

# Lavender, Lemon, and Rosemary: Just Follow Your Nose to the Entrance Garden

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As guests explore the Entrance Garden at the [2020 PHS Philadelphia Flower Show](#), “Riviera Holiday,” each may experience the fragrance and the beauty of this lush, Mediterranean gathering of sub-tropical plants in a different way. With more than 3,400 plants, flowers, and trees filling the garden, the scents of lavender, rosemary, and dianthus, gently mixed with olive, lemon, and cypress trees, and a pinch of artemisia, sage, and other herbs, will envelope

the senses and create a visual, emotional and olfactory oasis – unique to each person.

The power of fragrance – to heal, sooth, relax, invigorate, and even evoke a memory – has long been the focus of folklore and tales. In a study published in *Journal Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience* in October 2018, a Japanese scientist found that sniffing linalool, an alcohol component of lavender odor, was kind of like popping a Valium, for mice.

Here in Philadelphia, Pamela Dalton, Ph.D., M.P.H., at the [Monell Chemical Senses Center](#), notes the same tranquilizing properties were found when lavender oil was diffused into the chambers of mice and rats. She notes, however, “That people are more complex. If you have an association that’s unpleasant it won’t help you. The strongest evidence suggests that the reason lavender calms is because it is linked to a positive association for someone.”

### **The Nose Knows**

“Odor perception in humans begins when odorous molecules bind to olfactory receptors,” says Dalton. “Humans have approximately 400 different types of odor receptors and between 10 and 20 million receptors in total. It’s the combination of activation across the receptors that determines whether we are smelling rose or lily -- if I’m missing a receptor, a rose will smell differently to me than it does to you,” says Dalton.

### **Memories**

“Scents are closely linked to memories,” says Dalton. When we inhale certain fragrances, images, emotions, and even physical reactions often appear instinctively. She notes this can also work the other way -- “Looking at a photograph from our childhood, at times the very smell that our memory associates with the event will enter our noses – although it is not present at the time.” A scent reminiscent of Grandmother’s garden can bring back emotional experiences from that time in someone’s childhood as a three- or four-year-old. “It’s almost a sense of being transported back to that time,” says Dalton.



### **Lavender**

Long lauded for its calming effects, lavender takes a strong lead in this symphony of Flower Show scents in this year's Entrance Garden. Visitors should try to sniff out the six varieties of lavender: *Lavandula* 'Goodwin Creek Grey', *Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote', and 'Munstead', *Lavandula latifolia*, *Lavandula* 'Buchii', and *Lavandula stoechas* 'Luxurious', totaling 200 plants.

"Lavender reminds me of a trip to Provence in the South of France," says Jenny Rose Carey, Senior Director, PHS Meadowbrook Farm. "I love it! It's a clean, fresh fragrance that I find relaxing – a little spicy and earthy without being medicinal," she says.

"Lavender is more tranquilizing than citrus. But if you don't like lavender, or have an unpleasant association with it from childhood, it won't calm you," says Monell's Dalton. "Each of our own personal experiences with a fragrance drives how we will feel in the presence of a particular flower. The same garden will smell differently to each person, based on their genetic code."

### **Lemonade to Limocello**

Enter a Mediterranean state of mind as 19 Meyer's lemon trees (*Citrus x meyeri*) welcome guests to the Entrance Garden with their ornamental-like fruits dangling like fancy earrings. A splash of citrus in the air will awaken visitors with a refreshing, invigorating, and intoxicating aroma.

“These lemon trees will transport visitors to another place and time,” says Sam Lemheney, PHS Chief of Shows and Events. “The fragrance from these trees, combined with the other fragrant plants and herbs in the Entrance Garden, will mesmerize guests. “It’s like nothing we have ever created before.”

Prior to the Middle Ages, lemon balm was steeped in wine to lift one’s spirits, help heal wounds, and treat venomous insect bites and stings. During the Middle Ages, it was used to reduce stress and anxiety, promote sleep and improve appetite. Today lemon balm is combined with other calming herbs to help promote relaxation.

### **Rosemary**

A woody, perennial herb with fragrant, evergreen, needle-like leaves and white, pink, purple, or blue flowers, rosemary is native to the Mediterranean region. You’ll most likely recognize its scent when you step into the Entrance Garden.

John Rapini, Greenhouse Manager at PHS Meadowbrook Farm, is growing five types of Rosemary for this year’s Entrance Garden, totaling more than 200 plants. The varieties include *Rosmarinus officinalis* ‘Rex’, ‘Arp’, ‘Barbeque’, ‘Prostratus’, and ‘Tuscan Blue’.

“Most days I begin to smell the aroma of rosemary as I approach the small greenhouses out back where the plants are located,” says Rapini. “We have been growing these plants for over a year and I have discovered that ‘Rex’ is the most fragrant. Whenever I am in that greenhouse, I always touch some of the ‘Rex’. I can feel the oils from the foliage on my hands and take the earthy, woody, cleansing scent of rosemary with me. It’s one of my favorite smells!”

### **Making “Scents” of It All**

While there is still a lot to be learned about the power of fragrance, we do know that certain scents can translate into unique feelings, from a sense of comfort, relaxation and wellness to feelings of confidence or invigoration. So, take a deep breath as you walk through the Entrance Garden at this year’s “Riviera Holiday.” Let yourself breathe in the fragrances of palms, Mediterranean aloes, citrus, and jasmine, and see where it takes you – you may be surprised.

*The Monell Chemical Senses Center in Philadelphia is the world's only independent, non-profit scientific institute dedicated to basic research on taste and smell.*

PHS invites everyone to garden for the greater good.

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