

The Aromatic Perfumer's Glossary



Practical Potions, Apprentice Ship
Adventure

Natural Aromatherapy and Perfumer's Glossary

-A-

Absolute: A highly concentrated, aromatic, oily mixture extracted from plants through solvent extraction. Absolutes are similar to essential oils but often contain more waxes and other plant constituents. They are used extensively in perfumery and aromatherapy for their potent and complex fragrances.

Accord: A harmonious blend of two or more aromatic notes that combine to create a distinctive scent or aroma. In perfumery, accords are essential for creating complex and balanced fragrances. In aromatherapy, they can enhance the therapeutic effects of the blend.

Alcohol-based Natural Perfume: A type of fragrance where natural aromatic compounds, such as essential oils and absolutes, are dissolved in alcohol as the carrier solvent. This formulation helps to disperse the fragrance evenly and enhances the longevity of the scent. Alcohol based perfumes are usually put in a spray bottle. They do not generally have as much of a lasting effect as solid or oil based creations. But they have an airy and ephemeral character.

Alcohol Extract: Also known as a tincture, this is a concentrated extract where alcohol is used as a solvent to extract the beneficial compounds from plant materials. It can be used in both perfumery and aromatherapy.

Aldehydes: A class of aromatic compounds characterized by their distinctively sharp, sometimes pungent odor. In perfumery, aldehydes are known for enhancing and modifying fragrance compositions, often used as top notes to impart freshness and sparkle. They can add complexity and longevity to a fragrance.

Amber: A term often used to describe a sweet and vanillic perfume blend made from soft balsamic facets like blonde woods, pine resin or other woody materials. It is more of a concept than an actual material, used to evoke a warm, rich scent profile.

Ambergris: A rare and valuable substance produced as a byproduct from the male sperm whale. It has a complex and unique aroma described as sweet, earthy, and musky, making it highly sought after in the perfume industry. Due to ethical considerations, synthetic alternatives are often used.

Animalic: Fragrances containing notes reminiscent of animal odors, such as musk, civet, and castoreum. These notes are often used to add sensuality and depth to a fragrance, evoking a primal and luxurious feel.

Aromatherapy: A holistic healing modality that uses essential oils and other aromatic preparations to promote physical, mental, and emotional well-being. Essential oils are applied through various methods, including inhalation, massage, and baths, to harness their therapeutic properties.

Attar: A traditional perfume from India and the Middle East, made by blending aromatic materials into a base oil, such as Sandalwood oil. Attars contain 100% pure distilled essential oils and are free from alcohol and synthetic chemicals. They are highly concentrated and potent.

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Balsam: Aromatic, resinous plant material exuded from trees or shrubs, often used as a base in fragrances. Balsams are water-insoluble and semi-solid, providing a rich and warm foundation for perfumes.

Base Note: The longest-lasting layer of a fragrance, providing depth and richness. Base notes form the foundation of the scent, lingering for hours and anchoring the lighter top and middle notes. Common base notes include woods, resins, and musk.

Blondewood: A term used to describe light, smooth, and subtly woody notes derived from pale woods like Sandalwood, Cedar, and Amyris. Blondewood adds a sophisticated and gentle woody depth to fragrances without being overpowering.

-C-

Camellia Oil: A lightweight, non-greasy oil extracted from the seeds of the camellia plant. It is used as a carrier oil in aromatherapy and skincare for its high antioxidant content and moisturizing properties. Camellia oil is easily absorbed and leaves the skin feeling soft and nourished. It is used by aromatic perfumers as a base for oil based perfumes.

Carrier Oil: A base oil used in oil-based perfumes and aromatherapy to dilute essential oils and absolutes. Carrier oils, such as jojoba or sweet almond oil, help deliver essential oils to their intended purpose and provide additional health benefits when used topically.

Chypre: A perfume classification characterized by a combination of citrus top notes, a floral middle, and a woody base. Chypre fragrances are known for their complexity and elegance, often featuring notes of bergamot, oakmoss, and patchouli.

Civet: A paste obtained from the scent glands of the Civet cat, historically used in perfumery for its strong, musky aroma. Due to ethical concerns, the use of natural civet has declined, and synthetic alternatives are often used.

Cold Press Distillation: A method of extracting essential oils from citrus rinds using minimal heat, preserving the integrity of the oils. This process, also known as expression or cold pressing, involves mechanically pressing the rinds to release the oils.

Concrete: A solid or semi-solid wax-like substance produced by extracting oils from plant material using a solvent. Concretes contain both volatile and non-volatile compounds and are further processed to obtain absolutes.

Coumarin: A natural aromatic compound found in plants like Tonka beans and Vanilla grass. Coumarin is valued for its sweet, earthy scent reminiscent of freshly mown hay. It is used in perfumery to add warmth and complexity to fragrances.

