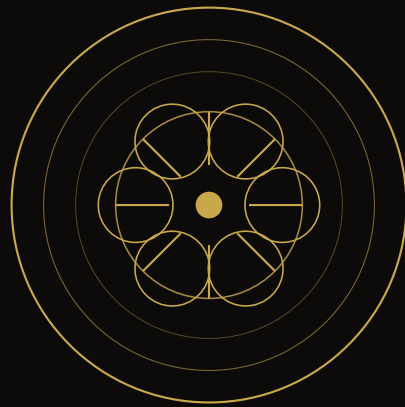




ALCHEMY WARES

The Complete Beginner's Guide to Aromatherapy

Plant Medicine · Sacred Scent · The Art of Essential Oils



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INTRODUCTION

Six Thousand Years of Plant Medicine

Aromatherapy is one of the oldest healing traditions known to humanity. Archaeological evidence places the use of aromatic plants and oils as far back as 6,000 BCE — long before written history, our ancestors burned aromatic herbs and resins in fire, both to purify their environments and to commune with forces they understood as divine. The smoke that rose was their first diffuser; the oils they pressed from flowers and bark were their first medicine.

Ancient Egypt stands as perhaps the most documented early centre of aromatic practice. By 4,500 BCE, Egyptians were using essential oils extracted from frankincense, myrrh, cedarwood, and botanical resins in religious ceremony, embalming, cosmetics, and medicine. The god Nefertem — depicted with a blue lotus rising from his head — was their deity of perfume and healing. Clay tablets have been decoded revealing precise recipes for salves, ritual incenses, and medicinal preparations. Meanwhile, Chinese scholars were documenting aromatic plants in the Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine as early as 2700 BCE, and Ayurvedic healers in India were blending oils for physical and spiritual health from approximately 3,000 BCE.



"The way to health is to have an aromatic bath and a scented massage every day."

— Hippocrates, circa 460–377 BCE

From Avicenna to Gattefossé

A crucial advance came in the 11th century through Ibn Sina — the Persian physician and alchemist known in the West as Avicenna. His invention of an improved condensing coil for steam distillation revolutionised the extraction of essential oils, making the process far more efficient and precise. His Canon of Medicine documented the therapeutic properties of over 800 plants and remained a standard medical reference in Europe for five centuries.

The modern word 'aromatherapy' was coined in 1928 by French chemist René-Maurice Gattefossé, following his accidental discovery that lavender oil applied to a severe laboratory burn healed the wound remarkably quickly, without infection or scarring. His 1937 book *Aromathérapie* established the scientific framework for essential oil therapy that informed all subsequent practice. French physician Dr. Jean Valnet expanded this work through clinical application, and Marguerite Maury — a nurse and surgical assistant — brought aromatherapy to Britain in the 1950s, developing the massage-based application method that remains central to holistic practice today. Robert Tisserand's *The Art of Aromatherapy* (1977) was the first English-language text on the subject and became the reference for virtually every subsequent practitioner.

The Science: How Aromatherapy Works

Aromatherapy acts through two primary pathways: olfaction (inhalation) and dermal absorption (topical application).

The olfactory pathway is the most direct and fastest-acting. When essential oil molecules are inhaled, they bind to olfactory receptor cells in the nasal epithelium and generate electrical signals that travel directly — via the

olfactory nerve — to the limbic system: the brain's emotional and memory centre. This direct route bypasses the blood-brain barrier and the slower analytical cortex, which is why certain scents can produce near-instantaneous emotional and physiological responses — calm, energy, memory, grief — without any conscious processing. The limbic system connects directly to the hypothalamus, which governs hormone secretion, heart rate, blood pressure, and the stress response. Aromatherapy is therefore, in the most literal neurological sense, plant medicine for the nervous system.

The evidence base for specific oils is now substantial. A 2023 systematic review (Healthcare, Konkuk University) of 11 clinical trials encompassing 972 participants found that lavender oil inhalation significantly reduced anxiety in 10 of 11 studies. A 2024–2025 meta-analysis of 11 RCTs involving 628 adults confirmed lavender's sleep-enhancing effect with statistical significance ($p=0.005$). Peppermint has been shown to enhance cognitive performance, improve alertness, and reduce physical fatigue. Frankincense contains boswellic acids with documented anti-inflammatory properties. The evidence is growing, rigorous, and consistently affirms what six millennia of human experience already knew.

How Essential Oils Are Made

Steam Distillation	The most common method. Steam is passed through plant material, volatilising the aromatic compounds. The steam and oils condense together and are separated. Used for most oils including lavender, rosemary, eucalyptus, and frankincense.
Cold Expression / Pressing	Used exclusively for citrus oils (lemon, bergamot, sweet orange). The oil is mechanically pressed from the rind, preserving the fresh, volatile character that distillation would alter.
Solvent Extraction	Used for delicate flowers (jasmine, rose, neroli) whose aromatic molecules are too fragile for steam. Produces a 'concrete' wax that is further processed into an 'absolute' — more concentrated and complex than distilled oils.
CO₂ Extraction	A modern method using supercritical carbon dioxide to extract oils at lower temperatures, preserving more aromatic compounds. Produces oils that are closer to the natural plant. Increasingly used for premium products.

HEART & EMOTION

The Floral Family

Soft · Romantic · Deeply Emotional · Heart-Opening

The floral family contains some of the most complex and historically revered aromatic plants in the world. These oils are extracted primarily from flower petals — often through solvent extraction or enfleurage for the most delicate species — and their chemistry reflects the extraordinary biochemical sophistication of the flowering plant. Florals act primarily on the emotional body: they open, soften, soothe, and invite the heart to be present. They are the oils of love, grief, self-compassion, and beauty.

