

if they're about the same width as the window, but an inch or two wider or narrower isn't a problem — especially since when plants reach their peak you can hardly see the exact edge of the box.

As for width, boxes that are at least 8 inches wide and 8 inches deep will hold enough water so that the plants don't dry out too quickly and will allow roots to comfortably grow.

Position the box a few inches below the window, especially if you have a window that opens outward. Most will come with brackets. Make sure they are sturdy enough to hold a load, since boxes grow heavier when water is added.

So, let's get started, OK?

"I would ask them if (the window box is expected to be) in the sun or shade," Foster said. "Then I would ask what colors (the customer) is looking for.

Foster said there are even different suggestions whether the site is morning or afternoon sun.

"If it's morning sun (with afternoon shade, you should go more with a (shade-thriving) plant," Foster said. "But with things like geraniums, you might want morning-shade, afternoon sun."

She noted it is important to add fertilizer every couple of weeks during the growing season to keep those plants happy.

The more picturesque window boxes really draw attention to themselves with distinctive cascading growth that have foliage and colorful blossoms that tumble out of the container, almost like a train of an elegant gown.

Foster said (PAGE 25)



# She said, she said

Consider any or all of these suggestions for window boxes. Good luck!

**Ginny Rosenkranz, commercial horticulture specialist with the University of Maryland Extension (Wicomico County) says:**

"For full sun, try the new snapdragons (trailing snapdragons), heliotrope, morning glory (trailing) lobelia, sweet alyssum, nemesia, flowering tobacco, geraniums and Ivy geraniums, petunias (especially wave petunias) portulaca, black eyed susan vine, nasturtium, verbena, landscape zinnias, bacopa, Silver Frost, Callibrachoa (Million Bells) and scaevola."

"For shade, I would use impatiens, like New Guinea impatiens."

**Rachel Melvin, horticulture educator and Master Gardener coordinator for Queen Anne's County says:**

"For full sun, try these annuals: Lobella, pansies, petunias, sweet alyssum and dianthus."



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(FROM PAGE 26)

It doesn't take long for a window box planting to take shape with cascading, maybe 45 days or so.

May is the ideal time to get window boxes started, since frost is nearly guaranteed to be gone until late fall.

But if you want to be sure your plants will be safe from a late frost, "a lot of people wait until Mother's Day," said Foster, which is May 9 this year. "If you plant them early, you'll want to keep an eye on the weather forecast in case there's a chance of frost.

To avoid damage from frost, bring the boxes inside or cover them with newspaper or paper from brown-paper bags or burlap, Foster said. "Never plastic," she warned.

Besides attracting pretty sights like hummingbirds and butterflies, some plants may even reward you with lovely aromas that may waft inside through a window with a breeze.

For example, a kitchen may be even more inviting with a heliotrope delivering its vanilla-like scent.

A kitchen window is always a convenient spot for a window box.

Do these plants need a little water? Are they looking a bit parched?

Just open the window and splash them with the sink sprayer.

Does your stove bubbling on the stove need a little extra zing? No problem — reach out and snip off a couple sprigs of herbs — basil, parsley, chives, sage, oregano, maybe? — and add that in.

"Herbs would be great for a window box," said Rachel Melvin, horticulture educator and Master Gardener coordinator for Queen Anne's County, suggesting mint ("always contain mint because it will spread like wildfire"), sage, parsley, basil, chyme, cilantro, chives and dill as ideal options.

But window boxes don't have to be limited to just kitchens, though.

If there's a view from inside that is a dead end, like a nearby wall facing your property where any outside options would be limited, you can make that blandness you see with a welcoming array plants just outside the ledge.

"They say the eyes are the window to the soul, why not draw those eyes to your windows?"

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# Aroma therapy

Story by Stephanie Jordan-Schwind

Remember to let your nose share in the rejoicing of the arrival of spring by making sure to include any of these fragrant flowers.

**W**ant to walk outside into your garden or landscape and just breathe in the smells of spring and summer?

Try adding some of these plants for a lot of fragrance and a bit of color from blooms and pollinators this year.

## •• Herbs ••

Rachel Melvin, horticulture educator and Master Gardener coordinator for Queen Anne's County, says that adding herbs to your garden will create a fragrant environment.

Lavender is an excellent choice for fragrance in your garden, Melvin says, giving homeowners a light, clean scent to enjoy. Plants have small blooms, ranging from deep purples to blues to pinks.

Lavender flowers during the summer, and thrives in well-drained soils. Because the plant typically grows to be about 4 feet high, it is good to use as borders for your garden.

It is native to the Mediterranean region, so Melvin



*Sweet peas — which offer a great combination of fragrance and color — need full sun and rich, moist soil.*

recommends putting about 1 inch of white sand around each plant; the white sand will reflect light and help repel pests.

It doesn't need to be cut back, unless you want to prune for bushiness. Melvin says some pruning is good for the plant — pruning increases air flow, which reduces the number of pests. And best of all, lavender is drought tolerant.

Looking for an herb that will give off a crisp, almost lemony fragrance in your garden? Try planting rosemary.

"I love it on my back step," Melvin says. "I can just walk out and smell it."

Rosemary needs full sun and can withstand mild drought. It does best in sandy soils. Though you can purchase it anywhere that sells a lot of herbs, be aware that some varieties are less hardy on the Eastern Shore.

