



Gergely Hollódi

**INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL SCHOLES**

*The term 'aromatherapy' was coined by René-Maurice Gattefossé in the 1930s and first appeared in print with the publication of his book, Aromathérapie: Les Huiles Essentielles, Hormones Végétales in French, first published in English in 1993. Many enthusiastic and professional people – coming from a scientific background or not – lay out the path for education and popularising aromatherapy in the coming decades. We experience a changing world around us with many challenges and changing trends in and around our beloved 'therapy' that was initially built on the healing properties of essential oils. With a newer generation evolving, we wanted to know about the individuals – or we can call them pioneers or GIANTS – who worked effortlessly to get this field accepted. In this edition, Aromatika editor-in-chief Gergely Hollódi interviewed **Michael Scholes**, who has been teaching aromatherapy, researching and meticulously collecting essential oils and aromatics for over 36 years.*

### **How did you initially get involved with aromatherapy, and what made you start working with essential oils?**

First and foremost, I did not get here by myself. I must thank so many teachers, colleagues, partners, students, customers, and friends especially Joan Clark (joan-clark.com), who each had a part to play. I was destined to find aromatic plants as I had lived in California for three years from 1982 to 1985 and experienced and soaked up a wide variety of alternative medicines including nutrition, Chinese medicine, herbs, massage, psychology, therapy, health, and wellness. This was the perfect foundation for the opening a farm-to-table holistic bed and breakfast in Shropshire, UK. My wife Teena and I were open to everything and everyone but certainly aligned with those who came before us in the early '70s in California. I must thank her for my introduction to the world of aromatics in 1987 as it is she who saw an article in the British women's fashion magazine, "Harpers and Queen" that featured two French gentlemen, one a medical doctor, Daniel Pénoël M.D., and the other an aromatologist and pharmacologist, Pierre Franchomme. After reading the article we jumped in the car and drove 50 miles to a place that sold essential oils and formulations in Llandrindod Wells in Wales. We purchased over 200 dollars' worth of essential oil blends we could not comprehend or understand. We sat there and looked at them not knowing what to do. Something profound had occurred, something had changed, and I was not aware of the degree of the change that was about to happen, and it was an amazing feeling.

About a week later I was in London, picking up supplies for our "Inn at Seventh Heaven". On the way out of London, I saw a banner across the street that advertised a "Health Fair Today". I pulled over and went in and I wasn't in there for more than five minutes when I saw this table with hundreds of little bottles with almost no identification whatsoever, except for some identifying marks on top of each bottle. Two men stood there and shared that they were single-note essential oils. I started talking to these two gentlemen and it was mind-blowing that they knew so much about something I really didn't know anything about. For every question I asked they gave me reams of information in terms of botanical information and medicinal properties. We sat together for a few hours and by the end of the afternoon I had volunteered to arrange a class for them in London even though I had never done this before. Something inside me said, "*This is what you're going to do for the rest of your life!*". On arriving back at the Inn, it was only then that I recognized that the two gentlemen I talked to were the same two gentlemen who were mentioned in the article.

Six weeks later we held a class at a naturopathic college in London and over 30 people attended including Robert Tisserand, Shirley Price, and the owners of many respected essential oil companies. This was before aromatic chemistry was a thing and before the French method of using essential oils as medicine was recognized in the English-speaking world. I was later recognized by my friends Daniel and Pierre for introducing French aromatic medicine to the English-speaking world. We took two days to review 12 es-



I am so committed to this path that I have made. It's my life's work and mission. Part of that journey has been to learn everything I can from the greats and teach alongside each one of them as part of my own learning and claiming my rightful place in history.

essential oils in such detail that every word was written down by every student attending and the enthusiasm was nothing I had ever witnessed in my life. I received no monetary compensation for my efforts, and this was clearly about the larger picture and initiation into the subject. However, I was compensated with a few essential oils which I still have in my collection and library including a 36-year-old frankincense, myrrh, and vetiver. I soon discovered that I had not started working with essential oils, they had already started working with me.

### **Where did you start your career?**

My aromatic career started the day I met Daniel and Pierre and the class that followed. In between our meeting and the class, I went to France to the outskirts of



> Paris and later to Toulouse in the South. I wanted to experience first-hand all that I had witnessed and heard so far. Daniel, his wife Rosemary, and three children welcomed me into their lives, and I became Daniels's apprentice, assistant, and intuitive.



**Michael with Daniel Pénoël and his wife Rosemary, 2018.**

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It was all very surreal. We eventually headed back to Paris and then soon after my wife Teena and I headed back to the US to reside permanently. What would I now do with my newly developed nose and skills? After a few months, I reached out to Marcel Lavabre who was the owner of Aroma Vera in Los Angeles, one of the only essential oil companies in the US. I started working for Mar-



**Michael created the classes for Aromatherapy seminars, end of the 1980s.**

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**Marcel Lavabre (left) and Michael teaching together, early 1990s.**

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cel in customer service and sales during the day and promoted classes in the evenings and weekends, beginning with classes that were 2–3 hours, one day, weekends, and our 5-day Certification Course. Marcel and I created two divisions, Marcel operated Aroma Vera, with all the essential oils and products and I developed the classes that branched off and became Aromatherapy Seminars through live and home study modules.

