

Wrapped in the Season's Soothing Scents

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Ever wonder why the smell of a fresh-cut Christmas tree sweeps you up in such pleasurable reveries? "Scent is the most powerful sense you have," says Kathleen Duffy, a nurse and clinical aromatherapist in Chicopee, Massachusetts. "It evokes wonderful memories of past holidays."

There's something else about those woody whiffs. "Along with the holiday smell, the essential oils that make up that evergreen scent - including pine, spruce, and cedarwood - will help you feel relaxed," says Kelly Holland-Azzaro, a clinical holistic aromatherapist in Banner Elk, North Carolina.



Since the fresh-cut tree smell usually fades in days, here are a few pointers on how to create an air of nostalgia and calm in your family's home through the whole season.

Spruce up the spruce: Use a few drops of essential oil to keep that pleasant evergreen smell long after the tree has lost its freshness. These essential oils, which are distilled from tree bark or needles, are available at health food stores and from online retailers.

Make sure you're getting pure essential oils, says Duffy, not fragrant oils or aromatics, which have other substances added to them. Expect to pay \$7-10 for a 10-milliliter bottle, which will easily last one or two holiday seasons. Put a few drops on the tree boughs. "Start with one or two drops," says Holland-Azzaro. Asthmatic children and seniors shouldn't be exposed to more than that.

Hit up a batch of mother nature: If you want your whole house to have a seasonal smell, try this: Mix 10 drops each of pine, spruce, and cedarwood essential oils in a small bottle. Put the mixture in an eyedropper and place a few drops on pinecone decorations, wreaths, or the tree itself.

If you want to quickly scent the house before company comes over, add two or three drops to a pot with about one quart of water. Simmer (don't boil) the water and the fragrance will spread through the house for hours. This can also help with dry sinuses.