

I love perfume. I love the sensual, stimulating, and soothing aromas, the exoticism of fancy names and mysterious formulae, and the luxury of gorgeous bottles in fanciful shapes.

Natural scents are magnificent. Whether as essential oils or some other extraction, or directly from the bloom, what is more delightful than jasmine, rose, or lilac for a rush of floral pleasure? What is more invigorating than a whiff of lemon juice or the sweetness of fresh-mown grass? But the blended, artificial scents of commercial perfume have a magic all their own, a magic that can be harnessed for all sorts of purposes.

It was Coco Chanel who first decided that a woman shouldn't smell like a flower, she should smell like *herself*. At her instruction, her perfume specialists developed *aldehydes*; artificial ingredients that blended natural scents so that no single scent dominated; instead, each perfume had its own unique signature. Modern perfumes such as *Chanel No. 5*, *Beautiful* or *Halston* don't smell like their ingredients; indeed, it is hard to figure out what they contain. Instead, they are distinctive, and change character in reaction to the individual body chemistry of the person who wears them.

Unfortunately, to sell such perfumes on a mass basis, the scents must be controlled in mass quantities. Natural ingredients, such as flowers, have variations from batch to batch, petal to petal. To make sure that every bottle of *Opium* or *Tommy Girl* smells exactly like every other, it is necessary to synthesize natural ingredients. They are thus uniform and consistent but, many occultists would say, disempowered.

Can commercial perfumes be used magically, despite their lack of natural essences, and if so how? What is it, exactly, that natural essences provide that commercial preparations lack, and how can you work around that?



Mystical, Magical, Perfume

TEXT
Deborah Lipp

ILLUSTRATION
Suzanne Cheryl Gardner

Does It Work?

Natural essences are like the life force of the plant or other aroma. In *Magical Aromatherapy*,¹ Scott Cunningham insists "Synthetics won't work." He explains that true (natural) essential oils "have a direct link with the Earth. This subtle energy, nourished by soil, Sun and rain, vibrates within essential oils. Since we too are of the Earth and also possess this link, we can merge the energy of true essential oils with our own to create needed change."

Scott was partially right. Only true plant essences can impart the vibrational connection to Mother Earth and life itself. The magic of scent, when worked without this natural power, is weakened. On the other hand, scent carries many additional powers besides the Earth Mother vibration, and artificial scents share those powers.

Look at it this way: If you were to do a spell or ritual that called for a red rose, and you didn't have a red rose or a nearby florist, there are all sorts of substitutions you might choose. You could take a red candle and engrave it with the image of a rose. You could draw a picture of a rose and place it on your altar, or use a photo of a rose from a magazine. Because sympathetic magic teaches us that anything that is *like* a thing, *is* that thing, all manner of substitutions would work.

Just so, anything that *smells like* a thing, is that thing.

Now the importance of this is different in perfumery from the example of the rose/candle. With the rose, we were looking for substitutions for something we really wanted or needed. But with perfume, we are (or at least I am) more looking for an excuse.

Thing is, there are a lot of us who just delight in perfumes; I would honestly rather wear *Spellbound* than patchouli oil, no matter how much more magically potent the oil may be. It is for this reason that I first became interested in using perfume magically and spiritually, and for this reason that I included a rather lengthy



section on perfume in my book *The Way of Four*.² Maybe it's just that I grew up in the suburbs, and knew more about perfumes than I knew about flowers and nature. Certainly I've learned a lot from nature over the years, but I still love going to the mall!

How?

The steps of using magical perfume are easy. They're similar to using any aromatherapy, except that with perfumes, you're using blends, and so you're looking for a *mix* of ingredients.

It's not easy to find out the ingredients of many perfumes, but you can learn a lot from retailers and reference books. Many manufacturers will tell you the primary

scents of their perfumes, so that looking on Avon's or Estée Lauder's websites, for example, will allow you to look up the various perfumes that they sell, and those pages will often mention the dominant notes of a scent. Another source is sellers; either brick-and-mortar or online. Try Macy's website or Perfumania. Once you have the ingredients, you can start to use reference books like *Magical Aromatherapy* to find out how they might be used magically. (Or cut out the middle man and read *The Way of Four*, where I provide extensive lists of perfumes, ingredients, and elemental associations.)

