

Plant Cycles and Essential Oils

A Brief Overview

Essential oils can be divided according to the part of the plant the oil is made from. This is a very practical distinction because the properties of the oils and what they are used for, both in physical and emotional work, are very different according to the part of the plant used and the season in which that part of the plant is at its most active and strongest.

Each plant begins in the physical (or base sphere) with the seed and then the roots. The plant then progresses through the vital sphere with the leaves, and on to the astral sphere with the flowering stage. The plant then creates its fruit, which is the seed of most plants, and is then returned to the physical world. Along the way it has produced elements which mankind the whole world over has long recognized as medicinal herbs and pungent spices, as well as given us woods and resins to be used for our good.

Essential oils produced in the roots (such as angelica) tend to have a very peaceful and grounding energy, and they have a nourishing, strengthening quality about them. Grounded in and nourished by the earth they are, at the same time, in a dynamic and vital growth phase. They are usually potent stimulants of the vital functions (particularly digestion) and are often recommended for anemia and conditions of slow absorption.

Just as the plant's leaf system corresponds to its vital body, so essential oils produced in the leaves seem to have a toning affect on the body and an affinity for the gathering and storing of knowledge. In Chinese medicine, the vital body is represented (and fed and nourished in large part) by the respiratory system. You will find these oils listed as having an affect on the lungs, etc. and on the vital organs.

The flower is the plant's ultimate achievement and in some cultures the intricacy and fragrance of a plant indicates its 'spiritual' development. The plants with the most intense floral creativity rarely produce any significant fruit or seed (rose and neroli are notable exceptions and their functions are also unique). The essential oils found in the flowers occur in extremely small amounts, but their fragrances are typically very intense. Such fragrances tend to have the highest frequencies and can be exhilarating or even mildly intoxicating.

The oils produced in the seed (fennel, coriander) are said to bring us back into the physical world where new experiences of growth await us when we are ready and willing to make dramatic changes. They are often used to invigorate and fortify and seem to show a strong affinity with the digestive system. This is particularly true of those seeds that are used as foods or spices.

The fruit of a plant, while usually containing the seed, is very much a separate classification. The production of a fruit is the representation of the plant's ability to take its energy all the way through to fruition, and is very much representative of the "sufficient strength for the day" emotional nature of the essential produced from them (citrus fruits, vanilla, clove, etc).

Essential oils which are also considered spices are among the most vibrant nutritional plants available, with astonishing high levels of vitamins and minerals. These nutrients are utilized by the body when absorbed through the skin as essential oils are applied to the body. This vibrance is also manifested in the flamboyant personality style of the spice oils.

Many of the plants from which essential oils are made are well-known among herbalists. The spice plants are also very nutritious, but less dramatically so than the herbals. They nourish, heal and prepare us mentally and physically to accomplish our particular mission among our fellow men.

Trees and bushes also have the ability to create oils in their wood. Such oils are centering and grounding in nature. Here the creative process is drawn into the heart of the wood and they show a corresponding ability to aid us in becoming firm and full of strength in our own centers. A tree is firmly anchored to the earth, strong and upright, reaching valiantly for heaven, but at the same time is able to bend in the wind of new ideas. A good way to be for all of us.

Some essential oils are produced from the resins or gums. These essential oils have a strong affinity for the glandular system; they control secretions and demonstrate cosmetic and healing properties (skin care, wounds, ulcers). Emotionally, they deal with issues of right and wrong and the ability to make choice and decisions.

The 9 Groupings in More Depth

(These lists are only partial, based on the most commonly used essential oils)

We will do 5 categories here: 1) a definition of what constitutes this category; 2) a description of the physical aspects of the body and physical ailments that this type of oil supports; 3) an emotional/spiritual picture of the strengths and characteristics these oils promote and help us achieve; 4) a picture of the emotional patterns of a person needing the strengths provided by one or more of these oils; 5) a list of the most commonly used oils in this category.

Roots: Extracted from the roots of plants

Physical: Stimulating and nourishing to the body's vital functions, particularly to the digestive and nervous systems; improve conditions of slow absorption of nutrients and vitamins and helps to alleviate mineral deficiencies

Emotional: People strong in this area feel a need to be connected to all other people and to have peace and harmony. When balanced they are well-grounded, good-natured, and promote serenity and stability in all around them; trusting of themselves and others; peacemakers, always kind and supportive and willing to be mediators between others; self-confident in their own quiet way; often more strong-minded than at first recognized; often establish deep relationships with a wide variety of people; humble; teachable; having a great capacity to give; observant; loyal and reliable

In need of: disorganized; neglectful; confused or muddled feeling; absent-minded; moody; obstinate; apathetic; depressed; emotionally unstable

