

Fragrant Plants for the Landscape

Sally Scalera

If you like aromatherapy like fragrant candles or sachets, don't forget that there are a lot of fragrant plants that can be used in the landscape. They come in different flower colors, amount of fragrance (ranging from light to strong) and blooming seasons.

Here is just a sample list of plants and some information about them.

Acacia farnesiana (Sweet Acacia) is a very fragrant tree with yellow pom-pom flowers. It grows 15-25 feet tall with a 15-25 foot spread. The flowers are produced year round and this tree prefers a location in full sun. Sweet acacia is a slow growing native that has small thorns.

Chionanthus virginicus (Fringe tree) is another native tree that grows 12-20 feet tall with a 10-15 foot spread. The white flowers are fragrant and are produced in the spring. This tree also attracts birds and mammals. One last note, it prefers moist, acidic soils.

Eriobotrya japonica (Loquat) is a broadleaf evergreen tree that also produces edible fruit. The fragrant white flowers are produced in the fall and winter. This tree grows 20-30 feet tall and 30-35 feet wide, so give it room. The fruit will also attract birds and squirrels to your yard.

Calycanthus floridus (Sweetshrub) is a native that produces flowers that smell like strawberries. The plant grows 6-10 feet tall and has a spread of 6-10 feet. The maroon flowers are produced in the spring and summer and the plant prefers a partially shady to shady location. This native can also tolerate a wide range of pH levels but it does like soils with good moisture. (Don't keep it too dry.) The foliage is deciduous and aromatic. Mature flowers can be used as air-fresheners in closets and drawers.

Cestrum nocturnum (Night blooming jessamine) has a very strong fragrance and it might be best to have just one per yard (or neighborhood) and have it somewhat away from the house. The white flowers are produced at intervals all year long. This plant will also grow 6-10 feet tall and wide. Find a location that receives full sun or partial shade for this plant. *C. nocturnum* can tolerate a wide range of pH and it can handle all soil moisture levels from wet to dry. Just remember, it is a fast grower and it is sprawling so think of this when finding the right spot.

Citharexylum fruticosum (Fiddlewood) is another native that produces very fragrant white flowers from the spring through the fall. This plant can get 8-10 feet tall with a 6-8 foot spread. Find a location that receives full sun to partial shade and if you live on the beach, that's OK as it has high salt spray tolerance. Fiddlewood has high drought tolerance and it prefers alkaline soils. This shrub will also attract birds to your lawn.

Gardenia jasminoides (Gardenia) has a strong fragrance to go with its pure white flowers. This shrub can grow 6-10 feet tall with an equal spread. Gardenias like a lot of sun though they do fine in partial shade. The flowers are produced in the spring. Pruning should be done soon after flowering has stopped. Gardenias prefer a pH of 5.5 or below and they can handle dry soils.

Jasminum nitidum (Shining jasmine) is a fast growing shrub that can reach heights of 4-6 feet and a spread of 6-10 feet. The white flowers are produced from the spring through the fall. Plant where there is full sun or partial shade. Shining jasmine tolerates a wide range of pH and it can tolerate dry soils.

Jasminum sambac (Arabian jasmine) is an evergreen shrub that can grow up to 10 feet tall if allowed. It's best though to prune it regularly since it blooms on new wood. Plant in locations that receive full sun to partial shade. The flowers are used in making perfumes and as a flavoring in tea.

Osmanthus fragrans (Sweet olive) has a very delicate fragrance which, unlike the night blooming jessamine, means that a number of these shrubs planted together will not be too overpowering. Sweet olive is a very upright, airy plant that can reach 6-10 feet tall with only a 3-4 foot spread. This plant produces its white, inconspicuous looking flowers in the spring and fall. An area with partial shade is perfect for these shrubs.

Hedychium coronarium (White butterfly ginger) spreads by rhizomes and can grow 2-3 feet tall. The pleasantly fragrant white flowers are borne at the top of each leaf stalk. After the stalk has flowered go ahead and cut it at ground level as that stalk will gradually turn yellow and die. This tropical plant can handle dry to wet soils and can handle full sun or partially shady locations.