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Hydrosols: The Next Aromatherapy

Suzanne Catty
Healing Arts Press (Mar 15, 2001)
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Aromatherapy, the use of “natural, whole, unadulterated, aromatic essences obtained from specific botanical sources by steam distillation” is a branch of plant or herbal therapy. The practice of aromatherapy employs essential oils to heal physiological, psychological, and even spiritual ills in a holistic way; that is, by treating the whole human being. The practice of aromatherapy can be found in the prehistory of many cultures, most notably in ancient Egypt, where aromatic oils were used in cosmetics and healing. The use of essential oils in healing has a long history. However, the use of hydrosols, the aromatic water produced by the distillation of plant material, is relatively new.

In this book, the author, a professional aromatherapist and founder of Aqua Vita (a company that produces hydrosols and essential oils), deftly presents a case for the use of hydrosols, in addition to essential oils, as a holistic tool for re-balancing a body’s systems to reach a state of health. Catty likens hydrosols to homeopathic substances: minute amounts of a curative agent taken over time to trigger the body’s own healing mechanisms.

Catty embarked upon an intense period of training in the use of hydrosols, experimenting with their use, and studying with world-renowned practitioners, among them Nelly Grosjean. The author offers the reader her years of knowledge and experience in descriptions of hydrosols she has used, as well as an analysis of their properties and how to produce them. For example, the hydrosol obtained from the distillation of Italian neroli (orange blossom) effectively cured the author’s caffeine jitters; the hydrosol of cedarwood has been used successfully for thinning hair; and lemon verbena hydrosol relieves symptoms of premenstrual syndrome. Catty presents methods and types of filtration, a comparison of storage options, such as black amethyst glass versus Miron violet glass, and different methods of treatments-when to use hydrosols in an aerosol, when to ingest them, and when to bathe in them.

This book provides a wealth of detail for both the consumer and the aromatherapy practitioner. Catty gives recipes for treating specific diseases, such as a blend of elecampane and cinnamon bark hydrosols in water and a rub of several substances, including black spruce and hyssop, to treat bronchitis. She also cautions readers to become informed consumers of aromatherapy products, choosing only the most pure ingredients. For those who have fond memories of rose and lavender waters, this book is a delight, and for those who are thinking of starting an aromatherapy practice, this book is a resource. (June).
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