or Easter lily perfume. The woody stems grow to over six feet tall, but pruning after flowering creates a more compact bush.

This honeysuckle is unusual when grown the first year or two. The main shoots grow out horizontally near the ground when they are young. Now that is weird! BUT after the following year, the new growth grows upright. Confused? Grow this shrub, and you will understand.

# Magnolia

## Magnolia stellata & soulangeana



**These are not the steel ones from Hollywood.**

Magnolias are probably the oldest known representative of all flowers. Their floral structure has survived through eons of time. They have a variety of fragrances ranging from lemon to gardenia, lily, clover, honey and maybe some vanilla is thrown in for good measure.

Most species can form small trees or large bushes depending on how they grow when young. They bloom in the spring but can have a few renegade blossoms during the summer and into the fall.

Two magnolias having fragrant flowers are the **Star Magnolia** (*Magnolia stellata*) and the **Saucer Magnolia** (*M. soulangeana*). The

Star Magnolia grows more like a shrub with four-inch, white or off-pink flowers. It blooms in the very early spring before the leaves come out. Two exceptionally fragrant varieties are **Royal Star** and **Water Lily**. These thrive better in more southern locations since a hard freeze in northern areas can damage or kill the flowers. Brown, limp blossoms are unappealing.

The larger Saucer Magnolia grows like a tree with a mixture of white, pink or light purple, tulip-like flowers. These blossoms appear before the foliage grows and are susceptible to frosts. They all take a while to develop and get established but seeing and smelling the flowers is worth the wait.

These Magnolias are hardy from zones 4 to 8.

# Malus – Apple

## Malus hybrida



**Nothing really to be crabby about these blossoms.**

I singled out a fruit tree known for its fantastic perfume in the warm, mid-spring air. That tree is the crabapple. The fruit is tiny, as compared to its more famous cultivated varieties. I believe apple blossoms have a particular, unique scent. It's a shame smelling them is for only a couple weeks in the spring depending on the weather. Not only are the blossoms perfumed but are drop-dead gorgeous and some make good-sized fruit in the fall. That's a trifecta of great qualities!

Just like lilacs and roses, how do you choose which fragrant variety to grow and enjoy? That's a good question, and the answer is you have to

“nose sample” them all when they bloom at garden centers in the spring. Just writing about them or showing photos does not highlight their outstanding beauty.

Hardiness for most apple trees is from zones 3 to 8.

# Mandevilla – Chilean Jasmine

## Mandevilla laxa



**Having a GPS would be handy right about now.**

This climbing plant is native to Argentina and Bolivia but for some silly reason called Chilean Jasmine. Someone should consult a map of South America to locate where they are. This vine is also not a real Jasmine.

The poor plant is so misunderstood and may need some professional psychological help.

You may be familiar with the standard Mandevilla vines purchased at most garden centers. Their flowers are red or dark pink but lack a fragrance. This easy-to-grow species has pure white, trumpet-shaped flowers and releases a fantastic Easter lily-like perfume in the summer evening air. Some noses detect a strong vanilla fragrance; my nose says the scent is a lily.

This vine will wrap around any supporting structure and will bloom from midsummer until fall. Although not very hardy – around zone 8, the vine can survive in colder areas than most other tropical vines. It makes an excellent container plant and kept indoors over the winter, but will drop its leaves. No fear – the plant will sleep for a long winter's nap. Come spring; it will re-grow and later bloom.

# Passiflora – Passion Vine

*Passiflora incarnata*; *caerulea*



## **A Holy Grower.**

Gardeners nickname these vines Maypops for they begin to grow and bloom in the late spring and continue until fall. They are a fast-growing perennial-shrub-vine that extends tendrils to grab hold of structures and other supports to lift itself up to heights of 10 feet and more.

The name 'Passion Vine' is not only from the notion that eating its fruit gives you romantic tendencies but also to the crucifixion of Jesus – as in, the Passion of Christ. South American people still know this plant by its legendary name of 'Flower of The Five Wounds.' Spanish missionaries

wrote about a beautiful flower growing in the rainforests that represented Christ's Passion before and during his crucifixion.

Try the following varieties for their fragrant and colorful flowers. **'Incense' Passion Vine** (*Passiflora incarnata*) is gorgeous having vibrant violet-blue, frilly flowers, and an excellent lily-sweet perfume. This variety is hardy from zones 5 to 10.

**Blue Passion Vine** (*Passiflora caerulea*) shown above, is a commonly found species in many nurseries. It is evergreen in tropical climates but becomes deciduous where winters are cold. The hardiness is from zones 6 to 10. The four inch-in-diameter flower is a gorgeous white or light blue with a bright ring of blue to purple filaments. These blossoms also have a sweet perfume.