If you already have a favorite perfume, you might first be interested in looking up its ingredients and magical associations. Instead of starting with spells to *change* something, examine how something already *is*. "Know thyself" is part of the task of the true Witch. If you have a scent that you love, find out what that scent is all about and meditate on the meaning.

When choosing a perfume to use magically, decide on a goal, and then figure out some likely ingredients. You might choose specific folkloric associations — often found in herbal references — such as protection, health, or romance, but let's keep it simple and look at elements and planets. If you know the magical meanings of the planets, and also understand Air, Fire, Water, and Earth,

you can figure out for yourself how things associated with them might be used. That is, if I know that coriander and ginger are spices associated with both Fire and Mars, then I can decide to use these spices for any Fire/Mars purpose. (*Obsession* and *Opium* both have coriander, and *Jean Paul Gautier* contains ginger.)

Okay, you've decided upon your goal, and figured out several ingredients that could help fulfill your goal. You've discovered the name of a perfume or two that contain those ingredients. Now what?

Simple: Concentrate, focus, and spray.

Perfumery for Publication

Suppose I want to get something published in a magazine or by a book publisher. To accomplish my goal, I want Air, which is associated with writing, and Fire, which is associated with success and public notice. For planets, I choose Mercury for its association with communication, and Jupiter for its good fortune and auspicious blessings on endeavors.

Looking into ingredients, I find that Anise, Star Anise, and Sage are Air/Jupiter, Caraway, Lavender, and Lily-of-the-Valley are Air/Mercury, Celery and Opopanax are Fire/Mercury, and Nutmeg is Fire/Jupiter.

Perfumes with appropriate ingredients include *Green Tea*, *Opium*, *White Shoulders*, and *Tommy Girl*. I also find the men's cologne *Tuscany*.

I prepare a space, perhaps at my altar, with my manuscript and my selected perfume. I still my mind and visualize success. Holding my manuscript, I spray myself and the manuscript with perfume, inhaling deeply. I visualize that I am spraying success and publication onto us, that we (the manuscript and I) are both absorbing successful publication through scent. I finish with a declaration such as "So Mote it Be."*

The world of perfume is just as magical as the world of aromatherapy; it all depends on your knowledge and willingness to explore and experiment.

Footnotes

¹*Magical Aromatherapy*, Scott Cunningham, St. Paul, Llewellyn, 1989, p. 34

²*The Way of Four: Create Elemental Balance in Your Life*, Deborah Lipp, St. Paul, Llewellyn, 2004. ©

*Editor's note: if you do this ritual, let the perfume do its work magically from a distance by sending your submission by email, or send an unscented manuscript by postal mail. No editor of our acquaintance likes to receive scented submissions.

— DEBORAH LIPP is the author of *The Way of Four* and *The Way of Four Spellbook*. She's been a Witch for almost twenty-five years.

Handy Magical Perfumes

I put a database together for myself (with the help of a tech-savvy friend), so that I could look closely at perfumes for certain magical uses. Here is some of the most interesting stuff I've learned.

Love

The majority of popular, alluring scents used in perfumery belong to Water and Venus. The following perfumes have more than half of their known ingredients associated with Water, and at least three ingredients associated with Venus.

Dolce Vita (Christian Dior).

Samsara (Guerlain).

Spellbound (Estée Lauder).

White Diamonds (Elizabeth Taylor).

White Shoulders (Parfums Intl.)

Balance

For balance, I chose perfumes with relatively equal parts of Air, Fire, Water, and Earth.

Green Tea (Elizabeth Arden).

Tuscany (a men's cologne by Aramis).

Miss Dior (Christian Dior).

Solar Power

For the power of the sun, you're usually looking for ingredients like cinnamon, marigold, carnation, or orange (not orange blossom). The following have at least three solar ingredients:

Dolce & Gabbana (Dolce & Gabbana).

Chaps (Ralph Lauren).

Perceive for Men (Avon).

Opium (Yves Saint Laurent).

Poison (Christian Dior).

Red (Giorgio Beverly Hills).

Tommy Girl (Tommy Hilfiger).

Safe Journey

For a safe journey, why not wear an appropriate perfume on the trip? You can also spray your airline or train tickets, or your car keys. Mercury is good for a journey, and Earth ingredients are good for safe arrival at home.

Green Tea (Elizabeth Arden).

Miss Dior (Christian Dior).

Opium (Yves Saint Laurent). ©