

Golden Isles

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MAGAZINE



ONCE UPON A TIME

A FAIRY TALE WEDDING

How We Met • Father of the Bride • Reception Eats

AROMATHERAPY

A MOST GRACIOUS VISITOR



BY J.M. LACEY

AROMATHERAPY.

The very word arouses a sense of peaceful stimulation. The soothing scents from a bath or massage help to ease the mind and body and reinvigorate the blood flow. The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary defines aromatherapy as "the use of selected fragrant substances in lotions and inhalants in an effort to affect mood and promote health." Most people who use scented candles, lotions, bath gels and potpourri in their homes would be inclined to agree. What we smell has a lot to do with how we feel and can even recall certain memories.

The use of essential oils is believed to date back thousands of years to Ancient Egypt, China, the Middle East and to Native Americans, when the oils were used for their scent and for preservation, such as with embalming. The practice of modern aromatherapy is largely attributed to the French chemist, René-Maurice Gattefossé, in the early 20th century. Today, it is used to calm, uplift and relax us through a variety of methods and treatments.

Can a smell really affect the way we feel? Are essential oils effective in treating ailments? Why do experts in the field swear by aromatherapy? And what are its benefits and its dangers?

Anne Marie Smith, a licensed master esthetician and body therapist with 20 years of experience in the use of aromatherapy, and owner of Skincare Solutions on St. Simons Island, explains that when the essential oils enter the body, the entire nervous system and glandular organs are affected.

"Aromatherapy is the most gracious visitor of all," she explains. When the oil enters the body, "it does its work at repair, regeneration and then takes its exit via the eliminatory organs."

Phuong Dai, a massage therapist with Island D-Spa on St. Simons Island, says the scent goes to the brain and then works through the nervous system. Then, "the whole body is relaxed," and, he says, the scent can even heal.

Both therapists work individually with their clients to apply the appropriate oils according to the clients' needs. Dai might use Arnica or Juniper Cypress to relieve pain in the body, muscles and joints. Smith will use a blending of 20 to 40 different essential oils.

Natural oils are used with aromatherapy. To know if an oil is organic, Smith suggests checking out the manufacturer's Web site because it will list the percentage of active oils. A consumer will also want to find out where the oils have been harvested, the company's history and if the company has integrity. There are more intricate tests you can request, she adds, which the company should provide.

There are some precautions with aromatherapy. Before using essential oils, check with your doctor, particularly if you have any ailments, diseases or conditions. For example, Smith and Dai both agree that aromatherapy should be avoided if a woman is pregnant because some oils can cause uterine contractions. Also, some people have allergies to certain scents, so discuss this with your doctor and aromatherapist.

And Smith warns when mixing your own essential oils, a beginner shouldn't go beyond using a couple of the single notes – that is, using one oil instead of blending them with other essential oils.

"These chemicals are in families of chemicals and you have to understand what they do and how to use them," she says.

Commercial oils will provide instructions on the bottle and they are already customized to make the particular blend unique.

The use of aromatherapy is a study in itself. Does it affect the whole person? Stress plays a large factor on how our bodies feel physically and emotionally. Whether you are preparing for a big event, like your wedding day, or simply want to focus on well-being, read on for ways aromatherapy can help to combat stress and rejuvenate the body.

STRESS

"Lavender is so popular," Dai explains.

For relaxation, he suggests adding lavender to your routine in the shower or the tub. He says the scent, combined with the warm water, will help make the entire body relax.

Smith suggests custom blending a scrub with some soothing essential oils.

"There are many constituents that could make up an anti-stress formula. Lavender would be one, but also Roman chamomile." She adds that "all anti-stress formulas are not alike." She recommends staying "with the simplicity of getting a nice carrier oil whether it's grapeseed or jojoba, and then add your single notes," such as "a lavender or a chamomile for soothing." And she warns that essential oils should be put into a carrier oil and never directly applied to the skin.

Dai also reminds us that the aroma from the herbs we use in our food can affect our well-being. Herbs like basil, ginger and rosemary, cooked fresh and blended with our tasty dish, can have a soothing affect.

SKIN

Anyone who suffers from acne or troubled skin will tell you — stress affects the skin. And an outbreak before an important event is a nightmare. But problem skin can be helped and even avoided with aromatherapy treatments.

Smith says to avoid acidics. This would include alcohol, caffeine and certain fruits, vegetables and meats. "The more acidic you are, the more you are going to see acne live in that condition." She suggests doing a detoxifying treatment, but warns that any such treatment and any extraction and purifying work should be done a week to two weeks ahead of an important event, "just to make sure everything that is going to come out, comes out."