### ***What is your first memory about your first contact with essential oils?***

I don't remember a specific oil. When I first smelled my first single note, I could not comprehend what it was as I had no memory, words, or vocabulary to describe what I was experiencing and nothing smelled familiar. I knew what herbs smelled like and I knew some flavors, I couldn't comprehend something so pungent, piercing, or as concentrated that smelled so medicinal. I had no vocabulary or language that I was able to describe what I was experiencing. My brain was firing, and it was soaking up every single molecule. It's the one thing that had been missing in my life, a library of aromatic molecules that would find their way into receptors that would change the way I would think and feel about everything. When I asked what they were, I would listen attentively and ask what's this one for, what's that one, and how can I use this one. One fragrant memory I can recall was not from my first contact with essential oils but from a memory of the first Christmas with my

first love when I was 17 in England. Her favorite perfume was "Youth Dew" by Ester Lauder (created in 1953). I bought it as a Christmas gift for our first Christmas together. I was unaware that it contained notes of rose, lavender, jasmine, spices, moss, patchouli, and vetiver. I remember it as if it was yesterday. I remember that it was Christmas Eve, it was dark outside, around 5 pm, it was cold, I was excited, the store was lit up, it was fancy, love was in the air, and I was in love. All these feelings and sensations were laid down in memory through the smell that captured the moment. I recently purchased a vintage bottle of this perfume, and it smells the same and swept me off my feet for the second time.

### ***Who did you study with?***

In my personal journey, I studied first with Daniel and Pierre in England and France. While in England I studied massage and essential oils combined with essential oil understanding. This consisted of using between 10 and 20 essential oils. It was Marcel Lavabre who introduced me to Aromatic Botany. Marcel grew up in the lavender-growing region of southern France and was a producer of essential oils and had experience in the production from gathering plants to distillation. Marcel wrote an exceptional book "*The Aromatherapy Workbook*" that was renamed "*Essential Oils and Aromatherapy*" in 2020. Soon after I met John Steele who is a renowned aromatherapist, archaeologist, author, and collector of some of the finest

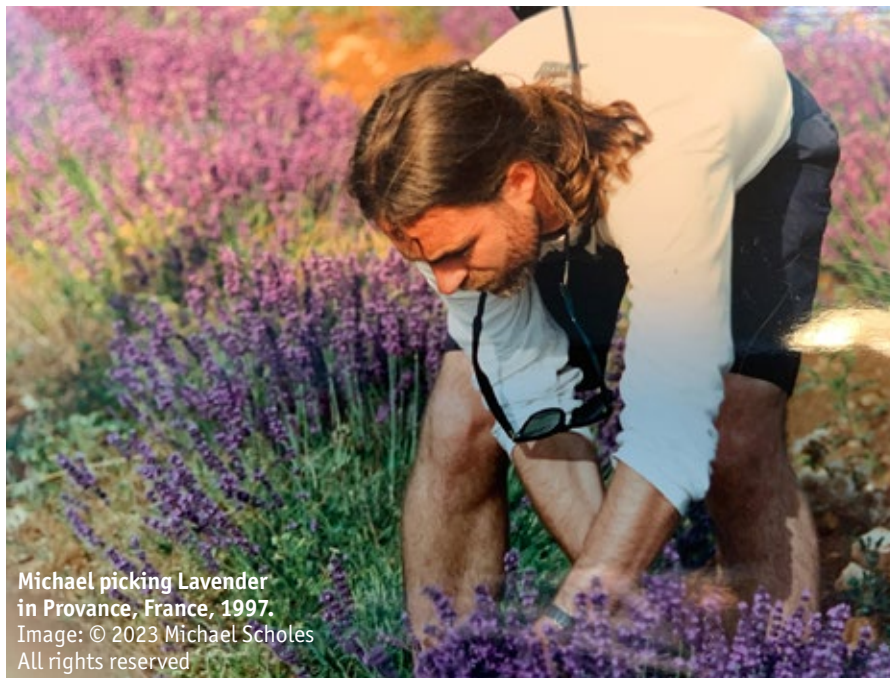
> essential oils and exotic floral absolutes available anywhere.

I met Kurt Schnaubelt in the south of France in 1987 when he was leaving a meeting with Pierre as I was entering the same room. I attended many of his conferences and classes. Kurt holds a Ph.D. in chemistry and is the founder and scientific director of the Pacific Institute of Aromatherapy in San Francisco.

Marcel was botanically connected; Pierre was connected to science and coined the word chemotype; Dr. Péroël was the master of formulating therapeutic blends and medicinal applications; Kurt was the chemist and German philosopher and John, the archeologist, aromatic explorer, and collector. Most are authors, writers, and keynote speakers and are published with over 300 years of combined experience. Each one is a philosopher of sorts having had individual encounters and personal experiences that incorporate subjects and interests that go way beyond fragrance. Each has weaved their individual beliefs and discoveries into their teaching. What each of these greats has in common is their love for aromatic plants and a desire to share their wisdom.

