

# TIME TO SPRAY

## YOUR 5-A-DAY

There's a veritable glut of vegetable notes cropping up in perfumes lately, from beetroots and carrots through to artichokes and even cauliflowers. SUZY NIGHTINGALE reports on a new and different generation of gourmand scents

JUST WHEN WE THOUGHT we'd seen (and smelled) it all, vegetable notes have started sprouting up all over the place in perfume. Press releases regularly boast of brassicas and beetroots joining the more widely used 'savoury' scent ingredients of carrot seed and cucumber, while French niche house L'Artisan Parfumeur have devoted an entire Potager collection to the glories of the vegetable patch.

Like any other trend, newness in fragrance can be traced back through cultural patterns, a certain shift in the zeitgeist that suggests something's in the air. One of the major happenings has been a gardening and grow-your-own boom in the UK that began during lockdowns and shows no signs of slowing. Google reported that searches relating to how to grow vegetables doubled during May 2020

to May 2021, while new research from beauty and naturopathic product producers Weleda, meanwhile, reveals that in 2021, '26.7 million Britons grew their own fruit, veg and herbs', with almost two thirds claiming that 'connecting with nature has had a positive impact on their mood.'

Though cynics might suggest vegetable scents are only on the rise because everything – from Stilton cheese, puppies' paws and even full English breakfasts – has already inspired a fragrance, as long ago as 2015, Lucas Sieuzac, senior perfumer at global perfume company Eurofragrance, predicted that 'vegetables will become a trend in the next few years – because we use fruits, flowers, spices and wood, but we have never, so far, used vegetables in perfumes in large quantities.'

More recently, perfume designer

Sylvaine Delacourte wrote a blog on the website of her eponymous fragrance house, agreeing that: 'A new trend is emerging. There are more and more notes expressing nature and the countryside,' she said, observing: 'This focus on nature is very much in-vogue and is right now being expressed through new players such as vegetables.'

Certain savoury notes have long been accepted as important materials for a perfumer to have at their fingertips. Edmond Roudnitska, for instance, used a high percentage of carrot seed in his Rose by Rochas in 1949, while Guerlain Perfumer Thierry Wasser once confided to us that celery seed was his magic ingredient for 'filling the hole' left by oakmoss's restricted use in his masterful Mitsouko reformulation.

Tomato leaf (a bright, green ▶



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*Leaps in technology have given perfumers access to new aroma molecules, which for the first time allow natural extracts of vegetables to be used in perfumery*

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## TOP OF THE CROPS

### 1 SALVATORE FERRAGAMO

#### **Giungle di Seta (pea)**

Inspired by Ferragamo's exotic silk prints, the verdant sweetness of pea shoots entwine with jungle vines, tempered by the powdery familiarity of peony: nature, tamed.

### 2 SHAY & BLUE

#### **Clementine (watercress)**

Succulent citrus wreathed in swags of laurel leaves and the bright, peppery green of watercress; flagging spirits further revived via petitgrain's piquant sunshine.

### 3 DIPTYQUE Eau Rose

#### **Eau de Parfum (artichoke)**

Artichoke was added to enhance the original rose oil - fleshy, green, slightly bitter, it speaks of melancholy moments wandering walled gardens, arboreal *amour*.

### 4 TO THE FAIREST

#### **Élan Vital (greens/nettle)**

A settling of greens and grounding vetiver on forest-y floors, the gathering of soft moss and patchouli with which to line a cosy bolthole, a cover of golden leaves.

### 5 COMME DES GARÇONS

#### **Rouge (beetroot)**

Familiar notes are daringly subverted as blood red berries and earthy beetroot meet supremely calming swirls of iced incense and charred leather.

### 6 JACK PERFUME

#### **Covent Garden (carrot)**

From Richard E. Grant's perfume house, Withnail's 'Camberwell carrot' morphs into a market stroll, munching on vegetables as an aromatic, ginger-tinged breeze excites.

### 7 BOHOBOCO

#### **Wild Carrot Oud (carrot)**

Carrots ripped out with roots, clods and bundled in newspaper, nestled in the crook of a leather-clad elbow, biked to a pipe-smoking lover down winding country lanes.

