

# Flower Essence Repertory

*A Comprehensive Guide to  
North American and English Flower Essences  
for Emotional and Spiritual Well-Being*

*by Patricia Kaminski and Richard Katz*

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St. John's



**Shasta Daisy**    *Chrysanthemum Maximum*

...When you no longer know how to go further, let the plants tell you, the plants that you let spring up, grow, blossom, and fruit within you. Learn the language of the flowers.

All earth-dwellers are able to understand the language of the flowers, for their teacher is the Sun-Spirit who speaks to every human heart. The plants point the way from grave to resurrection through whatever clefts and abysses, over whatever pastures and to whatever heights the path may lead: elderberry, wild rose, chrysanthemum, aster — they are the stair steps of transformation, of purification, and of healings from the wrongs and woes of the world.

Albert Steffen, *Journeys Here and Yonder*

# Overview of Flower Essence Theory and Practice

## Introduction: What are Flower Essences?

Flower essences are subtle liquid extracts, generally taken in oral form, which are used to address profound issues of emotional well-being, soul development, and mind-body health. While the use of flowers for healing has many ancient antecedents, the precise application of flower essences for specific emotions and attitudes was first developed by an English physician, Dr. Edward Bach, in the 1930's. Today, flower essences are gaining world-wide professional recognition for their significant contribution to holistic health and wellness programs.

Flower essences are generally prepared from a sun infusion of either wildflowers or pristine garden blossoms in a bowl of water, which is further diluted and potentized, and preserved with brandy. Quality preparation requires careful attention to the purity of the environment, the vibrancy and potency of the blossoms, celestial and meteorological conditions, and sensitive study of the physical and energetic properties of the plant through its cycles of growth.

Although flower essences resemble other health remedies which come in dropper bottles, they do not work because of the chemical composition of the liquid, but because of the *life forces* derived from the plant and contained within the water-based matrix. Like homeopathic remedies, flower essences are *vibrational* in nature. They are highly dilute from a physical point of view, but have subtle power as *potentized substances*, embodying the specific energetic patterns of each flower. Their impact does not derive from any direct biochemical interaction within the physiology of the body. Rather, flower essences work through the various human energy fields, which in turn influence mental, emotional, and physical well-being.

The action of flower essences can be compared to the effects we experience from hearing a particularly moving piece of music, or seeing an inspirational work of art. The light or sound waves which reach our senses may evoke profound feelings in our soul, which indirectly affect our breathing, pulse rate, and other physical states. These patterns do not impact us by direct physical or chemical intervention in our bodies. Rather, it is the contour and arrangement of the light or sound which awakens an experience within our own soul similar to that which arose within the soul of the creator of the musical or art

form. This is the phenomenon of *resonance*, as when a guitar string sounds when a matching note is sung. In a similar way, the specific structure and shape of the life forces conveyed by each flower essence resonate with, and awaken, particular qualities within the human soul.

Another model which may be useful in understanding the vibrational resonance of flower essences comes from *holography*. A holographic photograph consists of light-wave interference patterns, any portion of which contains information from the whole and can be used to re-create the original three-dimensional image. Thus, we can describe the water containing the blossoms as receiving a kind of holographic imprint of the essential qualities of the plant. Each drop of water contains the whole configuration of the plant's archetype. As we dilute the flower essence, we attenuate the physical substance of the infusion so that it is no longer biochemically significant. However, the full etheric "message" of the plant essence remains in the few highly dilute drops we take into our bodies.

Working with flower essences requires a stretch in our thinking beyond the materialistic assumption that "more is better." Flower essences, like other vibrational remedies, illustrate the principle that "small is beautiful." They are part of an emerging field of non-invasive, life-enhancing subtle therapies, which promise to make a major contribution to health care in coming years.



# Chapter 1:

## What is Flower Essence Therapy?

Flower essence therapy involves the application of flower essences in the context of an overall program of health enhancement, either in professional practice or home care. Although the word “therapy” is typically used to mean the treatment and cure of disease, the Greek root *therapeia* had a wider, soul-spiritual meaning of “service,” related to the word *therapeuein*, meaning “to take care of.” It is in this sense of service and care that we speak of flower essence therapy; it is a way to nurture and sustain health with the beneficent forces of Nature, in the context of wise and loving human attention.

To understand the therapeutic uses of flower essences, it is important to ask some basic questions about the nature of health and illness. What is the goal of health care? What causes illness? What is the relationship between mind and body? What are our assumptions about human nature? Our answers to these general questions will determine whether we have the understanding and insight to use flower essences in their full capacity as catalysts for mind-body wellness.

### The Nature of Health

#### **The freedom to experience life**

Health is the ability to fully participate in the rhythms of life, feeling the glory of the dawning day, celebrating the yearly cycle of the seasons, and sensing Nature’s pulse of life quickening within us. True health is more than just “getting by.” It means plunging into life, fully engaging body and soul in all that we do — in work, family and social life, creative expression, and inner contemplation.

There is no one fixed model of what it means to be a healthy person. To be healthy is to be completely ourselves — not the identity defined by social conditioning, nor the persona adopted to meet the expectations of others. Rather, it is the Self which uniquely expresses all that we can be. This will be different for each person, and thus presupposes the development of self-knowledge and understanding.

Health is the acceptance of life, with all its imperfections and contradictions. It is an expansiveness of being which grows strong by embracing all experiences, rather than trying to banish limitation, pain, or suffering. In fact, suffering has the potential to lead to a deeper appreciation of life, and an awakening to our own greater potential. Sickness can be viewed not as a scourge to be eradicated, but rather as a teacher, showing us sources of imbalance in our lives, or aspects of our being we have ignored. The challenges which we face can



evoke inner virtues, and motivate us to make needed changes. At its deepest level, illness can be an *initiatory experience*, felt not merely as a loss, but also as an opportunity for a new beginning.

Health presumes an inner freedom. Responsibility is the process which leads to true freedom, the *ability to respond*. When we are simply passive recipients of illness or medical treatment, merely reacting or feeling acted upon, we become objects to be manipulated, rather than active participants in our health care. True health requires active self-awareness, in which each of us takes responsibility for life's challenges and lessons.

## **Medical Paradigms of Healing**

Health is commonly defined in our culture as the absence of symptoms, or the elimination or control of disease. Because this definition lacks a positive image of wellness, our medical system is preoccupied with treating sickness, rather than creating health. Understanding the limits of this symptomatic approach to health is essential for anyone who uses flower essences. Without this awareness, it is easy to approach the flower essences merely as remedies to fix emotional symptoms, rather than as catalysts for awareness and transformation.

### **Mechanistic model of the human being**

The symptomatic approach to health is based on a paradigm of medical practice which has a mechanistic view of the human being. Its philosophic roots lie deep in the seventeenth century world-view, exemplified by René Descartes, who postulated the duality of mind and body, and by Isaac Newton, whose theories led to a mechanical, clock-like model of the universe. As this scientific paradigm developed in the following centuries, the Industrial Revolution filled our world with increasingly elaborate machines, and the human body came to be viewed as the most remarkably complex machine of all. This mechanistic model regards healing as a matter of fixing broken machinery, similar to tuning-up an engine or replacing a defective part.

As computers have proliferated in recent decades, the mechanistic paradigm has been further extended as a cybernetic model of life. Human beings, and living beings in general, are now considered to be like super computers, made of biological genetic “chips.” Through genetic engineering, modern medical technology is now attempting to redesign the very structure of living organisms.

While mechanical reductionism interprets life as being composed of physical “building blocks” such as cells, molecules, atoms, and sub-atomic particles — cybernetics reduces all intelligence to digital information, the succession of binary on/off bits which form the basis of the modern computer. The “artificial intelligence” of a computer is a powerful *instrument*, but is it the same thing as *life*? Consider a printed half-tone picture of a rose.



The series of dots and white spaces on the printed page may resemble the image of a rose, but we know that a *living rose* is infinitely more complex and full of far deeper meaning and significance.

Contemporary medicine has admittedly developed an extraordinary knowledge of the workings of the various systems and structures of the physical body. This has led to a sophisticated technology to repair the body from the ravages of disease and injury through surgery, and to alter the physiological functions of the body through chemical medicine.

While this complex medical technology provides some remarkable benefits, it is also exorbitantly expensive. Moreover, there are also other, less tangible costs. Few doctors today visit their patients in their homes, or take sufficient time in their interviews to get a full picture of the patient's life, including home environment, family dynamics, and work experience. The rise of the specialist, who is an expert in one part of the human "machine," means that less attention is paid to the whole person than was the case in the day of the family doctor.

Furthermore, when we are treated simply as machines to be manipulated or computers to be programmed, our tremendous innate healing capacities are ignored, making us increasingly dependent on costly medical intervention. The contemporary health care crisis is more than a financial or political problem; it is a cultural symptom of our disconnection from the deep sources from which true health springs.

## **The germ theory**

The underlying assumption of conventional medicine is that healing results from *fighting illness*, rather than from *fostering health*. In fact, it is striking how much of its language is borrowed from images of warfare. We try to "conquer disease" and "fight infection" with "magic bullets," and wage a "war on cancer."

The portrayal of medicine as a military campaign derives its impetus from the germ theory of disease, culminating in the nineteenth century with the work of Louis Pasteur, the founder of microbiology. He established not only the scientific but also the philosophical basis for modern disease-fighting techniques such as immunization and antibiotics. From the point of view of the germ theory, disease is caused by invading outside agents, such as bacteria or viruses, against which we must combat. Modern medicine has amassed a powerful arsenal of weapons which has won many battles against infectious diseases that once ravaged humankind.

The mechanistic/cybernetic models of the human being and the germ theory of disease contain some truths, and have led to improvements in human health. However, the inability of contemporary medicine to significantly reduce many chronic diseases such as cancer, arthritis, or cardiovascular illness points to a need for a larger view of health and healing.

## **Resistance to disease**

It was a contemporary of Pasteur, another French medical scientist named Claude Bernard, who was took issue with the idea that invading microorganisms are the reason for disease. Bernard stressed the importance of one's "inner environment" and the degree to which it was receptive to disease, rather than the "germ," which was merely the mechanism by which disease occurred. He spoke of the "soil" out of which human well-being could grow. He knew, as would any gardener, that without healthy soil we cannot grow robust, disease-resistant plants, no matter how much we battle against the invading pests.

Bernard's insights heralded the concept of *resistance* to disease, which recognizes that pathogenic microorganisms are widespread among the general population, but only certain people at particular times actually succumb to the diseases these germs "cause." Such an understanding is the basis of truly preventative health care, one which emphasizes diet, exercise, stress management, emotional well-being, and environmental factors as important components of a vibrant, disease-resistant way of life. Although such health-promoting lifestyle factors were articulated as long ago as the fifth century, B.C., by the Greek physician Hippocrates, they are again receiving increasing recognition as ways in which the individual can take responsibility and make an impact on his or her state of health.

It is true that not all illness is preventable, and many disease-causing factors may well be beyond individual control. Yet, we can influence how we *respond* to the challenges that life presents us. The modern understanding of the *immune system*, its role in disease prevention and recovery, and its close connection with our emotions and daily habits, teaches us that the way in which we live — our physical, emotional, and mental habits — has a profound influence on our ability to resist disease, and to create greater health and well-being.