Primary Uses	Emotional healing · Self-compassion work · Heart chakra practices · Romance and intimacy · Grief and loss · Anxiety and nervous system regulation
Blends With	Woody bases (cedarwood, sandalwood, vetiver) · Citrus top notes (bergamot, lemon) · Other florals in small quantities



Rose

Rosa damascena / Rosa centifolia · Note: Base-Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation or solvent extraction (absolute)

Rose is the most prized aromatic in the world. *Rosa damascena* — the Damask rose — requires approximately 3–5 tonnes of petals to produce a single kilogram of essential oil, making it among the most expensive substances by weight. Its fragrance is incomparably complex: simultaneously sweet, spicy, waxy, and deeply floral. Used in sacred practice across cultures from ancient Persia to medieval Europe, rose has been associated with love, the divine feminine, and the heart in every tradition that encountered it.

Therapeutic	Antidepressant · Anxiolytic · Aphrodisiac · Cicatrizant (wound healing) · Uterine tonic · Emotionally opening
Best Uses	Grief and emotional loss · Opening the heart chakra · Skin care (diluted highly) · Self-love and compassion practices · Blending as a heart note
Dilution	0.5–1% (very expensive; use sparingly and precisely)

■ *Avoid in first trimester of pregnancy. The absolute may cause sensitisation in some individuals.*

Lavender

Lavandula angustifolia · Note: Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation

Lavender is the most researched essential oil in clinical aromatherapy, and the most versatile. Its main constituents — linalool and linalyl acetate — produce well-documented anxiolytic, sedative, and analgesic effects. A 2023 systematic review of 11 trials found lavender inhalation reduced anxiety in 10 of 11 studies (972 participants). A 2024–2025 meta-analysis of 11 RCTs confirmed significant sleep enhancement ($p=0.005$). Gattefossé's original discovery was lavender healing a severe burn — and clinical evidence for its wound-healing and antimicrobial properties has since been extensively documented.

Therapeutic	Anxiolytic · Sedative · Analgesic · Antimicrobial · Antidepressant · Antispasmodic
Best Uses	Sleep disorders and insomnia · Anxiety and stress · Headaches (applied to temples) · Minor burns and wounds · General daily wellbeing · Safe for children (well diluted)
Dilution	1–3% topical · Can be applied neat in small amounts to minor burns and the temples

■ *Generally very safe. Avoid high concentrations during first trimester. Some individuals develop sensitisation with prolonged neat use.*

Ylang Ylang

Cananga odorata · Note: Base-Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation (fractional)

Ylang ylang ('flower of flowers' in Tagalog) is native to the Philippines and Indonesia, where the flowers are traditionally scattered on the beds of newlyweds. It is a classic aphrodisiac and a powerful nervine — rapidly reducing heart rate, blood pressure, and the physiological markers of stress. Its fragrance is intensely sweet and exotic. Used in small amounts it is sublime; used in excess it becomes overwhelming and can cause headaches. Less is emphatically more.

Therapeutic	Hypotensive · Aphrodisiac · Antispasmodic · Nervine sedative · Antidepressant
Best Uses	Reducing blood pressure and heart rate · Sensuality and intimacy · Emotional tension and anger · Sacral chakra practices · Hair care (scalp health)
Dilution	0.5–1% — use sparingly; highly concentrated

■ *Can cause headaches and nausea in high concentrations. Avoid during pregnancy. Not for young children.*

Neroli

Citrus aurantium var. amara (flowers) · Note: Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation or absolute

Neroli is extracted from the blossoms of the bitter orange tree — the same tree that yields bergamot (rind) and petitgrain (leaves). Its name comes from Anne Marie Orsini, Princess of Nerola (17th century Italy), who used it to perfume her gloves and bath. It is one of the great antidepressant and anti-anxiety oils, with a unique capacity to address both the psychological and physical aspects of stress — including palpitations, digestive upset, and shallow breathing.

Therapeutic	Antidepressant · Anxiolytic · Antispasmodic · Tonic for the nervous system · Cicatrizant · Regenerative for skin
Best Uses	Panic attacks and acute anxiety · Grief and emotional shock · Insomnia · Skin regeneration and stretch marks · Pre-exam or pre-performance nerves
Dilution	1–2%

■ *Generally safe. May cause drowsiness — avoid when driving after use. Avoid in first trimester.*

Geranium

Pelargonium graveolens / *Pelargonium roseum* · Note: Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation

Rose geranium is one of the most practically useful oils in aromatherapy — a hormone balancer, skin healer, emotional regulator, and reputable insect repellent. Its fragrance is rosy, slightly minty, and fresh — making it a more accessible and affordable alternative to rose in blends. It has particular affinity with the female endocrine system, regularly used to address PMS, menopausal symptoms, and hormonal mood fluctuation.

Therapeutic	Hormone-balancing · Antidepressant · Haemostatic · Antifungal · Cicatrizant · Adaptogenic for the nervous system
Best Uses	Hormonal imbalance and PMS · Menopausal mood support · Oily and combination skin · Heart chakra opening · Stress-related skin conditions
Dilution	1–3%

■ *Generally safe. Some sensitisation possible. Use caution during pregnancy.*

ENERGY & UPLIFT

The Citrus Family

Bright · Uplifting · Clarifying · Mood-Elevating

The citrus family is the most immediately accessible in aromatherapy — bright, clean, and instantly mood-lifting, these oils work within seconds of inhalation. Extracted by cold-pressing the rind of citrus fruits, they carry the concentrated volatile aromatic compounds that give each fruit its characteristic scent. They are high in limonene — a monoterpene with well-documented antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and mood-enhancing properties. Citrus oils are the top notes of most professional blends: the first thing the nose encounters, the element that creates the initial impression.

