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Storing, Handling And Using Essential Oils by: Mireille Gautschi

Storing essential oils:

Many Essential Oils are flammable and/or act as strong solvents. Eucalyptus Oil for example can be used to remove glue from old stickers or to strip paint.

Essential Oils are best stored in amber glass bottles with a tight lid. It is also advisable to fit bottles that don't have a dripolator (orifice reducer) with a child proof cap for safety reasons.

Sun light (UV) and high temperatures are the main enemies of essential oils. Amber glass bottles offer good protection from UV. Essential Oil containers are best kept in a dark, cool place with temperature fluctuations kept to a minimum.

Keep essential oils safely locked away from children at all times.

Stored at low temperatures, some oils will tend to solidify. This is no cause for alarm as they will turn liquid again once they reach room or in some cases body temperature. Most likely to solidify are the absolutes, vanilla, rose otto and fennel.

Under good conditions essential oils can be stored for periods of 6 months to several years. Some oils like myrrh, sandalwood, frankincense and patchouli will even improve or "mature" with age, very similar to a good wine.

The shortest shelf life have all citrus oils with grapefruit generally being the first to deteriorate. Once these oils start to turn cloudy or smell rancid they should be disposed of.

Handling and using essential oils:

When taking essential oils from the bottle, avoid contaminating the oil. Don't touch the top of the bottle or the inside of the lid. If you are using pipettes to transfer the oils, try to obtain disposable ones that you can throw away after use. Never use the same pipette for different oils. Used pipettes can also be stored for a short time in clip-seal plastic bags to use again later.

Avoid contact of essential oils with the skin as they can cause irritation. Using latex gloves and wearing protective glasses is recommended when handling essential oils.

Essential oils must never be used internally. For application to the skin, dilute the essential oil with a good quality carrier oil e.g. jojoba, almond or olive oil. 3% essential oil with 97% carrier oil is a safe ratio.

Diffusers and oil lamps need only 2-3 drops of essential oil to scent a room for many hours. The cup on the oil lamp should be 3/4 filled with clean water, add to it the 2-3 drops of essential oil. Only then light the candle in the burner. Remember some essential oils are highly flammable, so be careful when using an essential oil lamp.

Observe these points and you will get a lot of enjoyment out of your essential oils.

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