It is in this context of overall health enhancement that we can understand the remarkable contribution of flower essences. They are not *substitutes* for the wonder drugs or high-tech miracles of modern medicine. Rather, their purpose is to establish the ground out of which good health grows, to enrich the deep soil of our lives, so that the life-affirming habits and attitudes which nourish our well-being can take root and flourish.

## **The Mind-Body Relationship**

### **Psychosomatic medicine, stress and personality**

Although mainstream medicine has been increasingly influenced in past century by the mechanistic and military models of healing, a strong counter-movement which recognizes the role of the mind and emotions has also made significant advances.

Homeopathic medicine, developed by the German physician Samuel Hahnemann over two hundred years ago, became a major force in medical practice in the nineteenth century.

It emphasizes treating the person, rather than the disease, and homeopathic practitioners consider mental and emotional factors along with physical symptoms. Even though it is largely dismissed by conventional medicine as “unscientific,” aspects of homeopathic philosophy have penetrated mainstream medicine. For example, in the late nineteenth century the famous Canadian doctor Sir William Osler described the importance of his patients’ emotions and attitudes in illness and recovery. Osler has been quoted as saying, “It is better to know the patient that has the disease than the disease the patient has.”

The rise of psychiatry and the clinical use of hypnotism brought a recognition of the extraordinary influence of unconscious mental processes on the functioning of the body. This understanding was reinforced by the experience of World War I, in which many soldiers returned from the front lines suffering from “shell shock” due to the extreme stress of combat. It was at this same time that Dr. Edward Bach developed his insights into the role of emotions and attitudes in disease, leading to his flower essence system in the 1930’s.

The decade of the thirties unleashed the tremendous societal traumas of the Great Depression and the beginnings of World War II. With such challenges facing the human psyche, it is not surprising that this decade also brought further investigation of mind-body relationships. The concept of “psychosomatic medicine” was developed by the psychiatrist Dr. Franz Alexander and others at this time. A number of diseases — such as warts and other skin ailments, asthma, stomach ulcers, and colitis — were recognized as having emotional rather than physical causes, although their effects were definitely quite physical. It was also in the thirties that Dr. Hans Selye began his pioneering work on *stress*, a concept which has now made its way into popular culture. Selye showed that the “fight-or-flight” reactions of the sympathetic nervous system, which are appropriate to situations of immediate physical danger and emergency, can become debilitating when repeatedly triggered by habitual emotional attitudes or chronic stress reactions.

In the post-World War II era, mind-body research began to identify specific personality traits which correlate with a susceptibility to certain diseases. (Such an understanding has ancient roots; already in the second century the noted Greek physician Galen suggested the melancholic person was more susceptible to cancer.) One of the most famous modern studies to associate personality and disease was conducted in the 1950’s by Drs. Meyer Friedman and Raymond Rosenman. They coined the term *Type A behavior* for the impatient, hostile attitude that seemed connected with a greater risk of heart disease, compared to the more easy-going *Type B*.

Dr. Dean Ornish, who is receiving increasing recognition for his program of reversing heart disease through diet, life-style, and psychological change, has conducted some of the most significant contemporary research on heart conditions. He has found that behind the compulsive drive of many heart-disease patients is the effort to create a false self which can win approval and love from others, to fill the “empty void” felt deep within the heart. For such people Ornish prescribes “emotional open heart surgery” to help let down defenses.

His research shows that enriching one's feeling life, along with related lifestyle changes, contributes to a far better rate of long-term cure than conventional heart surgery.

Recent research by psychologist Lydia Temoshok suggests what she calls a *Type C personality*, characterized by unexpressed anger, hopelessness, and depression, which seems to correlate with greater susceptibility to cancer. In a landmark ten-year controlled study, Stanford University psychiatrist Dr. David Spiegel found that women with breast cancer who received group psychotherapy lived twice as long as women with the same condition and physical treatment, but who received no psychotherapy.

Additional research at Stanford with arthritis patients in a self-help program showed the importance of developing a sense of self-responsibility and mastery, described by psychologist Albert Bandura as "self-efficacy." Patients in the program who overcame feelings of helplessness and overwhelm experienced reduced pain and increased mobility.

While much study still remains to be done in order to establish the precise relationship between personality traits and specific diseases, current research clearly demonstrates that emotions and attitudes are major contributing factors to our ability to resist disease and create health.

## **Placebo effect**

Ironically, some of the most convincing arguments for the role of attitudes and beliefs in human health comes from data that is often discarded in research. When controlled studies are done, the control group receives a *placebo*, something which looks like a medication or treatment, but which is physically inert. The idea is that the treatment or medication is effective if the subjects who receive the "real" treatment have significantly better results than those with the placebo.

Nonetheless, many of the people who receive placebos do recover, often at much greater rates than would be expected from those not receiving any treatment at all. This "placebo effect" has become well recognized in research, and is explained as the effect of the belief of the patient, reinforced by the caring attention of the medical practitioner or researcher, that some helpful treatment is being received.

Researchers are generally paid to measure the physical effect of the remedy or procedure on the patients who receive the "real thing." Yet it seems equally significant to study the responses of the placebo group, who *receive no medical treatment at all, but often experience demonstrable changes based simply on the belief that they are receiving treatment.*

The placebo effect is convincing evidence that attitudes and beliefs impact the human body in ways which are as observable and real as active physical agents. Rather than discarding this part of the experimental method, we should examine it more closely. This



demonstration of mind-body influence challenges us to develop therapies which *directly* address attitudes and beliefs. Flower essence therapy is one such modality.

## **Psychoneuroimmunology**

In the 1980's medical science began taking the mind-body connection seriously, as research began to map some of the bio-chemical mechanisms involved. With the publication of Robert Ader's book *Psychoneuroimmunology* in 1981, this term entered the medical and popular vocabulary. Psychoneuroimmunology (PNI) refers to the mind's ability, acting through the nervous system, to alter the physiology of the human immune system, which is responsible for resistance to disease. Studies have shown direct connections of the nervous system with the thymus gland, which produces the T-Cells which are basic to immune function. Numerous "biochemical messengers" have been studied, including hormones which transmit emotional responses to and from glands in the body, and various neuro-peptides such as the endorphins which have pain killing and euphoric effects.

It is extremely important that we accurately comprehend the meaning of PNI and other mind-body research. *It does not explain the mind as a purely physiological phenomenon, nor does it prove that the mind can be controlled chemically.* Such an interpretation mistakes the *brain*, which is a part of the physical body, with the *mind* or *soul*, which are aspects of Self beyond the physical body. The mind acts *through* the brain and other parts of the body, and thus affects their functioning. As well, the mind's activity is impeded or enhanced by the condition of the brain and body. This is a reciprocal relationship, far more complex and dynamic than the simplistic assertion that the mind is *nothing but* biochemical mechanisms.

If PNI research is interpreted in a reductionistic way, it becomes just another elaboration of the human being as a complex machine or bio-computer. The true significance of PNI research is that we can measure the physical *effects* of our beliefs, attitudes, and feelings, which are otherwise not directly measurable. This is analogous to physicists who study invisible sub-atomic particles by looking at their trails in cloud chambers. The biochemical pathways charted by PNI research are evidence of higher soul qualities which have their origins in a realm beyond the physical body. Thus understood, this research supports a wider understanding of the human being, in which the physical body is directly affected by what we think and feel.

In summary, we can see that modern flower essence therapy is part of a larger quest within health care professions for a more holistic view of the human being, and especially the significance of feelings, attitudes, and beliefs upon our overall health and ability to resist to disease.

# The Contribution of Dr. Edward Bach

It is in this historical context of mind-body medicine that we can appreciate the genius of Dr. Edward Bach, the founder of flower essence therapy, and understand why his work speaks so powerfully to our own time.

Dr. Bach was a pioneer in understanding the relationship of emotions to the health of the body and psyche. He understood that to create health, the emotional and spiritual aspects of our being must be addressed. Ill health results when we lack an awareness of our soul-spiritual identity, and when we are alienated from others or disconnected from our purpose in life. As Bach explained in his landmark treatise *Heal Thyself*, disease is a message to change, an opportunity to become aware of our shortcomings and to learn the lessons of life experience so that we may better fulfill our true destiny.

Bach received conventional medical training in London, and practiced for many years as a bacteriologist. His approach, however, was quite unconventional, in that he based his treatment more on the emotions and attitudes of his patients than on a purely physical diagnosis. He later changed his practice to homeopathic medicine, appreciating its whole-person approach to health, and the application of remedies which energized the body's own healing powers. In fact, a series of intestinal nosodes developed by Bach are still used by homeopaths today.

In 1930 Dr. Bach left his homeopathic practice in London to go into the countryside to develop a new system of natural remedies, made from wildflowers. Through his sensitive observation of Nature and of human suffering, he was able to correlate each plant remedy with specific human states of mind.

Before his death in 1936 at the age of 50, Bach developed a range of flower essences which demonstrated a remarkable insight into human nature. At a time when the world was preoccupied with physical suffering, political upheaval, economic devastation, and the rise of Nazism and Fascism, Bach perceived the inner darkness of the human soul. He recognized the significance of destructive emotions such as depression, hatred, and fear. Along with other pioneers of psychosomatic medicine, he realized the devastating toll which unbalanced emotions and attitudes have on the human body. Bach went further, however, in that he knew that true health is based on a connection of one's life and destiny with a larger purpose. Moreover, he understood that substances could be found within Nature herself, which are capable of bringing profound change to the human soul and body.

# The Holistic View of the Human Being

## Life energy and health

If we recognize the human being as more than a machine to be repaired when it is broken, or a complex bio-computer in need of re-programming; can we develop an expanded view of human nature, a more “holistic” perspective? The first step is to recognize the human being as a system of *energetic forces*, as well as physical structures and biochemical activity. The ancient Oriental concepts of *chi* and *prana*, or that of *vital force* in Western tradition, describe a *life energy* which animates physical matter within living beings. A deficiency or disturbance in these life energies can lead to stress in the physical body, thus lowering resistance to disease.

By looking only at the physical systems of the human being, conventional medicine ignores the influence of transphysical energy fields. It is somewhat like trying to understand the images on a television by analyzing its parts, but without recognizing the surrounding electromagnetic energy field which carries the broadcast signal. The physical structure is fundamental, but the reductionist presumption that there is *nothing but* this structure ignores the forces which animate physical forms.

## The etheric body

The electromagnetic fields with which we are so familiar in our electronic age provide a useful analogy in order to comprehend the energy fields of living beings. However, it would be a mistake to try to explain *life* in terms of the *physical energies* of electricity and magnetism. Life energies, known as the *etheric formative forces*, have their own distinct qualities, characteristics, and even their own geometry. For example, physical forces radiate out to the periphery from a point of origin, while etheric forces concentrate in from the periphery to a vital center. George Adams and Olive Whicher, in their book *The Plant Between Sun and Earth*, describe how the study of *projective geometry* gives a mathematical basis for understanding the polarity of physical and etheric forces in living organisms such as plants.

