



For Teachers: SWEET BAGS



PHYSICAL ADDRESS

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SWEET BAGS

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn, through the sense of smell, how herbs could improve everyday life and treat illnesses.

FOR DISCUSSION

Sweet Bag: A sweet bag is a small cloth bag filled with herbs. In Maryland in the 1600s, there were no physicians (doctors). Colonists believed that by combining certain herbs containing medicinal properties and by carrying them around their neck in the sweet bag, they could help cure simple sicknesses, such as a stuffy nose, upset stomach, or headache. They believed the close proximity of the sweet bag to the nose and mouth allowed the colonist to breathe in the “vapors” of the sweet herbs and cure certain illnesses.



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Historic St. Mary's City

ACTIVITY

Sweet bags can be made by filling a 4 x 4 inch square of loosely-woven fabric (such as unbleached muslin or doubled cheesecloth) with any of the mixtures listed below. The corners of the bag should be drawn up and tied shut with a string. Once tied, place the bag between hands and rub them together to mix the scents. Tie a long string to the bag and wear it around the neck.

COMMON LADY'S SWEET BAG

2 parts rose petals
1 part lavender
1 part lemon verbena
3 pinches of ground nutmeg



SWEET BAG (to soothe a sore throat)

1 part lemon balm
1 part peppermint



COMMON GENTLEMAN'S SWEET BAG

2 parts crushed cinnamon*
1 part crushed cloves
1 part lemon verbena
1 part dried peppermint leaves



SWEET BAG (to soothe a cough)

1 part spearmint
1 part rosemary



* If whole spices are used, crush in a mortar and pestle.

Most of the herbs and spices listed above can usually be purchased online or at local grocery stores.

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