

HEALING ESSENTIALS AROMATHERAPY NEWSLETTER MAY 2015



Issue #18 Featuring Jasmine Absolute

Thoughts of Jasmine call to mind summer evenings in Key West scented with a heady, floral fragrance of Stephanotis (Madagascar Jasmine) wafting on the island breeze. My mother made beautiful corsages of Stephanotis for weddings which were kept cool in the refrigerator, then carefully wrapped in waxed paper, and laid in boxes for the short drive to the church. There are over 200 varieties of Jasmine. While some varieties of jasmine plants are among the most fragrant plants grown, not all are scented. It seems Jasmine may have originated in the Himalayas, then imported to the Middle East. Today it is grown in many different parts of the world. Only a few species are processed into Jasmine Absolute. Below are some of the most common varieties. As you will see, Star Jasmine, currently in full bloom over my porch, and grown in California as a vine or ground cover, is not true Jasmine at all.

MONTHLY SPECIAL BELOW: "ISLAND GARDEN COLOGNE"

Jasmine Plant Types

- **Spanish Jasmine** (*J. grandiflorum*), also known as royal or Catalanian jasmine, has fragrant, white flowers and is one of the most cultivated types of jasmine to be extracted as an absolute.
- **Arabian Jasmine** (*J. sambac*) is an evergreen shrub with intensely fragrant white flowers. This type of jasmine has been used for tea in China for centuries. The flowers are also extracted as an absolute.
- **Common Jasmine** (*Jasminum officinale*), sometimes called Poet's Jasmine from the Himalayas, is one of the most fragrant types of jasmine.
- **Pink Jasmine** (*j. polyanthum*) Fast-growing evergreen vine prized for its spectacular display of intensely fragrant pinkish-white flowers
- **Italian Jasmine** (*J. humile*) from the Mideast has fragrant bright yellow flowers and can be grown as a vine or a shrub.
- **Primrose Jasmine** (*J. mesnyi*) from China is seldom grown in the United States. This shrub produces lemon yellow flowers that are non-fragrant.
- **Madagascar Jasmine** (*Stephanotis floribunda*) intensely fragrant with dark green waxy leaves. A favorite for bridal bouquets and leis.
- **Star Jasmine** (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) from China is not a true jasmine, and is commonly grown throughout the western United States.

History:

The first plant known by the name *Jasminum sambac* was Arabian Jasmine. The word *jasmine* is derived from the Arabic word "*yasmin*," which means "fragrant flower." Without a doubt, this tropical and subtropical flower is native to Asia, probably India and possibly Persia (Iran). It crossed the Red Sea into Egypt as early as 1000 B.C., then found its way to Turkey and Greece. As early as the 13th Century, the Chinese were scenting their green tea with Jasmine. Historically, Jasmine has long been known to ease depression.

Jasmine Symbolism and Religious Use:

Delving into the fascinating history and symbolism of Jasmine one learns that due to its exotic fragrance and stimulating properties, it has been sacred to societies around the world for ages. To the Chinese, Jasmine represents feminine kindness, grace and delicacy, as well as a means of attracting wealth and romance; while in

Thailand, Jasmine symbolizes motherhood. In Hawaii, *Jasminum sambac*, with its clustered white flowers, is called "pikake" and is fashioned into leis as a show of friendliness and to honor special occasions.

For centuries in India, Jasmine has been associated with worship, conferring divine hope and promise. There is mention of Jasmine in the Hindu Vedas written thousands of years ago. In India, I have seen women and girls rising long before dawn, picking Jasmine flowers and marigolds and twining them into garlands. Every morning, prior to any activity, people walk to the market to buy a garland as we might buy a newspaper. The garlands are offered to the family deity at home and in temples, draped over necks of animals, and hung from the mirrors of vehicles as a symbol of devotion. Women, working in fields picking rice and dressed in brilliant saris, will have attached small clusters of Jasmine to their hair as a symbol of grace, sensuality, and hope. In South India in the Nilgiri Hills, while traveling to Ootamacund, one passes through Mysore, famous for their Jasmine and Sandalwood Incense. Approaching Ooty, a lovely old British hill station, women, with Jasmine in their hair, are seen picking tea leaves. Little did I know then that nearby Coimbatore is a large exporter of *Jasmine sambac* and that *Lemon Eucalyptus* is distilled in Ooty. Though not the largest exporter of J. Absolute, India exports huge amounts of Jasmine oil and incense, providing many jobs for rural people.



Arabian Jasmine (*J. sambac*)



Spanish Jasmine (*J. grandifloram*)

Method of Extraction: Jasmine is considered an absolute and not an essential oil as the petals of the flowers are much too delicate and would be destroyed by the steam distillation process used in creating essential oils. Other than the processing method an absolute is essentially the same as an essential oil. Up until recently, Jasmine oil was extracted by a method called *enfleurage*. This is described in the following passage from the mystery novel, Perfume:

"Jasmine season began at the end of July. The perfume of this flower was both so exquisite and so fragile that not only did the blossoms have to be picked before sunrise, but they also demanded the most gentle and special handling. Warmth diminished their scent; suddenly to plunge them into hot oil would have completely destroyed it. The souls of these noblest of blossoms could not be simply ripped from them, they had to be methodically coaxed away. In a special impregnated room, the flowers were strewn on glass plates smeared with cool oil or sometimes wrapped in oil soaked cloths. There they would die slowly in their sleep. It took three or four days for them to wither and exhale their scent into the adhering oil. Then they were carefully plucked off and new blossoms spread out. This procedure was repeated a good ten or twenty times and it was September before the pomade had drunk its fill and the fragrant oil could be pressed out from the cloths. In purity it was unequalled, the jasmine oil radiated the sweet, erotic scent of the blossoms with lifelike fidelity."

