

BAY HOUSE AROMATICS

Welcome
to our Autumn
newsletter. As the
days shorten and
the sniffles begin,
now is a good
time to make sure
your medicine
cabinet is stocked
up with the
necessary

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essential oils, and that they are not out of date. Eucalyptus of course is excellent for clearing your head when you're all stuffed up and can't breathe. But there are lots of other oils you could consider as well, especially if you have small children. Myrtle has a similar effect to eucalyptus but is much milder and also has the advantage of being sedative, whereas eucalyptus is a stimulant oil.

Myrtle has a long history, both in legend and medicine. In ancient Greece and Rome the plant was associated with love and its preservation. After Aphrodite had been born out of the foam of the sea she hid behind a myrtle bush to conceal her nakedness. Hymen, the god of marriage, wore a crown of myrtle and the plant was used in the ceremonies connected with most of the Roman gods. Wreathes of it were plaited for newlyweds and in fact this custom has continued to the present day. There was myrtle in Queen Victoria's wedding bouquet in 1840 and Princess Anne's bouquet in 1973 contained myrtle taken from the same bush at Osborne House which had furnished Queen Victoria's. We could fill this entire newsletter with descriptions of the symbolic and folk uses of myrtle. In the English county of Somerset it was believed to be the greatest bringer of good luck if planted in a flower box, but it would not grow unless planted by a good woman. But in Cornwall it was believed that only old maids could successfully cultivate myrtle.

Myrtle wood has many economic uses. Its hard and finely textured wood makes it ideal for the manufacture of walking sticks, umbrella handles and scientific instruments. It is used in the manufacture of *eau d'ange* (Angel water) which is used throughout the Middle East.

Medicinally, myrtle has been prized mainly for its berries. They were used in ancient Greece and Rome for disorders of the bladder, bites of poisonous snakes and scorpions, and toothache, amongst other things. In modern times the myrtle leaves are used in herbal medicine for treating chronic lung disorders such as emphysema and chronic bronchitis. The oil has a deodorising and dissolving effect on the secretions produced by the lungs, so it has become popular in aromatherapy for use in coughs, bronchitis and asthma – especially for children and old people. Because of its astringent properties, Julia Lawless (*Encyclopaedia of Essential Oils*) also recommends using myrtle oil against acne and oily skin conditions.

You can try growing myrtle yourself, it is an attractive little evergreen bush with white flowers that will grace any herb garden. It can grow up to five metres high, but is unlikely to do so in the UK because it is not frost-hardy and needs protecting in the winter.

(Most of the above information was taken from the 12 page article on myrtle in the excellent and recently published *Compendium of Symbolic and Ritual Plants in Europe*)

We always think that one of the nice things about using essential oils (and herbal remedies generally) is that there is such a wealth of interesting history and anecdote attached to them, as well as an increasing body of scientific evidence for their use. No wonder that modern synthetic medicines cause so many problems, when they have been around for such a little time. And they are so boring!

The sensitising ingredients

While we're on the topic of science and nature, perhaps we ought to mention the recent legislation known as the EU Directive 2003/15/EC. This became law on 11 March 2003 and all member states of the EU must enact it into national legislation by 11th September 2004. We won't bore you with all the details, but there are two interesting aspects as far as aromatherapy is concerned. First is a ban on the testing of finished cosmetic products on animals in any member state from 11 March 2005, and of the marketing of products which involved animal testing. And about time too, we all say. *But* to quote from a recent Aromatherapy Trades Council Newsletter, "We have however pointed out that the revised Cosmetic Regulations are in direct contravention with the requirements of the new European Chemicals Strategy, REACH that explicitly **requires** animal testing as a requirement of registration where such safety

information does not already exist. It means that many of the substances that are currently used in cosmetics and all future new preparations will be required to be tested on animals and they will subsequently be banned for use in cosmetic products, making a nonsense of the whole procedure". Don't you just love it, the way these politicians rule our lives.

Which brings us on to the second interesting part of this directive. Many natural products used in fragrances and cosmetics contain chemicals which were not previously required to be listed on labels, but are now deemed to be sensitising agents and must be listed if their concentration exceeds a specified amount. The aim is to alert fragrance allergy sufferers to a possible cause of sensitisation. Whether this is really in the best interests of the general public, or is the best way to go about dealing with what is a real problem for some people is debatable. Perhaps it will lead some enterprising perfume manufacturer to start marketing "100% synthetic ingredients – no nasty natural sensitising agents included!" It will certainly add to the range of products being marketed as "free from" or "for sufferers of allergy to . . ." How it will affect the aromatherapy profession with its insistence on working with pure and natural products will not become apparent for many years. What is definite is that this directive is now enshrined in European law and most essential oils used in aromatherapy contain some of these natural chemicals. The relevant concentrations are 0.01% in rinse-off products (eg shampoo) and 0.001% in leave-on products (eg massage blends, skin creams). These percentages may not seem very much but some essential oils contain a lot of the chemicals. There are 17 of these ingredients naturally occurring in the essential oils commonly used in aromatherapy. They are Benzyl alcohol, Cinnamic alcohol, Citral, Eugenol, iso Eugenol, Benzyl salicylate, Cinnamic aldehyde, Coumarin, Geraniol, Anisyl alcohol, Benzyl cinnamate, Farnesol, Hydroxycitronellol, Linalool, Benzyl benzoate, Citronellol, d-Limonene.

As an example, our French lavender oil contains 38% linalool. If you make up a skin cream with 2% of this oil in it, the resulting blend will contain 0.76% linalool, which means this ingredient now has to be listed. This listing requirement does not apply to the basic essential oils themselves, as they are not supposed to be used directly on the body. But everything that they go into will soon start appearing with these currently unfamiliar names added to the list of ingredients.

New Products

Roman Chamomile Well yes, we have sold this for years, it is one of the most useful oils available. As well as our usual stock, we now have some organic oil. This also comes from the flat lands of Norfolk in England, where it grows so well, but is certified organic material by the Soil Association. Like all the organic oils we sell, it has a more intense and tenacious aroma than the non-organic, although its properties are the same. Like myrtle it is a good oil to use with children. The price is about 5% more than the non-organic. Please ask if you need an exact price.

Trial Size Faith Products For a limited period we are providing trial (120ml) size of the Faith in Nature Aloe vera shampoo, Aloe vera conditioner, Jojoba shampoo, Jojoba conditioner, Lavender & geranium shampoo, Lavender & geranium conditioner, Rosemary shampoo, Rosemary conditioner, Tea tree shampoo, Tea tree conditioner. They are all £0.95 (including VAT, or £0.80 excluding VAT)

Linden blossom absolute We haven't stocked this for a while because of the high level of hydroxycitronellol that was in it. This is one of the fragrance chemicals that is known to cause allergic reactions in some people (and which is discussed elsewhere in this Newsletter). However, because of the popularity of this oil (and the fact that no-one has ever complained of reacting to it) we have sought out another supplier. We now have some new stock of Linden blossom oil, which has a much smaller amount of hydroxycitronellol in it. The aroma isn't identical to the old stock, but it is very similar, and the price is the same as when we last sold it. We are also reintroducing the Linden blossom 3% blend in jojoba oil.

*The Bay House
logo: the design,
which is based on a
medieval woodcut,*



*represents the
reliance of our
business on the
living world of plants*