Primary Uses	Morning practice and energy raising · Focus and cognitive clarity · Mood elevation and mild depression · Digestive support · Space cleansing and refreshing environments
Blends With	Floral middles (lavender, geranium) · Woody bases (cedarwood, vetiver, frankincense) · Herbal middles (rosemary, basil)



Bergamot

Citrus bergamia · Note: Top · Extraction: Cold expression of rind

Bergamot is the oil that gives Earl Grey tea its distinctive flavour, and one of the most therapeutically significant citrus oils. Unlike most of the citrus family — which are primarily energising — bergamot has a uniquely dual character: uplifting yet calming, making it exceptionally useful for anxiety, depression, and emotional instability. It is a key component in dozens of clinical aromatherapy protocols for mental health. Bergamot FCF (furocoumarin-free) has had the photosensitising compounds removed and is safe for use in leave-on products.

Therapeutic	Antidepressant · Anxiolytic · Antispasmodic · Analgesic · Antibacterial · Appetite regulating
Best Uses	Anxiety and depression · Emotional eating support · Pre-stress preparation · Skin conditions (FCF only) · Solar plexus and heart chakra · Blending as a citrus bridge between floral and woody
Dilution	1–3% · Use FCF version in leave-on skin products

■ *Phototoxic* — do not apply standard bergamot to skin exposed to UV light. Use FCF (furocoumarin-free) for skin application.

Lemon

Citrus limon · Note: Top · Extraction: Cold expression of rind

Lemon essential oil is one of the most studied and versatile of the citrus oils. Rich in limonene (up to 70%), it has documented antimicrobial, antioxidant, and mood-enhancing properties. Research has confirmed its capacity to reduce nausea, improve cognitive performance, and support immune function. In aromatherapy practice, lemon is the classic oil for mental clarity, decisiveness, and cutting through confusion. It is also the most effective citrus oil for space cleansing and surface disinfection.

Therapeutic	Antifungal · Antimicrobial · Antioxidant · Immunostimulant · Mental clarity · Digestive tonic
Best Uses	Mental fog and poor concentration · Morning energy practice · Nausea (inhalation) · Throat chakra support · Surface cleaning (diluted) · Digestive support (diffused)
Dilution	1–3% topical · Phototoxic — keep to diffusion or wash-off products

■ *Phototoxic on skin exposed to sunlight. Short shelf life — refrigerate and use within 12 months of opening.*

Sweet Orange

Citrus sinensis · Note: Top · Extraction: Cold expression of rind

Sweet orange is the most approachable, versatile, and universally liked oil in the aromatherapist's cabinet. Rich in limonene and with a warm, familiar, uplifting scent, it works as an antidepressant, digestive aid, and anti-anxiety agent — all while being safe for children and gentle enough for daily use. It pairs beautifully with almost everything and is the ideal oil for those new to aromatherapy.

Therapeutic	Antidepressant · Carminative (digestive) · Antispasmodic · Immunostimulant · Uplifting to mood
Best Uses	Daily mood support · Digestive discomfort · Children's calming blends (well diluted) · Sacral chakra · Combining with spices for warming winter blends
Dilution	1–3% · Generally non-photosensitising unlike most citrus

■ *Low toxicity — one of the safest oils. Some individuals sensitive to high concentrations.*

Lemongrass

Cymbopogon citratus · Note: Top-Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation

Lemongrass is a grass rather than a citrus fruit, but its high citral content gives it a clean, sharp, intensely lemony character. It is one of the most effective oils for clearing and refreshing a space — cutting through stagnant energy with precision. Used widely in Ayurvedic practice and traditional medicine across Southeast Asia, it is particularly valued for its antimicrobial properties and its ability to reduce physical and mental fatigue.

Therapeutic	Antimicrobial · Antifungal · Analgesic (muscle) · Insect repellent · Deodorising · Mentally clarifying
Best Uses	Clearing stagnant energy from a space · Muscle pain and tension (diluted massage) · Mental fatigue and low energy · Solar plexus activation · Post-illness room clearing
Dilution	0.7–1% topical — can cause sensitisation at higher concentrations

■ *Can cause skin sensitisation — keep dilution low for topical use. Avoid during pregnancy.*

GROUNDING & SACRED

The Woody & Resinous Family

Deep · Earthy · Anchoring · Meditative · Spiritually Elevating

The woody and resinous oils are among the oldest aromatic substances in human use. Frankincense and myrrh appear in the oldest recorded texts, burned in temples from Egypt to Babylon to Rome. Sandalwood has been used in Hindu, Buddhist, and Sufi sacred practice for at least 3,000 years. These are the base notes of aromatherapy — slow to evaporate, deep in character, persistent in effect. They ground, anchor, and open the higher dimensions of awareness. They are the oils of ritual, meditation, and the sacred.