These etheric life forces envelop the physical body, and can be said to constitute the *etheric body*. One striking demonstration of the existence of this body is the “phantom pain effect,” when a person retains a painful sensation of an amputated limb. The physical limb is gone, but the etheric limb remains. This phenomena is also illustrated in the “phantom leaf effect,” by which a Kirlian photograph of a cut leaf apparently shows the image of the energy field of the complete, uncut leaf. Russian researchers called this auric field the “bio-plasma” of a living being, which we can consider another name for the etheric body. (See *the discussion of research for more information on Kirlian photography*).

The etheric body also engenders life-building habits and rhythmic patterns of behavior. A similar concept has been advanced by Rupert Sheldrake, the pioneering English biologist and author of *A New Science of Life*. Sheldrake's *theory of formative causation* describes *morphogenic* (form-producing) *fields*, which give shape and direction to living organisms, and are molded by patterns of past experience. These are the etheric formative forces, which are common to all living organisms and are responsible for the growth and unfolding of organic forms.

It is the etheric body which distinguishes the living from the non-living. Its presence makes the difference between a vital, flourishing organism, and a lifeless heap of matter. When the etheric body withdraws from the physical body, death and dissolution occur. When the etheric body is strong and vital, the physical organism is full of life.

## **Homeopathy and acupuncture as energy medicines**

Two health modalities which are well-established in the world today — homeopathy and acupuncture — recognize and address the human etheric energy fields. What distinguishes homeopathic remedies from conventional medicaments is that they are so physically dilute that any biochemical influence is attenuated or eliminated, while their energetic forces are enhanced through a *potentization* process of rhythmic *succussion* which accompanies each stage of dilution. These remedies then impact the human energy fields through the *Law of Similars*. This principle holds that a substance which causes a particular complex of symptoms in large doses will stimulate the body to heal that same symptom complex in homeopathic dose. Thus, homeopathy acts as a catalyst to rally the vital forces of the human being to engage in the healing process.

Acupuncture is an ancient Oriental medical science in which tiny needles are inserted along the *meridians*, which are pathways of human vital energy. Used for everything from pain relief to curing chronic disease, acupuncture treatments affect physiological systems by adjusting and toning the human energy body.

Homeopathy is a widely practiced and highly respected profession in Europe, India, South America, and Australia. After a century of suppression, it is undergoing a revival in North America. Acupuncture, practiced for thousands of years in China and Japan, has become more and more widespread in the West in recent decades. Both of these health modalities can substantiate thousands of cases in which clients have experienced healing for which conventional medical science has no explanation. Giving infinitesimal doses of substances, or inserting needles in energy meridians, makes no sense if the human being is only a biochemical mechanism. The success of these etheric therapies is powerful evidence that the human being is more than a machine, and that human energy fields are real.



## The system of human energy fields

Recognizing the existence of the etheric body as a field of life energy is the first step to gaining an understanding of human *subtle anatomy*, the structure and functioning of “higher bodies” or energy fields which extend beyond the physical dimension. While there are many systems of subtle anatomy, we refer in this *Repertory* to a fundamental four-fold division of the human being which derives from various traditions of metaphysical wisdom and healing, and is summarized succinctly in the writings of the modern spiritual scientist, Dr. Rudolf Steiner.

This four-fold classification refers to 1) the physical body — the biochemical and mechanical structure of the body; 2) the etheric body — the life sheath which immediately surrounds the physical body and which is intimately connected with the vital forces of Nature; 3) the astral body — the seat of the soul, and the repository of human desires, emotions, and feelings, especially correlated with the world of the stars and other cosmic influences; and 4) the Spiritual Self or ego — the true spiritual essence or identity of each human being. These four bodies can also be regarded as comprising two fundamental polarities within the human being: that of *life* (the physical/etheric) and that of *consciousness* (the soul/spiritual). Having already reviewed the physical and etheric bodies, we now proceed to the consciousness pole of the human being.

### The astral body

Consciousness is born in the *astral body*, creating an inner space wherein the outer world can be experienced. If we compare the open planar quality of a plant leaf with the enfolding interior space of an animal or human organ, we have a picture of the difference between the etheric and astral bodies. The presence of the astral body in animals is evidenced in their characteristic movements and sounds, which are outward expressions of their inner experiences. In human beings, the astral body is the home of the *soul*, and our feelings, desires, and sensitivity to others and the environment. It contains our experience of both the world around us and our interior world. The astral body is very much a place of polarities, where we are torn between like and dislike, attraction and repulsion, extroversion and introversion. While it is the etheric body which imparts vitality, it is the astral body which gives color and depth to our lives.

Although the plant is primarily an expression of etheric forces in its growth and development, we see the influence of astral qualities in the appearance of the flower, with its unique colors, forms, and fragrances. The cup-like shape of many flowers suggests an interior space, although in a more partial way than human and animal organs. We can therefore understand why flower essences are specifically made from the flowering part of the plant. When the green plant shines forth in blossom, a very extraordinary and pure form of astrality briefly touches its etheric dimension. The remedies which are made at this

moment of flowering are uniquely able to address the emotional experiences of the human astral body, harmonizing them with the etheric body.

One of the ancient teachings about the astral body is that it contains seven major energy centers, or “chakras.” Much literature is available about the chakra system, its relationship to the emotions, and its correlation with the endocrine gland system of the physical and etheric bodies. Flower essences clearly have a great impact on the human chakras. However, we feel that an understanding of the chakra system and its relationship to flower essences should be based upon empirical evidence, as well as metaphysical philosophy. In this *Repertory*, only a few of the major chakra relationships are mentioned for those essences in which they are particularly significant. We intend to provide a fuller discussion of the relationship of flower essences to the chakras in future seminars and publications, as our research develops.

## The Spiritual Self

The crowning aspect of the human being in the four-fold system is the *spiritual ego* or *Self*, also known as the *I Am* presence or the in-dwelling individual spark of divinity. It is this inner awareness of Self, this possibility of individuation, that leads to the freedom to shape one’s destiny and to develop moral forces of *conscience*, as well as *consciousness*. This *I Am*, or self-reflective presence, distinguishes human beings from the other three kingdoms of Nature — the animals, plants, and minerals.

The Spiritual Self is that divine aspect of our being which works through the matrix of body and soul, seeking incarnation into matter in order to evolve. It represents an individual identity that cannot be fully defined by demographic or hereditary factors, but which manifests in our character and personal destiny. Just as the crystalline structure of each snowflake descending from the sky to the Earth is unique, so also is the diamond-bright divinity which belongs to each human soul a sublime expression of individual spirituality.

It is also the Spiritual Self which provides a central focus to integrate the diverse elements of our being. Egotism or selfishness occurs when we identify with limiting roles, self-images, emotions, or cravings, rather than with the fullness of the Spiritual Self. Sometimes these expressions of the “lower self” are hidden from the full view of our consciousness, but nevertheless exert powerful influences as the psychological “shadow” or “double.” If we can shift our identity to the Spiritual Self, we develop a *witnessing* capacity, a calm center for self-awareness and honest examination of our thoughts and deeds.

We cannot overcome selfishness through *self-denial*. An unhealthy suppression of individuality does not bring a true realization of the spiritual ego. Without a strong sense of selfhood and purpose we are subject to the random influences of shifting circumstances or to the control and direction of others; we drift through life like a rudderless ship at sea.

Genuine *selflessness* is born of freedom and strength, when service and surrender to a higher purpose are the conscious choice of a strong, radiant Self.

The physical expression of the Self is the immune system. Its function is to differentiate between that which serves the totality of our being, and those unhealthy processes which selfishly serve their own purposes at the expense of the whole. It is no coincidence that at a time when true spiritual identity is disturbed or distorted in myriad ways, our culture as a whole also experiences a rapid increase in illness related to immune function. The deeper message of these physical diseases is that we need to develop an integral relationship to the Spiritual Self.

A strong but balanced sense of Self is thus vital to the health of both body and soul. By awakening our awareness of the Self as the sacred, inmost part of our being, its sun-like radiance can light our path through life.

In summary, it is through understanding the multi-dimensional nature of the human being that we can realize the full potential of flower essence therapy for facilitating health and well-being. *It is a process which engages all four levels of our being*; the Spiritual Self, our inner experiences, our life forces, and also our physical nature. We are challenged to make a conscious choice to change, to take responsibility for our health and life destiny with the full force of our spiritual Self. We must address the emotions and attitudes which constitute the astral body, developing inner balance and clarity. Furthermore, we need to nourish the etheric body, awakening vital forces which in turn can energize and strengthen the physical body. Thus understood, flower essence therapy becomes truly *holistic*, relating to each dimension of life.

## **Flower Essence Therapy as Soul Healing**

### **The human soul**

While flower essences can touch every aspect of human experience, they do so through the vehicle of the human soul. Just what do we mean by soul? This is a question which has preoccupied thinkers for ages, so it is not likely we can offer a definitive description here. As the American philosopher Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “The philosophy of six thousand years has not searched the chambers and magazines of the soul.” Nonetheless, we do hope in this brief overview to impart a sense of what soul life is, and how flower essences enrich the soul.

In the theological discussions of philosophers, as well as in many contemporary religious and metaphysical teachings, “soul” is the immortal aspect of the human being, destined for damnation or redemption, or incarnating from lifetime to lifetime. In the words of the English poet, William Wordsworth, “The soul that rises with us, our Life’s Star / Had

elsewhere its setting /And cometh from afar.” From this perspective, the soul is a spiritual entity.

From the point of view of modern materialistic science, what we call soul is a completely physical entity, nothing but a by-product of chemical reactions in the brain. We can trace this concept all the way back to the seventeenth century French philosopher René Descartes, who located the soul in the pineal gland.

The classical view was that the soul is neither purely spirit nor body, but rather a living *quality* of the body. The Greek philosopher Aristotle defined soul as “the initial actuality of a natural body endowed with the capacity for life.” The Roman Plotinus declared, “It is the soul that lends all things movement,” echoing what Cicero said several centuries earlier, “For everything that is stirred to movement by external forces is lifeless, but whatever possesses life is moved by an inner and inherent impulse. And this impulse is the very essence and power of the soul.” The medieval nun, Hildegard of Bingen, described soul as “a breath of living spirit, that with excellent sensitivity, permeates the entire body to give it life.”

From these descriptions we have a feeling of soul as that which moves, or *animates*, a living body. In fact, *anima* and *animus* are the Latin words for the female and male aspects of soul. As humans we share this animating quality of soul with our fellow creatures on the Earth, the *animals*, each species of which expresses a unique soul quality in its sounds and movements.

Soul is what moves us; it is passion, desire, the striving for what is beyond our reach. Soul is also the depths of experience. It is the descent into pain, vulnerability, mortality, surrender. Like the blossom of the plant, the human soul expresses the richness of experience; it gives color, texture, and feeling. It is a chalice to receive life, an interior space in which to experience the outer world. The soul lives through contact with the heartbeat of life. We experience such soul in “soul music,” or in poetry which rouses the soul.

The soul is thus strongly connected to the astral body, the home of our emotions, our likes and dislikes, our experiences. Yet it is an oversimplification to say the soul *is* the astral body, for the soul also seeks a relationship with the physical world, with Nature, and with human society.

