

Redding Garden Club Conservation



Synthetic Chemicals in Fragrances: Problems and Alternatives

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SCENTSational??? Not really. There are more than 3,000 mostly synthetic chemicals used in the manufacture of fragrances that are added to just about everything you buy. Most are not regulated or even tested.

Fragrance is one of the top five allergens, causing topical reactions like contact dermatitis, and breathing problems like asthma. Some ingredients affect the central nervous system, others the immune system, and still others the reproductive system. They have been found in the breast milk of nursing mothers. Synthetic chemicals have been associated with cancer. They accumulate in the body; they do not biodegrade, and some pollute watershed areas. Phthalates, which help fragrances last longer, also affect many body systems. Guess what? Many are NOT even listed as ingredients on labels, even on cosmetics.

A good resolution for the new year would be to reduce your usage of synthetic fragrances where possible, but remember that **many of these chemicals are not required to be listed on labels**. Buying organic is a very good choice. You can opt for using safer, plant-derived fragrances around the house using the following **essential oils** which are easily purchased at health food stores:



Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) Calms and relaxes. Use 5-10 drops essential oil of lavender to 1 oz. water sprayed on your bed linens for a good night's sleep.



Nerola (*Citrus aurantium*) Destresses. Try 5-10 drops of orange blossom essential oil to 1 oz. unscented body lotion.



Palmarosa (*Cymbopogon martini*) Floral scent. Add 5-10 drops of palmarosa essential oil in 1 oz. of almond oil and add to warm bath water.



Geranium (*Pelargonium graveolens*) Soothing and good for focusing your mind. Add 5-10 drops geranium essential oil to 1 oz. grapeseed oil for massage oil.



Bergamot (*Citrus bergamia*) Add 1-2 drops of essential oil of bergamot to a hot, wet washcloth and slip into your shower, inhaling the aroma to boost energy, to balance and uplift you. (Yup, it is the ingredient in Earl Grey teas.)



Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) Several drops of rosemary essential oil added to grapefruit oil and used as a room mister leaves a fresh, woody scent.

Essential oils have been used in aromatherapy for many years. Studies have shown that they really do have calming or invigorating effects. **Sandalwood**, which has been used in temples and Eastern religious ceremonies, actually does relax and sedate the central nervous system. **Rose oil** actually helps to lower the adrenalin in the bloodstream.

Always do a patch test first to make sure you are not allergic. Pregnant or nursing women and ill people should contact a medical and/or aromatherapy professional before using essential oils.

(source: body+soul, March 2008)