Primary Uses	Meditation and spiritual practice · Grounding scattered energy · Third eye and crown chakra work · Deep relaxation · Skin rejuvenation · Space consecration
Blends With	Floral middles · Citrus tops · Other resins and woods · Small amounts of spice



Frankincense

Boswellia sacra / Boswellia carterii · Note: Base · Extraction: Steam distillation of resin

Frankincense is perhaps the most sacred aromatic in human history — burned in the temples of ancient Egypt, carried along the Silk Road, gifted to the infant Jesus, burned in Christian, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist practice alike. The active constituent incensole acetate has documented psychoactive properties — it activates ion channels in the brain that relieve anxiety and depression. Boswellic acids have potent anti-inflammatory effects. Frankincense slows and deepens breathing, quiets the analytical mind, and creates a profound quality of inner stillness that is unique to this oil.

Therapeutic	Anti-inflammatory (boswellic acids) · Anxiolytic · Antidepressant · Immunostimulant · Cicatrizant · Expectorant · Deepens breathing
Best Uses	Meditation and prayer · Third eye and crown chakra · Anxiety and chronic stress · Skin rejuvenation (anti-ageing) · Respiratory support · Sacred space creation
Dilution	1–3%

■ *Avoid during pregnancy (high doses may be uterotonic). Generally very safe.*

Cedarwood

Cedrus atlantica / Cedrus deodara · Note: Base · Extraction: Steam distillation of wood

The cedar tree has been associated with strength, permanence, and the sacred since antiquity — the cedars of Lebanon were used to build Solomon's Temple; Egyptians used cedarwood oil for mummification and temple ritual. Atlas cedarwood (*Cedrus atlantica*) from Morocco and Himalayan cedarwood (*Cedrus deodara*) are the most therapeutically valued varieties. Cedarwood is one of the most effective grounding oils — its woody, slightly camphoraceous scent creates a felt sense of stability and rootedness in the body.

Therapeutic	Grounding · Antifungal · Sedative · Mucolytic (respiratory) · Hair growth supporting · Antispasmodic
Best Uses	Root chakra grounding · Stress and anxiety · Scalp health and hair thinning · Respiratory congestion (diffused) · Grounding blends with vetiver
Dilution	1–3%

■ *Avoid during pregnancy. Distinguish Cedrus (true cedar) from Juniperus virginiana (Virginian cedarwood) — different therapeutic profiles.*

Sandalwood

Santalum album (Indian) / Santalum spicatum (Australian) · Note: Base · Extraction: Steam distillation of heartwood

Sandalwood is among the most therapeutically valuable and spiritually significant of all essential oils. *Santalum album* — the Indian sandalwood — has been used in Hindu, Buddhist, Jain, and Sufi sacred practice for over 3,000 years. It is applied to the body for death rites, burned as the highest temple incense, and used in Ayurveda for skin conditions, nervous exhaustion, and fever. Its primary constituent alpha-santalol acts as a sedative on the central nervous system through both olfactory and dermal pathways.

Therapeutic	Sedative · Antidepressant · Antispasmodic · Aphrodisiac · Anti-inflammatory · Skin-softening and conditioning
Best Uses	Crown chakra meditation · Deep relaxation and sleep · Skin care (dry, mature skin) · Sacred ritual and incense pairing · Male and female aphrodisiac blending
Dilution	1–3%

■ *Indian sandalwood (Santalum album) is now an endangered species — choose sustainably certified Australian or Hawaiian varieties.*

Vetiver

Vetiveria zizanioides · Note: Base · Extraction: Steam distillation of roots

Vetiver is known as the 'oil of tranquillity' in India and Sri Lanka, where it has been used for centuries in Ayurvedic practice. Extracted from the dense root system of a tropical grass, its aroma is deep, earthy, smoky, and profoundly grounding — like the smell of rich, dark soil after rain. It is the deepest base note in the aromatherapist's palette, and one of the most effective oils for calming the racing mind, anchoring scattered energy, and inducing deep, restorative sleep.

Therapeutic	Nervine sedative · Grounding · Anti-anxiety · Immune tonic · Antispasmodic
Best Uses	Root chakra grounding practice · Racing mind and anxiety · Deep sleep support · ADHD and scattered attention (growing evidence base) · Grounding blends as anchor note
Dilution	1–3% · Very viscous — warm bottle in warm water before use

■ *Generally very safe. Thick viscosity requires patience — warm gently to pour. Avoid during pregnancy.*

Myrrh

Commiphora myrrha · Note: Base · Extraction: Steam distillation of resin

Myrrh is one of the oldest documented aromatic substances — used alongside frankincense in Egyptian temple ritual and embalming, appearing in the Ebers Papyrus (1550 BCE) as a medicinal preparation, and referenced throughout ancient Hebrew and Christian sacred texts. Its bittersweet, warm, medicinal aroma creates an

atmosphere of contemplative depth. Therapeutically, it is most notable for its wound-healing, anti-inflammatory, and antifungal properties, and its deep anchoring effect on the psyche during meditation and grief work.

Therapeutic	Anti-inflammatory · Antifungal · Wound-healing · Expectorant · Antidepressant · Contemplative deepening
Best Uses	Sacred ritual and incense pairing with frankincense · Wound and skin healing · Oral health (diluted) · Grief and transition work · Crown and root chakra simultaneously
Dilution	1–2% · Resinous and viscous

■ *Avoid during pregnancy — uterotonic in high doses.*

CLARITY & FOCUS

The Herbal Family

Sharp · Clean · Clarifying · Mentally Activating · Respiratory

The herbal family encompasses the aromatic culinary and medicinal herbs — plants that have been used simultaneously as food, medicine, and ritual objects across every culture that cultivated them. Their chemistry is rich in monoterpenes, ketones, and oxides that act primarily on the respiratory system and the mind: clearing airways, sharpening attention, dissolving mental fog, and creating a quality of crisp, fresh alertness. They are the oils of focus, clarity, and productive work.

