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## SPRING AROMATHERAPY

Just thinking about lily-of-the-valley with its heady, distinctive fragrance can be a psychological aromatherapy as one looks out at the cold, bleak winter sky. It is the essence of spring, all that says, 'Spring has sprung!' It's truly amazing that such little flowers along a single firm, straight stem protected by a pair of oval, blade like leaves can produce such a unique scent, a classic in perfumes.

Lily-of-the-valley, like most of my perennial favorites is a plant from my childhood in Connecticut. They formed a long four-foot wide, ground cover border in the side yard that bloomed well into summer. I remember sitting in the shade and making a crown of the blossoms, splitting a stem and inserting the stem of another through the slit. Massive maple trees shaded and protected the bed from the summer heat and afternoon sunlight. When I married and moved, I dug some of the lily-of-the-valley rhizomes from this bed and planted them in my new garden. With each move, they were planted a new, spread and colonized with underground shoots to form a nice bed. A friend also shared some pink (rosea) lily-of-the-valley which I now also enjoy (pictured). The common lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*) is a native in parts of Europe and China. One variety, *Convallaria majalis* var. *montana*, is native to the United States, found from Kentucky into Virginia and south to Georgia.



In doing a bit of research, I discovered some fun facts about lily-of-the-valley: it isn't a lily, but actually part of the asparagus family; it is the national flower of Finland; and in France, May 1<sup>st</sup> is Lily of the Valley Day, as *majalis* is Latin for May.

Presently, I dream of, plan and look forward to signs of spring, but I will be happy to discover the little upright shoots (pips) protruding from my shade garden soil with the promise of all that is the season of spring.