They all grow well in full to partial sunlight and well-drained, fertile soil. Please may sure to provide a sturdy supporting structure for the tendrils to wrap around.

# Philadelphus – Mockorange Shrub

## Philadelphus coronarius



### **A citrus tree wannabe.**

Botanists named these shrubs after King Ptolemy Philadelphus, a Third Century B.C. ruler and not for the city of Philadelphia – just in case you appear on the American game show “*Jeopardy!*” They are old-fashioned shrubs covered in beautiful white, orange scented blossoms for several weeks in early summer. A well-grown plant can spread its strong citrus perfume around the neighborhood.

Young plants will take over three years to bloom, but it’s well worth the wait. This process is natural and necessary for the plants have to build up enough energy to produce all those flowers. They bloom on old

wood so trim or prune back after flowering in mid-summer. Grow them in sunlight and fertile soil. They are hardy from zones 4 to 9.

A recommended variety to grow would be **Snowbelle**. This one is important for those of you who need a smaller shrub for your garden. It grows to only three feet tall but is bushy. It blooms in early summer with double, pure white, citrus perfumed flowers. They resemble large clumps of snow sticking to the ends of branches.

When the flowers expand, they release the perfume during the heat of the day. As you putter around your garden, you will smell orange blossoms.

## Pinaceae – Pine, Spruce, Fir, Cedar



### **A breath of freshly scented memories.**

How can a discussion of fragrant garden plants not include this large group of trees? They are in that class of plants, like roses and lilacs, which invoke instant memories when smelled. It is their oils (resins) that produce their distinctive scents. Memories of Christmas, family camping and Grandma's big chest of old clothes instantly come to mind. Yes, planting a tree or two will not scent your entire garden, but they add remarkable beauty.

In the meantime, go on a long hike in a coniferous forest and take a deep inhalation of aromatic memories. Since they are trees, they will take a long time to grow. Please remember, if you don't plant it – you will never enjoy it!

# Rosa – Landscape and Climbing Roses

## Rosa hybrida



**Now we're getting into a very thorny situation.**

Okay. Time to learn about roses. Well, where do we start? How about a history lesson? The first cultivated roses appeared in Asian gardens over 5,000 years ago. Confucius wrote about them, and the Greeks

introduced the joy of rose growing to the Romans. The Romans went way too far in loving roses for they threw rose petals everywhere – especially at lavish sex parties. Yes, this is true!

Well, the love-fest ended after the fall of the empire for the early Christians viewed roses as vile plants and a symbol of absolute debauchery. It took a while for Western Culture to love them again.

Most, if not all, roses have vicious thorns (weapons of fingertip destruction), so look first before plucking a stem. When I was a little boy, my one Aunt told me, “Roses are red due to them absorbing blood from thorn-pricked fingers.” Oh yes, be afraid of the vampire rose bushes! It is a wonder I am brave enough to venture into a rose garden.

Roses love the sun so give them as much light as possible. You can extend hardiness in cold zones if you don’t fuss over them (like I do). Give them fertile soil but go easy on the fertilizer. The key is to toughen-them-up for winter.

There is an enormous number of outstanding Hybrid Tea, new shrub and climbing roses available, including some old or heirloom roses (described in another ebook of mine entitled ***Your Antique Rose Garden***). I can’t even try to list them here. My best advice is to visit your favorite garden nurseries and find ones best suited for growing in your area. Then concentrate on choosing the most fragrant varieties. Please try to include them in your garden even if you shed some fingertip blood.

# Sarcococca – Sweet Box or Christmas Box

## *Sarcococca confusa*



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### **Scoring a knockout perfume.**

I added both “common names” to this unusual and fragrant shrub that will punch you in the nose with its perfume. In most southern locations this plant can bloom anytime from around Christmas to early spring.

I have rarely seen this shrub offered by nurseries and “why not?” is an excellent question. Hardy from zones 6 to 9, but zone 5 growers can squeak by if you plant it out of those bone-chilling northern winds. This magnificent bush can grow to up to three feet tall but becomes bushy. The leaves are small but leathery and are evergreen.

The tiny, white flowers are clustered together in the leaf axils. They form during the summer and stay throughout the fall until in the winter they open and release one of the most enjoyable, potent, sweet lily-like perfumes into the air for a few weeks. You can smell this outstanding perfume many yards away including your neighbor's yard across the street.

Another unusual quality of this shrub is growing in shade and dry soils. That's right! Plant this in a shady spot (no hot sun), and it will grow well.

