

Scent up the patio with these fragrant plants

Enjoy time with family and friends and the heady scents of nature

The summer holiday season brings warm, bright days and balmy evenings to spend outdoors with family and friends and the entertainment patio is the perfect place to mix the delicious aromas of red wine, beer and boerewors with Nature's fragrances – peppermint, jasmine and honey! The small trees and shrubs double as shelterbelts or screens that provide some seclusion, even secrecy. It is not only flowers that add their scents to the air; leaves of many species are high in aromatic oils, and these are at their peak in the heat of the day. Plant these where day-time guests can reach out and touch, or where they brush past to release the fragrance. While many plants carry their scent through the day, those pollinated by night-flying animals release it at dusk and through the evening just in time for dinner outdoors.

Pavetta lanceolata, the Forest Bride's Bush has an elusive scent through the evening, a beautiful shrub for evening entertainment through December. Combine it with *Buddleja salviifolia* or *B. auriculata* for an attractive, scented privacy screen.

Coleonema and *Agathosma* species and the Wild Rosemary, *Eriocephalus africanus*, are specialist scented shrubs for Western Cape gardeners, along with *Metalasia muricata*. And gardeners country-wide can wrap sunny patios in the delicious scents of the Mint family, like the salvias, *Hoslundia opposita*, and *Syncolostemon species*, *S. canescens* especially. And *Mentha longifolia* too with its most attractive foliage. Pick the leaves of all these species and squeeze to release their spicy, lemon and mint scents that will get your digestive juices flowing. These are often more intense in the hot, midday sun, as are those of the *Pelargonium* family are famous for their scented leaves. Species to try are *P. tomentosum* (for light shade or sun), *P. graveolens*, *P. radens*, *P. citronellum*, *P. cucullatum*, and *P. scabrum*.

Back to floral scents; *Gardenia volkensii* and *G. thunbergia* have pungent scents to attract night-flying insects like moths and bats, as does the small, tropical-leaved *Dracaena alectrifomis*, or Large-leaved Dragon Tree, a must for frost-free gardens along the eastern coast. These shrubs and small trees all do well in light shade, and here you can add the softly twinning creepers, *Jasminum multipartitum* and

J. angulare that impart a sweet scent of the ever-popular jasmine fragrance. Add the pale to deep pink trumpets of *Crinum moorei* and this spot will become a favourite place in which to relax and de-stress.

Around the water feature, *Melianthus major* and *Freylinia lanceolata* impart a honey-scent that will bring in the bees and insects on which your pond wildlife will feast! Another honey-

scented plant, this one a groundcover, is *Hermannia pinnata*, with a display of orange-red bells in spring and summer that will take your breath away.

Delicious smells eluding you? Open the sinuses with *Artemisia afra* and *Tarchoanthus camphoratus*, famous for their medicinal abilities to open up stuffy sinuses and clear a foggy head.

And, finally, a plant with a wide distribution range that should be planted in all gardens, is *Helichrysum odoratissimum*. Its common names indicate how widely used it is in natural medicine, Most Fragrant Helichrysum (Eng.); Kooigoed, or Kruie (Afr.); and imphepho (Xhosa & Zulu). This highly aromatic plant has a strong, spicy smell, is used both as a perfume and to repel insects, so the evening patio would be the perfect placement. The smoke is said to work as a sedative to induce sleep, and traditional healers prescribe it for insomnia and to calm pain (Muthi and Myths from the African Bush, by Heather Dugmore and Ben-Erik van Wyk).