Lovely Potpourri Recipes

In general, when making up a potpourri, you'll need four types of materials, plus any oils you wish to use:

1. Fragrant Leaves, Flowers, or Petals.
These would include lavender and rose petals, jasmine flowers, fragrant herbs such as lemon verbena or bay leaves, etc. (2-4 parts)

2. Spices.
These are not strictly necessary in the more modern potpourris, since our oils tend to make up for their absence, but I really like to see them used in most mixes. I generally use whole form, as they add so much to the visual as well as the scent appeal of the mixture. Powdered form is OK, especially in sachet mixes, but they tend to make a jar-type potpourri look dusty. (1-2 parts)

3. Petals, Leaves, and Pods
for color and visual interest. This is where anything you've been able to grow or gather comes in as a real plus, since every item you don't have to pay for adds to the "plus" side of the cost figures! Any flowers except roses, lavender, and jasmine fall into this category. In fact, I even count commercially obtained roses as "half scented", since they're not the more desirable, fragrant damascene roses which hold scent so well. (use 4-8 parts of this type of material)

4. Fixative and Oil.
You'll generally want fragrance or Essential oils, or a blend of the two - that's fine I've been using the blends successfully for years, now! Also a fixative agent, to help your fragrance stick around. I generally prefer using either calamus root, orris root, or absorbent oak moss. Some like to use the newer "fiber fix" or "magic" potpourri fixative, which consists of ground corncobs or cellulose fiber. This ingredient is good in that it does not aggravate allergies, but I've had little success in using it in my mixes. According to Dody's charts, which I use to calculate amounts of fixatives and oils, you need to use it at twice the amount of calamus or orris root, and you need to add 3-4 times as much oil as when using the more traditional roots or mosses. For me, this is not an option, so I'm unable to give much
information to it's use. In order to figure out the proper amount of fixative, you must first decide which one you're going to use. If using calamus or orris root, I'd suggest using the cut or cut/sifted form. Figure the number of cups of unscented material (#3) you've used. For each 4 cups of unscented material, you'll need ¼ cup of calamus or orris root. Double that amount if using cellulose. For each ¼ cup of calamus or orris, you'll need 1 dram (1/8 oz. or about 120 drops) of oil. Again, remember to increase the amount of oil if using cellulose. If, like me, you like to use oak moss as a fixative, you use 1 cup of moss (I like to buy the whole form, and cut it into small clumps) per each 2 cups of unscented mix. (If using pre-cut moss, use 1 cup moss to each 3-4 cups unscented). I know that this seems like a lot of fixative, but the cost per cup compared to the rest of the fixatives is very low, and it adds to the volume of your potpourri, as well. Too mossy for you? Simply cut the amount of moss down a bit, and add some calamus or orris to take up the slack! Remember, this is potpourri, not brain surgery - get creative!!! For each 2 cups of oak moss, you'll need 1 dram (1/8 oz.) of oil. At this point, I'd like to point out the merits of adding a bit of gum resin as a secondary fixative, as well as for the added "mixer-binder" properties - it really tends to blend all of the scents together into a wonderful, deep scent. Any gum resin works - gum benzoin, gum Arabic, gum tragacanth, or frankincense or myrrh. I like, again, to use pieces or tears to prevent a dusty look, and generally now use frankincense tears - cost is most reasonable. Toss a tablespoon or so in with the flower petal part of your potpourri - don't add to the oils - it will become a gummy mess (But it will smell wonderful)! Start out by mixing your petals, scented and unscented, your herbs, leaves, and spices (and gum resin, if you choose to use one) in the bottom of a large container. Some say not to use plastic, but I've used it successfully for years - OK as long as you don't pour any oils directly onto the plastic - that tends to degrade the plastic and adds a weird smell to your wonderful petal mixture! Put your fixative on the top - if using calamus, orris, or cellulose, just make a pile on the top. If using moss, you can simply dump it on top of all the petals. Then pour the oils carefully over the fixatives - it's ok if some of it goes on the petals, just try to put most of it on the fixative. Close this up for about 2 days, for the oils to be absorbed by the fixative. Then open, gently mix, and close again. Repeat this every day for at least 2 weeks. Sometimes, in the case of strongly scented mixtures (lavender would be one, cinnamon another, for example), your potpourri needs to age 4-6 weeks. When you open your mix and are satisfied with the fragrance, and there are
no "sharp edges", unpleasant to the nose, it's ready to package, and, hopefully, sell!

If you go all the way to the end of this missive, you'll find several recipes for some of my own mixes. If none of these appeals to you, please feel free to get back with me, and I'll attempt to print up a few more, or check out one of the books mentioned below.

