

Compost

Simmer Pots



Looking to fill your home with festive holiday scents this season? Making Compost Simmer Pots is a fun way for children to get into the holiday spirit while learning about the different fruits, spices, and trees we associated with winter festivities.

WHAT IS A SIMMER POT?

A simmer pot is a pot filled with water and various fragrant ingredients that, when heated on a stove, release a wonderful natural aroma into the air, making your home smell cozy and perfect for the holidays. It is nature's aromatherapy!



MATERIALS

- Oranges, apples, lemons, cinnamon, anise, cloves, ginger, rosemary, pine needles, cranberries, nutmeg, pine cones, or your choice of scented items
- Soup Pot
- Water
- Knife
- Stove

METHOD

- 1) Choose your ingredients! What scents delight you? Some traditional winter holiday scented items include oranges, lemons, ginger, cranberries, pine needles, apples, rosemary, pine cones, cloves, star anise, cinnamon, and nutmeg. If you have a Christmas tree in your home, you can clip sprigs of it for your pot, or you can go for a walk and clip some sprigs from pine trees at your local park. Rosemary, lemons, oranges, and pine cones may also be readily found growing in your neighborhood!
- 2) Cut your ingredients into smaller pieces. Pine branches may require garden shears, and children cutting fruit should use kid-friendly knives. There's no right or wrong way to cut up your ingredients. Spices such as cloves, anise, cinnamon, and nutmeg can be used in their whole or powdered form.
- 3) Add all ingredients to a soup pot, fill it almost to the top with water, set it on the stovetop over high heat, and bring the water to a boil. Once a boil is reached, reduce the heat to the heat to low, and simmer the mixture on low heat for as long as you like. Repeat each day until the mixture loses its scent or begins to decompose. (You may keep it on the stove from day to day, though storing it in the refrigerator between simmers will extend its lifespan.)
- 4) Once your simmer pot ingredients are all scented out, simply compost your ingredients and either use them for your garden or contribute them to your city's green waste!
- 5) *Tip: Don't want to "waste" fruit? Just eat or juice your apples, oranges, and lemons, and toss the peels into the pot!*

Opportunities for Expanded Learning

- **There's no right or wrong way to make a simmer pot! Experiment with different types of ingredients and scents. Which ingredients create the most fragrant pots? Why do you think that is? What ingredients work best together and why? Journal about your different concoctions, drawing pictures of each and noting their different scents and how they make you feel. Do they remind you of anything, conjure memories, or make you feel a certain way?**
- **Carefully dissect and investigate your ingredients! Slowly pull your oranges and lemons apart. What do you notice about the rind? How many layers does it have, and how are they different? Take a closer look at the flesh. What do you notice? What do you wonder about it? What does it remind you of? If you use whole spices, examine them closely. Line them up and analyze how different the shape of each one is. Do a blind scent test to see if you can identify which spice is which. Do a little research online to learn about how each spice grows and where they originated in the world. Crush rosemary leaves and pine needles between your fingers. What do you notice on your skin? Are they more fragrant when you crush them? Does your skin feel a certain way? Why do you think that is? Cut a cranberry in half and look inside. What patterns do you see? Draw the patterns. Do they remind you of anything you've seen elsewhere in nature, or even in math class?**
- **Go for a walk in your neighborhood to collect ingredients. What do you notice growing this time of year compared to summer months? Do you see any wildlife interacting with the plants you choose? Do you see any pollinators at citrus plants, or any fuzzy critters in pine trees? Why do you think those animals are with those specific plants? What are they doing?**



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