How can it be that the soul arises from the spiritual world, yet expresses itself through the physical body? What mystery is contained in this paradox? Just where do we find the soul? The German poet Novalis said, “The seat of the soul is there where the inner world and the outer world meet. Where they overlap, it is in every point of the overlap.” The Greek word *psyche* means both “soul” and “butterfly.” This image suggests that the soul is capable of transmutation, or *metamorphosis* from earth-bound caterpillar to enclosed chrysalis and finally to unfettered heavenly wings. Soul is thus an intermediary between inner and outer; between the body (incarnation in matter) and the spirit (limitless expansion of the Self); and between life and consciousness.



This dynamic, fluid nature of soul is essential. If we confuse soul and spirit, as did many of the theologians of the past, then the soul becomes a disembodied abstraction separated from the pulse of life. If we reduce soul to a physical mechanism, as does modern materialistic science, then we deny its transcendent and mysterious attributes, conjuring a macabre vision of a colorless world populated only by machine-like creatures.

There are many descriptions and perspectives on soul. As in the well-known Indian parable of the blind men and the elephant, each perception is a glimpse of a larger totality that is beyond our view. However, with each new viewpoint, we arrive closer to the truth. Now that “soul” has escaped the obscurity of theological dissertations and crossed the frontiers of ethnic idiom to take its place in the titles of best-selling books, we have the opportunity to join with the larger culture in an exploration of the meaning of soul. We can now speak of flower essences as a soul therapy with some expectation that we will be striking a chord of recognition.

## **Psychology, psychotherapy, and soul healing**

Psychology, in its etymological roots, is the “knowledge of the soul” (*logos* of the *psyche*). This may be hard to recognize in a culture where some psychologists exploit rats to understand human behavior, or use sexual insecurity and other emotions to sell consumer products or manipulate public opinion. These practices illustrate an approach which treats the soul as a mere mechanism which can be predictably programmed. To the extent that people act mechanically and unthinkingly, such behaviorist methods become self-fulfilling assumptions.

Some schools of psychology and psychiatry have increasingly turned to psychopharmacology, involving the use of tranquilizers, anti-depressants, or psychotropic drugs to address the soul’s struggles. While it is true that chemical manipulation of the brain can dramatically alter behavior and experience, the soul is more than brain chemistry.

Despite various attempts to reduce psychology to mechanistic programming, psychotherapy (“soul care”) is ultimately concerned with enhancing self-awareness and the quality of the life of the soul. In the early development of psychotherapy, it was Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalysis which recognized that the psyche has hidden or unconscious dimensions, which nonetheless exert powerful influences on our thoughts, feelings, and actions. However, psychology and psychotherapy did not really come into their own until the societal traumas of the first half of the twentieth century — two World Wars, the Depression, the Holocaust — which gave a strong impetus to shine the light of understanding into the dark recesses of the human psyche. As the generation born after World War II has matured, psychotherapy has become an integral part of our cultural life.

## The soul therapy of Carl Jung

The Swiss psychiatrist Dr. Carl Jung especially developed the soul dimension of psychotherapy. Jung was originally a disciple of Freud, but took issue with his narrow emphasis on sexuality as the cause of neurosis, and as the primary basis for the soul-spiritual aspirations of humanity. Jung recognized that within the depths of the individual's experience — contacted through dreams, meditation, deep therapy, and in the mythological images of traditional cultures — are certain transpersonal *archetypes*. These recurring themes are expressed with many variations according to individual circumstances. However, they emanate from a common source, which Jung named the *collective unconscious*, or what might also be called the *ground of being* or *universal mind*, first articulated by the Greek philosopher Plato. Jung contended that conscious inner work could help one arrive at an understanding of how these archetypes play a role in the unfolding of individual destiny. He taught that by a process of *individuation*, the human soul can harmonize its various aspects and find its unique expression in life. Particularly important is the encounter with the *shadow*, the unrecognized emotions and attitudes which often run counter to our conscious intentions. Once these disowned elements of the psyche are acknowledged, they can gradually be reclaimed and integrated with the conscious Self. Jung called this process the *Union of Opposites*, borrowing an image from the tradition of alchemy.

In fact, one of Jung's major contributions was to revive a modern interest in alchemy as a language of the soul. Jung disputed the conventional view that alchemy was an attempt to magically convert base metals into gold. Instead, he viewed alchemy as a series of symbolic processes for inner work and the transmutation of the soul. Jung found correlations between transformative images which arose spontaneously in the dreams of his patients, and the archetypal forms used in alchemy. This led Jung to conclude that alchemical processes involving the substances of Nature were basically projections of the human psyche, a kind of waking dream full of symbols of the inner life, but without any independent reality.

Unfortunately, Jung was only half correct in his assessment of alchemy. His insights led to new wisdom about the life of the human soul, but without a direct connection with the soul of Nature. The natural world is filled with living archetypes just as real as those that dwell within the human psyche. As we will discuss below, alchemical wisdom is not simply a projection of an interior world onto a blank screen; it works with the *correspondences* between the human soul and the soul of Nature. It is this very understanding which is the foundation of flower essence therapy.

## Recent developments in psychotherapy

In the post-World War II period, one of the most significant pioneers of psychology was Abraham Maslow, the founder of *humanistic psychology*. Maslow took issue with the misplaced emphasis within psychiatry and behavioral psychology on helping a dysfunctional

individual to become “well-adjusted” in his or her work and family roles. Maslow posited a *hierarchy of needs*, which includes the basic capacity to function in the world and achieve the necessities of life. However, beyond these physical survival needs is the striving for *self-actualization*, or the full development of the *human potential* to find deeper meaning and fulfillment in life. This recognition became the basis for humanistic psychology and for what is called the *human potential movement*, which spawned a great variety of therapies designed to help the soul to find fulfillment in life.

*Transpersonal psychology* is a further development, in which there is a recognition of a transcendent or spiritual dimension to life which gives a wider context to our individual soul development. One of the pioneers of this work was Roberto Assagioli, the developer of *psychosynthesis*. Through this process a core sense of the Spiritual Self is developed as a center around which to constellate the various sub-selves, or subpersonalities.

As we approach the end of the twentieth century, voices are arising which question whether psychotherapy as it is practiced may be thwarting rather than enhancing the life of the soul. Archetypal psychologist James Hillman has criticized the narcissism of those whose approach to self-development leads to introversion and withdrawal from social and political involvement. He urges us to see the connection between individual neurosis and societal ills, and to become engaged in the issues of our time. Theodore Roszak has pointed out that much contemporary soul anguish has its origins in society’s disconnection from the Earth. Feeling that the self-actualization of the human potential movement is inadequate, he calls for a new *ecopsychology*, in which our own healing is inseparable from healing the Earth. Robert Sardello urges us to bring meaning and beauty to our lives not only as an inner reality, but as an active and dynamic experience in the social and natural world. Thomas Moore writes of the need for “care of the soul” as a daily activity, rather than only an experience for the therapist’s office. He suggests we let go of our obsession with fixing psychological problems, and instead attend to the wisdom of our soul’s unique experience.

In their sometimes polemic, but always trenchant questioning of contemporary psychotherapy, these voices challenge us to develop a new psychological paradigm. The psyche should not be regarded as an isolated object for inner reflection, but a fully engaged participant on Earth and within human culture. The individual human soul is a member of the world soul (*anima mundi*). It is intimately related to *Gaia*, the living being of the Earth, and to all the beings within her. So envisioned, psychotherapy becomes genuine soul healing, true to Novalis’ definition of “where the inner world and the outer world meet.”

## **Flower essences and the world soul**

Flower essence therapy embodies this expanded vision of soul care. Its fundamental tenet is that our personal wellness and sense of wholeness depend very much on the greater well-being of the world in which we live. However, this is not merely an abstract concept or a theoretical ideal. The inmost process — the very heart of meaning within flower essence

therapy — is that a *dialogue or relationship is engendered between the human soul and the soul of Nature*.

Ultimately, we can view flower essence therapy as an extraordinary form of communion, one in which we receive not simply physical nourishment from the substances of the Earth, but where we allow ourselves to consciously absorb soul qualities from the Earth's living being. Such therapy affords us the opportunity not merely to be "healed" in a personal sense, but to actually experience and learn from Nature, to unite microcosmic and macrocosmic awareness.

Understood from this perspective, we can appreciate the deeper significance of the two *polychrest* (multi-use) remedies in the Bach system. Wild Oat and Holly epitomize the blending of inner and outer in flower essence therapy. Dr. Bach intended them to be widely used, to help orient the soul in the most basic way along its healing journey. Wild Oat addresses our capacity to find meaning in the world, to develop the inner commitment and focus which can strengthen and direct the soul to find its vocation or calling to serve others and to contribute to world culture. On the other hand, Holly addresses the inmost feelings of the soul which separate us from others, such as hostility, jealousy, and envy. In fact, the very name of this remarkable plant means wholeness or holiness; Holly leads the soul toward a feeling of unity, inclusiveness, and trust in relationships with others.

As we consider each of the essences listed in the *Repertory*, we see that they always address the exquisite balance of the soul: to find inner strength and meaning, but also to build compassionate sensitivity for others; to widen the consciousness, but also to focus it for practical and grounded activity; to be aware of higher and more subtle worlds, but also to be in the physical world and in the physical body. While still a pioneering effort, flower essence therapy has the potential to make a real and significant contribution to our understanding of soul healing. It promotes a truly dynamic relationship between inner and outer, personal and social, the human world and the natural world, and personal awareness and transcendent consciousness.

## **The divided alchemical tradition**

The process of relating the individual soul to the world soul and the soul of Nature has ancient roots in the tradition of alchemy. Although considered by contemporary culture to be merely a primitive precursor of modern chemistry, and believed by Jung to be strictly psychic or symbolic; alchemy is in fact a profound system of philosophical and scientific activity which recognizes the interconnectedness of Humanity, Nature, and the Cosmos. The great Egyptian teacher Thoth (known as Hermes Trismegistus to the Greeks) was reputed to be the founder of the alchemical tradition, and is known as the originator of the axiom, "As Above, So Below."



Alchemical wisdom held that the order of the universe is expressed in the world of Nature, as well as in the human being, who can be considered a microcosm of the larger cosmos. One of the clearest representatives of this teaching was the medieval Swiss alchemist Paracelsus. He depicted Nature as a book written in cosmic script, whose forms and processes pointed to the working of higher laws. His *Doctrine of Signatures* described how the correspondences between forms of plants and humans indicated the specific healing action of plant remedies. This was based on the understanding that physical structures and processes of plants express the same universal principals which are manifest in the forms and processes of the human being. Paracelsus related celestial influences from the planets and stars to plants and metals, an understanding we can also find in the compendiums of such great herbalists as Hildegard of Bingen, Gerard, and Culpeper.

According to Paracelsus, the work of the alchemist was to take the substances of Nature and make them more refined and subtle, thus enhancing their transformative powers for the human being. He wrote, “The *quinta essentia* is that which is extracted from a substance — from all plants and from everything that has life . . . the inherency of a thing, its nature, power, virtue, and curative efficacy.” Thus, for Paracelsus, a healing remedy was the refined *quintessence* of a natural substance.

