

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 development of a root system. The plant then produces leaves, which are considered to be the most vital, growing phase of its life cycle. The plant then moves on to the sphere which corresponds to the astral aspect of development with the opening of the flowers. The flowers lead to the production of the fruit, which is the seed of most plants, thus returning the plant 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. The plant has also given us woods, resins, and aromas that heal and make our hearts glad.

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.

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. Still surrounded 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 other conditions of poor absorption of nutrients.

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.

As described above, the oils produced in the seed (fennel, coriander) bring us back to earth where new experiences of growth await us if we are ready and willing to accept them and move forward in our lives. This usually means that we will need to make one dramatic change or another. Seed oils 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 oils produced from them (citrus fruits, vanilla, clove, etc).

Essential oils made from plants which are considered spices are among the most nutritional plants available, with astonishing high levels of vitamins and, especially, minerals. This has been known by herbalist for centuries. These nutrients are utilized by the body when absorbed through the skin as essential oils are applied. Essential oils made from the spice plants and the plants recognized as herbal remedies nourish, heal and prepare us mentally and physically to accomplish our particular missions in life. Spice oils have flamboyant personality styles, just as you would expect.

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. If we become too rigid in our thinking and emotions, we can be easily broken by the storms of life.

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 choices and decisions.

The 9 Groupings in More Depth

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

We will do: 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: These oils are stimulating and nourishing to the body's vital functions, particularly to the digestive and nervous systems. They are often used to improve conditions of slow absorption of nutrients.

Emotional: People strong in their emotional connections with other people have peace and harmony about them and in their lives. The use of essential oils made from the roots of plants can help us be more firmly grounded in ourselves, allow us to be good-natured yet firm, which will promote serenity and stability around us. We can feel trusting of ourselves and others, be kind and supportive, even mediate quarrels between others if needed. We can learn to be self-confident without being over-bearing and to establish deep relationships with a wide variety of people. The greatest gift of the root oils is in helping us to be observant, humble, teachable, loyal and reliable.

In need of: We can know that we are in need of root essential oils if we are disorganized, neglectful, feel confused or muddled in our thinking processes, are absent-minded, moody, obstinate, apathetic, depressed or just plain emotional.

Oils: angelica, calamus, garlic, ginger, spikenard, turmeric, valerian, vetiver

Leaves: Extracted from the leaves of trees or plants

Physical: These oils' main impact is on the vital organs in either toning or cleansing. These oils have 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 as is generally thought in our own culture. 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 new ideas, considering them and making the best parts of them useful in our own lives. Knowledge and learning become sustenance to people who are working to strengthen their 'leaf energy' and they will spend as many waking minutes as possible getting more of it. These essential oils can help us keep the whole picture in mind, even when specializing in a particular area. We can become innovative thinkers with multiple solutions and theories in every situation but hard-working and with enough energy, concentration and confidence to carry out our ideas. People needing 'leaf energy' usually can not handle aggression or conflict. They will be completely drained by it.

In need of: People out of balance in this area and in need of the support these oils can bring, 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. They can become paranoid, hostile, scornful, cynical or just plain exhausted and over-whelmed. They often choose to spend a lot of time alone and can become suspicious and out-of-touch with the world around them. Sometimes they are resentful or exhausted by the demands of family and friends.

Oils: allspice, anthopogon, basil, bay, birch, blue tansy, cajeput, cassia, cinnamon, citronella, clary sage, cypress, davanna, eucalyptus, fir, galbanum, geranium, marjoram, melissa, myrtle, niaouli, oregano, palmarosa, patchouli, peppermint, petitgrain, pine, ravensara, rose geranium, rosemary, sage, spearmint, spruce, tamala, tarragon, tea tree, wintergreen

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

Physical: Floral oils can aid us with a wide variety of physical ailments that, with a little analysis, are clearly based on emotional needs or mis-perceptions. These oils are often helpful for any type of pain that is made worse or seems to be caused by emotional stress or nervous tension. Particularly useful for issues involving the feminine reproductive cycles and the lack of absorption of nutrients

Emotional: People unstable or depleted in floral energy need to have status, to be admired, and to feel that they stand out from the crowd. Physical appearance is important to them. When well balanced they are dynamic, bursting with energy and enthusiasm; totally confident and ambitious but full of love and passion. When out of balance they can appear superficial but, even then, they are very sensitive and soft-hearted, often sensing others moods and trying hard to help. People who are balanced in this sphere bring a lot of happiness to others.

