

AROMATHERAPY ADVICE

THANK YOU FOR SUCH AN outstanding magazine. I look forward to every issue and read it cover to cover—a few times.

I read with great interest Aimee Lee Ball's Spa Rx article on Aromatherapy [March-April]. Although one thinks of essential oils only in terms of aroma, true aromatherapy incorporates inhalation, aroma, bodily application, and ingestion. Essential oils contain chemical compounds such as terpenes, sesquiterpenes, and phenolic compounds. Oils with phenolic compounds, such as wintergreen, are analgesic and can be used similarly to cortisone and aspirin when applied directly to the body, inhaled, or ingested. As you found in your research, the wonderful properties of plant-based oils, such as antifungal, antibacterial, and cell regeneration, come from their biochemistry.

You cannot use just any essential oil if you are to receive the benefit of the plant's underlying properties. Most essential oils sold in the U.S. today are for external use only and are perfume, not therapeutic grade. Essential oils can be used only in their whole, natural state, as they are more than the sum of their parts. Oils containing synthetic or extracted compounds don't have the same therapeutic properties as oils created entirely by nature, even if their components have the same chemical formulas. In addition, the distillation processes and testing of the finished product are important components of ascertaining viability. Lavender may be great for skin, but if you use a lavender that's cut with lavadin (although the bottle says 100 percent pure lavender), distilled with solvents, or not tested to ensure a low camphor ratio, the lavender may do more harm than good.

Organics is only one component of pure oil. The other questions to ask are, Is the oil processed using a technique that maintains the therapeutic components of the plants? Do the oils have high biofrequency? Has the purity and quality of the oil been ensured through independent lab analysis? In addition, only cold-air diffusion should be used with therapeutic-grade essential oils since heating them (with a tea light or in a candle) destroys any therapeutic benefit. If I see a company that claims to have 100 percent pure therapeutic-grade essential oils but advocates heating them, I know that they are really making perfume-grade oils, since no seller of therapeutic-grade oils would advise doing so.

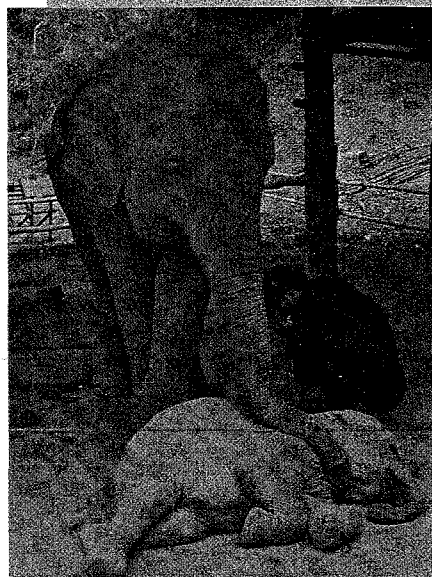
It is the responsibility of the spa to

ensure that the essential oils it offers to its clients are pure and that they have the properties being touted. That's why I use only ingestible essential oils in my practice, and if I were to receive an aromatherapy treatment, I would allow only oils that are ingestible to be used. As a spa trainer for therapeutic essential oils, I'm seeing a trend toward greater understanding of essential oils and their therapeutic benefits. Many high-end spas, such as the Bellagio, use true therapeutic-grade essential oils. They are to be commended for offering their clients products that deliver the advertised benefits.

MARIA G. TURCHI, NCTMB
 MASSAGE AND ESSENTIAL OIL THERAPIST
 TENAFLY, NJ

Elephant Love

We were the only ones who were moved by the the stories of the elephants at the Four Seasons Tented Camp in Thailand's Golden Triangle March-April. Hina Vaid, a writer, Perry and Carolyn Butler are in the camp for year and fell in love with the elephants who take their guests on daily



trails. Sadder to see elephants, decided on the day of Donakorn and not satisfied simply donate to the camp's elephant adoption program, they came up with two creative ways to support. Perry created a special Pasodol brand of their classic vineyards. The vineyard, which was previously planted with a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Cabernet Franc in the 2001 vintage. It earned a Robert Parker rating of 90. Carolyn created the classic Italian shoe producer, Cesare Cricca to create an exclusive style, a sexy Deep-Red Orsini pump in a black and white color with a 1 1/2" red heel (available at www.rodandoverse.com). Proceeds from both will go to the Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation to care for Nam Chok, who has become a favorite of the camp's youngest elephant, five-month-old Touy Suk-Loi. The two together will be more information about elephant rescue programs in Thailand, visit www.elephantfamily.org or e-mail John Brien at the Four Seasons Tented Camp at johnbrien@fsc.com.