

Flora & Fauna

Stop and Smell the Rosemary

Many of us spend a great deal of money on herbs and spices to flavor up our dishes in the kitchen, but you don't have to eat herbs to enjoy them or receive some of their benefits. Many herbs have delightful fragrances that can leave you feeling energized or relaxed after a single whiff.

Here is a list of some of the more fragrant herbs you can enjoy with your nose alone:

- **Anise Hyssop** – When anise hyssop is in bloom, you'll recognize its licorice aroma right away. Both the flowers (which can be white, blue, pink, or purple) and the leaves are perfumed and edible.
- **Chamomile** – This calming fragrance has been used in teas and tinctures for generations. The tiny daisy-like flowers add a bit of merriment to any garden. Be warned, however, chamomile is related to ragweed, so it could irritate allergy sufferers.
- **Lavender** – This wonderful all-around herb is beautiful to look at, delightful to smell, good for cooking, and it deters deer, too! Lavender makes a wonderful potpourri that you can use to keep clothes fresh or give as a gift.
- **Lemon balm** – This plant really does live up to its name. The leaves have a light, lemony smell and taste that is quite invigorating. The plant can become a nuisance, however, as it spreads rapidly by runners. Plant where it will have room to roam or grow it in a pot.
- **Mint** – The fragrance on mint leaves is so powerful you'll most likely smell it in the wind long before you see the actual plant. This clean, astringent smell will leave you feeling revitalized and refreshed. Be careful, however, as this herb spreads easily and can overtake your garden. It's best kept in a pot or in an area of your garden where it has plenty of room to grow.
- **Rosemary** – In addition to being famous for its wonderful evergreen fragrance, rosemary is also known for enhancing memory. When you're stressed, rosemary's aroma can have a calming effect, and when you're tired it can make you more alert. So be sure to avoid rosemary before bedtime!
- **Scented Geraniums** – Most geraniums don't have showy flowers, but their lacy leaves and powerful perfumes make them a favorite for many gardeners. Geraniums tend to mimic other popular fragrances such as apple, chocolate, cinnamon, ginger, lemon, lime, mint, nutmeg, orange, rose, and strawberry.
- **Thyme** – You'll be amazed at the concentrated aroma packed in the tiny leaves of this creeping plant. Add a few sprigs to a bouquet of roses for a wonderfully complex fragrance you'll have a hard time tearing your nose away from.

GUARANTEE SYSTEM.

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Cleaning Corner:

Homemade Drain Cleaner

Before reaching for a commercial product containing caustics or acids, try the following old-fashioned remedy that's a lot gentler on the environment:

1. Heat up several quarts of **water** to nearly boiling in a container on the stove.
2. Pour a quarter cup of **baking soda** down the drain, following it with several 2-ounce applications of **white vinegar** every couple of minutes. The foaming reaction between the alkaline baking soda and the acidic vinegar may loosen the clog.
3. Wait 5 to 10 minutes after the last vinegar application, **plunge** the drain several times, and then immediately pour the container of **hot water** directly into the drain (be sure your pipes are the type that can tolerate very hot water before using this method).
4. **Plunge** the drain a second time. Finish the job by flushing the drain with a strong flow of **warm water** from the tap.

August

- 1498 Christopher Columbus becomes the first European to visit Venezuela
- 1776 The Declaration of Independence is formally signed
- 1785 Caroline Herschel becomes the first woman discoverer of a comet
- 1806 The Holy Roman Empire ends
- 1861 The first federal income tax was levied in the US
- 1926 Gertrude Ederle becomes the first woman to swim across the English Channel.
- 1950 ABC begins broadcasts the first Saturday morning kid shows: Animal Clinic and Acrobat Ranch
- 1974 President Richard M. Nixon resigns the presidency as a result of his involvement in the burglary of the Democratic Party headquarters at the Watergate office complex
- 1990 The Magellan space probe reaches Venus

Health Advice: Five-Minute Tips with a Big Payoff

Want to make a big impact on your family's health and safety? Check out the following simple tips. Just five minutes here or there can make for a very positive change.

Buckle Up. Make sure everyone is securely buckled in every time you get into a vehicle. Kids should ride in the correct safety or booster seats for their age and size. It's the law, and it lowers the risk of serious injury or death if there's an accident. Local villages, your insurance company, and even your local police department offer free car seat checks to you can make sure your child's safety seat is installed correctly.