Everybody was well on their aromatic journey before I arrived on the scene. I am an intuitive, practitioner, formulator, researcher, healer, and teacher with over 36 years and over 100,000 hours of experience in all things aromatic. I am so committed to this path that I have made. It is my life's work and mission. Part of that journey has been to learn everything I can from the greats and teach alongside each one of them as part of my own learning and claiming my rightful place in history. In addition, to add my own piece to the aromatic puzzle and to this foundation of wisdom.

The aromatic world we now live in would not have existed if it were not for the dozens of people who have contributed in small, large, and meaningful ways. There are too many to name and this included all the students who have studied and provided a forum for each teacher. It is also worth noting that in 1987, before cell phones and computers, every country was at a different stage of aromatic evolution and awakening and there was



Michael picking Lavender in Provence, France, 1997.  
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Michael teaching outside, 1990s.  
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no Google, Alexa, Siri, or AI. The only way to study was to read books, go to libraries and attend live classes and events. France has its aromatic foundation in medicine and England has many essential oils suppliers and massage practitioners. At the same time, North America had few suppliers or data. Much of what was known came from knowledge of herbs that was extensive. While herbs and es-

sential oils have some overlap, as they are both derived from plants, they really are very different. There was very little reliable or accurate data on essential oil for the public and suppliers grabbed what they could from classes, workshops, books, journals, and translations. It really was "learn as you go", and the first class that I taught alone in Seattle I barely knew what I was doing, and the only ad-

> vantage was that nobody else knew much of anything on the subject. Since then, information has grown exponentially and is now more integrated with easy Google University access. I shared what I knew, repeated what I had learned, and expanded my knowledge base from all the questions that I was asked. I must have repeated the same answers for almost 40 years and then added some of my own discovery and personal testimony.

### **Who was your inspiration or the most influential person?**

Everybody was special in one way or another, but Daniel Péroël was somebody extra special. He was the first person I ever met in aromatherapy. Daniel not only speaks English well but is an M.D., specializing in aromatherapy, phytotherapy, and homeopathy. He has had thousands of patients who benefited from his intervention. I personally witnessed patients with serious burns, infections, mental disorders, and immune compromise. He is fully versed in every single essential oil and is familiar with the benefits, dosages, applications, side effects, toxicology, and safety. Not as a scientist or researcher but as someone who helps patients and is hands-on with clients with proven results. He sees real people, real patients with real problems. He inspires, motivates, is passionate, and is deeply knowledgeable about many alternative therapies. I soon recognized this is real medicine and nature's medicine. We taught on the same stage many times and shared hundreds of hours together. He truly is a walking encyclopedia, and his teaching goes well beyond the subject of aromatherapy and includes quantum physics. Without his perspective, I do not really know that I would have been on this journey. He gave me the foundation and support to develop my own style and focus. His friendship confirmed that I had value and purpose and the desire to go beyond even my own limitations. Having had no background in botanical plants, chemistry, science, Chinese medicine, or application to name but a few examples, this subject forged me into who I am today. I am an

example that anything is possible once you commit to something. This subject allowed me to go in just about any direction and demonstrates that what we desire and develop can occur in our own style and expertise. Daniel set the bar very high, and I strived to live the aromatic life and know the essential oils intimately as if they were inside of me and part of me.

### **What is/was your philosophy in teaching aromatherapy?**

These complex, highly evolved, aromatic plants have affected me so deeply that they have even provoked me to go deeper and ask questions regarding where they came from, but who is the master architect and who or what created this highly evolved complex botanical world? I personally give it all to God, an infinite God, beyond any other form of explanation, including evolution. As third-dimensional beings, we often put emphasis on what we can see, including science. What we cannot see we have to feel or sense and that may be challenging if we either do not feel much or we give priority to what we think. What we see in botanical plants, especially aromatic ones, is more than what we can measure under a microscope or through scientific evaluation. Essential oil can be seen but the scent itself cannot be seen and our brains are impacted well before our cognitive brain detects the smell. Since smells are processed primarily in the limbic system, these scents, or complex combinations of aromatic molecules, go where they need to go and latch onto receptors. They deeply impact our internal chemistry, energetically and specifically, through our endocrine system including moods and emotions. In an instant, they can modify our breathing, increase our circulation, affect our thinking, lower our heart rate, and open our minds to endless possibilities.

My philosophy is simple and yet simple can be complex. It explores the symbiotic relationship between aromatics plants and humans. The focus is on how we are receptive to aromatic molecules and how these molecules are necessary if we are to thrive physically and every other way. If you fully accept this philosophy, it will

be easier to see the energetics as opposed to focusing on essential oils as a separate entity.

This philosophy is my aromatic blueprint in explaining why essential oils are limitless in action and effect.

**1.** We evolved with, and alongside, aromatic plants and all aromatic molecules are useful and compatible with humans. These aromatic plants are the source of life everlasting and when distilled are highly concentrated and if stored at optimal temperatures, away from direct sunlight, can last a lifetime or even an eternity. They are pure potential energy and are only released once you take them out of the bottle or take the cap off. We are designed to capture and absorb this potential energy that can be used during our lifetime. This is a gift that constantly reminds us that it is the essence within ourselves that is unique and not the physical body and its basic needs.