This plant also has one of the most tongue-tied names that sounds like some bacterial disease. Be careful when saying to your friends and neighbors, "Come on over for a visit. I got the rare *Sarcococca*!" Make sure you stress this is a shrub and not something it should concern the Centers for Disease Control.

# Syringia – Lilacs

## *Syringia vulgaris*



### **The springtime memory maker.**

No fragrance garden would be complete without these outstanding, colorful, and fragrant shrubs. I believe lilacs evoke more memories of childhood than any other flower—except for roses. For me, I remember (as a boy) visiting the farm of my Uncle Floyd and Aunt Agnes on warm spring days. They had several large, purple lilacs near a swing. The smell of lilac perfume always takes me back to those wild swinging days. I was a young 1960s swinger.

Be prepared to experience amazement when looking at lilacs with all the varieties, colors, and fragrances. There are so many colorful

varieties to choose from in garden centers. You might also check out your local botanical gardens to view full-sized Lilacs in full bloom. Well, here is a suggestion – start with the familiar old-fashioned species called ***Syringia vulgaris*** and then explore the related hybrids and other species. Please plant them and give your children and grandchildren something to form pleasant gardening memories.

Most Lilacs are hardy from zones 3 to 9.

# Viburnum

## Viburnum burkwoodii and Viburnum carlesii



### **Growing fragrant snowballs for your garden.**

This lovely shrub has a heady sweet Daphne or clove perfume that nearly overloads your nose with perfume when you inhale. You can smell the fragrance several feet away in the warm mid-Spring air.

Viburnums are necessary for any fragrance garden and will give you with many years of springtime enjoyment. The small blossoms are in clusters and begin as light pink buds opening to pure white petals.

The ideal plants to grow in your garden include **Burkwood** (*Viburnum burkwoodii*). It is a semi-evergreen shrub and deciduous in far northern areas and increases in height to an average of six feet tall, and is bushy.

Tightly clustered white flowers burst open from dark pink buds and release a heavenly clove aroma into the air.

**Korean Spice** (*Viburnum carlesii*) has the same qualities as the Burkwoodii species. The intoxicating fragrance fills the air for about two weeks.

Plant them in full to partial sunlight and moist, humus-rich soil near a door or window so the fragrance can drift into your home. Both species are hardy from zones 4 to 8.

# **Vigna - Corkscrew Vine**

## **Vigna caracalla**



**All we need now is a bottle of wine.**

This plant is a very rare, semi-tropical, climbing vine gardeners wish to plant in their gardens. It needs to have a trellis or some other climbing structure to weave its stems around.

Another common name is the Snail Vine. It is a tropical perennial, but for most areas, it is an annual vine related to the familiar Lima Bean grown in the vegetable garden. The plant produces large clusters of Sweet Pea-like flowers. These blossoms appear contorted as a corkscrew or a snail shell. They are white and purple-blue but change to creamy yellow with age. The icing-on-the-cake is the delightful, spring Hyacinth fragrance. Oh, does it smell divine!

We can enjoy the flowers from mid-summer and well into fall before a hard frost kills the vine tops. Being an annual in northern gardens, you can dig up the swollen tuberous taproots and store them in damp peat moss or potting soil for the winter. In the late spring, after the threat of frost has passed, you can replant this root.

This vine enjoys full to part sunlight (for maximum flower production), fertile soil and a sturdy supporting structure. It can grow upward to about 15 feet by fall but don't worry for there are plenty of flowers at eye and nose level. Some seed companies sell the seeds, but you need to purchase them early for they always sell out.

# Vitex – Chaste Tree

## Vitex agnus-castus



**A cold shower would also help.**

Believe it or not, this shrub is a woody member of the Verbena family which includes those colorful summer annuals. Western Culture may not hang its very existence on this, but I find it interesting.

This shrub has a growth habit like the Buddleias (Butterfly Bushes) with 12 to 18-inch long flower spikes. These spikes, with many tiny violet-blue flowers, have a lovely perfume. They bloom in mid to late summer and can last until a hard frost.

Like Buddleias, cut back the woody stems to nearly a foot off the ground in the winter, so it produces fresh new growth in the spring. It is this recent growth that forms the flowers in the summer.

Now, onto the intriguing facts like “what does the name mean?” Gather around everyone. Another name for this shrub is “Monks Pepper Tree” and centuries ago monastery Monks used to grind the seeds to make a pepper substitute for their food. Yeah, so what? Well, they had an idea this pepper could also inhibit sexual desire, and thus the ‘chastity’ part of the name arose. They must have heavily seasoned their food with it. Okay. Maybe we should not venture too far in this area. This information is nothing to post on Facebook, but inquiring minds need to know all the juicy details. Botanical history can be very entertaining.