Primary Uses	Mental clarity and study · Respiratory health · Morning energy without stimulants · Throat chakra practices · Post-illness recovery · Physical fatigue
Blends With	Citrus tops (lemon, bergamot) · Woody bases (cedarwood, frankincense) · Other herbals in complementary pairs



Peppermint

Mentha piperita · Note: Top-Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation

Peppermint is one of the most researched essential oils for cognitive performance and physical pain. Its primary constituent menthol activates cold receptors in the mouth and skin, creating the distinctive cooling, clarifying sensation. Research has documented peppermint's ability to enhance memory, improve alertness and reaction time, reduce headache pain (applied diluted to the temples — as effective as acetaminophen in some studies), and alleviate nausea. It is also a powerful antispasmodic for the digestive system.

Therapeutic	Analgesic · Antispasmodic · Antinauseant · Cognitive enhancing · Antifungal · Cooling and refreshing
Best Uses	Headache relief (diluted at temples and back of neck) · Mental fatigue and exam preparation · Nausea (inhalation) · Digestive spasm · Muscle pain (diluted massage) · Throat chakra
Dilution	1–2% topical · Cooling effect means less is more

■ *Do not use on children under 6 (menthol can cause breathing difficulties). Avoid mucous membranes. Not near the face of infants.*

Eucalyptus

Eucalyptus globulus / Eucalyptus radiata · Note: Top-Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation of leaves

Eucalyptus is the preeminent respiratory oil in aromatherapy. Its primary constituent 1,8-cineole (eucalyptol) is one of the most extensively studied aromatic compounds in pharmacology, with well-documented expectorant, bronchodilatory, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial properties. It is used across the world in pharmaceutical preparations (Vicks, many cough remedies) and has a growing evidence base in complementary medicine for respiratory conditions, cognitive enhancement, and immune support.

Therapeutic	Expectorant · Bronchodilator · Antimicrobial · Anti-inflammatory · Analgesic · Immunostimulant
Best Uses	Cold and respiratory infection support · Sinus congestion · Mental clarity and focus · Throat chakra practice · Wound cleaning (diluted) · Muscle pain
Dilution	1–3% topical · Excellent in steam inhalation (2–3 drops in bowl of hot water)

■ *E. globulus* is too strong for children under 10 — use *E. radiata* instead. Do not ingest. Keep away from eyes.

Rosemary

Rosmarinus officinalis / *Salvia rosmarinus* · Note: Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation

Rosemary has been associated with memory, loyalty, and academic excellence since antiquity — Greek students wore rosemary garlands during examinations. Modern research has confirmed the folk wisdom: a 2012 study published in *Therapeutic Advances in Psychopharmacology* found that simply being in a room diffused with rosemary oil significantly improved speed and accuracy in cognitive tests. It is a hair and scalp tonic of proven efficacy — a 2023 study found rosemary oil as effective as 2% minoxidil for androgenetic alopecia.

Therapeutic	Cognitive stimulant · Analgesic · Antimicrobial · Circulatory stimulant · Hair growth · Carminative
Best Uses	Study and mental work · Memory support · Hair loss and scalp care (diluted) · Solar plexus activation · Muscle pain (sports massage) · Circulation
Dilution	1–3%

■ Avoid during pregnancy and epilepsy. Avoid with high blood pressure (*camphor chemotype*). Use CT *verbenone* for sensitive individuals.

Basil

Ocimum basilicum · Note: Top-Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation

Sweet basil is a powerful yet gentle mental stimulant — clarifying, focusing, and uplifting without the intensity of peppermint or rosemary. In Ayurvedic tradition, tulsi (holy basil) is one of the most sacred plants, believed to purify the atmosphere and elevate consciousness. The sweet basil used in Western aromatherapy is similar in character, with documented antispasmodic, antimicrobial, and adaptogenic properties. It is particularly effective for mental exhaustion and the kind of flat, foggy fatigue that follows sustained cognitive effort.

Therapeutic	Mental stimulant · Antispasmodic · Antidepressant · Antimicrobial · Adaptogenic · Digestive tonic
Best Uses	Mental exhaustion and brain fog · Digestive spasm and nervous digestion · Solar plexus and sacral chakra · Grief and low mood · Blending as a fresh herbal top note
Dilution	1–2%

■ Avoid during pregnancy. Estragole-rich varieties may be carcinogenic in high doses — use linalool-rich sweet basil. Avoid with epilepsy.

Clary Sage

Salvia sclarea · Note: Middle-Base · Extraction: Steam distillation of flowering tops

Clary sage is the most powerfully euphoric and hormone-active oil in the herbal family. Its primary constituent linalyl acetate creates a dreamy, slightly narcotic quality — it has been used to adulterate wine and beer (giving

rise to the name 'muscatel sage'), and in high concentrations can produce vivid dreams and altered perception. It is one of the most important oils for female hormonal health, with oestrogen-like activity and particular affinity for conditions of the reproductive cycle.

Therapeutic	Hormone-balancing (oestrogen-like) · Antispasmodic · Euphoric · Nervine sedative · Antidepressant · Uterine tonic
Best Uses	PMS and menstrual cramps · Menopausal hot flushes · Anxiety and depression · Third eye and sacral chakra · Evening and creative practices · Vivid dreaming (small amounts before sleep)
Dilution	1–3%

■ *Avoid during pregnancy — uterotonic. Do not use before driving — can cause drowsiness and disorientation. Avoid with oestrogen-sensitive conditions.*

WARMTH & VITALITY

The Spice Family

Warming · Stimulating · Sensual · Circulatory · Deeply Grounding

The spice oils come from the aromatic bark, seeds, and berries that drove the spice trade — those extraordinary journeys of commerce and conquest that connected the ancient world in the pursuit of fragrance and flavour. Cinnamon from Sri Lanka, cloves from the Moluccas, black pepper from India, nutmeg from the Banda Islands — these substances were once literally worth their weight in gold and shaped the course of history. Their essential oils carry the same warming, stimulating, depth-giving character. Used sparingly in blends, they add a profound richness; used alone, they can irritate. They demand respect and precise dilution.