**2.** By design, everything is within us, perfectly crafted and created and we can heal from almost everything as we were designed this way. Using essential oils daily can help fine-tune, boost, regulate, and harmonize with all human emotions such as love, compassion, humility, kindness, gratitude, trust, peace, and even faith.

**3.** Aromatic molecules can bind to receptors within us and enhance, reawaken, and activate all our internal systems and regulate our immune systems. They are very helpful for most of what ails us due to physical and energetic stagnation. Aromatic plants have everything to give, and we are highly receptive to receive.

**4.** Plants must die for the essence of the plant to live in another form and from the minute we are born we are also slowly dying so it is logical that the application of essential oils helps slow down the process by applying oils that are self-regulating and balancing and good for longevity.

**5.** Plants contain more than the sum of the parts and often contain constituents that do not exist in the plant but only appear during distillation. The same is true of humans where we are much more than flesh and bones. You cannot see a scent and you also cannot see the essence within us. It is the essence within us that defines who we really are.

> 6. Plants give unconditionally and require nothing in return. We are designed to give in a similar way to add something, not remove something from the world.

7. Plants change their internal chemistry when stressed by the environment where they learn to adapt. When we are stressed, we often do not adapt so well so it makes sense to use essential oils that can help us to adapt to changing circumstances.

8. Aromatic plants have secondary metabolites that are not essential for their growth, development, or reproduction. They exist in the plants as something extra and in addition to their survival and need to reproduce. We also have something within us that is greater and beyond our survival instincts and basic drives. Essential oils help us to go beyond sickness and survival to thrive beyond the physical where we can give and not take and serve one another. They are truly life-enhancing.

9. Plants create up to 3,000 aromatic constituents, many are specific and target the lungs, digestive system and target inflammation, pain, vitality, and the immune system. There are other constituents that are so gentle, subtle and often exist in small amounts. These target the emotional, spiritual and energetic body binding to receptors and finetune our internal chemistry.

10. There is a group of essential oil(s) that are tailor-made for each of us. In addition, specific aromatic constituents that will affect every part of our lives. When used continuously they prop us up when facing challenges and keeps us intact and fully functioning at the optimum level. Energetically, they are the most vibrant molecules. In their pure state, they are the ultimate way of shifting energy in the body. Disease starts when all aspects of ourselves is not in alignment and where we're living in a world where we're reacting to the world and not acting according to our greater good.

***Your approach to treatments is what you call multi-sensory-based. Can you explain a bit more?***

I never started out planning to do body work even though I had received a certificate in 1987, from training in England that



Michael visiting a Lavender supplier in Provence, France, 1997.  
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combined essential oils and massage. In early 2000 a very close friend of mine became the Spa Director of the Ritz Carlton in Puerto Rico. She had asked me if I could design a treatment that would be similar to "Rain Drop Therapy". While I was familiar with this treatment, I decided to design my own Restorative Treatment based on 16 aromatherapy steps using 10 essential oils, 5 synergies, and five specialty products applied on the whole body, along the spine, and including the scalp, hands, and feet. It was an instant hit and is now in several luxury spas throughout North America. Since I already designed an organic bath body, skin, and hair line I adapted to suit and custom fragranced each product. Today, I have designed several treatments in addition to Restorative and including Drift to Sleep, Green Your Body, Elements, Chi Massage, Counterbalance, Mood, and Intuitive.

If you really want to find out what the body needs, you must really learn what the body needs in all kinds of scenarios and then work backward by matching the symptoms with the organ systems and meridians. This methodology combines touch

with multiple sensory application methods and essential oil combinations or blends that will be most suitable. Once this is achieved, I decide on what delivery system to use. This can be in the form of massage oil, using a selection of multiple oils and blends, body scrubs, body muds, seaweed, bath milk, scalp nourishment, hand and foot balms, and skin exfoliation. Various essential oil blends are added to these bases and/or applied in small concentrations directly to specific points, systems, or parts of the body. In addition, using tools like hot stones, bamboo, and ayurvedic metal wands. The conclusion I have come to, after hundreds of treatments, is the body responds well to multi-sensory experiences. Using bases that offer different sensations, varying the pressure; using long, short, and continuous strokes; anointing the chakras, and using multiple blends and single notes that are used through inhalation and application. These can be applied to different zones including the scalp, face, neck and shoulders, hands, and feet. While essential oils are already powerful and therapeutic, they need to be combined with therapeutic

tic touch customized to the individual for optimum results. Where the body is receptive and connected essential oils help to relax and let go. Mixing it up and not being so predictable that the client knows what to expect next. Finally, every time a different essential oil or blend is used have the client smell from your hands or under the massage cradle.