Now I'd like to take the opportunity to tell you that I've been making potpourri for over ten years, and have been offering potpourri supplies, fragrance and Essential oils through The Ginger Tree for seven years. You probably know that there are several other ways to make potpourri. If interested, I'd suggest checking out one or more books. Storey Publications puts out a small pamphlet, entitled "Making Potpourri". It's a bit out of date, suggesting the use of powdered fixatives, but is, in general, a good reference. I also have about 25 copies of a book I use all the time for reference to fixative and oils amounts, "Potpourri, Easy as 1-2-3!" by the late Dody Lyness, my personal potpourri mentor, and the one who made The Ginger Tree a possibility for me. The book is now out of print, so as far as I know these are the last copies available. They're $8.95 each. Two other indispensable books on my shelves are by Phyllis Shaudys "The Pleasure of Herbs" and "Herbal Treasures". They have many wonderful activities, many potpourri recipes and methods, and lots of other information. "Herbal Treasures" has a good introductory chapter to Aromatherapy and bath and body products. The Ginger Tree also carries all the supplies necessary to make most potpourri and sachet mixes, in quantities as low as 1 oz. retail and 8 oz. wholesale. Fragrance oils are available from ¼ oz. thru 1 pound. Essential oils and Aromatherapy blends are available in quantities as small as 1/16 oz., and as large as 1 pound. If you have a supplier, great! If you're looking for one, just send me a snail mail address and I'll get you a catalog - really, 26 pages is just too much to email! Please be sure to let me know if you have a business, so that I send you the proper (wholesale) prices! I will, however, need a re-sale number for wholesale businesses when you order the first time!

Following are a few recipes you might be interested in to get started...
Potpourri Recipes

Plumberry Potpourri

- 5 Cups Cockscomb, Dyed Violet or Purple
- 5 Cups Rose Petals, Red
- 2 Cups Star Flowers, Purple
- 2 Cups Orchid Flowers, Purple
- 2 Cups Globe Flowers, Dyed Purple
- 2 Cups Spidergrass, Bleached
- 1 Cup Angel Wings, Violet
- 1 Cup Cinnamon Bark
- 1 Cup Tulip Flowers, Bleached/Dyed Lavender
- 1 Cup Tulip Flowers, Purple
- ½ Cup Cloves, Whole
- 1 Tablespoon Frankincense Tears
- 4 ½ Cups Oakmoss, Cut
- ¼ Cup Calamus Root, Cut
- ¾ Oz. Fragrance Oil - Plumberry

Place all dried ingredients except oakmoss, calamus, and oil in the bottom of a large plastic container. Place moss and calamus root on top. Pour or spray oil over fixatives, avoiding sides of the container. Cover and allow to set up 1-2 days, till fragrance is absorbed by the fixatives. Mix all together gently, cover, and allow to age 10 days to 2 weeks, until fragrance is well absorbed and mellowed.

If desired, add 5 cups of Silver Curly Pods and 2 cups of Kerni Fern. Use half and half mix of Plumberry and Sugar Cookies fragrances. Voila - you now have Sugarplums!
Woodland Fantasy Potpourri

- 6-8 cups fir tips, broken into 3" pieces. (Again, this is a good opportunity to use ones you've dried yourself. You can use any type, although fir tends to have a nicer scent. Sand pine, if obtainable, has a "tangerine" scent, and is nice used as part of the greens. Also remember, pine tends to hold its needles and its scent better if you wait to harvest till after the first frost!
- 1 ½ cups lichen, black & silver
- 25 pieces golden mushroom pods, natural
- ¾ cups cinnamon bark, broken into large pieces
- ¾ cups small cones, hemlock, birch, xyris, or alder
- ¾ cups curly pods, natural
- ¾ cups bakuli pods
- ¼ cups cloves, whole
- ¼ cups juniper berries, blue or red, or whole rose hips
- 2 Tablespoons Frankincense Tears (optional)

Mix all in container, then place on top:

- 3 cups oak moss, whole, cut into small "clumps"
- 3/8 ounce fragrance oil, Woodland Fantasy, or other "foresty" scent of your choice. TIP: Fir Needle or spruce oils tend to smell more foresty. Pine tends to smell like Lysol IMO

Allow to "set up" 2 days for oils to absorb, then mix all, and continue to mix gently once a day for at least 2 weeks. This mix tends to be "bigger than life", and is a natural for craft fairs and shows in large containers where customers can "scoop their own".