Wash Hands. Scrubbing with soap and running water for 20 seconds is one of the best ways to avoid getting sick or spreading germs. Do so before you eat or after you use the restroom, blow your nose, cough, or sneeze. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be used if soap and water aren't available.

Test Smoke Alarms Every Month. Change the batteries when you set your clocks each spring and fall. It's also a good idea to talk to your children about what to do if there was a fire in your home. Visit www.BeFireSmart.com for advice and interactive games for your family.

Read Food Labels. Check how many calories are in the food you eat, and be sure to pay attention to serving size (ex: the label on the bag of chips may only say 100 calories, but if there are 4 servings and you eat the entire bag, you've consumed 400 calories!). You can also use labels to help you choose foods low in fat or sodium and high in fiber and other nutrients.

Review Vaccinations. Make sure everyone in your home – you, your spouse, and your children – is up to date on all vaccinations. If not, see your doctor or visit your local immunization clinic. Vaccines aren't just for kids. Far too many adults become ill, are disabled, and even die each year from diseases that could easily have been prevented by vaccines. To check on recommended vaccinations, visit the CDC's website at www.cdc.gov/vaccines.

Considering Pregnancy? Take folic acid. When taken before and during pregnancy, this B vitamin helps prevent certain serious birth defects. Women who might become pregnant should take at least 400 micrograms a day. You'll need even more if you've already had a child with a brain or spinal cord birth defect.

Kid Corner: Transitioning Back to School

A new school year is about to start, and that means big changes for your student. Every year means a new grade, a new teacher, and even new classmates. Stress intensifies when kids make the leap from elementary to middle school and middle school to high school. Academics become more challenging and there are new responsibilities, peer pressure, and even puberty to deal with. Even small issues like managing a locker for the first time, can seem like a big challenge. Your child will look to you for support, so keep the following in mind:

1. **Nervous is normal.** It's completely normal for students to feel some anxiety before starting a new year. Don't dismiss these feelings by saying, "Oh, don't be so nervous!" (Did that ever help you?) Instead, help your student turn his anxiety into excitement by pointing out all the great things about the upcoming year. Will there be new clubs or teams (like photography, art, or jazz) that your student can join? What about new classes like biology or chemistry lab? If nervousness persists and interferes with your child's ability to function, school counselors can often help.
2. **Spark a conversation.** As children get older, they seem to talk less and less. Tweens and especially teens start answering questions with one syllable or even just a shrug. Parents sometimes worry about invading their kids' privacy, but remember that it's your *job* to ask questions and know what's going on in your child's life. So, instead of asking, "How was your day?" (to which the usual response is "Fine."), ask "What was the toughest part of your day?" You can also use movies, public service announcements, or news reports to spark conversations. A TV news report about school violence can generate a discussion about how to peacefully resolve conflicts, for example.
3. **Don't do all the talking.** Most parents tend to be in problem-solving mode 24/7. When your child shares a problem, it's natural to want to get in there and fix it, but what most kids want is someone to just listen. Help your child think through the problem by asking questions like "What do you think would help?" or "How do you think you should deal with this?" Follow up your discussion by highlighting your child's past successes to help them feel confident. Saying "I know you can do it" is one of the most empowering things you can say to cheer on your child.
4. **Tackle the touchy subjects.** Talking about sex, drugs, and bullying is a tough job, but every parent has to do it. For help in starting conversations, visit www.talkingwithkids.org and www.kidshealth.org. Teach your child to be assertive and say, "No thanks, I don't want to" when confronted with peer pressure situations. And help them know it's okay and usually preferable to simply ignore it and walk away when confronted with a bully.
5. **Talk about values.** Kids may not act like it, but they really do want parents to lay down moral guidelines. Teens also tend to cope better and succeed more when parents focus on building positive values and encouraging good behavior rather than reducing risk and punishment.

This recipe puts a delicious spin on an old classic. The salty bacon and tart apples make regular grilled cheese sandwiches seem boring and old fashioned by comparison!

