

## Aromatherapy Tip of the Week - #14

April 22, 2008

### What is Viscosity?

Viscosity is the thick or thin consistency of any liquid. It is how easily it will pour.

When we are talking about essential oils this can be very important. As the viscosity - how thick or thin an essential oil is will and can make a world of difference in how you blend them and how long they will last when being diffused.

Essential oils can be thin like water or alcohol and pour easily and evaporate quickly or they can be thick like honey. Occasionally you will come across one that is so thick it is like a paste. It will not pour at all - unless heated.

Why is this important? Mainly when blending. If you were to compare the drops of say Lemon oil with that of patchouli and were to drop 5 drops of each on a clean glass plate. You would see the 5 drops of lemon would spread out easily and be shorter in height. The 5 drops of patchouli would possibly stay in a little bit of a mound and would move very slowly across the plate and then only if tipped.

Thicker oils are harder to get to blend well into or with lighter oils. This is the same with carrier or fixed oils when used for massage.

Thinner lighter oils have a tendency to evaporate quickly and the thick honey like ones will linger or take days to evaporate.

How does this relate to blending? In two different ways. First, the quantities involved. Not so much a problem when you are making a small amount of a massage oil such as for one time use (1/2 oz or less) but when you are making LARGE batches you can have quite a discrepancy in the potency.

That's why when we give you recipes they are made in small - typically one or 2 ounce quantities as the amount of essential oil is very small and the strength will be fairly consistent.

If you were to make large quantities, your blend may not smell or react the same. The quantities of essential oils will not be the same due to the varying viscosities of essential oils when measured in drops.

Take for example if you were to measure 1 mL of Lemon oil and count the drops out of your pipette you would count about 25 drops but the same 1 mL of patchouli may only count out to be 18 drops. So thickness (viscosity) can count.

When mixing larger quantities you will be measuring by volume, typically in mL's, not by drops.

Most recipes are proportional and can easily be made larger but not if you continue to measure in drops - your final product will be quite different. So to increase many recipes you will need to do conversions.

As for the other reason why viscosity is important - if you are to make a blend for diffusing or adding to potpourri or candles, etc. you will want to use thick, viscous oils with lighter, thinner oils. What that does is to help your lighter, thinner oil last longer as the thicker oils will 'trap' some of the lighter oils molecules and only release them as the thicker oils evaporate.

So when blending - think of the viscosity too, not just the oils you are using but how they will be used, how long they need to last and how large of batches you will be making of your final product.

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