She's careful to use soothing blends of essential oils on the skin, especially for people who have acne, Rosacea



and Psoriasis. She says most skin that is prone to acne is sensitive, so she is careful to use blends that will not aggravate the problem skin.

A bride, especially, should begin detoxifying treatments a few months ahead of her big day. "Nature takes time" when it comes to problem skin, says Smith, and she prefers to treat the whole body from the inside out with aromatherapy treatments. The organic facial would be one of the treatments she would use to help an individual with problem skin.

SOUL

A therapeutic massage coupled with aromatherapy can also help relieve stress, as well as alleviate those aches and pains.

Laura Phillips, an independent licensed massage therapist in the Golden Isles for the last six years, says that people benefit from a massage because it increases blood flow to the troubled areas and "helps move lactic acid and calcium deposits back through your body." She says it helps



the circulatory and lymphatic system because it's "pushing some really good blood to your heart."

One of Dai's therapy treatments involves reflexology, a system of massaging specific areas of the foot or sometimes the hand in order to promote

healing and relieve stress in other parts of the body. Dai, who's been training in reflexology since he was a child and has been licensed for the last 10 years, says that he loves the method and it's one of his favorite therapies.

Working with the pressure points in the feet not only relaxes the body but, he says, can even heal. Since each point in the foot affects another part of the body, the points in the foot can be massaged to help alleviate pain such as a headache or back pain. Dai can pinpoint the problem areas of the body by the tightness and tenderness in the foot so that he knows what areas may need the most work.

While Dai says there are lifelong benefits to reflexology therapy, he cautions that you need to know what you are doing and leave the therapy treatment to a professional. As a precaution, always check with your doctor when undergoing new treatments, especially if you are pregnant or suffering from ailments.

For a resource on reflexology, Dai recommends "Feet First: A Guide to

Get In Shape For Your Big Day!



(Next to the Island Cinemas)

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WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY WITH STYLE



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COMMON ESSENTIAL OILS AND SOME OF THEIR USES

Eucalyptus – opens and clears nasal passages; boosts immune system; relieves muscle tension

Ylang-Ylang – antidepressant; relieves stress

Geranium – relieves menstrual cramps; restores hormone balance; tones and balances skin

Peppermint – relieves aches and pains; relieves headaches

Lavender – relaxes; uplifts; treats burns, cuts, scrapes and other mild wounds

Lemon – treats athlete's foot, flu and colds, varicose veins and warts

Sage – treats muscular aches and pains; relaxes; helps with insomnia; restores hormone balance

Tea Tree – treats infections like jock itch, athlete's foot, ringworm and yeast problems; boosts immune system

Chamomile – soothes sleeplessness and anxiety; treats muscle aches

Rosemary – stimulates immune system and fights infection; stimulates digestive tract

Rose – emotional balance

Common Essential Oils Related to Mood:

Relaxing – lavender, chamomile, jasmine, frankincense and myrrh, neroli, orange, tangerine, ylang-ylang

Revitalizing – lemon, grapefruit, cinnamon, juniper, vanilla, geranium, rosemary

Stimulating – peppermint and eucalyptus

Read all precautions on the labels as some oils cause irritations and headaches. Follow manufacturer's instructions. As always, check with your doctor when using any new treatments, especially if you are pregnant or suffer from ailments or disease.

Sources: aromanaturals.net; medicalnewstoday.com; and Reference Guide for Essential Oils, by Connie and Alan Higley, (Abundant Health), ninth edition revised 2005.

Foot Reflexology" by Laura Norman, (Fireside), available through Amazon.com.

The aromatherapy massages can be customized to each client's needs. Massages can include body scrubs to help with circulation, polishing, and hot towel treatments to relax the muscles.

Phillips says a massage is more than a luxury, adding: "It's good for your body."

A massage should be done during the last week and the day of an important

event, according to Smith, because it's a great form of relaxation. "It's also going to quiet the skin and the nervous system."

There are many resources available online and in bookstores on aromatherapy, individualized for each person's needs and interests.

For information on massage therapy, including a list of licensed therapists in your area, visit American Massage Therapy Association (amtamassage.org). The site includes an excellent guide

with tips and resources for consumers. Other sources include the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork (ncbtmb.org) and Georgia Board of Massage Therapy (sos.georgia.gov/PLB/Massage).

So relax. Light the candles, choose your soothing music and slip under the scented bubbles in your bath. Allow the scents to comfort and invigorate you before you begin your day — or life — as a more relaxed you. ■



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