The esoteric school of Rosicrucianism was an important part of the alchemical tradition, devoted to the perception of the natural world as a rich library of spiritual archetypes and transformative processes. Their spiritual practices were not designed to leave the physical body, nor to abandon the larger body of Nature or the needs of the human community in which they lived. On the contrary, each achievement along the Rosicrucian path demanded greater mastery of the physical and social worlds, and an increasingly deeper consciousness of the spiritual laws shaping these worlds. Active during the late Middle Ages and at the beginning of the Renaissance, the Rosicrucian alchemists lived in a practical way in the world, making substantive contributions in the healing, academic, and scientific professions of their time.

As we know, science forsook its metaphysical roots, and developed a mechanistic paradigm in which *matter* no longer has any connection to *being*, or to the etheric forces of Nature. *Alchemy* has become *chemistry* which, along with reductionistic biology, forms the basis for contemporary materialistic medical science. Alchemical teachings were dismissed as merely primitive superstition or charlatanism. Certainly many errors and distortions have crept into alchemical teachings through the ages, but profound wisdom permeates these teachings, for which a materialistic age has no comprehension.

Thus the tradition of alchemy, based on the relationship between the outer world of Nature’s substances and the inner world of the human soul, has become divided in our time. On the one side we have a soul-devoid study of a mechanical world, and on the other side we have a disembodied system of symbols which exist only in the interior world of the psyche. Contemporary psychology reflects this alchemical split. Psychiatrists who follow

the medical model work with substances and physical processes, but do not attend to the inner life of the human soul. Psychologists in the Jungian tradition are masters of the inner soul life but (with a few notable exceptions such as Dr. Edward Whitmont) generally lack a relationship to the soul of Nature, and do not work with a precise knowledge of the actual substances of Nature.

## **Flower essence therapy as a new alchemy of the soul**

Because flower essence therapy addresses the relationship between the human soul and the soul of Nature, it reunites the two polarities of the alchemical tradition. It is a harbinger of a *new alchemy of the soul*, one which incorporates ancient wisdom with a modern awareness of the human psyche and of Nature.

The essence derived from the blossoming plant creates an alchemical *quinta essentia*, facilitating a soul dialogue between the archetypes of Nature and the archetypes within the human soul. This is not based on romantic sentimental projection, or nostalgia for a mythic golden age. Rather, it is a very precise understanding that the thoughts, feelings, and experiences of the human psyche are reflections of the same cosmic laws inherent in the growth patterns, shapes, colors, fragrances, and vital energies of Nature which are expressed in the flowering plant. This is the meaning of the alchemical teaching, “As Above, So Below.” The soul life we find as we journey inward corresponds to the *anima mundi* of Nature herself.

# **The Unique Role of Flower Essence Therapy in Health Care**

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## **Flower essences are not drugs**

Because flower essences are something we take into our bodies, it is easy to confuse the essences with drugs which are used to treat physical and emotional illness. Flower essences are not drugs. First of all, because of their vibrational nature, flower essences have no direct impact upon the body’s biochemistry, as do pharmaceutical and psychoactive drugs. Tranquilizers, anti-depressants, pain-killers, mood-brighteners, and “mind-expanding” drugs affect emotional states, but they do this by changing brain chemistry, thus altering the biological vehicle through which the human soul expresses itself.

Such biochemical manipulation may be important in cases of severe illness, such as extreme suicidal tendencies. Yet, apart from the danger of side effects, we must ask profound questions about the use of mood-altering drugs to control or eliminate such typical human emotions as depression, fear, anxiety, and shyness. What is the effect on the soul of chemically-induced personality makeovers? Is something lost when the soul no longer needs to grapple with the pain of childhood abuse, or anger at the injustices of the world?

Can the soul learn life's lessons if it no longer has the freedom to experience pain and transformation? Would society have fared better if its great poets had treated their introversion with mood enhancers, or if its social critics had cured their alienation with anti-depressants?

Flower essences, by contrast, leave the soul in freedom. They *encourage* rather than *compel* change, working by vibrational resonance rather than bio-chemical intervention. Their effect is evocative, much like the impact of a conversation with a wise and caring friend. The essences stimulate an inner dialogue with hidden aspects of the Self, awakening profound psychological archetypes, and giving us access to their message. As a result of such "speaking" to our soul, deep emotional and mental changes take place, which may then produce physiological alterations as well. But these changes are not imposed from without; they occur from within ourselves, through our own experience and effort.

Flower essences are *catalysts* which stimulate and energize the inner transformative process, while leaving us free to develop our own innate capacities. They are used best within a context of inner development, through self-observation, dialogue, and counseling. For this reason, they are not used to treat particular diseases. Rather, flower essences help us to learn the lessons of any ailment, to meet the challenges presented to our souls by emotional and physical pain and suffering, and thus to transform our lives. Such a health-enhancing metamorphosis may naturally eliminate many painful physical symptoms, but the ultimate goal remains the evolution of the soul. Unlike pain-killing or symptom-suppressing drugs, which can create long-term dependence when used to control chronic conditions, flower essences stimulate lasting changes in consciousness, which continue to be a part of our lives after we stop taking the essences.

## **Flower essences are not conventional herbal remedies**

Flower essences have much in common with herbal remedies. They share a heritage of using pure ingredients directly from Nature, and a philosophy of working with, rather than suppressing, the healing process. In fact, after Dr. Bach left his homeopathic practice and discovered flower essences, he referred to himself as an herbalist, and characterized the essences as herbal remedies.

However, flower essences are a very specialized form of herbal preparation, which should be distinguished from conventional herbal remedies. Herbal products are made from many parts of the plant, including the root, stem, leaves, fruit, seed, as well as the blossom; they are made by a variety of methods, including infusion, decoction, and tincture.

Flower essences differ in their preparation method in that they are generally made by infusion, and only with the fresh blossoms of the plant within a very specific environmental matrix. In describing flower essence preparation, Dr. Bach commented, "Let it be noted in this that the four elements are involved: the earth to nurture the plant; the air from which

it feeds; the sun or fire to enable it to impart its power; and water . . . to be enriched with its beneficent magnetic healing.” We would also add that there is the fifth alchemical element, the *quintessential* element, which is the sensitive consciousness of the flower essence preparer. Thus, flower essences are more than simple herbal extracts; they are alchemical *quintessences* which carry the living archetypes of the whole plant, captured at its highest moment of unfolding into blossom.

Herbal remedies are generally selected on the basis of physical symptoms, and are used for their naturally occurring physical constituents. Flower essences, by contrast, are vibrational in nature, and are selected for their impact on soul qualities. Still, within the herbal and shamanic traditions of many cultures there is the knowledge that plants have deeper meanings, and are associated with spiritual forces and processes. This legacy of a more subtle herbalism can be viewed as one of the sources for understanding flower essence qualities.

Herbal properties of plants bear a relationship to their uses as flower essences, but are not identical. Often the flower essence’s impact on the soul is like a “higher octave” of the physical effects of the plant, although this must be considered in the context of a complete study of the plant, as discussed starting on page 85. For example, Dill is used as a culinary herb to stimulate digestion and counteract flatulence caused by eating too much or too quickly. As a flower essence, Dill addresses “psychic indigestion,” when the soul is overwhelmed by too many or too rapid sense impressions; it works to refine and clarify our experience of the sense world. Many modern herbalists use flower essences along with traditional herbal medicaments. However, they report that the essences address issues of the psyche far more directly and precisely than do conventional herbal remedies.

## **Flower essences differ from fragrances and essential oils**

Flower essences should not be confused with fragrances, nor with pure essential oils used for aromatherapy, although the term “flower essences” is sometimes mistakenly applied to these oils. Flower essences have no particular smell, except for the brandy which is used as a natural preservative. This is because the *physical* substance of the blossom contained in the essence is highly attenuated, so that its *vibrational* qualities can be accentuated.

Fragrances are generally synthetic preparations prepared for their scent, and used in perfumery. Pure essential oils are highly concentrated natural distillations of the aromatic oils of plant substances, and are thus a specialized type of herbal remedy. Essential oils can have strong impacts on both body and soul, but their pathway is through the senses and physical body, rather than the vibrational fields of the flower essences. Aromatherapy and flower essences work well in tandem, but they should not be confused. They are complementary therapies — body to soul, and soul to body.



## How flower essences and homeopathic remedies compare

Flower essences also differ from homeopathic remedies, although these modalities have much in common historically, philosophically, and in practice. Both types of remedies are vibrational in nature, and thus physically dilute. They each act as catalysts for the person's own healing process, rather than suppressing or controlling symptoms. Both modalities address the person rather than the disease, and endeavor to match the remedy to the unique individual situation. Dr. Bach practiced as a homeopathic physician before developing his flower essences, and today homeopaths are among those who most readily recognize the efficacy of flower essence therapy.

Yet there are significant differences between flower essences and homeopathic remedies. Bach clearly described his development of flower essences as a break with homeopathy, for he contended that the essences do not follow the *Law of Similars*, which is the very definition of homeopathic medicine.

According to this principle of similars, homeopathic remedies are developed by *provings*, in which large doses of a substance are given to a group of healthy individuals, and the symptoms they develop become the indications for the condition the remedy addresses. If Bach had used this homeopathic method, he would have given a test group of people large doses of Holly, and found that they became envious, jealous, or hateful, or found that Clematis in large doses produced a dreamy, unfocused state in his test group.

It is a historical fact that Bach never used provings in developing his flower remedies, nor have homeopathic provings been used to test other flower essences. Instead, Bach found that Holly flower essence brought a sense of connection and love to the soul troubled by jealousy, envy, or hatred, and that Clematis essence enhanced the quality of presence for dreamy, disembodied persons.

If flower essences do not follow the *Law of Similars* of homeopathy, can we say instead that they are an expression of the *Law of Contraries*, which is the basis of symptom-suppressing allopathic medicine? Bach apparently believed that flower remedies work by contraries within the soul, saying that they “flood our natures with the particular virtue we need, and wash out from us the fault that is causing the harm.” However, our own research over the past sixteen years indicates that this is an over-simplification. Rather than working by similars or contraries, the transformative action of flower essences is an expression of the integration of polarities within our psyche, as understood in alchemy and by Jungian psychology.

For example, Mimulus flower essence addresses the fears of everyday life; it does not create fear when given in large doses to an otherwise healthy person without these fears, as would be expected if it followed the homeopathic *Law of Similars*. Nor does Mimulus essence obliterate fear, as would a tranquilizer drug operating by the *Law of Contraries*. A person taking Mimulus flower essence may become more *acutely conscious* of an existing state

of fear, perhaps previously hidden from awareness. At the same time, *Mimulus* encourages the person to face these fears, rousing the requisite soul strength to meet such challenges. Therefore, we can say that the *Mimulus* works with the *polarity* of fear and courage, enabling the soul to reach a higher level of integration. Rather than *eliminating* fear, *Mimulus* helps us to have the *courage to face fear*. Understood in this way, flower essence therapy applies the alchemical law of the *Union of Opposites*, by which polar opposites are integrated into a higher synthesis.

