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ESSENTIAL *beauty*

WHETHER YOU CREATE YOUR OWN CONCOCTIONS, OR LOOK FOR BRANDS THAT INCORPORATE THEM, USING ESSENTIAL OILS IN SKINCARE IS A SUREFIRE WAY TO CREATE BEAUTIFUL, NOURISHED, YOUTHFUL SKIN.

BY STEPHANIE HOLLAND

Have you ever imagined having flawless, blemish-free skin that seems to glow from the inside out? Essential oils might just be the answer to your skincare prayers. Not only do they nourish, hydrate and moisturise any skin type, the essential plant nutrients they contain can also alleviate many skin conditions, from acne and premature ageing to oily or congested skin. If you've ever thought of essential oils as just "feel good, smell good", think again.

With proven therapeutic properties that make them effective in skincare, they are considered by some to be the purest and most concentrated source of natural beauty available. Essential oils are highly antiseptic; they help speed up the removal of old skin cells and encourage the growth of new ones; they help to eliminate waste; they regulate the production of sebum; and they reduce the impact of emotional stress. Regular and dedicated use of organic or wild-crafted essential oils blended for your skin type will encourage beautiful, nourished and youthful skin, whatever your age.

After a century-long hiatus, essential oils have made a comeback over the past decade as their therapeutic benefits become more widely known. With skincare companies using the powerful properties of essential oils to create effective skincare ranges, these concentrated essences are regaining credibility in an industry that has become

heavily reliant on synthetic chemicals.

Concerns about the safety of synthetic chemicals are driving consumers and skincare companies alike back to organic and wild-crafted ingredients. Unknown side-effects of ingredients such as parabens and sulphates, increasing skin sensitisation, allergic reactions and concerns about systemic effects in the body are driving interest and excitement in natural alternatives such as essential oils.

According to Robert Tisserand, aromatherapy consultant, teacher and

There are many factors that contribute to the state of your skin over your lifetime, including:

- Genetics and heredity
- Gun exposure
- Hormonal changes
- General health and wellbeing
- Emotional concerns
- Weight gain and loss
- Eating habits
- Lack of sleep
- Movement (frowning etc)
- Gravity
- Medications
- Alcohol
- Smoking
- Pollution
- Your skin type

Your skincare regimen is another vital factor that contributes to the overall health and wellbeing of your complexion, as well as preventing and treating a variety of common skin conditions.

A custom-made daily skincare routine for your skin type, condition and concerns is the best way to encourage nourished, beautiful, youthful skin that glows from the inside out.

author of *The Art of Aromatherapy*, there is more research being conducted than ever before. "We're seeing evidence suggesting essential oils can effectively address the problem of antibiotic-resistant bacteria and can do so in so many unique ways. There's tremendous interest in the cosmetics industry and I believe there are some unexplored possibilities for essential oils there," he says.

Despite a growing body of research proving the effectiveness of essential oils, the transition can take some getting used to. "Sometimes, people are so used to the smell of synthetic fragrances that the smell of natural essential oils can be a new experience for them and it takes time for them to adjust to the natural essential oils," says Carolyn Stubbin, aromatherapy practitioner and co-founder of Perfect Potion. "However, once they start using essential oils, they begin to experience the benefits to their skin and find products containing synthetic fragrances smell less attractive than they once did."


The combination of aroma and therapeutic properties also affects how you feel. "Essential oils are the immune system of the planet," says Farida Irani, Ayurveda aromatherapy practitioner and founder of Subtle Energies. "They are antimicrobial, antifungal, antiseptic and antibacterial, but they are also the prana, the qi, the life force of the plant and you're synergising that life force with your own life force. Your immunity is therefore high; you're totally rejuvenated, you're balanced and you're ready to set off!"

Whether you buy the raw ingredients and blend them yourself at home, visit an aromatherapist or select ready-made products containing them, essential oils can help to banish acne and other blemishes, prevent premature ageing and treat scars, detoxify congested skin, balance oily or dry skin and reduce stress and calm the mind. →

Wild turmeric is excellent for conditions like eczema and acne.



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Essential oils promote a healthy and youthful complexion through their healing and anti-ageing properties.

BANISH ACNE AND OTHER BLEMISHES

Essential oils effectively treat acne and a variety of other skin conditions by helping to neutralise bacteria and aiding the skin's protective function. "Acne requires a combination of antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties to help reduce bacterial infection and inflammation," says Carolyn. Essential oils of lavender, tea-tree and lemon are excellent at helping to clear the infection, reducing the amount of sebum produced, minimising scarring, reducing inflammation, reducing stress and anxiety and eliminating bacterial toxins.

There are also some less well-known essential oils that are excellent for treating acne and other inflammatory skin conditions. "One of the most important oils that I have

ANTI-AGEING BLEND

- 1 drop essential oil of frankincense, *Boswellia carterii*
- 1 drop essential oil of rose, *Rosa damascena* or *Rosa centifolia*
- 1 drop essential oil of sandalwood, *Santalum album*
- 12ml jojoba wax, *Simmondsia sinensis*
- 2ml borage oil, *Borago officinalis*
- 1ml carrot oil, *Daucus carota*

Directions: Add ingredients to a 15ml bottle and blend well.

Use: Apply 6-10 drops to a cleansed and toned face and neck using gentle circular movements, both morning and evening. Wait 5-10 minutes before applying makeup.

Concerns about the safety of synthetic chemicals are driving consumers and skincare companies alike back to organic and wild-crafted ingredients.

come across is wild turmeric," says Farida. "Wild turmeric is excellent for conditions like skin cancer, eczema, psoriasis and acne. We have a beautiful acne blend in which we use wild turmeric and Indian lime because they are highly antiseptic."