***You did a lot of work in formulating. What is your approach or model for creating blends?***

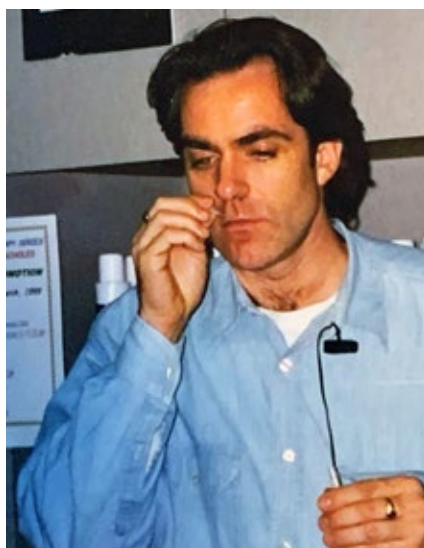
From mixing to formulating to finding alchemical solutions, there is only so much you can learn through reading. The true art of blending is when you create a blend. It is so much more than knowing the notes, the chemistry, the botany, percentages, concentration, toxicity, and dosages. It really is like music when you have many notes that are at your disposal, and it is something magical when you place them on a page and create a composition. Even with words, there are so many to choose from, but it is not only the words you choose but the order you put the words in that turns a statement into something that impacts one so deeply. Yes, you can attempt to remember all the information needed but when it comes to making the final blend use your intuition above all else. The goal is to make a blend that smells great, that is designed for a specific purpose or specific client, and perhaps with an intention. It must be chemical and botanically balanced, effective, smell good, and be affordable. When applied often it can change someone's perceptions of themselves, relieve a condition or symptom, and help heal energetically.

There are many layers in a blend. The physical is impacted directly as you can feel it when applied. The emotion can take time as it permeates throughout the olfactory system and begins to affect your internal chemistry, receptors, and internal recalibration. On a subtle or even spiritual level fragrance can affect how you feel beyond yourself as it relates to the larger picture relating to your own existence.

When I'm talking to a client, in a con-

sultation, I am making notes, but also making a list of oils that I think would be beneficial as well as what the client is looking to achieve and their intention. This involves the purpose of the blend which could be something for a physical, emotional, psychological, spiritual, or energetic need or desire. I begin writing down individual essential oils as the client responds to specific questions or responses. It's not too different from a sketch artist who draws a picture from what people are reporting about how someone looks. Filling in the gaps and identifying what the client is not saying as I attempt to join all the dots.

At the end of an hour's consultation, I may have listed 30–40 oils on a piece of paper. I then go through the list by sub-categorizing it into three or four different columns of the essential oils that go well together. Each column will have a theme that is connected to the part of what the client is attempting to address. The client ultimately decides what is their priority as to what they need, how many blends they need, and what they can afford. I then give a list of options from a concentrated synergy to something for the body, bath, or skin, diffuser, and even a perfume. It's even possible to take oils from all the columns and make one master blend that may be effective as an overall blend that can be



**Scent identification in Hong Kong.**  
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worn daily to address all the client's concerns, from the physical to the emotional and right through to the energetic.

This is also an alchemical or magical process where aromatic notes are bouncing around in my head and transforming what is said into notes and images that end up in the final concoctions. Something magical is happening as all the notes fight to be in the bottle. It is my job to make it happen where there is always a part of me in the blend and where the resulting formulation ends up being more than the sum of the parts. The true magic in this mathematical equation is how many drops one uses of each oil and what concentration the client will receive the most benefit.

This process can take time and any blend that I have made for my own collection may have taken weeks, months, or even years to concoct. With all 750 essential oils at my disposal, it's sometimes what notes, and essential oils are shouting the most in my head that takes center stage in the blend.

***Why 'Laboratory of Flowers'? I think many identify you with this pseudonym. What's the symbolism behind?***

The *Laboratory* represents the Science of the fragrance, and the *Flowers* represent nature in its entirety and its botanical roots. Like any laboratory, there are calibrated beakers, measures, flasks, jugs, and pipettes. Like any garden, there is beauty, color, plant material, raw ingredients, and smells. Lots of smells. The lab represents science, research, teaching, investigation, formulating, and accuracy. The flowers represent all things that grow in nature, not the



aromatic, but also the non-aromatic, plants that sometimes cannot easily be differentiated from other plants but are the herbs found in herbal medicines.

The Laboratory of Flowers combines both in that there is not one essential oil in the Lab that is not supported by documentation, research, journals, and a vast library of books and personal experience. A laboratory without flowers would be modern-day medicine and flowers without the laboratory would be purely folklore. We are not manufacturing drugs or chemicals, we're mixing botanical formulations that are chemical in nature, but they are not synthetic chemicals which is what we assume chemicals are. They are plant-based creations, remedies, constituents, and molecules, pure and simple.

While I have a Lab where I mix and concoct it's a far cry from the ultra-sterile environment of a modern-day laboratory. It does contain air filtration and is climate controlled but it is more equivalent to a kitchen than a science lab where I am surrounded by over 750 essential oils, over 35 carrier oils, and multiple unscented bases including creams, lotions, scrubs, masks, and infused oils. It is here that I spend half my days carefully formulating oils together in a very specific sequence, hand mixing and filling with no electric filling machines, and where all the essential oils and absolutes are bottled fresh and made to order.

