

## Using the Power of Aromatherapy for What Ails You

By Joanne Eglash

From stress to insomnia, aromatherapy can ease your woes and worries. And here's the bonus: Most of these remedies will not only lighten your ailments, but also will sweeten your household.

Both art and science, aromatherapy involves "healing body, mind and spirit by the use of natural, essential oils," says Marge Clark of Madison, Tenn., who founded Nature's Gift in 1990. The volatile aromatic oils involved in this practice are all derived from plants and intended to "enhance or achieve physical and psychological well-being."

Although aromatherapy originated with methods of healing through herbs that have been practiced for eons, Clark says the so-called "modern" form of this science is said to have started in France early in the 20th century. Research scientist Rene Gattefosse reportedly "burned his arm in the lab and plunged it into a vat of lavender essential oil to ease the burn. The burn healed much more quickly than expected, and he devoted the rest of his life to the study of the healing attributes of the oils."

Despite this history, "The oils are most effective when inhaled. Any other use is secondary to the effects caused by inhalation," Clark says.

### Using Aromatherapy for Specific Purposes

**Stress relief:** Citrus oils often can help to relieve stress, Clark notes. "All citrus oils are mood-elevating." Those that are calming and "uplifting" include bergamot, elementine, mandarine and sweet orange oils. Aromatherapy oils that are both energizing, uplifting as well as "excellent de-stressors" include pink grapefruit and lemon oil. You may also want to experiment with blends of such oils. For example, Clark sells Nature's Gift DeStress synergy oil, which eased my worries after a long day at work followed by an evening at a neighbor's "poodle-sitting."

**Increased prosperity and happiness:** "If we are speaking purely of financial prosperity, there are some oils that are said to encourage this," Clark says, including many of the so-called "hot" spices such as ginger, basil and cinnamon. For a more abundant life, she says she experimented with "the spiritual oils — frankincense, cistus — and used them in meditation to see what, within me, was blocking me from having a more abundant life." You may also have heard cistus referred to as rockrose. "It's considered one of the ancient spiritual oils," Clark says. However, she cautions that because cistus can have some extremely powerful emotional effects, you should be careful if you choose to use it.

**Insomnia relief:** The soothing fragrance of lavender essential oil is Clark's first choice. Experiment with a few drops of Bulgarian Lavender in a warm bath or a drop on the pillowcase — it's a powerful sedative, Clark says. "Other choices are Red Mandarine, used in a diffuser or inhaled via a few drops on a tissue inside your pillowcase." Roman Chamomile also can be helpful.

**Food cravings:** Just as with food tastes, the aromatherapy panacea for your food cravings is a very personal matter. For example, some say that inhaling what Clark calls "food-related" essential oils, such as Pink Grapefruit oil, can ease food cravings. Others may find that inhaling a fragrance such as vanilla or grapefruit actually increases those cravings. Another option, Clark suggests, is to experiment with what she calls "the gentler spices that are often used as digestive aids in other parts of the world," such as coriander or fennel. I've discovered that sniffing peppermint oil can ease my cravings, and that rose oil's nurturing fragrances also can help.