

COMPLEAT AROMATHERAPY:

essential 10 oils for health and beauty

Aromatherapy is the science of plants and their essential oils — harvested from flowers, stems, bark, or leaves, for example — and the effect these concentrated plant essences and their scents have on our health, our moods, our well-being. For centuries aromatherapy has been key to traditional healing and skin care. In the last century, science began to tap into the benefits that essential oils offer, from biomedical uses to natural cosmetics. Even at the most basic level, who doesn't find a sense of calm at the familiar scents of "home," whatever that presents to each of us — sweet Virginia honeysuckle, or luscious lilac from New England's capes?

Studying aromatherapy is a profession for some, a life-long avocation for others. Intrigued, but don't know where to start? Want to move beyond store-bought scents and dabble into all-natural essential oil-based concoctions? While most natural skincare is best left to the experts, we can all enjoy Nature's gifts with some basic information and a love of scent.

PURCHASING ESSENTIAL OILS

Be sure to purchase your essential oils from a qualified aromatherapist or aromatherapy supplier. To ensure quality, request all-natural, undiluted oils; be aware some companies sell synthetic oils popular with perfumers or candlemakers. Check to make sure your oils are all natural — many may also be available Certified Organic.

Remember that essential oils are concentrated — never use "neat," or directly on the skin. Always mix carriers, or blending agents, with your oils. Jojoba Oil and distilled water are excellent staples for your starter kit.

Always play safe with your essential oils: Although gifts from Nature, they should never be ingested. And keep them out of reach of your children and pets.

AROMATIC STARTER KIT

Start building your aromatherapy kit with 10 essential oils that will open you to a whole new world of aromatic energy: Lavender, Clary Sage, Geranium, Eucalyptus, Peppermint, Bergamot, Lemon, Ylang Ylang, Neroli, and Rosemary.

ESSENTIAL OILS & BLENDING

No aromatherapy kit is complete without the granddaddy of essential oils, **Lavender**. Although there are many varieties of Lavender, *Lavandula angustifolia* or *Lavandula officinalis* is the most popular. Besides having a wonderful scent, Lavender

provides many healing properties — including its healing effect on burns, which launched modern aromatherapy when discovered by a French chemist in the 1930s. Lavender is soothing; start with a few drops in 8 ounces of distilled water in a spray bottle and mist your bedroom and pillows to help instill a relaxing slumber.

Since Lavender is also known for its anti-bacterial and hydrating properties, your Lavender Mist will make an excellent facial spray while traveling. Ward off airborne germs or freshen your space with a few spritzes. For an extra lift, add a few drops of **Clary Sage** (*Salvia sclarea*), a floral note with calming qualities. It might help when your flight is delayed...again!

Clary Sage is also an uplifting scent popular for PMS — especially when blended with a few drops of **Geranium** (*Pelargonium graveolens*), an essential oil known for its balancing properties. Blend these two with your favorite unscented body cream for an aromatic moisturizer.

If you're battling the flu and cold season, arm yourself with **Eucalyptus** (*Eucalyptus globulus*), a bright, light oil used for its respiratory properties. Toss two tablespoons onto your shower floor for an invigorating, sauna-like morning wash that will surely clear your sinuses. And if your child is battling the sniffles, drop three drops in a room vaporizer (drop in three drops of lavender for a bit of calm, as well).

You may already enjoy the uplifting, cooling effects of **Peppermint** (*Mentha piperita*) in your favorite breath mint.



Add Peppermint essential oil to your kit; mix a few drops with Jojoba Oil and rub on temples and stomach to settle an upset stomach or combat nausea or motion sickness.

Stress doesn't have a chance with the additions of **Bergamot** (*Citrus bergamia*) to your kit. A mild citrus oil from the Italian-grown fruit tree, Bergamot, like Lavender, will blend perfectly with any of the oils in your aromatherapy kit. Balancing and uplifting, mix a few drops with six drops of Lavender in your bath for the ultimate mood mellow at the end of a hectic day. Or add six drops to a light ring diffuser (*before* turning on the lamp!) to diffuse its sweet aroma throughout a room.

Since essential oils take on interesting, deeper scents and more beneficial results when blended with one another, try experimenting with blends of three essential oils. Bergamot,

Geranium, and Clary Sage offer a more complex balancing blend perfect for adding to an unscented bath gel.

Lavender and **Ylang Ylang** (*Cananga odorata*), or the romance-inspiring "flower of flowers," will boost your spirits while soothing your senses when blended together: Blend a few drops of each in distilled water for an all-day facial mist — your office mates will envy your smiling calm and scented cubicle!

And dropping in two drops of Clary Sage will reap a lovely facial mist that helps combat the tautness of dry skin.

For an environmental spray the whole family will love, mix sunny **Lemon** (*Citrus limon*) and

Bergamot in a your mister with distilled water to lift spirits and offer double duty as a natural anti-bacterial. For a more complex, "happy" room spray, blend with more citrus oils like Sweet Lime and Pink Grapefruit, and spray liberally to banish mustiness and freshen stale air —

especially handy for far away hotel rooms (or closer-to-home basements).

Neroli (*Citrus aurantium*), or Orange Blossom, is another essential oil from the citrus family. Sweet and uplifting, Neroli is renowned for its

anti-aging properties — cosmetic companies worldwide add it to skincare. You can, too: Blend two drops of this premium oil with a dime-size dollop of your favorite facial moisturizer and lightly massage into your skin. (The scent alone is abhh-inspiring!)

Rounding out your starter kit oils is **Rosemary** (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), one of the earliest plants to be used in aromatherapy. Blend with Peppermint for a natural germ-fighting household surface cleanser. It will invigorate the senses and make cleaning a breeze! Or since some scientists believe Rosemary increases energy, mix a few drops with Lemon essential oil in distilled water for an invigorating pre-workout mist.

LIVING WITH SCENT

For more robust aromatherapy mists, venture into using floral waters, such as Orange Blossom or Lavender Water, with your mister blends. Or boost your evening bath with a blend of your favorite oils and 1 cup Epsom Salts — a Salts blend with Rosemary and Eucalyptus is terrific for sore, post-workout muscles.

Certainly aromatherapy is no substitute for the medical expertise of your family physician, but it certainly adds a spice to life and a natural healing therapy for skincare and daily living. These 10 essential oils have more wonderful elements, but getting started with some simple uses is a enjoyable introduction to the scores of essential oils offering a world of scent to daily living.

