

the gift of RELAXATION

SPA TREATMENTS AT HOME

You don't have to spend \$4,000 for a few nights at Canyon Ranch and a stroll on its underwater treadmill: Turning your bathtub into a home spa can be a transformative experience. Relief can be as simple as swirling a few drops of grapefruit essential oil into a warm bath. Or it can be as complex and fulfilling as assembling a handful of dried red clover tops, sage, and yarrow for a detoxifying soak.

Another tip for money-saving stress reduction: These concoctions make great gifts. And they'll be gratefully appreciated throughout the coming months of holiday anxiety. (Sorry, I meant fun.) Here's a quick guide to some of the possibilities.

Herbal baths

Herbalist Rosemary Gladstar has one of the best suggestions for bathing I've ever heard: Set an old clawfoot tub outdoors to bathe under the stars. For many of us, of course, it's cold in November, so here are a few of Gladstar's suggestions for herbal hydrotherapy indoors.

Place herbs in a muslin bag or sieve and tie it directly to the bath faucet. Run very hot water through the herbs until the tub is half filled. Then adjust water temperature and, if you like, add a few drops of essential oils. For ultimate relaxation, Gladstar recommends a handful each of dried chamomile blossoms, lemon balm leaves, and rose petals. "Immersing yourself in an herbal bath is much like stepping into a giant cup of tea," according to Gladstar. "Your pores open up, absorbing the healing properties of the herbs."

Other herbs to mix and match include lavender buds and whole rosemary, with a dash of rose geranium essential oil for all-purpose relaxation; eucalyptus leaf, peppermint, and white willow bark for colds; and nettle leaf and yarrow, with a few drops of peppermint essential oil, for detoxification. Peppermint oil, among others, has been studied for a range of therapeutic properties, including relieving irritated and inflamed skin.

Essential oils

Imagine a blooming rose condensed into a single drop of oil. That's the power of essential oils, which capture and concentrate the healing, fragrant essence of plants. The therapeutic effect of aromatherapy combined with the soothing warmth of water is irresistible. But handle these intense oils with care—never take them internally, and dilute them in a carrier oil, such as sweet almond, if using directly on the skin.

To add essential oils to the bath, swirl in a few drops. German chamomile will soothe and relax, or if you prefer a beauty soak, try three drops of juniper berry and three drops of rosemary, and use a skin brush to target cellulite. Lavender is always welcome, and in one study has even been shown to soothe infants. Lavender bath oil (more diluted than essential oil) not only relaxed both mothers and babies, but the infants also cried less, looked at their mothers more, and slept better afterward.

Bath salts

On a cold night, concentrated bath salts can warm and stimulate. To make your own, use top-quality magnesium salts and/or Dead Sea salts (not table salt). Mix 2 cups magnesium salts, 1 cup Dead Sea salts, and ½ cup baking soda in a dry glass bowl. Stir well and drizzle in 2 tablespoon vegetable glycerin. Add 10 drops essential oil (try balsam fir), stir until absorbed, and store in a sealed glass jar. Salts will last indefinitely.

Another Gladstar recommendation: a warming cinnamon bath salt soak. The spice acts as a decongestant and is antiviral and antiseptic—perfect for cold and flu season. Mix 3 tablespoon cinnamon powder with 1 cup sea salt and store in a glass container. When you're ready to soak, use ½ cup.

Can you imagine a better way to end a winter day? ^{TFL}

ESSENTIAL OILS & EMOTIONAL BENEFITS

Balsam fir	Cleansing
Chamomile	Pampering
Cinnamon	Warming
Grapefruit	Joy
Juniper	Energy
Lavender	Soothing
Lemon balm	Relaxing
Peppermint	Cooling
Rosemary	Clarity
Rose	Sensuous