Flower essences and homeopathic remedies are also prepared differently. While homeopathic remedies have been made from nearly any substance, and from any part of the plant, flower essences are made exclusively from the blossom. For this reason, flower essences should be also distinguished from various vibrational remedies made from other parts of plants, or from animal or mineral substances, such as sea essences and gem elixirs. It is specifically the flower that is used for flower essences, because it is in the process of blossoming that the soul qualities of Nature come into the form and substance of the plant. Thus, the flower essence becomes a vehicle of communication between the soul of Nature and the human soul.

Even when homeopathic remedies are made from flowers, they are prepared differently than flower essences. The homeopathic mother substance is a tincture or alcohol extraction of the macerated plant, which is then diluted and potentized, often many times, to produce a remedy. Flower essences begin with an infusion in water of the whole blossom of the plant, in which the preparer works very consciously with the surrounding meteorological and environmental conditions. For this reason, flower essences are made in the “laboratory of Nature,” in the natural wildflower habitat or in a garden where the flowers can flourish under ideal conditions.

Flower essences are used only in the first or second dilution, yet directly affect the mind and emotions. They impact the psyche in a gentle way which generally leaves the consciousness free to choose how to respond to their influence. Homeopathic remedies usually need to be raised to a much higher potency to affect mental and emotional states. Many practitioners believe that such potencies act upon the psyche in a more compelling manner than do flower essences. In this way, high-potency homeopathic remedies have some similarities to pharmaceutical drugs, and must be used with great caution by very skilled practitioners. Low-potency homeopathic remedies, by contrast, work more directly with the physical-etheric aspect of the human being, and are thus more similar to herbal remedies. Flower essences combine the safety of low-potency homeopathic remedies with the consciousness-stimulating ability of higher potency remedies. They accomplish this by creating a *dialogue* with the soul, rather than *dictating* to it.

Flower essences also differ from homeopathic remedies in the manner in which they are used. A homeopathic case involves an extensive cataloguing of symptoms, usually with a strong emphasis on physical conditions and habits, which give a picture of the etheric or

life body of the person. The practitioner then seeks to find the best fit between the list of symptoms presented by the patient and the list of indications for the remedy.

By contrast, flower essence therapy correlates an “archetype” or “message” of a plant with a particular quality within the human soul or psyche. While physical and other symptoms provide clues regarding inner issues, choosing a flower essence is more than matching a list of symptoms and indications. Rather, the emphasis is on identifying underlying life issues and lessons, as a way of painting a “soul portrait” of the individual. This picture is then correlated with one or more flower essences whose vibrational configurations embody these qualities and processes.

It is thus clear that flower essences are *not* homeopathic remedies, although both belong to the larger category of energy or vibrational remedies. There may be confusion on this point because some brands of flower essences are labeled as homeopathic drugs for regulatory or import purposes. Such labeling is unfortunate and inaccurate, but it in no way invalidates the philosophical and practical differences between these two modalities.

## **Working with vibrational devices**

Flower essence therapy also differs from systems of vibrational testing and practices which employ machines or devices to measure or adjust human energy fields according to various quantitative scales. These modalities are frequently employed to aid in the selection of homeopathic, nutritional, and herbal remedies, as well as to “tune” physiological systems by working with vibrational “equivalents” of remedies. To the extent such devices work with *quantitative* measurement, they can give useful information, particularly about relative strength or degree of vitality within human physiological and energetic systems, and how these are affected by various substances. However, these measurements are not a substitute for working with the *qualities* of flower essences and the soul issues they address. Flower essence therapy involves us in a series of conscious *relationships*; it entails inner dialogue and reflection about feelings and attitudes, sensitive conversation with a friend or therapist, and a receptive listening to the healing language of Nature.

Furthermore, using vibrational or electronic devices as substitutes for real flower essences creates a subtle field lacking a physical-etheric anchor. While the materialist ignores the soul of Nature by reducing substance to mere chemistry and mechanics, there are serious problems with the opposite impulse which utilizes purely vibrational mechanisms that disassociate one’s soul from the physical substances of Nature.

Thus, at best, vibrational devices can serve a supplementary role in flower essence therapy. However, there is no substitute for developing a conscious relationship with the human soul and with the soul of Nature if we wish to truly partake of the gifts which the essences offer us.

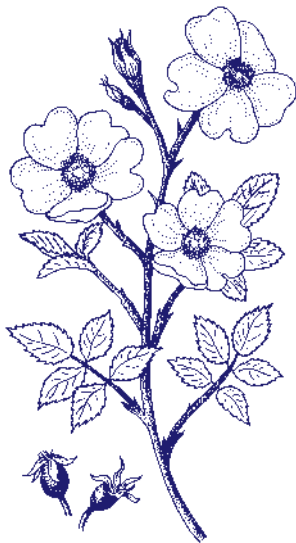
## Flower essences and the healing quest

In the beginning of this section, we defined health as the ability to completely experience life, to become fully ourselves. By awakening the innate capacities of our soul, flower essences enhance health on all levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual. They do this not by suppressing symptoms, nor by altering our biochemistry, but rather by acting as catalysts to strengthen our conscious healing journey.

This journey is a quest for wholeness, founded on the recognition that illness is a wake-up call from our soul, demanding self-discovery and sensitivity to others and to the world around us. Most of all, *it requires that we change our inner attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions.* It is here that flower essences can offer their unique contribution, no matter what other therapies we are using.

It is all too human to fear and resist change, particularly when we are unaware of its purpose or necessity. By rousing our awareness, even if it is sometimes painful, the essences provide an additional stimulus to help us past our denial and resistance. In the words of the German poet Goethe, “Unless you are constantly dying and becoming, you are but a shadowy guest on a darkened Earth.” This is true for all of us, but illness makes this truth more urgent.

Therefore, while flower essences combine with and support many other health modalities, they have their own unique message to share with us. Like true friends, they challenge us to self-awareness and change, but ultimately leave the choice to us whether we seize the opportunity and heed the call toward soul metamorphosis.



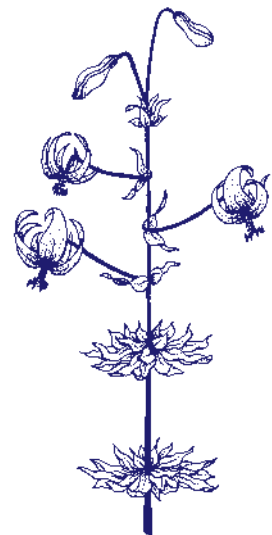
California Wild Rose  
*Rosa californica*

*Je älter ich werde,  
je mehr vertrau ich auf das Gesetz,  
wonach die Rose  
und die Lilie blüht.*

The older I grow,  
the more I trust in the law  
by which the Rose  
and the Lily bloom.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe  
from *Goethe's World View*,  
trans. by Heinz Norden.

Tiger Lily  
*Lilium humboldtii*





# **Chapter 2: Can We Verify the Properties of Flower Essences?**

## **The Need for Flower Essence Research**

How do we know that flower essences have the effects attributed to them in this *Repertory*, or in other flower essence literature? In the face of recent scientific evidence, it seems indisputable that emotions and attitudes have a profound affect on health. Yet, it challenges our accepted modes of thought to say that a highly dilute infusion of flowers without any discernible biochemical mechanism can affect how we think and feel. Furthermore, even if we accept that flower essences can affect human states of mind, how can we be sure that a plant essence will have the specific effect which is claimed? These are crucial questions for anyone seeking to understand and employ flower essences in health care. It is for this reason that the Flower Essence Society is dedicated to a multi-faceted research program.

### **The legacy of Dr. Bach**

Dr. Edward Bach's pioneering work in the 1930's is a starting point for our inquiries, but it leaves many questions unanswered. Although Bach was only able to spend about eight of his 50 years researching flower remedies, he had done considerable study of human psychological types during his years as a bacteriologist and homeopath. These insights were further developed into the particular soul typologies corresponding to his flower essences, first as a system of 12 types, then 19, and finally 38. Through Bach's sparse writings and talks, and the biography written by his assistant, Nora Weeks, we have some glimpses of how extraordinarily perceptive Bach was about the soul life of his patients. By carefully observing how his patients walked into the consulting room, he often intuited which remedies they would need.

Although he was highly critical of medical science, it is clear that Bach's professional medical training served him well in his flower essence research, for he was able to apply the scientific discipline of keen observation and systematic study to an understanding of the human soul. We may assume that Bach employed a similar approach in his Nature studies. He appears to have some connection to the alchemical tradition, and refers in his writings to the teachings of Paracelsus. We also know that Bach originally prepared his flower

essences by gathering sun-potentized dew drops from the blossoms, a method favored by alchemists.

However, we have no information about Bach's perceptions of the plants used for his flower essences. Nora Weeks reports in the biography, *The Medical Discoveries of Edward Bach*, that he traveled extensively throughout the countryside in search of plants to use as herbal or flower remedies, and that he spent time observing their form, growth patterns, and habitat. But aside from her account of his extraordinary sensitivity to plant energies, Bach's actual method of plant research remains shrouded in mystery.

Bach himself bears some responsibility for this situation, as he deliberately destroyed his research notes and many of his writings. In the introduction to *The Twelve Healers and Other Remedies*, Bach wrote, "No science, no knowledge is necessary, apart from the simple methods described herein; and they who will obtain the greatest benefit from this God-sent Gift will be those who keep it pure as it is; free from science, free from theories, for everything in Nature is simple." Evidently reacting against the excesses of an overly materialistic and reductionistic science which had little place for the human soul or the soul of Nature, Bach deprived future generations of his insights into the dynamic processes which allow plant energies to enter into the metamorphosis of human consciousness. We can speculate that his attitude may also have been due to the tradition of secrecy of esoteric knowledge within the Masonic Lodge, of which Bach was a member; or perhaps Bach himself was not fully aware of how he reached his intuitive understandings of the plants.

Julian Barnard, a leading researcher, teacher, and writer about Dr. Bach's life and work, makes the following comments in his book *Patterns of Life Force*:

... At a certain point Bach's research took a leap, and we find it difficult to see where and how. In 1928 he is walking on one bank of the river still working as a bacteriologist, but searching for herbal equivalents to his vaccines, and then . . . he appears on the other bank with a 'thin glass bowl' potentising certain flowers that are to hold a new healing power.

Well, we have a choice. We may decide to leave him on his side and say his was an insight and inspiration that is beyond us, or we may choose to build a bridge that will take us across to a deeper understanding of how it works and why. Those who prefer the first course of action are left with his system of healing and can rejoice in the fruits of this work. An explanation such as it is will be that he was an extraordinarily sensitive man who had wandered and was led, who found through suffering and personal affliction: a blind and painful discovery. But Bach's work, his writings and his flower remedies invite another view, and while it is more demanding, it is also more rewarding.

It is just this quest for a bridge of understanding, to learn how the archetypal language of the flowers corresponds to the language of the human soul, which led to the founding of the Flower Essence Society, and its emphasis on plant research and flower essence case studies.

## **The polarization of soul and science**

We need flower essence research not only to satisfy our thirst for philosophical understanding. There is also a practical and moral necessity to find standards and principles for understanding flower essences, which has become more urgent in the six decades since Dr. Bach's time. Particularly in the past ten years, hundreds of new flower essences have been made available very rapidly by dozens of groups around the world. Often different people making the same essence will attribute quite different qualities to it. Claims are frequently made for essences with little or no standards of research. What criteria can we use to know which, if any, interpretations of essence properties are correct? Can we learn to distinguish between true insight, momentary subjective feelings, and psychic or sentimental projections? Can we develop a methodology for investigating the accuracy of our intuitive perceptions?