Ingredients:

- A few slices of bacon (vegetarian bacon substitutes can also be used)
- Whole grain bread
- Butter
- Slices of cheddar cheese
- Granny Smith apple, cored and thinly sliced

Directions:

1. Fry the bacon in a non-stick skillet and set aside.
2. Spread butter on 2 slices of whole-grain bread. Place one slice of bread, buttered side down, in a non-stick skillet over medium heat.
3. Top with a slice of cheddar cheese, then slices of a Granny Smith apple, then the cooked bacon, and finally another slice of cheese. Cover with the other slice of bread, buttered side up.
4. Cook until the cheese starts to melt. Carefully flip the sandwich over and continue cooking until cheese is melted and bread is lightly browned.
5. Serve with a hearty vegetable or tomato soup.

An Apple a Day...

Ever heard that old saying, "An apple a day keeps the doctor away"? Well there may be some truth to it. Apples are wonderful fruits that pack a lot of nutrients that help maintain healthy bodies.

For starters, apples have no fat, saturated fat, sodium, or cholesterol.

Apples:

- are an excellent source of fiber
- are a natural source of health-promoting phytonutrients, including plant-based antioxidants
- contribute the mineral boron to the diet, which may promote bone health
- contain natural fruit sugars, mostly in the form of fructose
- help maintain steady blood sugar levels

How to Pet Proof Your House

Animals make great companions, but part of being a responsible pet owner is making sure they're safe and protected from hazards both inside and outside the home. Many dangers are hidden in plain sight, so check out this list below so you can avoid any serious problems in the future.

Plants. If your pet gets into your lilies, azaleas, or philodendron, it can spell bad news. All are toxic to dogs and cats, so place potted ones out of reach and keep an eye on your pet when he's in the yard. Also, never use cocoa mulch – it contains caffeine and theobromine, both of which can be deadly to dogs. For a complete list of dangerous plants, go to www.thepetshow.com and click on "Pet Tips."

Electrical cords. Cats are attracted to wires because they can feel the electricity running through them. To protect Mittens from electrical shock, keep wires tucked away or hidden inside plastic tubing. Unplug electronics when you're not using them to avoid the temptation all together.

Chew toys. Before you give Fido that rawhide bone, make sure it's American-made. Imported rawhide can be contaminated with salmonella or chemicals. So play it safe and check the label before you buy.

Plastic bags. The rustling noise of plastic bags can be a siren's song to some dogs and cats. Many animals will ingest plastic bags, which leads to choking hazards, intestinal blockages, and fatal consequences. So be mindful of plastic bags when you get home from the grocery store and keep them safely tucked away.

Toys that encourage bad behavior. Many pet owners love to lavish toys on their pets, but never stop to consider that some toys may actually encourage bad behavior.

Most dogs, for example, love chew toys. While Fido may love the braided rope chew toy with the fringe on it, he'll have a hard time telling the difference between his toy and the braided rope rug in the kitchen (those textures feel the same in his mouth). He'll also have a tough time telling the difference between his stuffed toys and your child's stuffed toys. Everything will get chewed, and poor Fido will be in big trouble.

So be sure to pick out toys that can satisfy his need to chew (rawhide bones and plastic squeaky toys), and help him know what's okay to gnaw and what isn't.

...Caring for Leather...

Leather is a popular choice in furniture, car interiors, clothes and accessories. And along with the cozy leather sofa and the great shoes comes the frustration of keeping them clean. Here are some simple solutions you can use at home to keep your leather looking like new. Of course, if you get in a pinch, call Guarantee System at 616-451-0787 to help you out!

- **Protect leather.** Always keep leather furniture out of direct sunlight to prevent drying and cracking the leather.
- **For general cleaning,** dust weekly with a soft cloth or use a vacuum.
- **For tougher dirt,** lather a moisturizing soap such as Dove on a soft, damp cloth, and then wipe the item to remove dirt and grime. Do not over-wet the leather, and do not rinse after washing. Just buff with a soft, dry cloth; this allows the moisturizing soap to condition the leather. Polish as usual. ***For best results,** use manufacturer-recommended cleaners and conditioners, or simply call the professionals to ensure a job well done.
- **To remove water spots,** moisten the area again with a little water, let it dry or gently blow dry. Never place leather in the sun to dry.
- **To remove grease,** simply apply some Talcum powder or corn starch to the spot and let it sit for a few hours. Do not rub it in, simply let the powder or starch absorb the grease and then you can easily vacuum it away.



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This issue of Neighborhood News brought to you by:



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