Oils: angelica, ginger, spikenard, valerian, vetiver

Leaves: Extracted from the leaves of trees or plants

Physical: Main impact is on the vital organs, toning and cleansing them; has a particular affinity for the respiratory system

Emotional: In Eastern healing traditions, the vital organs of the body are fed and nourished to a very large extent by the respiratory system, not just the digestive system. It is thought that, along with the air that is essential to life, new thoughts and ideas (also essential to life in the eastern view) are drawn into the body with the breath and it is on the breath that old ideas and misconceptions are expelled. Just as the leaf of the plant takes in air and nutrients, these essential oils help our minds to be always taking in every new idea, considering it and making the best parts our own; knowledge and learning are sustenance to people strong in 'leaf energy' and they will spend as many waking minutes as possible getting more of it; must always research a subject thoroughly; keep the whole picture in mind, even when specializing in a particular area; innovative thinkers, full of theories and ideas; hard-working with a great ability to concentrate; pacifists - can't handle aggression or conflict

In need of: When out of balance, find it hard to keep the whole picture in mind or to admit that the conclusions they have drawn are flawed or lacking in some way; can become paranoid, hostile, scornful or cynical; often reclusive and suspicious and out-of-touch with the world around them

Oils: bay, birch, cajeput, cinnamon, cypress, eucalyptus, fir, myrtle, patchouli, petitgrain, pine, ravensara, tea tree

Florals: Defined as oils and absolutes that are extracted from the flowers or petals of plants or trees

Physical: A variety of physical ailments that, with a little analysis, are clearly based on emotional needs, feelings of stress, or nervous tension; often helpful for pain made worse by emotional stress and for issues involving the feminine reproductive cycles and anemia

Emotional: Need to have status, to be admired, and to feel that they stand out from the crowd; physical appearance is important and they make the best of themselves physically; dynamic, bursting with energy and enthusiasm; totally confident and ambitious but full of love and passion; can appear superficial but are really very sensitive and soft-hearted, often sensing others' moods and trying hard to help; bring a lot of joy and happiness wherever they go

In need of: all the opposites of the above generosities; insensitive, manipulative, envious, power and status hungry; have great difficulty loving others and sharing with them; have shallow values; tend to lie to achieve goals or look good

Oils cassia, German and Roman chamomile, helichrysum, jasmine, lavender, neroli, rose (maroc and otto) ylang ylang

Seeds: Extracted from the seeds of plants

Physical: The seed of a plant is dormant until placed in the ground and watered, but still possesses a great capacity for growth that is about to burst forth. Essential oils derived from the seed are generally earthy in nature and have a corresponding impact on the glands, on the digestive organs and anything having to do with growth and development. They often help the body rid itself of accumulated toxins and poisons that are interfering with growth and normal functioning

Emotional: To create a suitable environment for growth and development. The potential (while invisible and dormant) of a seed is reflected in creative and intuitive abilities, particularly as they focus on opportunities for growth. People strong in this energy have a remarkable ability to go through the same mundane experiences day after day and keep finding great joy in each experience; ability to constantly re-invent themselves, changing job, appearance, or direction in what appears to be an instant; beauty and romance are a part of their soul and vital to their well-being; like a seed, they can be delicate and sensitive to their environment; almost always highly individualistic and a little different from those around them

In need of: When over-whelmed, they will become despondent and depressed, showing great insecurity and feelings of worthlessness; their endearing tendency to self-indulgence becomes addictive behavior; can become self-pitying, melancholy and disillusioned; prone to start projects but be dissatisfied with them and throw them away half finished

Oils: coriander, dill, fennel, nutmeg

Fruits: Extracted from the fruit of a plant or tree

Physical: The various kinds of fruits (from clove buds to citrus fruits) and the oils extracted from them have something nourishing for every body system and gland. Some have an affinity for the nervous system, others for the skin and others for circulation or for glandular deficiencies and problems

Emotional: Have a need to feel clear, connected and satisfied with themselves and to have the respect and approval of those around them. Almost always hard-working; friendly; supportive; take responsibility for themselves and any project in which they are involved; not usually ambitious for themselves but excellent employees because they are able to take a variety of projects to fruition, finishing each one with diligence, flair and originality; are bright, joyful, benevolent, empathetic, faithful and dependable; sensuous and passionate

In need of: Indecisive or just contradictory; hesitant and cautious; defensive to the point of unreasonable; clingy, anxious and oversensitive; impatient, spiteful, sarcastic with feelings of inferiority; their ability to finish projects bogs down in indecisiveness or hurt feelings

Oils: bergamot, black pepper, clove, grapefruit, juniper, lemon, lime, litsea cubeba, mandarin, orange, tangerine, vanilla

Spices: Extracted from various parts of plants or trees and commonly recognized as culinary spices worldwide