In need of: The floral essential oils are always quite 'heady.' Unless you are in need of them, you will usually find them almost offensive. You can be sure you need one if you are becoming insensitive, manipulative, envious, power and status hungry, are having difficulty loving others and sharing with them, have shallow values or tend to lie to achieve goals or look good. The problem is that you probably won't admit these traits to yourself or seek change.

Oils anthopogon, blue tansy, catnip, chamomile Egyptona, chamomile German, chamomile Roman, helichrysum, Idaho tansy, jasmine, lavender, melissa, neroli, rose (maroc and otto), tagette, yarrow, 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 it possesses within it a potential for growth. Essential oils derived from the seed have an impact on the glands, 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, which make them useful for cleansing and supporting the liver.

Emotional: The potential (while invisible and dormant) of a seed is reflected in its creative and intuitive abilities, particularly as the seeds 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. They joyfully spend the time and energy necessary to create a suitable environment for growth and development for themselves and others. People strong in this energy seem to be constantly reinventing themselves by changing job, appearance, or direction. They need beauty and romance in their lives and, like a seed, they can be delicate and sensitive to their environment. Just as many different plants can come from seeds that often look quite similar, there is an endless variety to the characteristics that seed oils can help you strengthen and affirm in your life. It is important to remember, when using essential oils, that the closer we get to God the more of our own individual we will be. It is perfectly acceptable, even a good thing, to be a little different from those around you.

In need of: When you are over-whelmed and feeling despondent, depressed, insecure, self-pitying, disillusioned and worthless, you can find energy and stability by the use of one or more seed oils. You might try one of these oils if you tend to start projects but become dissatisfied with them and throw them away unfinished.

Oils: ajowan, aniseed, caraway, cardamom, carrot seed, celery seed, coriander, cumin, dill, fennel, fenugreek, manuka, nutmeg, parsley

Fruits: Extracted from the fruit of a plant or tree

Physical: One of the various kinds of fruits (from clove buds to citrus fruits) and the oils extracted from them will 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: We all have a need to feel clear, connected and satisfied with ourselves and we usually need to have the respect and approval of those around us. The use of fruit oils helps us to feel kind-hearted, friendly, supportive, and able to take responsibility for ourselves and any project in which we are involved. Just as the fruit of the tree represents the ability of the plant to survive and thrive to fruition, oils from this stage of plant life can help us be finishers, recognized for our diligence and dependability as well as for our joyful, passionate natures.

In need of: Some indicators that you would benefit from an essential oil in this family are being indecisive or just contradictory, being hesitant and cautious, being defensive to the point of unreasonable, being clingy, anxious and oversensitive, or feeling impatient, spiteful, sarcastic and having feelings of inferiority. Your ability to finish projects is limited because of indecision or because of your hurt feelings, which caused you to walk away from something or someone.

Oils: allspice, aniseed, bergamot, black pepper, chaste tree, cinnamon berry, clementine, clove, grapefruit, green pepper, juniper, lemon, lime, litsea cubeba, mandarin, orange, suganda kokila, tangerine, vanilla, Zanthoxylum