Primary Uses	Solar plexus activation · Warming winter blends · Circulation and cold extremities · Digestive support · Ritual and ceremony · Depth in meditation blends
Blends With	Citrus tops (especially sweet orange and lemon) · Woody bases (sandalwood, cedarwood) · Florals in small complementary amounts



Cinnamon

Cinnamomum zeylanicum (bark or leaf) · Note: Base-Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation of bark or leaf

Cinnamon has been traded and prized for over 4,000 years — it appears in the oldest Chinese pharmacopoeia, was so valued in ancient Rome that Nero burned a year's supply on his wife's funeral pyre as a gesture of extreme devotion. Cinnamon bark oil is one of the most powerfully antimicrobial essential oils known, with documented efficacy against numerous bacterial and fungal strains. It is also a potent circulatory stimulant and digestive tonic. It must be used with extreme care — it is among the most skin-sensitising of all essential oils.

Therapeutic	Antimicrobial · Circulatory stimulant · Antispasmodic · Antifungal · Antidiabetic · Warming
Best Uses	Winter immune blends (diffused) · Cold extremities (diluted massage, low%) · Digestive support · Solar plexus stimulation · Ritual warming atmosphere
Dilution	0.1–0.5% bark oil · 0.5–1% leaf oil — among the most sensitising oils in aromatherapy

■ **HIGHLY SENSITISING** — keep to very low dilutions. Never use undiluted. Bark oil more sensitising than leaf. Avoid during pregnancy and with children.

Clove

Syzygium aromaticum · Note: Middle-Base · Extraction: Steam distillation of flower buds

Clove is one of the oldest-known analgesic substances — its primary constituent eugenol (70–90% of clove bud oil) is still used in dentistry as a local anaesthetic and antiseptic. The Moluccas (Spice Islands) were the only original source of cloves, making them among the most geopolitically significant substances in history. In aromatherapy, clove is a powerful warming, stimulating, and antimicrobial oil — excellent in diffused immune blends and for adding depth and warmth, but requiring very careful skin dilution.

Therapeutic	Analgesic · Antimicrobial · Antifungal · Antioxidant · Immunostimulant · Warming
Best Uses	Immune-supporting winter blends (diffused) · Toothache relief (1 drop clove bud on cotton wool — temporary) · Digestive support · Ritual and sacred atmosphere
Dilution	0.5–1% — sensitising; use minimum effective amount

■ *Sensitising — low dilution only. Avoid during pregnancy. Avoid with blood-thinning medications (eugenol has anticoagulant activity).*

Black Pepper

Piper nigrum · Note: Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation of dried berries

Black pepper essential oil bears little resemblance in aroma to freshly ground pepper — it is warm, spicy, and woody rather than sharp and pungent, because the volatile compounds responsible for sneezing are not present in the essential oil. It is one of the most effective circulatory and warming oils, particularly valuable for muscle pain, cold extremities, and the kind of stuck, stagnant energy that needs to be catalysed into movement. It is also used in smoking cessation protocols — inhaling black pepper oil has been shown to reduce cigarette cravings in multiple studies.

Therapeutic	Circulatory stimulant · Analgesic · Antispasmodic · Digestive tonic · Warming · Smoking cessation support
Best Uses	Muscle pain and sports massage · Smoking cessation (inhalation) · Stagnant energy and blocked solar plexus · Cold extremities · Catalysing action and will
Dilution	1–3% · Less sensitising than cinnamon or clove

■ *Avoid with kidney disease. Use caution on sensitive or inflamed skin. Moderate use only.*

Nutmeg

Myristica fragrans · Note: Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation of dried seed

Nutmeg was once the most expensive spice in the world — the Dutch East India Company held a monopoly on the Banda Islands (the only original source) and enforced it with extraordinary violence. The essential oil is warmer and more complex than the spice, with analgesic, anti-inflammatory, and digestive properties. It has a uniquely mildly psychoactive quality — the constituent myristicin is a precursor to similar compounds to MDMA, making nutmeg mildly euphoric in aromatherapeutic use (far below levels of the ingested spice that produce genuine toxicity).

Therapeutic	Analgesic · Anti-inflammatory · Digestive · Mildly euphoric · Circulatory
Best Uses	Joint and muscle pain blends · Digestive discomfort · Adding depth to warming winter blends · Sacral and solar plexus practice
Dilution	1–2%

■ *Avoid in large amounts or for extended periods. Avoid during pregnancy. Contains myristicin — use in moderation.*

PURIFYING & CLEARING

The Camphoraceous Family

Piercing · Cooling · Purifying · Clarifying · Strongly Antimicrobial

The camphoraceous family is defined by a cool, penetrating, medicinal quality produced by high concentrations of 1,8-cineole, camphor, and related oxides. These are the most pharmaceutically active aromatic compounds in regular aromatherapy use, with extensive clinical documentation for antimicrobial, antifungal, and respiratory effects. They are the oils of purification — used for space clearing, immune support, respiratory health, and cutting through the energetic residue that accumulates in environments and minds over time.

