

SOOTHING SCENTS FOR THE SOUL

AVICENNA AND AROMATHERAPY Arabian Alchemy

While the European world was stuck in the middle of the Dark Ages, the Arab world was experiencing a Golden Age of intellectual, philosophical, scientific, and medical enlightenment. At the cusp of the last millennium, a thousand years ago, the happening place to be- if you were hip to progress- was Baghdad.

Even if you wanted to study the works of the ancient Greek philosophers, mathematicians or medicinal

“There are no incurable diseases-only the lack of will. There are no worthless herbs-only the lack of knowledge.” Avicenna

scientists like Plato or Hippocrates, you needed to read them in their Arabic translation. In the Middle Eastern cradle of civilization spirituality and

science were complementary subjects. One explored the physical structure of the universe as an expansion of one's religion. In Europe, by contrast, the medieval Church banned herbal remedies as pagan practices. The Dark Ages were dark because there was no room for intellectual or scientific advancement. It is a universal truth that expansion and constraint cannot happen at

the same time. When a society runs on fear, growth is impeded. The same can be said on an individual level. We naturally contract and withdraw with fear or doubt, but once we let go of fears we are open again to explore and experience new things.

Abu Ali al-Husayn ibn Sina

Abu Ali al-Husayn ibn Sina was a Persian great thinker of the time. Amongst his many contributions to both eastern and western civilization are medical writings that continued to be used to study medicine up until the 17th century in Europe. Ibn Sina also invented the process of steam distillation, upon which, modern aromatherapy is based. Ibn Sina is more commonly known in the west by his Latinized name Avicenna. Rose Water was the scent he perfected. There is a saying that the Prophet spoke of his preference for prayer, wives and scents. Scents were an integral part of wellness for body and spirit. Rose water continues to be popular for purifying sacred spaces, personal hygiene, and in cuisine. Roses are full of antioxidants, flavonoids, vitamins and are soothing to both the nervous system as well as good for skin conditions-especially aging skin.

ROSA DAMASCENA

Technically, Rose Water is not an essential oil. It is the byproduct of the steam distillation of the flower. As such it is what is known as a hydrosol. The actual essential oil is very pricey as it takes 200 rose blossoms to make just a few drops. Rose absolute (*Rosa centifolia*) is similar, but is extracted by solvent- not water, which changes its chemical composition significantly. All rose oils are emotionally warming and good grounding base notes in blends. Base notes evaporate slowly and give a longer lasting, usually calming effect.

ROSA DAMASCENA

Essential Oil of the Month

Essential oils names are written in italics in their Latin or scientific titles. This is called binomial nomenclature. The first name is capitalized and refers to the genus. Think of it as the parent plant. With *Rosa damascena*, the name of plant family is Rosaceae, commonly known as Rose. The second name refers to the species of that family. Different species are sort of like siblings in the same plant family. The species name *damascena* is also

italicized, but lower case is used always.

The species name often offers up characteristics that make each “sibling” unique such as origin or physical attributes. In the case of *Rosa damascena*, this is a

variety of Rose that is said to have originated in Syria.



<http://www.healthresource4u.com/treat-dry-skin-with-rose-water.html>

Also known as Rose Otto, *Rosa damascena* is cultivated primarily in the Kazanlik region of Bulgaria. “Otto” means oil in Bulgarian. Its main chemical composition is alcohol. Alcohol in oils generally makes them safer for use with the elderly and children than other chemicals. This is not to be confused with the alcohol that some folks drink. *Rosa damascena* is used as a female tonic (due to its hormone like properties) for everything from PMS to frigidity to menopause. It is also said to open the heart and help heal grief. It nurtures and comforts.

We, in the West, owe a great debt to Abu ‘Ali al-Husayn ibn Sina and to others of the Arab world that gave us many of the everyday things we take for granted like mathematics. Our dominant system of numbers is no longer Roman Numerals but Arabic. Besides Algebra, there is a whole A-list of contributions from the Islamic world: astronomy, astrology, architecture, alchemy (which is the basis of chemistry), the arts, the Arabica coffee bean, and, of course, aromatherapy.

Rose Water Bed Spritz Recipe

- ✿ Spray bottle
- ✿ Distilled water
- ✿ 1-2 drops Rose Otto oil

Fill bottle with water, add oils and spray on bed linen for a lovely, relaxing, (and potentially romantic) aroma.

For a more cost effective alternative, pick up rose water in the international aisle at the grocery store. Mix 1/3 rose water into 2/3 distilled water and spritz away to your heart's content.



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