

## Introduction to Essential Oils

Plants have an innate ability to protect themselves. They cannot flee, they cannot itch themselves, they cannot seek foods that might comfort them. Each plant with their own unique make-up, has the power to adapt to their environment and even produce antibodies to protect them from outward threats. These abilities are contained in the essence of the plant.

Essential Oils are volatile, non-oily aromatic liquids naturally occurring in various parts of plants: trees, herbs, flowers, fruits, woods and spices. Most essential oils are made up of between 100-600 naturally occurring chemical components. These oils are obtained through distilling the portion of the plant which contains the secretory structure which houses the adaptive and protective essences of plants.

In distillation, the liquid produced has two parts. There is a light liquid on the bottom and a heavier liquid on the top, like fat rising to the top in a gravy or soup. This top liquid (which does not mix with the lighter water) is skimmed off. This is the essential oil and the water that remains is called a hydrolat, hydrosol, or flower water. Essential oils are highly concentrated and in most cases best used diluted in specialized carriers.

Essential oils have three distinct modes in how they relate with the human body:

- Pharmacological: the chemical changes that take place when the essential oil enters the blood stream, tissue, and brain.
- Physiological: how an essential oil affects a system of the body – stimulated or sedated
- Psychological: personalized response to the smell of an essential oil centralized in the limbic part of the brain.

Blends of oils are used to combine the chemical essences of oils to create personalized solutions. Like medicines and diets, essential oils affect every person differently and can over time stop being effective. What works for one might not work for another and a new blend or oil might find a different level of success.

Combined with medical support, proper diet, healthy lifestyle and common sense - essential oils can be a tool in many people's personal self-care.