PREVENT PREMATURE AGEING AND TREAT SCARS

Essential oils promote a healthy and youthful complexion through their healing and anti-ageing properties. Essential oils of jasmine, rose, frankincense and sandalwood encourage the growth of new skin cells, making them particularly effective for anti-ageing blends and wrinkled skin.

Scarring, even older scars with characteristic redness, can be reduced through regular use of patchouli, frankincense and everlasting. A less widely known essential oil from Cyprus, everlasting is uniquely powerful when intense healing is needed. Farida also recommends wild turmeric and Kashmiri lavender. "Grown in the foothills of the Himalayas, Kashmiri lavender has slightly different chemical constituents from the French lavender. It has a very sweet, distinctive aroma and is excellent for all skin problems," she says.

DETOXIFY CONGESTED SKIN

Given that up to 25 per cent of the body's waste products are eliminated via the skin, any problems with elimination can lead to congestion, boils and rashes. With their detoxifying properties, essential oils can assist the skin in eliminating waste and reducing congestion. Essential oils of lemon, juniper, grapefruit, rosemary and carrot seed are excellent detoxifiers.

Tender, red and inflamed boils benefit from essential oils of juniper berry, geranium and grapefruit. For rashes, Carolyn says, "Chamomile and lavender have anti-inflammatory properties that can be used in a cool compress." Farida adds that palmarosa, wild turmeric and Indian spikenard are good for detoxifying the face. "We also have the North Indian vetiver, which is very rare. It is a very grounding, very solid oil and excellent for detoxifying," she says.

BALANCE OILY OR DRY SKIN

Their ability to regulate sebum production means that essential oils can help to keep skin perfectly supple and balanced. In the case of oily skin, which is prone to blemishes, essential oils of cypress and

FP AD

geranium are recommended for their astringent qualities. They regulate sebum production and contribute to an overall balanced and supple complexion, as well as controlling the bacteria responsible for any infection. Farida also recommends Kashmiri lavender and wild turmeric for their balancing and healing actions.

Dry skin tends to be dehydrated and unable to retain moisture. Sandalwood and rose are effective for hydrating and moisturising dry skin. For extra-dry skin, Farida recommends *Jasminum sambac* (a specific variety of jasmine) and Indian vetiver. Geranium works equally well on dry skin as it does for oily skin due to its balancing action on the sebaceous glands, improving the whole health of the skin.

REDUCE STRESS AND CALM THE MIND

Using essential oils daily has a positive effect on your psychological wellbeing. This affects the functioning of the rest of your body, including your skin. "If your skincare products contain essential oils and they contribute to feeling less stressed and more positive, then your skin will benefit, too," says Carolyn.

Negative emotions such as anxiety, depression and anger can manifest in a variety of skin conditions, including acne and congestion. Carolyn recommends making blends or using products that contain essential oils of neroli or lavender for anxiety, bergamot or rose for depression, and lavender, sandalwood or chamomile for anger.

Jasmine is also very popular for its soothing effect on the mind and the skin. "We've got many varieties of jasmine in India, so we try to use as many as we can because they've got amazing, exquisite properties," says Farida. "*Jasminum sambac*, in particular, grown in southern India, is very good in skincare as well as for treating anxiety, depression and anger." Farida also recommends including Indian palmarosa and Brazilian rosewood.

ACNE BLEND

3 drops essential oil of tea-tree, *Melaleuca alternifolia*
 1 drop essential oil of lavender, *Lavandula angustifolia*
 1 drop essential oil of lemon, *Citrus limonum*
 10ml jojoba wax, *Simmondsia sinensis*
 2ml wheatgerm oil, *Triticum vulgare*
 2ml calendula oil, *Calendula officinalis*
 1ml carrot oil, *Daucus carota*

Directions: Add ingredients to a 15ml bottle and blend well.

Use: Patch-test before use. Apply sparingly to a cleansed and toned face and neck using gentle circular movements, both morning and evening.



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PERSONALISED THERAPEUTIC SKINCARE

Once you've matched essential oils to a certain skincare need, it's important to consider that the most effective skincare solutions use specific ingredients that enhance each other, in exact concentrations. "You also need to consider the correct amount of product, the correct method of application and the correct frequency of application," she says.

For this reason, buying ready-made products can make the transition to a new skincare philosophy easier. "The benefits of purchasing ready-made products are that each product has been formulated with plant extracts and pure essential oils to respond to a specific skin type or problematic skin condition. There is also the convenience factor and the reliance on expertise," says Carolyn. However, you can also add drops of specific essential oils to your existing skincare products and even make them yourself at home.

If DIY skincare is your forte, there's a number of good-quality suppliers of

aromatherapy oils, base creams, gels, masks, scrubs and mists. There's also a variety of good courses, workshops and books that can educate and inspire you. The advantage is you can create a different blend on a daily basis if you need to. This is as personalised as skincare gets.

BEAUTIFUL, NOURISHED AND YOUTHFUL SKIN

"The wise women and healers of indigenous cultures throughout history have used plants to care for the skin and heal disorders," says Carolyn. This knowledge is now being put to the test as their effectiveness is documented in the lab. Interest and excitement will continue to grow as the safety of skincare ingredients and marketing claims come under closer scrutiny. With therapeutic benefits that go beyond delightful aromas, skincare in harmony with nature has never been more attractive. ☺

Stephanie Holland is a qualified aromatherapist, writer and blogger for holistic health & beauty. W: www.aromamuse.com