Primary Uses	Immune support and infection prevention · Respiratory health · Space clearing and energetic purification · Mental clarity cutting through fog · Physical detox practices
Blends With	Citrus tops (lemon, eucalyptus pairs naturally with lemon) · Woody bases in small amounts · Herbal middles



Tea Tree

Melaleuca alternifolia · Note: Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation of leaves

Tea tree is among the most clinically researched essential oils and one of the few with a robust pharmaceutical evidence base. Indigenous Australian Aboriginal peoples used the leaves of *Melaleuca alternifolia* for millennia as a wound treatment and antiseptic — crushing the leaves and applying them directly to infections. Modern clinical studies have confirmed broad-spectrum antimicrobial, antifungal, and antiviral activity. A 2020 review documented efficacy against MRSA and other antibiotic-resistant organisms. It is one of the most practical household essential oils available.

Therapeutic	Antimicrobial (broad spectrum) · Antifungal · Antiviral · Immunostimulant · Anti-inflammatory · Wound healing
Best Uses	First aid and wound care · Acne treatment (2–5% dilution) · Fungal infections (athlete's foot, nail fungus) · Cold and flu immune support · Space clearing · Household cleaning
Dilution	1–5% topical · Can be applied neat to spots and insect bites

■ *Do not ingest. Oxidised oil causes sensitisation — keep tightly sealed, refrigerated, and replace annually. Avoid mucous membranes.*

Cajuput

Melaleuca cajuputi · Note: Top-Middle · Extraction: Steam distillation of leaves and twigs

Cajuput is closely related to tea tree and eucalyptus and shares their characteristic camphoraceous, medicinal quality — but with a slightly sweeter, fruitier edge. It is widely used in Southeast Asian traditional medicine and is one of the key ingredients in traditional Singaporean and Malaysian medicated oils. Its primary use in aromatherapy is for respiratory conditions, pain, and the energetic clearing of spaces and auras.

Therapeutic	Analgesic · Expectorant · Antimicrobial · Antispasmodic · Febrifuge
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Best Uses	Respiratory congestion · Muscle and joint pain · Space clearing and aura work · Cold and flu support
Dilution	1–3%

■ *Avoid with children under 6. Avoid mucous membranes.*

METHODS OF USE

Five Ways to Work with Essential Oils

01 Diffusion

The most popular and accessible method. Add 4–8 drops to a water-based ultrasonic diffuser and run for 30–60 minute sessions. Intermittent use (30 min on, 30 min off) prevents sensitisation and habituation. Diffusion is ideal for mood, atmosphere, and immune support. Reed diffusers and room sprays are suitable for more constant, lighter aromas.

02 Topical Application

Dilute in a carrier oil (jojoba, sweet almond, fractionated coconut) at the appropriate dilution ratio before applying to skin. Apply to pulse points (wrists, temples, base of throat, inner elbows), the soles of the feet (quickest absorption), or massage into specific areas. The skin is most absorbent when warm.

03 Steam Inhalation

Add 2–3 drops to a bowl of hot water. Drape a towel over your head, close your eyes, and inhale deeply for 5–10 minutes. Exceptionally effective for respiratory conditions — the steam carries the aromatic molecules directly into the airways. Eucalyptus, peppermint, and tea tree are ideal for this method.

04 Aromatic Bathing

Add 6–8 drops to a teaspoon of carrier oil or milk (to disperse) before adding to a warm bath. Never add undiluted essential oils directly to bathwater — they float on the surface and can cause skin or mucous membrane irritation. Soak for 15–20 minutes. Lavender, geranium, and frankincense are ideal bath oils.

05 Massage

The combination of skilled touch, warmth from hands, and therapeutic essential oils creates a uniquely powerful therapeutic experience. Dilute at 2–3% in a carrier oil for body massage. This method produces the greatest dermal absorption and is the gold standard for muscular pain, nervous system regulation, and lymphatic support.

Dilution Reference Guide

Application	Dilution %	Drops per 10ml carrier
Facial / sensitive skin	0.5–1%	1–2 drops
Children (2–12 years)	0.5–1%	1–2 drops
Adults — general body	2–3%	4–6 drops
Adults — localised pain	3–5%	6–10 drops
Acute short-term use	Up to 10%	20 drops
Bath (in carrier/milk)	1–2% total	6–8 drops total

BLENDING BASICS

The Art of the Accord

Blending essential oils is both science and art. The theoretical framework of top, middle, and base notes was borrowed from classical French perfumery and gives the aromatherapist a practical structure for building balanced, coherent blends. A well-constructed blend tells a story with its fragrance: the top note makes the first impression, the middle note provides the heart and body, and the base note grounds and sustains the entire composition.

Top Notes

First impression · Fresh · Bright · Volatile · Evaporate within 1–2 hours

Lemon · Bergamot · Sweet Orange · Lemongrass · Peppermint · Basil · Eucalyptus

Middle Notes

The heart of the blend · Balancing · Harmonising · Evaporate within 2–4 hours

Lavender · Geranium · Clary Sage · Rosemary · Ylang Ylang · Neroli · Chamomile

Base Notes

Foundation and depth · Fixing · Grounding · Lasting · Persist for 8+ hours

Frankincense · Sandalwood · Cedarwood · Vetiver · Myrrh · Benzoin · Patchouli

The 30-50-20 Rule

A practical starting point for beginners: aim for approximately 30% top notes, 50% middle notes, and 20% base notes by drop count. This creates a balanced, complete composition. In practice, this might be 3 drops lemon (top), 5 drops lavender (middle), 2 drops frankincense (base) in 10ml of carrier oil. Adjust to your nose — there are no rigid rules.