This shrub loves to grow in full sunlight and well-drained, fertile soil. The growth height is over eight feet tall and is hardy from zones 6 to 10. It may prove challenging to find but check the major garden centers in your area.

# Wisteria

**Wisteria sinensis, floribunda, macrostachys**



**Maybe Jack didn't grow a beanstalk after all.**

Wisteria always causes awe to people when they first encounter it. I first saw this vine many years ago when visiting my Aunt's best friend, Bertle. A large Wisteria grew by her old Victorian-style house. And I

mean huge for the vine turned into a tree and became as tall as the house. In full bloom, the blossom scent was mesmerizing. I'm not sure of the species, but this vine had to be super-hardy.

Two species are always available to many gardeners: **Chinese Wisteria** (*Wisteria sinensis*), and **Japanese Wisteria** (*Wisteria floribunda*). The Chinese species is hardier but less fragrant than the Japanese vine. Most Wisteria bloom only in mid to late spring.

The third species more gardeners should know is *Wisteria macrostachys* or the **Kentucky Wisteria**. This species is exceptionally hardy and super fragrant. Locate the variety called **Blue Moon**. It has stunning blue-purple, sweet pea-like blossom clusters, a pleasant fresh fragrance and it re-blooms during the summer. Bred in Minnesota, this variety is super-hardy (zones 3 to 9) and propagated by cuttings, which will induce the vine to bloom earlier for you.

Try to find established, variety-named plants to grow. Avoid like the plague seed-grown unnamed plants! Seed-grown plants take an eternity to bloom. That is why unsuspecting gardeners become so dissatisfied growing Wisteria. The vines will grow and grow but produce no flowers. Always purchase cutting-grown or grafted mature plants.

All Wisteria vines need to grow in sunlight to part shade, well-drained soil and a sturdy, long-lasting, tall structure to grow and wrap around.

# Witch Hazel

*Hamamelis virginiana, mollis, japonica and x intermedia*



## **How to be a Springtime prognosticator with healthy skin.**

Witch Hazel is a large deciduous shrub (up to 20 feet tall when old) with colorful, sweetly fragrant flowers during the winter and into the early spring.

It is hardy to zones 3-9, but there are important considerations when choosing a variety for your garden. First, the plant requires winter cold to bloom. Without this chill period, most species and cultivars may not produce flowers. So, you need to visit your local garden center to find those candidates that will thrive well in your area or climate.

The second consideration, based on that visit, is to choose those that are fragrant. One recommended cultivar, *Hamamelis x intermedia* 'Jelena,' is among the best available, with intensely aromatic orange and red flowers.

In early February, people and groundhogs are eager to determine when Spring will arrive. Who needs a prognosticating groundhog when you have Witch Hazel flowers to see and smell? When the days are sunny with a hint of warmth in the air, these shrubs will bloom. If you think these plants have “mental health issues” I would agree with you.

They bloom well for several weeks, providing us with sweetly scented and colorful ribbon-shaped flowers. Yes, the wavy petals look like they went through a paper shredder. But, there they are blooming among the snow-covered branches. Depending on the species and hybrids, the petals are bright yellow to orange and even a brick-red. The hybrid varieties display variations of these colors and degrees of scent.

Witch Hazel will grow well in part shade, but additional sunshine will produce more blooming power. Avoid growing in dense shade and dry soil locations. Once established, they are trouble-free.

The American Indians discovered an extract by boiling the bark into a tea and adding animal fat to make a creamy lotion. This lotion, when applied to skin ailments, provided pain-relief and cures. It is a natural astringent which soothes irritated or inflamed skin. We still use this extract – in some form or other.

Now, what about the bizarre name of this shrub? Is it named after Hazel, a local witch who cast a spell to make shrubs bloom in late Winter? “Eye of newt and toe of frog” sort of Macbethian incantation? That would be wicked fun but, sadly, it refers to a “rough” old-English meaning of a bendable shoot or stick. Sorry, no broomsticks involved. How is that for an anticlimactic fact?

# Conclusion

## **Grow yourself some happiness!**

This ebook has only scratched the surface on what fragrant flowers and plants you can grow. 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 trees, shrubs, and vines. I have two other companion ebooks on fragrance gardening. They are part of *The Scent of Your Garden* series. One ebook is entitled, *Fragrant Perennials and Bulbs*, and the other is *Fragrant Annuals and Bulbs*.

Another ebook, entitled *Your Antique Rose Garden*, explores the various older, fragrant roses cherished long ago and today. Endangered of disappearing forever, gardeners should try to grow them in their gardens. I think you will enjoy reading and learning from it.

Please visit my author website at <https://gedwinvarner.com>, which includes 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.