Gold Frankincense & Myrrh Potpourri

- 3 cups cedar tips, broken into 3" pieces. (use your own if you've got 'em - just make sure they're very dry. You can use preserved or not, as you prefer, and any type you wish. Western Red are quite pretty, but kind of "stickery". Ours are Thuja-type cedar tips.
- 1 ½ cups curly pods, painted gold (or any other gold accent you wish)
• ¾ cup Pearly Everlasting, broken into small "clumps" (or substitute any small white flower - clumps of gypsophillia, white statice, or bleached miloberries are also nice)
• ¾ cup hemlock or other small cones
• ½ cup angel wings, natural cream
• 3 Tablespoons Frankincense "Tears"
• 3 Tablespoons Myrrh "Tears"

Mix these gently in a covered container or large plastic bag, then place on top:

• 2 cups oak moss, whole, cut into small "clumps"
• 1 Tablespoon orris root, cut
• 1 ½ drams (3/8 oz.) fragrance oil - Gold, Frankincense & Myrrh, or another fragrance you prefer

Follow general directions, pouring oil over fixatives and allowing to set up 2 days. Then open, stir gently, and repeat every day for 3 weeks. If you choose to use the GFM fragrance, it's a mix of Frankincense, Myrrh, Sweet Orange, and Ambergris fragrances, and is very rich and "oriental".

Country Woodstove Simmer Spices

Take equal parts whole allspice, broken cinnamon bark, cinnamon chips, whole cloves, dried orange peel in small pieces, dried lemon or grapefruit or tangerine peel, if you have it, and ½ part of whole coriander. Mix and use 1-2 tablespoons to simmer in 1-2 pints of water. **Do not let the water go dry!**
You might want to add: mace, cardamom, herbs, apple dices, pine needles, or anything else you think of! The basic recipe was borrowed and altered from one found in Phyllis Shaudys "Herbal Treasures".
Apple Jack Potpourri

- 2 ½ cups kesu flowers, dyed red
- 2 cups star flowers, dyed red
- 1 ½ cups (about 30-35 pieces) golden mushroom pods, natural
- 1 cup curly pods, natural
- ½ cups cinnamon bark, broken into large pieces
- ½ cup twisted leaves, cream
- ¼ cup cinnamon sticks, 1"
- ¼ cup smalley leaves
- 2 Tablespoons allspice, whole
- 2 Tablespoons cloves, whole
- 2 Tablespoons Frankincense Tears (optional)

Mix all in container, then place on top:

- 3 ½ cups oak moss, whole, cut into small "clumps"
- 2 Tablespoons calamus root, cut
- 3/8 oz. fragrance oil - Apple Jack, or any Apple-Spice scent you like.

Pour oils onto the fixative, cover, and, after 2 days, open and mix gently. Repeat every day for at least 3 weeks, better with 4-5 weeks.

Have fun … It'll make your potpourri turn out better!!!

Apple Garlands a la Ginger Tree

In order to string a beautiful garland with your apples, you might wish to seal the fruit with some polyurethane or other sealer.

Carefully drill holes in whole nutmegs, 1" and 3" cinnamon sticks, whole hazelnuts, or any other interesting pods you might find. I use a dremel with drillbit, and drill holding the spice firmly in a pliers, drilling downward into a cardboard box bottom on top of a thick pile of newspapers. If you're lucky enough to have a drillpress, it's a bit more secure, but also a bit more time consuming. It's a good idea to wear safety goggles, and PLEASE make sure children are out of the room. Believe me, these things can hurt if you lose hold of them! Make sure the holes you drill are large enough for a large
tapestry needle threaded with your desired stringing material to go thru easily. I generally use hemp twine, but have used jute string, waxed beeswax linen, fishing line, nylon thread, whatever you think might give the look you wish.

Decide the length of finished garland you desire. Cut your string at least a foot longer, to make it easy to tie loops in the ends. Thread large, sharp tapestry-style needles to both ends of your string. Start with a middle section to your garland, then add matching sections of mixed fruit/spices/bay leaves/what have you alternately on both sides of your garland - make sure to make "mirror" sections, so your garland will be balanced. In other words, if you use 12 apple slices in the middle, then 6 bay leaves, a nutmeg, a 3" cinnamon stick, then another nutmeg, on one side, be sure to add materials to the other side in the same order. When you've reached the end of your rope (sorry), tie each end into loops so that you can hang in a doorway, on a Christmas tree, mantelpiece, stair rail, etc. I find that the garlands are easiest to work in 3 foot and 6 foot lengths. They're also tremendously cute when made into short lengths to hang in the kitchen on a shaker peg. If desired, dot the apple slices and cinnamon sticks (and the string between, too) with appropriate fragrances so that your creations smell totally delicious!