- Spices:** Extracted from various parts of plants or trees and commonly recognized as culinary spices
- 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 an extreme state. Conditions that are hypo-this or hyper-that, a severe infection of highly resistant bacteria, complete collapse, extreme fatigue, and volatile emotions are just a few examples of physical conditions the spice oils might be helpful with. There is nothing bland or mediocre to be found here.
- Emotional:** The balance the spice oils can bring to our lives is amazing. We can love life, be animated, happy, warm-hearted, spontaneous, dynamic and self-assured. The spice oils in a blend are there to help us become energetic, productive and practical and they do this by increasing cellular oxygen levels. The spice oils have a stimulating and toning effect on our bodies and minds, and, interestingly, enhance the action and power of other oils in any blend in which they are placed, making them a great example of synergy. Spice oils also illustrate the principle of natural remedies returning the body to a state of homeostasis, or balance, because they often act as both a stimulant when energy levels are low and as a sedative during times when our bodies and minds are stressed and need to rest and relax.
- In need of:** People in need of spice oils have become unbalanced either by burnout (running too fast, too far, and having too much fun) or by the frustration of not achieving their goals and desires, which were usually unrealistic in the first place. If you find yourself being any degree of demanding, resentful, rude, abusive, insulting or you have a tendency to treat others like servants designed to meet your needs, you might consider working on these traits and using the spice oils to help you. Behaving much like a child when our 'wants' are not met, hysteria, panic attacks and depression are other common symptoms.
- Oils:** aniseed, basil, black pepper, caraway, cardamom, cinnamon, clove, coriander, cumin, dill, lemongrass, ginger, marjoram, nutmeg, oregano, rosemary, tarragon, turmeric
- 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 who has a two-fold mission of providing unconditional love and care for as many others as possible, and needing to find that same love and caring for themselves. If you find yourself over-whelmed by the needs of others, no longer consider it a joy to serve or you resent being needed by other people there are probably nutrition deficiencies robbing you of energy.
- In need of:** When over-whelmed, people needing herbal essential oils can become resentful, but they are usually unable to say 'no' or stop taking on everybody else's troubles. They even tend to 'smother' people with their concern and worry and they are unable to let their children grow up or leave home with gracefulness. They tend to get too intimate and intrusive in other people's lives and get insulted when they feel themselves excluded from even the most intimate details of that person's life. If you find yourself forgetting to say thank you to those around you, but need to be thanked for every little thing that you do for others, herbal oils are for you. Perhaps you have even been known to use guilt as tools of manipulation (shame on you!)
- Oils:** basil, clary sage, geranium, hyssop, marjoram, melissa, myrtle, peppermint, spearmint, oregano, rosemary, sage, thyme both red and white, blue yarrow, green yarrow

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

Physical: The essential oils in this category, especially the conifers, have strongly to do with maintaining firmness and strength in our own centers. Any physical ailments on which they have an effect will almost always be driven, at least in part, by a wavering and lack of faith in our own core beliefs and in our ability to live by them. With this being said, they are often useful for glandular system disharmonies and the skin afflictions that result from them. This fact should tell us something about the emotional drivers of glandular problems. Of particular note in this family is sandalwood, which can help us tap into our own inner strength when facing our difficult challenges. Wood oils are also useful for heart irregularities that have their roots in the inability to handle stress or tension.

Emotional: Wood oils aid us in being strong, independent, bold and forthright. People strong in this energy stand for justice and courage and have a great capacity for hard work. They are usually warm-hearted people with a lot of tolerance and compassion for the mistakes that others have made although they, themselves, are moral, self-confident, motivated, perceptive, faithful and steadfast.

In need of: Out of balance wood characteristics include the following: tendencies to dominate; becoming dictatorial and threatening; being 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 by others. At times the wonderful characteristics of balance in wood energy becomes argumentative, egotistical, harsh, vengeful, and severe to the point of meanness. There is often a wood oil somewhere in a blend; its inclusion brings the blend together, adding a sweetness and structure that would otherwise be missing.

Oils: cabreuva, camphor, cedarwood, cypress, galbanum, hinoki, howood, pine, ravensara, rosewood, sandalwood, spruce, cinnamon

Resins: Extracted from the resin or balsam which exudes from the bark of 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, pus filled and inflamed infections, catarrhal conditions, ulcers, and inflammations of any sort. They are also helpful for maintaining or returning elasticity to the skin. Frankincense and myrrh are of particular note in this group of essential oils.

Emotional: If your energy is strong in this area you will be driven, in the best sense of the word, by high ideals. Morality, truth, justice and purity of thought are things you constantly and consciously seek. Your values, principles, and ethics are part of everything you do and you understand that there are principles that underlay every decision of our lives. Deep spirituality is a personal goal but you are usually realistic and tolerant in your dealing with others.

In need of: If these strong personalities make a moral mistake they are devastated and find it difficult to forgive themselves. They are often harshly critical of themselves and can get caught up and immobilized by guilt. When out of balance you will see traits such as being self-righteous, dogmatic, intolerant and very, very angry. The disappointment they feel with themselves or others can lead to discouragement, which is followed closely by nervousness and depression. It feels to them as though it is them, single-handed with no help or hope in sight, against all of the evil forces of the universe!

Oils: benzoin, copaiba balsam, elemi, frankincense, myrrh, opoponax