Five Starter Blends

Grounding & Calm

3 drops frankincense · 3 drops cedarwood · 2 drops lavender · 2 drops vetiver

Carrier: 10ml jojoba or sweet almond

Morning Energy

4 drops lemon · 3 drops rosemary · 2 drops peppermint · 1 drop black pepper

Carrier: 10ml fractionated coconut

Sleep & Rest

4 drops lavender · 3 drops cedarwood · 2 drops sandalwood · 1 drop clary sage

Carrier: 10ml jojoba

Sacred Space

4 drops frankincense · 2 drops myrrh · 2 drops sandalwood · 2 drops bergamot

Carrier: Diffuser blend (add to water)

Heart Opening

3 drops rose or geranium · 3 drops bergamot · 2 drops ylang ylang · 2 drops sandalwood

Carrier: 10ml jojoba

SAFETY & PRECAUTIONS

Use with Respect

Essential oils are highly concentrated plant extracts — a single drop of peppermint oil contains the aromatic equivalent of 28 cups of peppermint tea. They are powerful and deserve precision and respect. Most problems in aromatherapy arise from undiluted use, excessive application, or inappropriate use during pregnancy. The following guidelines reflect current best practice from the International Federation of Aromatherapists (IFA), Robert Tisserand's *Essential Oil Safety* (the field's standard reference text), and clinical evidence.

Always Dilute

Never apply undiluted essential oils to skin with the exception of lavender and tea tree in small spot applications. The general rule: 2 drops per 5ml of carrier oil for body use.

Photosensitivity

Citrus oils pressed from the rind (bergamot, lemon, lime, grapefruit) contain furanocoumarins that react with UV light and can cause severe burns. Do not apply to skin exposed to sunlight within 12 hours. FCF (furocoumarin-free) versions are available and safe for daytime use.

Pregnancy

Many oils are contraindicated during pregnancy — particularly those with uterotonic activity (clary sage, rosemary, myrrh, cinnamon) or high phenol/ketone content. In the first trimester, stick to lavender, neroli, and bergamot FCF at low dilutions. Always consult a qualified aromatherapist or midwife.

Children

Children require lower dilutions — typically 0.5–1% for ages 2–12. Several oils are contraindicated for young children: peppermint and eucalyptus globulus (under 6), cinnamon, clove, and oregano (all ages under 12). Keep all oils locked away and out of reach.

Ingestion

Do not ingest essential oils without the guidance of a qualified medical aromatherapist or integrative physician. Internal use of oils is a specialist area with significant risk. The oils in this guide are for external and aromatic use only.

Quality

The therapeutic value of essential oils depends entirely on their quality and purity. Many commercially available oils are adulterated, diluted, or synthetically extended. Look for GC/MS testing, organic certification, and transparent sourcing from reputable suppliers.

Sensitisation

Repeated use of the same oil — particularly undiluted — can cause sensitisation: an immune reaction that makes the skin hypersensitive to that oil permanently. Rotate oils, dilute correctly, and avoid continuous use of the same oil for more than three weeks.

THE ALCHEMY WARES COLLECTION

Curated for Purity and Intention

The Alchemy Wares aromatherapy collection is built around a simple principle: quality over quantity, and intention over abundance. Every oil has been selected for purity, potency, and its specific function within a meaningful practice. The collection spans individual essential oils, incense for space preparation, crystals for amplifying intention, and ritual tools for creating the conditions in which plant medicine works most deeply.

Essential Oils

Organic essential oils from Tribal Spirit — one of Europe's most respected organic oil producers. GC/MS tested, sustainably sourced, available in 10ml and bulk sizes. The collection includes basil, bergamot, cinnamon, clove, eucalyptus, lemon, lemongrass, nutmeg, and more — all profiled in this guide. Each oil is selected for therapeutic quality rather than fragrance alone.

alchemywares.com/category/oils/

Incense

Sacred smoke has been the companion to aromatic practice since the dawn of human ritual. Our incense collection includes Nag Champa, Palo Santo, sandalwood, frankincense, and specialist Ayurvedic seven-chakra blends. Use incense to clear and consecrate your space before beginning your essential oil practice — the two traditions complement each other perfectly.

alchemywares.com/category/incense/

Sage and Smudging

White sage, cedar sage, Palo Santo, and specialty smudge blends for clearing stagnant energy before practice. Space clearing is the foundation of effective aromatherapy — it signals to the nervous system that ordinary time has ended and sacred time has begun.

alchemywares.com/category/sage/

Crystals

Crystals placed near a diffuser or held during topical application amplify intention and add a tactile, somatic dimension to aromatherapy practice. Clear quartz amplifies the effect of any oil; rose quartz pairs with floral oils for heart work; amethyst deepens the meditative quality of frankincense and sandalwood practice.

alchemywares.com/category/crystal/

Ritual Kits

Complete curated sets that bring together essential oils, incense, crystals, and tools in a single, beautifully presented package. Ideal as a starting point for new practitioners, or as a gift for those ready to deepen their practice.

alchemywares.com/product-category/ritual-kits/

Shop by Intention

Browse the collection by intention — Love, Protection, Abundance, Healing, Sleep, Grounding, Clarity, Confidence. Each category curates oils, incense, and crystals that work together toward a specific energetic and emotional aim. A particularly effective way to approach aromatherapy when you know what you need but not yet which plants carry it.

alchemywares.com/product-category/intention/



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