

SOMETHING FRESH IN THE AIR

Ever Hear of Pomander Balls? Tussie Mussies? Burning Bush?

They're Perfumes for the House,

Made of Cloves and Orange, Verbena and Lavender.

"Sweet perfumes work immediately upon the spirits for their refreshing," herbalist Ralph Austen observed in 1653. He might have gone on to say that sweet perfumes can work on houses too for their refreshing, especially now in the dead of winter, when rooms, like their inhabitants, need a pick-me-up.

The best perfumes for the house are homemade, of garden herbs and the simplest materials.

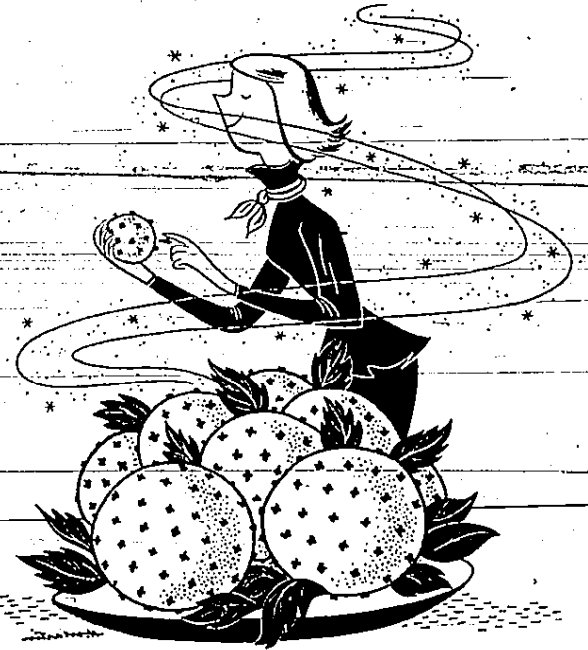
The fragrance of natural materials is subtle, and in perfuming a house, subtlety is indicated. A "sultry" atmosphere may be alluring on the person, but it is too much for one hundred and thirty square feet of living space. Another advantage of the herb fragrances is that they stay fresh till they disappear; they never are stale.

Cloves and oranges are two of the simple natural materials that are wonderfully effective for refreshing the spirits of the house. By themselves neither are particularly impressive, but combined they turn into pomander balls and give off a sweet enticing air that enlivens a room like a bunch of fresh flowers. An expert gardener and housewife gives this recipe for pomander balls, with comment:

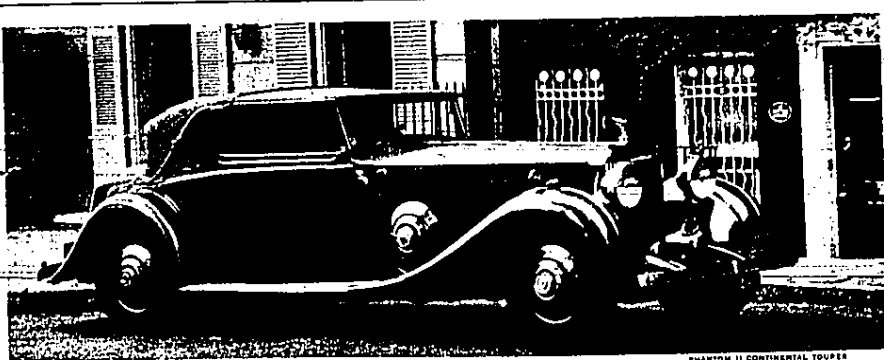
Use A Firm Orange

"You start with a firm orange—preferably a Valencia orange—and a quarter of a pound of good cloves. I like to buy the cloves loose so I can be sure they have the heads on the stems. In addition you need a skewer or any sharp-pointed instrument—an ice pick does nicely—and I

also believe in buying an ounce or two of powdered orris or calamus-root at the drugstore and an ounce of some essential oil. This is not strictly necessary, but it adds a flourish as the oils are the true essences of aromatic plant materials. Oil of cloves will do, and oil of orange or oil of lemon is even better. Get the best quality or none at all. You only use a few drops so you can afford to be extravagant. Now... pour your orrisroot into some shallow container like a box top or a tray, and pour the cloves out into another where they will be easy to pick up. Rub your orange lightly with the essential oil and roll it in the powdered orrisroot (this acts as a fixative to hold and blend the fragrance). The orange is now ready to be



What is it that smells so good? Valencia orange, spiced with oil of orange, rolled in orrisroot and studded with cloves.



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spiced and made into a pomander ball. Make a hole in it with your skewer, sink a clove deep in the hole, so only the little starry head shows on the surface, and continue till the orange is studded with cloves. It is like cloving a ham before you bake it, but when you have finished cloving an orange for a pomander ball the surface should be solid with cloves."

At this point some people put the pomander away to dry for a couple of weeks in a brown paper bag, but it can be put out in the air immediately. The spicy cloves draw out the cool sweetness of the orange; when you walk into a room where there is a bowl of pomanders there is a 'top note,' as the perfumers say, of surprise and delight.

"Sometimes people come in and say, 'What is it that smells so good?'" says the pomander-maker quoted above. "And there are others who don't consciously notice the fragrance, but they will have an extra sense of well-being anyway, because there is an extra pleasantness in the air."

A Generous Bowlful

"Pomanders are much more effective if you make a generous bowlful, about a dozen of them. They seem to reinforce each other. I have had one big bowl on a side table in my hall

for five years now and they're still delicious. And they're decorative too—clove-brown oranges, arranged with shiny green-brown magnolia leaves around them. As they dry they get hard as rocks, but they're still fragrant."

"It takes about an hour to make one. I like to do them in the evening by the fire, and if it is snowing outside the window, so much the better, while the air in the room becomes faintly spiced."

Potpourri To Order

Best known of the herb perfumes for the house is potpourri, also best when it is homemade of the simple materials. Once it was necessary to have a flourishing garden to get these fragrances and the charm they bring with them into the house. You needed well-grown roses and a bed of sweet herbs, and the roses had to be picked the first thing in the morning and dried on screens in a sunny attic (who has one?), and it was a long painstaking process before you could lift the top from a jar of potpourri for a happy reminder of last summer's roses.

But like so many other operations, making potpourri is easier now than it used to be. If you haven't the garden and the attic and the technique for drying

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DRAWING BY HENRY MARTIN