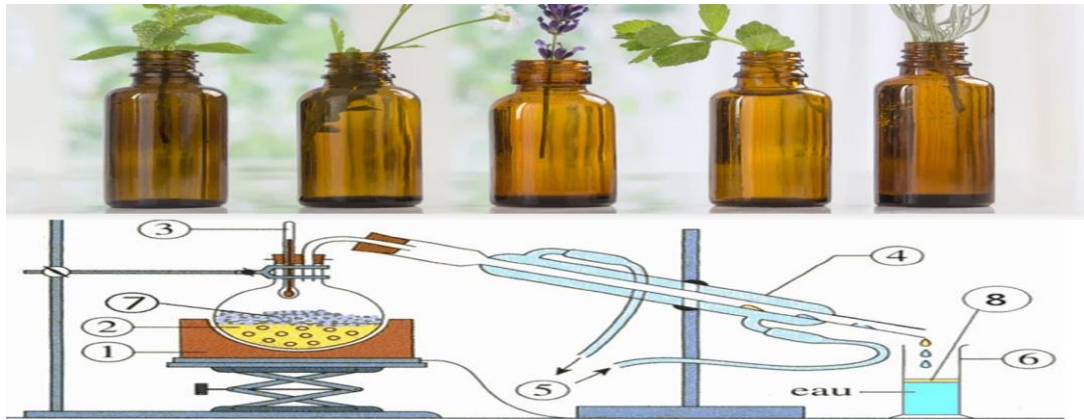


What are Essential Oils?



Is a concentrated hydrophobic liquid containing volatile aroma compounds from plants? Essential oils are also known as **volatile oils**, **ethereal oils**, **aetherolea**, or simply as the "oil of" the plant from which they were extracted, such as oil of clove.

*An essential oil is a liquid that is generally distilled (most frequently by steam or water) from the leaves, stems, flowers, bark, roots, or other elements of a plant. Most essential oils are clear, but some oils such as orange and lemongrass are amber or yellow in color.

Essential oils are not the same as perfume or fragrance oils. Where essential oils are derived from the true plants, perfume oils are artificially created fragrances or contain artificial substances and do not offer the therapeutic benefits that essential oils offer.

The chemical composition and aroma of essential oils can provide valuable psychological and physical therapeutic benefits. These benefits are usually achieved through methods including inhalation and application of the diluted oil to the skin.

Essential oils are the fragrant, highly concentrated natural constituents that are found in plants. They are what give the plant its characteristic odour and contain the healing power of the plant from which it was extracted. When used correctly, essential oils bring a wide

range of health benefits since unlike modern drugs, they have no side-effects.

A typical essential oil will contain more than 100 different chemical compounds, each of which exhibits a specific therapeutic property, and it is for this reason that many essential oils can be used for such a wide range of conditions. Virtually all essential oils possess antiseptic properties, but many also have antifungal, antiviral and antibacterial properties.

How are essential oils extracted?

Mostly, essential oils are obtained by [steam distillation](#) although other methods are used. Citrus fruits are [cold pressed](#) (expression) mechanical means or solvent extraction, and the oil from delicate flowers is obtained by a more sophisticated method that produces what is known as an [absolute](#) - *not an essential oil*. This special process is used because delicate flowers cannot withstand the high temperatures needed to extract essential oils by steam distillation.

Essential oils are located in tiny secretory structures found in various parts of plants.

Common Name	Plant Parts	Extraction Method
Basil	Leaves	Steam distillation
Mint	Leaves	Steam distillation
Lavender	Leaves	Steam distillation
Thyme	Leaves	Steam distillation
Cinnamon	Outer bark	Steam distillation
Ginger	Rhizomes	Steam distillation
Black Pepper	Seeds	Steam distillation
Rose	Flower	Cold press

They are used in perfumes, cosmetics, soaps and other products, for flavouring food and drink, and for adding scents to incense and household cleaning products.

After extraction, the resulting essential oil is a highly concentrated liquid that contains the aroma and therapeutic properties of the source from which it came. Nothing should be added or removed from this oil if it is to be used in aromatherapy. To achieve maximum therapeutic benefits, essential oils should be exactly as they came from the still - 100% pure and natural. A true essential oil.

Standardized essential oils

Some industries reprocess essential oils in order to make them meet a required odour or flavour 'profile'. To achieve this, synthetic chemicals are added to the essential oil and often certain unwanted non-fragrance components are removed (rectification). This 'standardization' is common practice in the perfumery and flavour industries in order to maintain absolute consistency in fragrance or taste, and this is fine. However, this practice is totally unacceptable if the essential oil is for use in aromatherapy, this is adulteration - not standardization.

Adulterated essential oils may often smell acceptable to the untrained nose, but because they are extended with synthetic chemicals or diluted with vegetable oil it makes them extremely poor value for money. Not only that, but if an essential oil has been standardized, adulterated or adjusted in any way it simply won't be as effective. Adulterated essential oils are often the cause of skin sensitization and irritation - completely the opposite of what we aim to achieve in aromatherapy.

Purity in essential oils

This is why you should always buy essential oils from long established and trusted aromatherapy suppliers who specialize in supplying therapeutically active essential oils for aromatherapy, and not the more common commercial grade that have been adjusted to meet the requirements of the perfumery or flavouring industries. To meet the high

quality for aromatherapy, an essential oil should be extracted from a single botanical species that has been botanically authenticated and derived from a known country of origin.

To be 100% pure, nothing should be added or taken away from the oil after extraction. To enable us to meet this requirement, every essential oil supplied has been analytically tested for purity using Gas Chromatography/Mass Spectrometry (GC/MS) to establish its purity. This is why all our oils are guaranteed to be pure, natural and unadulterated.

The science bit

The chemistry of an essential oil is extremely complex, and a typical example of oil will contain an elaborate mixture of aromatic constituents such as alcohols, aldehydes, esters, ketones, lactones, phenols, terpenes and sesquiterpenes that combine to produce a unique set of therapeutic qualities.

This complex mixture of natural chemicals is what makes essential oils such effective healing agents; for example eucalyptus oil is refreshing and invigorating, eases muscular aches and pains, plus it is a very powerful antiseptic agent. This means that in aromatherapy there are several [ways to use essential oils](#) to enjoy using your essential oils to promote physical and emotional health and well-being.

Health benefits of essential oils

Essential oils possess a wide range of healing properties that can be used effectively to keep you in the best of health as well as looking good. These health-giving benefits include improving the complexion of your skin by stimulating cellular renewal, easing aches and pains, balancing roller-coaster emotions and fighting bacteria, fungi and other forms of infection. Essential oils have an almost endless list of therapeutic uses, and science continues to discover more about them every year.

Essential oils carry the essence of the plants in such a potent form that a single drop of essential oil can equal multiple teaspoons of the

dried herb for instance, (1 drop of peppermint oil equals more than 25 cups of peppermint tea!). And they can be used or applied in a multitude of ways and combinations to bring powerful results to your tasks, atmosphere, and bodies.

Many essential oils have **antibacterial, antimicrobial, antiviral, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, and antibiotic properties.**

Interest in essential oils has revived in recent decades with the popularity of aromatherapy, a branch of alternative medicine that claims that essential oils and other aromatic compounds have curative effects. Oils are volatilized or diluted in carrier oil and used in massage, diffused in the air by a nebulizer, heated over a candle flame, or burned as incense.

Essential oils or value added extracts or products required for perfumery, flavour, fragrance and cosmetic industries in addition to aromatherapy value are other important areas where India can contribute to business and demand globally.