Plant only these rosemary cultivars in your garden: Dutch Mill, Howe, Madalene Hill or Arp. Rosemary actually has a small flower as well, ranging in color from whites to pinks, and blooms in late summer or early fall.

If you don't have a lot of space in your garden, be aware that if you do not prune your rosemary, it can grow to be 6 feet tall and develop a really thick base. Pruning will give your plant a nice shape, and reduce the risk of mites.

Melvin says that it is important to buy both lavender and rosemary as plants; they do not do well if you start them from seed.

Mint also gives off a nice scent in the garden, and there are a variety of fragrances from which to choose — try growing lemon mint, pineapple mint, peppermint



*Lavender flowers during the summer, and thrives in well-drained soils. Because the plant typically grows to be about 4 feet high, it is good to use as borders for your garden.*

*(Photos by Ginny Rosenkranz)*



*Carnations, left, with its clove-like fragrance, come in a array of colors such as pinks, reds and whites.*



*The native trumpet honeysuckle will give you a splash of color and offers a floral scent to attract pollinators.*

*(Photo courtesy Rachel Melvin)*

or spearmint.

Mint requires full sun, though it can tolerate partial shade (it should receive between six and eight hours of direct sunlight). It does best in loamy soil, so make sure it receives a well-drained mixture of sand, clay and silt.

There is a disadvantage to growing mint — it spreads like wildfire, Melvin says. That's why you should never actually plant it in your garden. Instead, grow mint in a 10-inch pot. Be sure to pick off any seed heads; this will help reduce the spread of the plant in addition

to producing more leaves.

Lemongrass is another herb that Melvin recommends planting in your garden, though it is more difficult to find. It requires full sun and a well-drained soil, and because it cannot withstand frost, it is best to grow lemongrass in pots and bring inside during the colder months.

"It will overwinter fine in your house if you have a sunny area," Melvin says. And fragrance isn't the only advantage to adding a few herbs to your garden.

"Herbs in the landscape don't

just smell nice,” Melvin says. “You can use them for something.”

Lavender is often used in soaps and perfume, and make lovely bouquets and wreaths, she says, while you can use rosemary, mint and lemongrass in a variety of recipes.

Mint from your garden can be used in teas, while lemongrass is typically used in Asian dishes.

• • *The best of both worlds* • •

Looking for some plants that combine the both color and fragrance to your garden?

Melvin says that rhododendrons have a fragrance similar to a rose, and come in a variety of colors, including whites, pinks and corals.

They thrive in full sun to partial shade, moist soils with a low pH, and as an added bonus, also attract songbirds and butterflies.

Depending on the variety you plant, they can be anywhere between 3 and 10 feet tall, and bloom

in the May-to-August range.

Melvin also recommends planting the native trumpet honeysuckle, which will give you a bright flower in corals, reds and yellows.

Since it is a vine, you will need to utilize a trellis and prune it in the fall to contain it.

It offers a pretty floral scent, which attracts hummingbirds, ladybugs, song birds and butterflies. Trumpet honeysuckle is prone to aphids, so make sure to inspect your plant every so often.

Sweet peas also offer a great combination of fragrance and color, says Ginny Rosenkranz, a commercial horticulture specialist with the University of Maryland Extension. Sweet peas need full sun and rich, moist soil. And since it is a climber, be prepared with a trellis or arbor to provide sweet peas with a home.

Carnations are another option, as well, Rosenkranz says, with

a scent similar to clove and variety of bloom colors — pinks, reds and whites. They love full sun and sandy soils, and once established, are very drought tolerant.

Other plants with that are fragrant, color bloomers include:

- Moon flowers (*Datura innoxia*) — These flowers are annuals and bloom in the late afternoon hours. Flowers are pure white with a lemony fragrance. These plants need full sun, and though they love sandy soils, they can adapt to most.

- Flowering tobacco (*Nicotiana*) — These blooms range from whites to pinks to purples, and the plant needs full sun. Any soil will do.

- Day lilies (*Hypericum* family) — These day lily blooms give off a lemony scent, and these plants thrive in full sun to partial shade. They love sandy soils, but will adapt to other soil types. ➔



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(FROM PAGE 6)

woodpeckers that enjoyed the rotted limbs on the ditch line not far from the garden. One evening I saw a red-bellied woodpecker gathering rotten hot peppers and banging the rotted meats into holes on the soft rotted tree limbs much in the way they do with bugs.

There is even pepper suet available. Salsa anyone? No kidding. Salsa was on sale, so I found a chunk of rotten log, carved a cup-shaped hole in the wood, filled the hole with chunky salsa and set it under the rotten trees. Sure enough, the woodpeckers found it.

Orioles are attracted to halved oranges, or slices of mandarin orange, and they enjoy sugar water like the hummingbirds' red favorite. Cardinals will go for maraschino cherries, cranberry and red grapes.

Always supply real bird seed to keep your birds around and don't ever stop feeding or offering fresh water for drinking and bird bathing.

Enjoy our feathered friends. They're happy all day and beyond filling our hearts with joyful song. 🐦

*(Editor's Note: Bev Leitch is a freelance journalist who resides near St. Michaels.)*

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