***I know you have - what you call - a 'library of fragrance'. Can you tell us a bit about it?***

The *Library of Fragrance* AKA Laboratory of Flowers is a place to view and sample all the fragrant possibilities in one place. As an educator, I align more with education than commerce and in the beginning, the idea of having a store felt distracting from my overall purpose. I have always wanted to differentiate a sales platform from a library. A sales platform is where you go to buy something as opposed to a library which is somewhere you go to study, learn, or research. Even though I have an online store I only see it as an extension of what I teach. My intention is to look at my collection similarly to a seed bank, where



**The Laboratory of flowers in 1997.**

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**...and in 2019.**

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I store and catalog each oil, its country of origin, its botanical name, and sub-species. It's a reference in time and through time to preserve the collection for generations to come. While I am willing to share my Library of Fragrance, I am committed to keeping a small amount of each oil for research and scent comparison even as many age over time, and where I rotate stocks often to maintain freshness. It is ongoing and constantly changing. My nose knows what it is looking for and has recorded what a true essential oil smells like and I ask myself does the oil I am purchasing pass the smell test. It must be close to, but not the same, as the emerging aromas adapt to an ever-changing world that is adjusting to what is needed now.

The Library of Fragrance only exists to showcase personally selected essential oils that are available in smaller sizes that give more people the opportunity to sample up to 750 essential oils under one roof. It gives you, the essential oil enthusiast, an opportunity to experience a true essential oil to begin and build your own collection. It's one thing to know an individual essential oil it's another to compare it with other essential oils from various countries, altitudes, and soil types. It's also another thing to compare different varieties within the plants such as eucalyptus globulus vs. eucalyptus dives, radiata, and Staigeriana, to name but a few. Each essential oil belongs to a botanical family, and it is useful to sample other plants and essential oils in the family. The library gives the student an opportunity to read my own interpretation in addition to what you may already know or what has already been written. This includes therapeutic qualities, broad-spectrum application, historical significance, energetics, aromatic wisdom, know-how, and what I have perceived after working, smelling, formulating, and combining in over 1750 formulations.

The *Library of Fragrance* contains 96 genus, multiple species, subspecies, and chemotypes from approximately 68 countries. They are sourced from wild-crafted, certified organic, and bio-dynamic sources including vintage, aged, rare, precious, premium, and select sources. I have sought high and low, far, and wide for oils that represent the best that nature has to offer. We also offer conventional sourcing and pesticide-free for comparison. Most of our oils are available in small sizes as small as 2ml or 4ml to sample and where you can add them to your own personal library. It's not static, new varieties arrive monthly. Sometimes oils are missing, sometimes oils are added, some disappear into the archives, some are out of stock, and some are not available due to low inventory or disappearing sources, low yields, and diminishing demand.

The library is a source of aromatic wisdom making it easier to find the ordinary and the extraordinary that will match your own journey whether physiological, chemical, or emotional that match your



> own personality. We are highly tuned and highly complex human beings looking to fine-tune our chemistry, so we can become balanced, purposeful, harmonized, aligned, and in tune with the world that we share. Within the aromatic world is a collection of aromatic plants for everyone that when discovered and used daily will help restore inner peace and align with purpose. This collection can and will need to be adjusted as we transform, let go and change for the better. Sometimes we need something physical, sometimes emotional, even spiritual, or just to help us let go, open our hearts, or change our view of the world. Often, we are angry, fearful, depressed, or stressed out and we are looking for a way out not just from one oil but a collection that when used or combined can help us overcome what troubles us.

This collection is very personal, and it is a record of my scented journey as each oil was introduced at a different time of my life when I was looking and searching for direction, meaning, and introspection. In 1987, at the beginning of my aromatic career, it was hard to find reliable sourcing, variety, and certified quality. All the plants were in place, and the distillers were distilling but the aromatherapy marketplace was not yet fully formed and integrated. The masses had not yet woken up to the emerging aromatic revolution. Today, everything is available and artisan-crafted distillers have access to global markets that are accessible through quick delivery where the oils are tested for their authenticity.

As an essential oil enthusiast if you do not have the oil in front of your nose then whatever you research cannot be fully stored in long-term memory. I collected oils so I could teach them and learn all their subtle undertones and notes. It just got out of hand when I became a collector. This began when I started to source lavender and it has grown to 29 varieties from every corner of the globe. It's only when you have many varieties that you see that lavender has many nuances depending on the country, soil, climate, location, altitude, and species. It's a fragrance, a single-note perfume, no two are alike and each has a unique profile and appeal. When I hear that somebody does not like laven-

der, I always want to ask which one of the multitudes you do not like.

My intention is to encourage you to experience a cross-section of essential oils at a price that is affordable, where you get to sample something before you decide to either purchase more from me or from somebody else. My promise is to find every oil that completes the library and our missing link to that plant or what is missing within.