CO₂ Extraction: A method of extracting essential oils using carbon dioxide as a solvent. This process can be done at low or high pressure to obtain high-quality extracts without leaving toxic residues. CO₂ extraction preserves the delicate aromatic compounds and produces pure, potent oils.

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Dabber-style Bottle: A fragrance container designed to dispense perfume in small amounts by dabbing. These bottles often have a small rod applicator attached to the cap or integrated into the bottle, allowing precise application to the skin. They are commonly used for oil-based perfumes.

Deer Musk: A substance obtained from the scent glands of male Musk Deer. Historically used in perfumery for its rich aroma, it has largely been discontinued due to ethical concerns. Synthetic musk is now commonly used as a substitute.

Dilution: The process of mixing essential oils or absolutes with a neutral carrier substance, such as alcohol or carrier oil, to reduce the strength of the scent. Dilution allows for better control over the intensity of the fragrance and ensures safe application on the skin.

Dry-down: The final stage of a fragrance's development, occurring after the top and middle notes have dissipated. The dry-down reveals the base notes and the true character of the perfume as it interacts with the wearer's skin chemistry.

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Eau de Cologne (EDC): A light, refreshing fragrance with a lower concentration of essential oils (typically around 2-4%). EDC offers a subtle scent that lasts for a few hours and is often characterized by citrus and herbal notes, making it ideal for daytime wear.

Eau de Parfum (EDP): A fragrance with a higher concentration of essential oils (usually around 15-20%), offering a long-lasting scent that endures for 6-8 hours. EDP provides a rich and complex aroma, suitable for both daytime and evening wear.

Eau de Toilette (EDT): A fragrance with a moderate concentration of essential oils (typically around 5-15%), resulting in a scent that lasts for 4-6 hours. EDT is a versatile fragrance, suitable for everyday wear and various occasions.

Eau Fraiche: A light and refreshing fragrance with a very low concentration of essential oils (usually around 1-3%). Eau Fraiche offers a delicate and fleeting aroma, ideal for a quick refreshment or a subtle hint of fragrance.

Enfleurage: An ancient extraction technique using odorless fats to capture the aroma and oils from plant materials. The process involves placing petals on a layer of fat, which absorbs the essential oils. The fat is then washed with alcohol to extract the oils. This method is effective for delicate flowers but is time-consuming and costly.

Essential Oil: A highly concentrated liquid extracted from plants, containing the natural aroma, volatile oils, and beneficial properties of the plant's essence. Essential oils are used in aromatherapy, natural perfumery, skincare products, and natural remedies for their therapeutic effects and aromatic qualities.

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Incense: Raw, natural aromatic plant materials such as resins, gums, flowers, leaves, bark, and spices burned to release fragrant smoke. Incense is used for spiritual, religious, ceremonial, or therapeutic purposes, as well as to create a pleasant atmosphere or aid in meditation.

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Jojoba Oil: A liquid wax extracted from the seeds of the jojoba plant. Jojoba oil is used as a carrier oil in aromatherapy and natural skincare for its moisturizing properties and stability. It closely resembles the natural oils of the skin, making it an excellent base for essential oil blends. It is used by aromatic perfumers as a base for oil based perfumes.

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MCT Coconut Oil: Medium-chain triglyceride oil extracted from coconut. MCT oil is used as a carrier oil in aromatherapy and cosmetics for its lightweight texture and quick absorption. It is ideal for creating non-greasy, easily absorbed formulations. It is used by aromatic perfumers as a base for oil based perfumes.

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Resin: A viscous exudate excreted by trees or shrubs as a means of protection. Resins are water-insoluble and are used in perfumery for their warm and depth-providing properties. Common resins include Frankincense, Myrrh, and Benzoin.

Room Spray: A fragrance product designed to freshen and scent indoor spaces. Room sprays are made with essential oils or aromatic compounds dissolved in water or alcohol, providing an instant burst of fragrance to enhance the ambiance of a room.

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Solid Perfume: A fragrance formulation where aromatic compounds, such as essential oils and absolutes, are mixed with a wax and oil base to create a semi-solid texture. Solid perfumes can be applied directly to the skin and offer a long-lasting, portable fragrance option.

Spray Perfume: A fragrance product dispensed through a fine mist spray, allowing even application of the scent. Spray perfumes are typically made with essential oils or aromatic

compounds dissolved in alcohol or water, providing a convenient and consistent fragrance experience.

Steam Distillation: A process used to extract essential oils from plant materials by passing steam through them. The steam causes the oils to vaporize, and the vapors are then condensed back into liquid form for collection. This method preserves the integrity of the essential oils and is commonly used for herbs, flowers, and leaves.

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Top Note: The first volatile scents perceived upon application of a fragrance. Top notes typically last for around 2-15 minutes and consist of light, refreshing aromas such as citrus, herbal, or fruity notes. They set the initial impression of the fragrance.