As we seek the answers to these questions, we are met with a dilemma. In our modern culture, it is science which provides the objective standards by which we test the validity of our assumptions and beliefs. Yet science appears cold, unfeeling, dehumanizing, and unrelated to what is most sacred to the soul. Furthermore, scientific research generally ignores the ecological and cultural destruction which seems to accompany its progress.

While scientific thought dominates our culture, a major counter-current has developed, reacting against the materialism of conventional science. This conflict represents a deeper fissure in our culture, one we discussed earlier in the splitting of alchemy into soul work and hard science. The division could be described variously as one between humanities and science, soul and technology, psyche and substance, or inner and outer. We meet it also in our educational system (particularly in North America), where most scientists, engineers, and technicians have little training in history, psychology, philosophy, or the arts, and so are usually blind to the human and moral consequences of scientific development. On the other hand, there are vast portions of the population who are unfamiliar with the basic concepts of science. This results not only in an ignorance of complex modern technology, but it also cripples the capacity for rigorous thinking. Without an understanding of the scientific method, it is difficult to systematically observe and inquire about the natural world, or to independently think and evaluate evidence in a quest for truth. Thus, the polarization of our inner and outer worlds has led to imbalances both in our soul life and in our understanding of Nature.

## **Problems with subjective knowledge**

In the past our spiritual and soul life was regulated much more by cultural and religious structures. Today, we experience greater freedom, as well as increased confusion. Some gravitate to fundamentalist convictions to feel secure. Others, rejecting the need for scientific investigation and the systematic thought of the intellect, prefer to rely on feeling, vague intuition, and mystical experience as a guide for truth.

We see this latter tendency strongly within the “New Age” movement, and among many people who use flower essences, resulting in a rapid expansion of intuitive and psychic experiences. For example, many flower essence qualities have been derived from psychic impressions and channeling, inner messages and spiritual guidance, reading of subtle energies, or various vibrational testing systems such as kinesiology (muscle-testing) and radiesthesia (pendulum). Often this is without any grounding in systematic observation of the essences’ actual effects on people, or careful study of the plants from which they are derived.

Relying only on personal feeling, intuition, or brief psychic experience is on the extreme *inner* side of the polarity we have described, a place of total subjectivity. It is imbalanced because we risk living in our own reality, unrelated to others or to the world in which we live. The individual soul becomes isolated from the world soul, and from the soul of Nature.

Consider, for example, the predicament if each practitioner had a totally different definition for each flower essence or homeopathic remedy. In such circumstances, we would create a veritable “Tower of Babel,” in which it would be impossible for us to work together because we could not share a common language or perception of reality.

At its heart, science is a quest for truth, for a reality that can be shared collectively, because it reflects an accurate understanding of Nature rather than an egoistic projection of personal experience. It is a corrective to the confusion that can result from excessive subjectivity. Despite the limited scope in which conventional science is practiced, it is the *scientific method* which offers us a way to accurately perceive the world and define its underlying principles. Through scientific investigation we encounter the natural world and other human beings, and we link ourselves to a larger reality. Thus, despite all that is alienating about modern science, we desperately need the *spirit of science* — the search for standards of truth in the study of Nature — in our flower essence research and in related fields of inquiry.

## **Imbalances in scientific method**

While we require the objectivity which science offers, we face very real problems with current scientific method.

Our word “science” comes from the Latin *scire*, which means “to know,” but also “to discern” in the sense of separating or cutting apart. This ability of the analytic mind to divide phenomena into their component parts, as well as to separate the observer from the observed, has enabled humankind to learn much about the natural world. As Aristotle pointed out long ago, we need some *distance* in order to see anything clearly. Humankind needed to stand back from Nature in order to observe it and contemplate its meaning. Besides giving us knowledge, our intellect has granted us a powerful sense of freedom and individuality which was not possible when reality was cloaked by social or religious dogma.



Yet, this same development of detached objectivity, or *observer consciousness*, has also alienated us from Nature, from the spiritual world, and ultimately from ourselves. Complete objectivity can only be achieved by reducing the world into a collection of objects to be observed. There is a paradox here, however. If human beings are just another class of objects, then *who* is observing this world of objects? If the mind is just a biochemical product of the mechanism of the brain, then where is the consciousness that arrived at that conclusion? The German physicist Max Planck, who first developed quantum theory, put it this way: "Science cannot solve the ultimate mystery of Nature. And it is because in the last analysis we are part of the mystery we are trying to solve." Despite the perplexing questions raised by quantum physics and relativity theory early in this century, and by current new perspectives like chaos theory, mainstream science has largely ignored these fundamental epistemological issues.

Scientific study arose out of an impulse to leave the cloisters of the Middle Ages, and to venture independently in the realm of Nature to observe her and know her laws. Yet, by relying on complex instruments as a way of measuring reality, the scientific researcher of today is often separated from the direct experience of Nature phenomena through the perception of the human senses. It is ironic to see to what extent the scientist has created the laboratory as a modern cloister, an artificial environment detached from Nature and society.

Modern science has thus become increasingly divorced from the full dimensionality of the *life process*. In striving for rational objectivity, the scientific method has narrowed its field of vision to what is physically measurable and quantifiable, disregarding the *qualitative* experience of the etheric and soul dimensions of life. Because it neither perceives the wholeness of living forms nor acknowledges the living *beings* which inhabit these forms, modern science has become disconnected from Nature and from the human soul, and thus unable to comprehend the subtle forces or soulful qualities associated with flower essence therapy and other holistic paradigms.

We need to find new forms of scientific research which are appropriate to the subtle realm of the essences, yet which retain the rigor and objective truth-seeking qualities which have made scientific inquiry such an important step forward in the evolution of human culture. Thus, we are challenged on two sides. Our research into vibrational remedies needs the disciplined search for truth, which is the essence of science. Yet, our approach to science must encompass the profound multi-dimensional relationship of humanity with the world of Nature which is so lacking in contemporary scientific research. Flower essence therapy requires the development of a new, living science of Nature.

# Toward a Living Science of Nature

What kind of science can comprehend the mystery of flower essences? Such a science requires the disciplined observation of systematic thinking which characterizes the scientific method, but must be broad enough to encompass the reality of the human soul and the world soul. It perceives Nature not as a collection of mechanical objects, but as a *community of beings*. It is a *holistic*, rather than a *reductionistic* science, which not only separates physical reality into its component parts, but recognizes how each part is an expression of a greater whole. This science also recognizes that while we are the observers of life, we are also active participants in life, and that the polarity of objectivity and subjectivity must find a new synthesis.

## Goethean science

The scientific approach we are positing has its sources in the alchemical/Rosicrucian stream discussed earlier, before its eventual split into the psychic symbolism of contemporary psychology and the soulless substance of chemical medicine. Alchemy recognized the correspondence between the macrocosm of Nature and the microcosm of human experience. The Rosicrucian alchemists understood that the path of human spiritual development must unite itself with the world to encounter the working of spiritual laws in the forms and processes of Nature.

This path of ensouled Nature science was further developed by the German poet and natural scientist Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. During his lifetime (1749-1832), Goethe witnessed the rapid development of scientific materialism, which soon led to the Industrial Revolution. Yet he believed with the Rosicrucian alchemists that “. . . the sense-perceptible corresponds throughout with the spiritual, and is not only an evidence of it, but indeed its representative.” As a poet, it was Goethe’s destiny to initiate a science which recognized the soulfulness of Nature, while remaining true to the objectivity of the scientific method.

Goethe’s artistic temperament allowed him to see the relationship of the part to the whole, to perceive an underlying unity within the diversity of natural phenomena. His early scientific work was devoted to geology. He became convinced that hidden in the geological strata of the mountains he studied were deep stories which Nature had to tell. As Goethe wrote in *Wilhelm Meister*, he “. . . used these figures and crevices as letters of an alphabet, had to decipher them, formed them into words and learned to read them . . .”

Goethe’s full scientific genius is revealed in his studies of living Nature, particularly of plants. He was a keen observer of the myriad details of plant life, not so much with the goal of description and classification, but rather of finding the unifying principles. Commenting on the classical botanical system of Linnaeus (Carl von Linné), Goethe wrote, “. . . I therefore felt justified in concluding that Linné and his successors had proceeded like legislators, less concerned with what was, than with what should be . . . but rather intent

upon solving the difficult problem of how so many inherently unfettered beings can be made to exist side by side with a degree of harmony.”

Rather than just considering its parts, Goethe looked at the totality of the plant, its development in time, and its dynamic relationships with other plant forms and processes. Goethe conceived of the multitudinous expressions of plant life as variations on a universal theme, which he called the *Urpflanze* (archetypal plant). Goethe knew plants not as static forms, but as an expression of dynamic processes of continual change, existing in time as well as in space. He was able to perceive the fluidity of forms in living beings as an expression of underlying etheric patterns and cosmic laws. He referred to these forms and processes as the *gestures* of plants or animals. This is similar to Paracelsus’ *Doctrine of Signatures*, an understanding that there is a correspondence between outer physical forms and the inner qualities they express.

Goethe’s pioneering work provides a basis for a living understanding of the language of Nature. It is a *qualitative* science of Nature, contrasting with the strictly *quantitative* approach of the prevailing reductionistic and mechanistic view of Nature. Rather than simply measuring the chemical constituents of a plant, Goethe studied how the shape of the leaf evolved from the young to the mature plant, appeared in a new form in the flower petals, and again in the stamens and pistils. Instead of seeing the flowering and fruiting of a plant as a mere mechanism for propagation, Goethe saw it as a culmination of a dance of expansion and contraction, expressed newly in each stage of the plant’s growth. Out of this understanding, he developed his well-known concept of the *metamorphosis of plants*.

In the Goethean approach to science, human consciousness actually becomes an instrument of research. Thinking itself becomes metamorphic, developing the same mobility and flexibility as the phenomena it encounters. It involves a re-creation of an inner image of what we perceive in the outer world through our senses. This capacity is an extension of the artistic imagination; but it differs from how we often understand imagination in that *it is a precise response to the actual phenomena of Nature*.

Through this process which Goethe called “exact imagination,” we begin to experience not only the phenomena of Nature, but also their effect on our own being as we inwardly experience them. In this way we can perceive not only the objects and events of Nature, but also the forces and qualities which permeate them. We are thus able to comprehend the archetypes living in Nature not as intellectual abstractions, but as direct perceptions out of our living thinking.

Observation is married to thinking, allowing perception to grow into a living concept. The Goethean scientific method thus brings about a reconciliation of the dichotomy of inner and outer, of participant and observer, and of objectivity and subjectivity, in the research process.

In Goethean science, the observer becomes a conscious *participant* in the research process. It is different from conventional “observer consciousness,” where the researcher pretends to be a detached, unbiased, and uninvolved spectator. In the conventional scientific method, any subjective participation in the research project is seen as an interference to be avoided. Since it is the nature of scientific observation that the observer affects what is observed (Heisenberg’s Uncertainty Principle), this unacknowledged participation becomes unconscious, often leading to hidden assumptions and biases. By contrast, the Goethean scientist takes responsibility for and actively cultivates the clarity of his or her own consciousness as a scientific instrument.