### 8 MAYA NJIE

#### **Voyeur Verde (fennel)**

The comfort of cut grass and freshly washed car leather, aniseed sweets sucked on the back seat, windows rolled-down to drink in forest air - then home in time for tea.

accord created by perfumers, often achieved through a blend of blackcurrant bud and galbanum), has also been much prized by perfumers and perfume-wearers alike, with so many of us immediately propelled back to childhood memories of rubbing a tomato leaf between their fingers to get a hit of that so-green, astringent, slightly bitter and utterly nostalgic smell. First used to full effect in Sisley's L'Eau de Campagne by Sisley in 1976, tomato leaf was also present in Passion by Annick Goutal in 1983. The first true 'vegetable garden in a bottle' fragrance, though, might said to be Hermès Un Jardin Sur le Nil (2005), when Jean-Claude Ellena so cleverly turned a stroll in the garden islands of the Nile at Assouan into a sophisticated salad of a scent, evoking the aqueous juiciness of the tomato and

carrot, atop luscious fruits, lotus flower and a silvery drift of incense.

More recent launches, however, rather seek to replicate the rain-soaked atmosphere of the allotment, the life-giving joy of seeing the fruits (well, vegetables) of your labour pulled from the ground, earth still clinging to them. Why now this bumper crop of veg patch perfumes? Well, leaps in technology have given perfumers access to new aroma molecules, which for the first time allow natural extracts of vegetables to be used in perfumery. For DS & Durga's Bistro Waters, for example, which features lime blossom, pear and basil, the pivotal smell of green pepper was only possible thanks to a patented ingredient from Firmenich called Firgood™, which is derived entirely from organic matter. Asked why he ▶

## THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT



German fragrance house Symrise recently released a collection of five vegetable 'alcoholates', 100% natural extractions made possible by SymTrap™ technology: a gentle, cold-processing technique that doesn't destroy the volatile top notes of vegetables, but delivers the crisp freshness we so crave. Based on by-products from the food industry,

SymTrap™ recycles wastewater produced by distilling plants and fruit, trapping the aroma molecules contained in the waters, turning them into resin - another example of 'upcycling', as the fragrance world seeks to lower its environmental impact. After washing that 'resin' with alcohol, the ingredient can then be used in fragrance formulas.

The five alcoholates consist of artichoke, asparagus, cauliflower, leek and onion. And while they might not sound as sexy as *rose de Mai* or jasmine sambac, perfumers are excited by this expansion of their ingredient palette, which opens up a whole new sub-category of gourmands - the olfactory opposite of the sugar-dusted original generation of gourmand scents. L'Artisan Parfumeur were first to harness this technological bounty; for their Potager collection, they enlisted leading perfumers to 'nurture the passion of L'Artisan Parfumeur and its founder Jean Laporte's love for nature... by revealing notes of vegetables never before used in perfumery.'

Alexandra Carlin, who worked on the supremely creamy, cauliflower-infused Tonka Blanc, speaks of her excitement at creating 'the first perfume on the market to contain a natural vegetable extract.' Quentin Bisch explains that the challenge for him was 'to dress the vegetable with a classic material to keep a part of the mystery.' Thus, beetroot is burnished with bergamot and soft musk for his Musc Amarante; Vetiver Écarlate fuses a zing of tomato leaf and grapefruit to its shadowy coolness; fresh fennel spiked with lemon juice and pink pepper enlivens Cédric Céruse; and pea pods are draped in the mint-flecked glamour of orris, for Iris de Gris.

Mouth-watering, every one.

thinks savoury and vegetable notes are presently proving so popular, D.S. & Durga founder, David Moltz, says that 'fruit can be perceived as young, but vegetables as very adult. So, a vegetable fragrance is kind of like an adult gourmand.'

'The increase in the popularity of vegetable notes is challenging people that not every perfume these days has to be sweet to be pretty,' explains indie perfumer Freddie Albrighton, who recently opened his first boutique, in Stourbridge. To his latest fragrance, Somebody Else's Flowers, Freddie added an overdose of savoury notes of radish and watercress. He also reached for an ingredient called allyl phenyl ether, 'which has an ozonic, floral shop-air, a honey/mushroom smell, and adds a little of the sweet earthiness needed to remind us of the little green sprouting leaves.'

When creating for niche British house To the Fairest, founded by Rebecca Rose, perfumer Penny Williams added the bitter green note of nettle, which proved a

creative turning point for the just-launched composition of Élan Vital. 'With this scent,' Rebecca says, 'I wanted to capture the sensation of going "off grid" – embracing nature in its wildest form and taking inspiration from the earthy, grounding notes of the forest floor.' She continues: 'There's something very stirring about vegetal notes, and the "mulch" of soil, rain and undergrowth is at once comforting and quickening. It is this duality that lends itself to such interesting expressions in creative perfumery.'