### ***What do you think of the greatest achievement in your aromatherapy career?***

My consistency, commitment, steadfast and determined nature where I have not waived and have been fully engaged in this subject for the past 13,140 days (as of July 9, 2023). It is my life's work. A seed was planted the first moment that I smelled my first essential oil. Not only have I grown but I now see a whole new world emerging where everyone who has been affected and engaged in this life-enhancing aromatic world has changed. In a recent search on my computer, I found over 100,000 files in Microsoft Word with over 90% being related to this subject. I have cataloged everything including every audio recording of every class and event I have participated in from the beginning. This includes Aromatherapy 1990, one the largest events and trade shows on aromatherapy that took place in Santa Monica in Los Angeles. During this event, there were three tracks of lectures on Psycho Aromatherapy, Medicinal Aromatherapy, and Body and Skin running simultaneously.

My goal from the beginning was to learn everything I could and share what I have learned as well as to live an aromatic life and to create original thoughts. I see now that it is part of my destiny. I had no ulterior motive; I became a human sponge. There is so much information on this subject and even I knew that the only way to remember was through repetition so that's why I started teaching. Once I started it was clear that I had to go far, wide, and deep. I only started selling essential oils by request from students. I have discovered that knowledge is different from know-how in that one can only integrate the subject



**Master of Ceremonies at Aromatherapy 1990, Santa Monica, California, USA.**

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when what you know gets laid down into memory when you smell, apply, and use essential oils daily and repeat every day.

I do feel like I've been a conduit for bringing people together and have been instrumental, at key moments, regarding what I've been teaching. My students and customers have been my biggest teachers, supporters, and advocates. I think my greatest contribution goes beyond essential oils and what they can do for people who suffer in one form or another. After all, essential oils are a means to an end and not everything for everyone. We must sometimes look beyond the oils and ask ourselves what is next. If we achieve peace and calm, balance and harmony, immunity and vitality, wisdom, and clarity, will we be able to see and feel differently? Will healing occur due to finding a new state of mind and inner peace? Is this the sole purpose for our life so we can feel on every level and open our hearts? Is this what nature is teaching us? Do aromatic plants open us up to this possibility by changing the way we think and process our thoughts? And by changing our physiology, changing our emotions, and our ability to express does this connect us to something greater than ourselves? These are questions I constantly ask myself. I can conclude that this world is truly magical if we focus on what is real and true and become advocates for change.

This can be achieved every day, every

hour, if necessary, to have an ongoing connection with nature using pure essential oils, complex formulations, and ease of use through formulations that are blended into personal care products and used often.

### **What was the biggest challenge in your aromatherapy career?**

Balancing my personal needs and what I feel is for the greater good and the amount of discipline needed, and self-sacrifice required. After all, I could have been in life more but chose to do what I have done for my own healing and transformation. Even at the expense of personal relationships as well as my role as a father to my son Lane, and of those close to me. There are too many aromatic plants and oil and not enough time.

### **What do you think about the present trends in aromatherapy - worldwide and in the US?**

There are 66 million results on Google when you type in the word Aromatherapy, 373 million regarding essential oils, and 142 million when I asked, "How many people use essential oils?". No matter what the number it seems to be growing exponentially. There is evidence to suggest that essential oils have gone mainstream where people are using essential oils in personal care products that are already fragranced, where there is little need for instruction or direction. Then there are those who own essential oils but mainly received a Google education. Next are those who own a larger selection of essential oils, and books and have taken some online classes. Stepping up really means more oils, more books, and more education, online and some live events. Then comes professional applications, resellers, and people who solely make their living where essential oils and services are up front and center. And of course, the multi-level companies such as Young Living and Do Terra where people are creating a business that also has a lot of information on the oils and products they are selling.

**Less is more.** Since demand is high so is supply and when something is monetized you must keep selling to make ends meet. This can only lead to one thing and

that is consumers only buy more when they are encouraged to use more. My philosophy is less is more and the only time we must use more is when we have physical pain and immune compromise or when we are sick. Other than that, one drop or less will suffice smelled from the bottle, or rubbed between your hands, and where the hands are placed on a part of the body that needs attention.

**Sustainability** in a climate-impacted world is going to be challenging. Plants may migrate like birds when they can no longer thrive in extreme conditions. But it will take time to resettle in places that do not offer the terrain. There must be enough for everyone, not just those with resources as they are the medicine of the past, the present, and the future. Entire forests of rosewood, frankincense, and sandalwood are disappearing rapidly, and frankincense trees are being bled twice per year instead of the tradition of only once. Some oils are hard to find and impossible to locate due to climate and as well as limited demand. If we lose a species, we should at least have a sample of oil as a reference.

**Quality** is suspect. What oils are being sold at prices that are so low? It questions what is in the bottle. Is something organic or is this a certificate on a mediocre oil? From farm to table is a premise that assures that what you eat has been tracked and monitored throughout. The lack of standards is like the wild west. Companies in India, Malaysia, and elsewhere who know too much about chemistry infiltrate the market with fake oils at prices too good to be true and where everything is always in stock. If your first encounter is a synthetic that smells so good, even though it is fake, it may make you question something that is real in the future. True Essential oils are precious, they need to be cultivated with care, stored correctly, and used sparingly and wisely. They are often sacred, have been used traditionally, and can restore you to wholeness when under stress. Due to stresses all around the quality, the smells, the potency, and the beauty is diminishing.

