

Aromatherapy Tip of the Week - #16

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What do Essential oils smell like?

Describing what an essential oil smells like can be quite tricky.

If you try to explain the smell of a particular essential oil to someone that has never smelled that odor before, your description can be very difficult to relate. Although most oils can be described by some common terms. Most everyone has smelled these common scents before.

The common terms are: floral; woody; citrus; herbal; spicy; minty; camphor; pine; vanilla-like

Then there are sub categories of each: soft; strong; mellow; sharp; smooth; harsh; bitter; sweet; sour; full; flat; and obviously all the ones in between.

Each essential oil can be described with one of the common terms, but some may need to be described using two or three of the common and one or two of the sub categories.

An example is Ylang ylang, it is very floral, and can be very soft or very strong, depending on the 'sniffers' nose and the fractionation of the oil.

Rosemary smells herbal and camphor and is more mellow than say Eucalyptus Globulus that smells strong camphor but not herbal.

So, when learning about essential oils, again, keep a little journal. Write your descriptions down. Smell it after a drop that was placed on a cotton ball - immediately after applying it, then in 5 minutes, 15 minutes and 1 hour. The smells will change as the oils volatile constituents evaporate into the air. The original oil smell may or may not be present after the hour.

Have fun and buy a few sample sizes of several essential oils. Then put them in the categories listed above - or add your own descriptions. Use the terms that will help you to remember the scent. This will come in handy as you begin to blend and develop your own recipes.

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