Author Alfred Austin (1853 – 1913), captures the love of nurturing plants in his book *The Garden That I Love*: 'The glory of gardening, hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just the body, but the soul...' And having found such solace in our gardens – in particular, in our veg patches – what a treat it is that perfumery now offers perfume-wearers the chance to spray our five a day.

Not just dig or shop for them.

**9 DRIES VAN NOTEN Neon Garden (carrot)**

A brightly lit allotment made photoshoot-worthy – carrot crops wreathed in morning mist, a gauzy gown worn with designer wellies, the soft surprise of minted orris.

**10 ROGER & GALLET Verveine Utopie (fennel)**

Fronks of licorice-y fennel tickle the senses, the herbaceous verdancy rippled with spices and fringed with decadence as wormwood-infused absinthe has its way.

**11 STORIES No.2 (tomato leaf/greenhouse)**

The soothing steam of a childhood memory: grandfather's greenhouse, his pipe smoke encircling tomato plants, rose cuttings, the joy of running barefoot on grass.

**12 L'ATELIER PARFUM Verte Euphorie (carrot)**

The instant whoosh of sunshine-y citrus presages leafiness and crunchy carrot in the heart, earthy sweetness swathed in fluffiness on the softly musky base.

**13 DS & DURGA Bistro Waters (bell peppers)**

A savoury special of juicy green peppers and aromatic, just-chopped herbs with undercurrents of fancy cocktails to follow, late-night lock-ins and snogging the chef.

**14 PACO RABANNE Fabulous Me (pumpkin)**  
Eschewing showiness, a warm snuggle that speaks of cosiness, silky sandalwood wrapped around fleshy pumpkin, rhubarb's tartness tempering the sweetness.

**15 4160 TUESDAYS Le Jardin de Monsieur McGregor (cucumber/celery)**  
Mr McGregor's pipe smoke trail traces a rambunctious bunny through a Lake District garden: leafy greens, creamy mushrooms and nibbled strawberries.

**16 ÉTAT LIBRE D'ORANGE Like This (pumpkin)**  
The thrill of turning leaves, returning home, carved pumpkins, and ginger-spiced bread on a worn, wooden kitchen table; a warm dram drunk beside a peat fire. 🍷

## FIVE TO SPRAY Symrise's ground-breaking vegetable ingredients...

### ARTICHOKE

'Using our patented Symtrap™ upcycling technology,' Symrise explain, 'we managed to capture artichoke, and its smell has now bloomed in the hearts of our perfumers! They love its mellow, creamy, velvety green textured facets, giving a pulpy touch that is also delightfully rich, yet green and healthy. The scent is described by most as the new geranium note.'

### ASPARAGUS

'Presented as the new galbanum note, Symrise is the first to have ever captured its smell. Since it is now part of our palette, our perfumers are playing with its myriad complex tones – salty sprouting green, bread crust, porridge, green peas, Brazilian nuts... and are having fun discovering the variety of its facets bringing a natural, seedy, grain-like texture for an innovative addiction into the new gourmand family.'

### CAULIFLOWER

'Perfumers love it for its nurturing notes – very creamy, slightly powdery,

it also has vanilla, spicy, and toasted, almost burnt, facets. [We believe that] cauliflower is an utterly "texturised" note; perfumer Alexandra Carlin adds: "When you have that "texture" at your fingertips, you can't help yourself but to try it out in creations! Not all raw materials have textures."

### ONION

'Our Brazil-based perfumer Leslie Gauthier is utterly enthused about it, saying: "It is one of the most natural-feeling products of the tropical notes we have in our palette, offering a unique sulfuric undertone. We use its sparkling, fizzy, tangy facets to enhance the tartness of fruits such as mango or guava. Onion turns to be a wonderful and natural exotic scent booster!"

### LEEK

Symrise observe: 'This was used by Leslie Gauthier in an experimental mineral-floral composition to add a depth and weight in similar ways to the manner in which violet leaf has conventionally been applied in Chypre or woody creations.'

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*Vegetable notes open up a whole new sub-category of gourmands – the olfactory opposite of the sugar-dusted originals*

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