The method of *enfleurage* has become impractical and uneconomical due to the high cost of labor and the large number of flowers needed to produce a small amount of oil.

Absolute is a technical term used to denote the complicated process of extraction by chemical solvent. The volatile oils in the blossoms are dissolved with a solvent. This "extract" is gently heated to boil off the solvent. The concentrated extract is now called a "concrete". The concrete is warmed in alcohol to a melting point and the essential oils dissolve into the alcohol. The alcohol is then filtered and alcohol removed. The remaining liquid is the "absolute."

All Jasmine Absolute is very expensive. 30 ml. (one ounce) may cost from \$100- \$150.00. There is a low yield as it takes approximately 1000 pounds or 3.6 million fresh blossoms to produce one pound of Jasmine oil. And the process to make the Absolute is labor intensive.



Description of Jasmine Absolute:

Parts of plant used: flowers. **Method of Extraction:** Absolute. **Color:** dark orange. **Consistency:** Viscous. **Note:** Base. **Aroma:** Intensely floral, warm, rich and highly diffusive odor with fruity and tea-like undertone. All Jasmine oil is very overpowering and has to be mixed with other components, adding it drop by drop.

Chemical constituents: Jasmine has over 300 chemical constituents. The main component is benzyl acetate. The volatiles rapidly diminish once the flowers are picked.

Blends well with: Bergamot, Clary Sage, Frankincense, Geranium, Helichrysum, Lemongrass, Melissa, Nutmeg, Orange, Rose, and Sandalwood.

Madagascar Jasmine (*Stephanotis floribunda*)

Properties of Jasmine absolute: anti-depressant, antiseptic, anti-spasmodic, aphrodisiac, parturient (aids in childbirth), sedative, uterine tonic.

Uses of Jasmine Absolute:

- ❖ **Internal Use:** Jasmine flowers may be added to any tea.
- ❖ **Dermatologic:** used to treat dry and irritated skin.
- ❖ **Nervous System (CNS):** The therapeutic effect of the sweet aroma on the mind and emotions has been known for centuries. Research by EEG shows a stimulating effect on brain waves, yet there is a calming and dilating effect on peripheral capillaries. Thus, it has been described as a powerful antidepressant of a stimulating nature.
- ❖ It is recommended when depression has given way to hopelessness and lethargy.
- ❖ **Reproductive System:** Very useful during labor. Massage lower abdomen and back to relieve the pain of contractions. Also relieves menstrual cramps.
- ❖ **Subtle Energy:** Long considered an aphrodisiac, it eases fear, vulnerability, or anxiety that could be preventing an open heart and mind.

Jasmine sambac has the same therapeutic effects as the *J. grandiflorum* variety, yet it is the most highly valued in aromatherapy for its euphoric, sensual qualities. *J. sambac* is lighter and sweeter than *J. grandiflorum*

Jasmine grandiflorum has an intensely warm, orange blossom-like top note, a musty rose-like middle note and soft deep black tea undertone.

Remedy: Recommended for the "relief of Insomnia, shock, and grief. To each ounce (30 ml) of Jojoba oil add 2 drops of each of the following essential oils: Rose, Petigrain, Lavender, Benzoin, Ylang Ylang, Jasmine, Neroli, Rosewood, and Vetiver." Kurt Schnaubelt, PhD, director of the Pacific Institute of Aromatherapy in San Francisco.

Method of Application: May be used topically in massage, compress, bath, ointment and skin care. May be inhaled directly, in diffuser or steam inhalation.

Healing Essential News: I am delighted to announce my products are currently being sold at “Digs” a florist shop in Ojai located on the corner of Hwy 150 and 33 (150 is the road to Lake Casitas). Products are being sold separately or as an addition to flower arrangements and baskets. Bath sets and Relaxation Sets added to a floral basket make lovely Mother’s Day and Get Well gifts.

***Mother’s Day Monthly Special:**

*New!! “Island Garden”
Eau de Cologne
A light floral fragrance reminiscent of my early Key West garden. It contains tropical notes of Jasmine, Ylang Ylang, Key Lime, Vanilla and a hint of spice.*

- 100% essential oils*
- No synthetics*

Island Garden Cologne ½ ounce original price \$15.00 special price \$13.00

May all mothers everywhere be blessed for their untiring devotion and commitment to their children. May each and every one of you enjoy a truly Happy Mother’s Day.

Patricia Wing, RN, IAC, Clinical Aromatherapist

References:

1. The Complete Guide to Aromatherapy, by Battaglia, S., P. 213-215.
2. Information on the history and images of Jasmine are adapted from Wikipedia and various internet sites.
3. The Healing Intelligence of Essential Oils, by Kurt Schnaubelt, Ph.D., p. 150.
4. The Secret Language of Flowers, by Samantha Gray, p. 83.
5. The Scent Trail, by Celia Lyttelton, p. 179 - 192