Physical: Because they are derived from various parts of plants, spice oils are varied in their nature. Two common denominators, however, are that all spices are high in minerals, and that every condition they are recommended for will be in the extreme. Conditions that are hypo- this or hyper- that, or an overwhelming infestation of resistant bacteria, etc., or perhaps complete collapse and prostration, or always in over-drive; the hypo-states of impotence and infertility or the corresponding hyper- states in reproductive matters

Emotional: A balanced spicy personality is a joy to behold. They love life, are animated, happy, warm-hearted, spontaneous, dynamic and self-assured. They are also extremely productive and practical, real go-getters; they can be charming and lovable; extremely extroverted; enjoy having money, not for power but from a shopping point of view, if they can afford it, their wardrobes will be full of shoes and clothes they never wear; generally trendsetters; even when pretty well balanced, they can be a little selfish and self-centered (conversations are usually about them and the things that are going on in their lives), but they are always worlds of fun to be with

In need of: Spice personalities can become unbalanced both by burnout (running too fast, too far, and having too much fun) and by any frustration of their flamboyant dreams and desires; at their worst they can be demanding, resentful, rude, abusive and insulting, treating everyone else like servants designed to meet their needs; they often behave like a very spoiled little child when their 'wants' are not met; hysteria, panic attacks and depression are common

Oils: anise, black pepper, cinnamon, clove, coriander, ginger, nutmeg

Herbs: Oils extracted from plants generally thought of as medicinal herbs

Physical: I find that with the herbal essential oils, as with the herbs themselves, I have a favorite one or two for just about every body system or gland. Herbal essential oils are nutritious and this nutrition is absorbed and used by the body whenever they are applied to the skin. Herbs seem to be concentrated vitamins in highly absorbable form while the herbs and oils that are considered spices are stronger in mineral content

Emotional: The herbal personality is that of the healer. They have a two-fold mission of providing unconditional love and care for as many others as possible, and needing to find that same unconditional love and caring for themselves. These people are helpful, generous, giving and thoughtful. They make time, and plan time, in their busy lives to help other people and consider it a privilege to be needed

In need of: When over-whelmed, people needing herbal essential oils can become resentful but still unable to say 'no' or stop taking on everybody else's troubles; often smothering in their personal relationships; unable to let their children grow up or leave home with gracefulness and peace; tend to get too intimate and 'into' other people's lives and become quite intrusive and get insulted when they feel themselves excluded from even the most intimate details of another person's life; need to be thanked often; use guilt or even hypochondria and psychosomatic illnesses as tools of manipulation

Oils: basil, clary sage, geranium, hyssop, marjoram, melissa, peppermint, spearmint, oregano, rosemary, sage, thyme both red and white, blue yarrow, green yarrow

Woods: Extracted from twigs, wood chippings or shaving of trees

Physical: The essential oils in this category, especially the conifers, have so strongly to do with the maintaining of firmness and strength in our own centers that any physical ailments on which they have any effect will almost always be driven, at least in part, by a wavering and lack of faith in our own core beliefs and faith. With this being said, they are often useful for glandular system disharmonies and the skin afflictions that result from them and this fact should tell us something about the emotional drivers of glandular problems. Wood oils are also useful for heart irregularities that have their roots in a lowered ability to handle stress or tension

Emotional: Wood is strong, independent, bold and forthright. People strong in this energy stand for justice and courage and have a great capacity for hard work. Can be warm-hearted people with a lot of tolerance and compassion for the mistakes that others have made; moral, self-confident, motivated, perceptive, faithful and steadfast; need to be in touch with nature

In need of: Out of balance wood characteristics include tendencies to dominate, become dictatorial and threatening; can be very unyielding, meaning they expect their opinions to be accepted by others and their methods of doing things to be considered correct and to be acted on immediately other others; argumentative; egotistical; harsh; vengeful; severe to the point of meanness

Oils: camphor, cedarwood, pine, rosewood, sandalwood, spruce, cinnamon

Resins: Extracted from the resin or balsam which exudes from some trees and shrubs

Physical: In a very strong corollary to the way resins exude from the plant, these essential oils have an affinity for secretions, infections, catarrhal conditions, ulcers, and inflammations of any sort. Are also helpful for maintaining or returning elasticity to the skin

Emotional: If your energy is strong in this area you will be driven, in the best sense of the word, by high ideals with morality, truth, justice and purity of thought held as something to be constantly sought after; ethical considerations are part of every thing you do; deep spirituality is a personal goal but realism and tolerance color your dealings with other people

In need: If these strong personalities make a moral mistake they are devastated and find it difficult to forgive themselves; can become harshly critical of themselves; can become self-righteous, dogmatic, intolerant and very, very angry; disappointment leads to discouragement which is followed closely by nervousness and depression; often feel like it is them against all of the evil forces of the universe, single-handed!

Oils: benzoin, balsams, elemi, frankincense, myrrh

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