**Availability** is moving more towards mass-produced or commercially created oils that lack the personal touch found in small-batch distillations found in remote

locations, that have more interesting profiles, and a wider bandwidth of benefits. The trend of adjusting the blend with specific constituents such as linalool or menthol only makes everything feel the same or homogenized. We need variety in order to grow. Analysis is important but not everything. People search for certificates of analysis that cannot be understood by most instead of fine-tuning their noses to detect subtle notes of excellence. What happened to the phrase the nose knows?

**Sourcing** is very important and there is a trend towards "Any Country of origin will do". Aromatic plants can be grown and do grow in many countries. However, there is a hierarchy of countries that have generational historical significance in having the same plants growing in the same location for generations.

**Tools** are important such as blending programs like Dropsmith or LabAroma where you can receive assistance when your skills may be lacking. AI may have a role where you can seek out the specific information that you are looking for regarding finding a specific essential oil for a specific purpose that would include all the supporting evidence. It may also be useful in researching what blends well with what and finding information on a specific species.

**Grow and distill your own plants.** There was a time when many houses had a still, especially in Europe, where they distilled the plants that were being grown in the local environment. After all, it's not quantity that counts, it's quality.

**Therapy as in the therapy in Aromatherapy.** This would be helpful where essential oils could be incorporated into therapy sessions to calm the client in order to be able to access memory and lost emotions. This is especially true if someone is suffering from PTSD or attention deficit. Essential oils can be very useful in modulating chemical imbalances that lead to depression and dementia, so people are able to feel again.

### **How do you envision aromatherapy in 10 years? And 20 years?**

Aromatherapy and essential oils will undoubtedly enter a third phase in its

> evolution and possibly reach mass use where people will wake up and take back their health and their minds. There are four scenarios, good, not-so-good, bad, or catastrophic. It will be good if we can slow down, consume less, be mindful, grow more, eat less, and use essential oils every day as a preventative. Not as an alternative to medicine, but as medicine. It will not be good if continue to use all our natural resources for anything other than what benefits life itself where we continue being at war, especially with ourselves. It will be bad if nothing changes, and we just hold onto hope. It will be catastrophic if nature fights back using weather as its weapon regarding mass displacement, destruction, and food shortages. Apparently, everything is dependent on the weather. If we can adapt, prioritize, plan accordingly and focus on what is important, and see nature as the center of our lives then we may be able to adapt. If we use new technologies that are more efficient and less dependent on energy and focus on the larger picture, we may be able to avoid the inevitable. If you always have one essential oil on you will be at least able to connect with nature and adapt accordingly. Build your aromatic collection as it may be more important than you can imagine in times of change. Expect higher prices due to fires, floods, changing weather patterns, and loss of a specific species. There may be a time when only certain plant oils will take center stage based on sustainability, the ones that may be affordable and not necessarily the most therapeutic.

### **What kind of projects are you working on currently?**

1. Adding more essential oils and content to [labofflowers.com](http://labofflowers.com) and the *Library of Flower* which includes being able to locate essential oils on the site by keywords including the color of the plant, botanical families, part distilled, and benefits.

2. Compiling information for several books I plan to write as I have amassed enough information to cover several topics. I am committed to only writing from

my personal perspective, based on my own experience, as it relates to the larger picture regarding this subject.

3. Planning a series of master classes on specific topics. I am also discussing partnering with other teachers and co-creating new classes based on two perspectives such as male and female and intuitive vs. analytical, to name but a few.

4. Ongoing master class online to run each week or biweekly based on my extensive research and experience with all the essential oils in the library.

5. Developing a program on *"Aromatics for Trauma and Recovery, including addiction"*. The focus will be on helping people to change their chemistry with aromatic interventions utilizing a combination of complex formulations.

6. Launching [rollonremedy.com](http://rollonremedy.com). This is a relatively new site that features 100 roll-on remedies from my top master formulations. When laid out end to end they cover all the challenges and joys of the entire human experience. There are over 20 kits of ten remedies for every conceivable life challenge.

7. Begin a mentoring program and the possibility of offering internships, and one-on-one private training.

### **What would be your tips for a new or upcoming aromatherapist new to the field?**

Regarding knowledge, seek wisdom. Study everything you can, aromatically and non-aromatically, and learn as much as you can regarding your craft. Learn at least one benefit from each essential oil. Spend equal amounts of time smelling, mixing, formulating, and connecting with the essence, not the essential oil. Do not worship these oils, they are a means to an end, and there are no substitutes or shortcuts for doing everything you can to in order to become your optimal self.

### **What are your aromatic plans for the future?**

My official retirement age is 66 years and 8 months or approximately two years from now. I have been taking time



**Michael in the Lab of Flowers, 2019.**

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to reflect on what is next as I reach this milestone. Over the next 24 months, I would like to transition away from sales and manufacturing into research, writing, teaching, presenting, and consulting. This includes topics that go beyond aromatics and incorporate all that I have learned along the way. I do want to leave a legacy and would like to see all my recordings, journals, writings, and books left in a central location or *"Institute of Aromatherapy"* for the benefit of generations to come. This does not exist now but could sometime in the future that would be able to collect resources far and wide as a means of cataloging what was, what is, what could be, and what is next.



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