

Growing and Using Scented Geraniums

From Shy Valley Farm

Scented Geraniums are not actually true geraniums, but are members of the Genus Pelargonium. There are hundreds of varieties, in several classes organized by scent. The floral and lemon scented varieties are wonderful to use in bath and body products, and in beverages and baked goods.

Scented Geraniums are perennials, but they are tender, meaning that they are sensitive to cold temperatures and will not survive winters in East Tennessee without protection. You may plant them in the ground outside and grow as an annual plant, or they can live for years in pots with proper care.

If planting in the ground, choose a spot with at least 4 hours of sunlight per day, preferably in the morning, and rich, well drained soil. To grow in a container, select a quality potting mix and fortify with a handful of compost and regular additions of balanced plant food. Containerized scented geraniums do best outside in summer and indoors in a sunny window for winter. During summer months, they appreciate living in a spot with lots of indirect sun, or sun in the morning, but shade in the afternoon. They propagate easily from stem cuttings, and benefit from being trimmed up/ cut back from time to time.

Scented Geraniums may be used in a number of bath products. To make an aromatic Bath Salt or Foot Soak place a layer of scented geranium leaves (can also be done with many other herbs) in a shallow, parchment lined, baking tray. Cover with Epsom salt and leave in a safe spot (away from pets and children) indoors in an air conditioned home. The leaves will dry relatively quickly, and you can then use the parchment to funnel the salt and dried leaves into a blender. Blend to break up the leaves and mix them evenly into the bath salt, then put in an air tight jar or other package until ready to use.

Both the flowers and leaves are edible and may also be used in baking/ beverage making. Try these ideas to get started.

Make a Scented Geranium syrup by adding scented geranium leaves to a simple syrup during the stage where it is being heated to dissolve the sugar. When finished, cover and allow the solution to cool with the leaves steeping in it. When fully cool, strain and use to make herbal cocktails and mocktails.

Make scented geranium sugar by placing a few leaves in a jar of sugar and allowing the scent to permeate the sugar over a few weeks time. You can also blend dried leaves or flower petals into the sugar and allow to dry and use the pretty green sugar in cookies and cupcakes.

Make beautiful and tasty cookies by making your own favorite sugar or shortbread cookie and cutting into circles or squares. Place each cookie onto a fresh scented geranium leaf when placing on the pan or parchment to bake as you normally would. (Its quite alright if the leaf is bigger than the cookie, just flatten it down and place the cookie on it.) After baking, the leaves will have adhered to the bottom of the cookies. Leaf material that was sticking out beyond the edges of the cookies can be easily removed after baking by quickly rubbing the edges to flake off the now crisp and fragile excess. Display the cookies bottoms up to showcase the beautiful designs. You can apply this idea to cakes, as well, by lining the bottom of the pan with leaves. The cake will be permeated with the flavor of scented geraniums (really good with chocolate cake).

Find more information at the following links

<https://extension.psu.edu/scented-geraniums>

<https://www.motherearthnews.com/organic-gardening/scented-geraniums-zmaz84jazloeck/>