However, the Goethean method is also different from the totally subjective approach, in which our inner world is naively projected on the outer world in a very self-centered way that denies the *otherness* of what is outside of us. Nor is it like a drug-induced or psychic journey which takes us out of our physical bodies into other realities, or puts us in astral contact with discarnate beings.

The Goethean method is an encounter with a very tangible natural world that has its own laws and truths. Our understanding of that world must be based on what is actually there, discovering the correspondence between the inner experience and the outer phenomena. This is a skill that takes time and patience to develop into a true scientific research technique which can discriminate between truth and error.

## **Spiritual science**

Goethe’s scientific studies became a small, underground counter-current to the mainstream of scientific thought. He was far better known for his literary work, particularly his masterpiece drama, *Faust*. About a hundred years ago, the Austrian-born philosopher and spiritual teacher Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) edited Goethe’s scientific works, bringing them to the attention of the modern world, and articulating for the first time the true significance of Goethe’s scientific epistemology. Steiner recognized in Goethe a strict phenomenalism in which thinking remains true to the direct perceptions of Nature. It was not that Goethe shunned thinking, but rather that his thinking was formed by his perception. In this way he avoided the error of mainstream science which applies the mechanistic laws appropriate to inanimate objects to the metamorphic world of living beings.

Steiner was not antagonistic to modern natural science. He recognized that humanity had developed an important faculty for independent thinking in its attempt to explain the natural world. Rather than dismiss the scientific method, he wished to enlarge it, to develop a *spiritual science*, which he called *anthroposophy*, meaning the “wisdom of humanity.” In his lecture series, *The Boundaries of Natural Science*, Steiner said, “We must begin by acquiring the discipline that modern science can teach us . . . and transcend it, so that we can use the same exacting approach . . . thereby extending this methodology to the investigation of

entirely different realms as well . . . Nobody can attain true knowledge of the spirit who has not acquired scientific discipline, who has not learned to investigate and think in the laboratories according to modern scientific method.”

Steiner’s spiritual science is built on Goethean science, but has adopted a complementary approach. Whereas Goethe began with the percept and moved to the concept, Steiner started with the pure thinking and then developed perception. Goethean science is a study of Nature, but Steiner wished to bring scientific discipline to the investigation of consciousness itself.

In Steiner’s book *The Philosophy of Freedom* (also known as *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity*), he maintained that the human thinking faculty can be raised to a level where it becomes spiritual activity. As such, it is more akin to conscious meditation than to a mystical experience of merging with the divine. In its essence, this spiritual thinking activity is totally “sense-free,” yet it can be directly experienced, and its truth validated. Steiner offered pure mathematics as an example of sense-free thinking, with its rigorous logical consistency and verifiability. It is through developing higher thinking, Steiner contended, that we have the possibility to win true freedom, to grow to spiritual maturity by taking responsibility for the capacity of our Spiritual Self to comprehend higher truths.

Goethean science and sense-free thinking, Steiner explained, form two sides of a polarity, matter and consciousness, both of which must be encountered and harmonized to develop true spiritual science. He likened this process to the ancient breath yoga of the Orient, which worked with the cycle of inhalation and exhalation. In this new yoga of our modern age, we “breathe in” our sense perceptions of the world, and we “breathe out” our thoughts. As Steiner described in *Boundaries of Natural Science*, “inhalation and exhalation are physical experiences: when they are harmonized, one consciously experiences the eternal. In everyday life we experience thinking and perception. By bringing mobility into the life of the soul, one experiences the pendulum, the rhythm, the continual interpenetrating vibration of perception and thinking.”

By uniting perception and thinking within our soul experience, tempered with scientific discipline, spiritual science is able to avoid the problems of subjective knowledge as well as the imbalances in conventional scientific methods discussed earlier. Spiritual scientific research requires that we become free of psychic projection, emotional bias, and self-delusion in order to become clear instruments of perception and insight. Yet to obtain objectivity, we neither become a detached observer cut off from Nature and divorced from any inner experience, nor depend upon abstract technical instruments of measurement. Rather, true objectivity consists of a disciplined and systematic ability to observe and to understand what is being observed. The essence of the scientific method — objective observation and documentation of phenomena — must be integrated with the essence of the spiritual approach — reverent recognition of transpersonal and transphysical states of reality and being.



Through spiritual science, the human soul can encounter the archetypal realm of Nature and the higher realms of spirit with the same clarity and inner discipline which is practiced in the physical sciences. Just as the botanical scientist, for example, can develop the perceptive capacity to clearly distinguish the structure of a flower, so the spiritual scientist can learn to employ inner vision to “see” the forces which form the flower, and the living “idea” or archetype from higher realms which brings the plant into being.

Such a new science of Nature requires heightened capacities within the human soul for imagination (clear-seeing), inspiration (clear-hearing), and intuition (clear-feeling or sensing). All these methods of working with the phenomena of Nature need to be reinforced and amplified by a community of researchers who are working in similar ways, so that individual insights can be corroborated and refined through a collective pool of knowledge.

Goethe’s and Steiner’s spiritual scientific approaches have been taken up and elaborated by many contemporary researchers working in the fields of botany, animal biology, biodynamic agriculture, anthroposophical medicine, physics, chemistry, and mathematics. In our flower essence research, we face a similar challenge. Can we apply the *spirit of science* by integrating the *clarity* of scientific method with sufficient *soul sensitivity* for the inner qualities found in the plant?

## **Flower Essence Plant Study**

Flower essence research is essentially a two-fold process: it involves study of the plants used to make essences, and study of the experiences of people using the essences. Both of these areas are vitally important, but plant study presents perhaps the greatest challenge, requiring the breaking of new ground.

Dr. Bach’s development of flower remedies, and the homeopathic tradition of Hahnemann out of which Bach’s work emerged, both emphasized the clinical use of the remedies, and provide few guidelines for direct study of the sources of the remedies in Nature. To some extent, our flower essence plant studies can draw upon the herbal traditions of many cultures, which are rich with useful plant information and lore. However, much herbal knowledge is fragmentary or vague, often representing incomplete remnants from past cultures. Herbology today, much like conventional medicine, frequently emphasizes physical properties and effects, without relating them to their soul qualities or subtle influences. In the alchemical teachings of Paracelsus and others we find a rudimentary approach to plant study which integrates the inner and outer worlds. However, when we look for a modern development of alchemical studies, the purely

symbolic approach of Jungian psychology predominates, unrelated to the actual substances of Nature.

Therefore, our task is to forge a modern alchemy, a new science of Nature which can help us understand the plants we use for flower essences. Along this path, the nature studies of Goethe and the spiritual scientific philosophy of Steiner can be guiding lights. However, Goethe and Steiner never applied their methods to the study of the soul language of flower essences, and Bach's flower essence discoveries were never developed into a systematic plant science. Thus, while we have much to learn from those who have come before — individualities such as Paracelsus, Hahnemann, Goethe, Steiner, Jung, Bach; and traditions such as herbalism, shamanism, and folk medicine — we must ask new questions, and seek new answers. Finding our way to a spiritual science of flower essence therapy is a truly pioneering journey, on which we have taken just the first few steps.

## **The importance of physical observation of plants**

Those who prepare flower essences (and other health remedies) for the public have a fundamental responsibility to understand the plants they use. For practitioners and those who use flower essences in home care, the research methods described below constitute important background knowledge for appreciating the complex effort required to discover and thoroughly research flower essence properties. Even for those not directly involved in plant research, it is important to understand the many research considerations that comprise flower essence field study.

In the research program of the Flower Essence Society, we begin our study of flower essence qualities with observation of the plant itself, and its relationship to its environment. In the words of Paracelsus, “if you wish to know the Book of Nature, you must walk its pages with your feet.”

Before interpreting the soul qualities of plants, it is important to cultivate the discipline of actually perceiving the plant, observing its color, form, habitat, growth patterns, and seasonal cycles. All of these physical details provide a foundation on which to build more grounded insights about the subtle qualities of the plant. Once we have sensitively encountered the plant as a physical being, recording our many observations in a journal and sketch-book, we can gradually create an inner image of the plant, and begin to understand its essential nature.

This process is similar to our observant attention to the posture, facial expressions, and movements of a person, so we can understand something of his or her inner character. We must first discern in the physical forms and movements what Paracelsus called the plant's *signature* and Goethe the *gesture*, before we can know the soul qualities they represent.

To acquire such deep insights involves patient, continuous observation, and a deep love and sense of wonder for the world of plants. Just as we could not say that we really knew

someone from one or two brief encounters, so it is also necessary to develop a *relationship* over time with any plant we wish to know. Furthermore, just as we need to know something of a person's connections with their family and community in order to gain a fuller picture of who they are, we should consider the plant's relationship to its habitat, other plants, the animal world, natural seasonal cycles, and environmental changes.

It is important to remember that the plant is a *time being*. We do not know a plant only by seeing it in blossom. The flower is the culmination of a process which begins with a seed, sprouts into a root and shoot, opens into leaves, grows through stages of new branches and leaves, gathers its forces into buds, and finally bursts into blossom. It continues with the fertilization and falling away of the flowers, and the ripening into fruit and seed, by which the cycle begins again.

Consequently, to make flower essences we must know more than just the flower at the moment of blossoming. Our study is of the whole plant as it extends in both time and space. This is because the flower essence is not simply an extract of the substance in the blossom; it is a distillation of the whole being of the plant. It is at the moment of flowering that the highest soul-spiritual expression of the plant surfaces; and yet only if we are willing to follow the plant in its complete journey can we truly appreciate the mystery of the blossom itself.

This deep knowledge of essence plants is important, not only so that they can be used wisely, but also because plants are living beings, who require that we represent their essence to the world with as much respect, accuracy, and truthfulness as possible. Just as we can easily misunderstand a human being by projecting our own subjective bias, or by not taking sufficient time to truly learn from and listen to his or her life biography; so also can we very easily distort our relationship with plants. If we are unfamiliar with plant observation, we may have difficulty distinguishing what is truly significant about a particular plant from what is a common property of many plants. It is easy to oversimplify the process of finding plant gestures. We must be prepared to observe and experience many plants for years before being able to truly understand the archetypal gesture and corresponding soul essence of any specific plant.

## **Encountering the plant: a field study of Yarrow**

We first encounter a plant as a particular form, with its specific colors and aromas, in relationship to its habitat. We are interested in understanding how each part of the plant relates to the whole, and how it compares to other plants. Over time, we observe the relationship of the plant and its growth patterns to the cycles of Nature.

To give a practical dimension to our outline of plant research, we will give some general indications for studying Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*). This well-known wild herb is one of the most prominent and efficacious flower essences included in the *Repertory*.

We find Yarrow flourishing in sunny, open areas, and particularly exalted in alpine meadow habitats. In the early spring we see only a mat of dark green feathery leaves closely hugging the ground. Rubbing the leaves, we encounter a strong, sharp aroma. If we dig a bit, we will note the rhizomatous roots spreading underground. Later in the spring, a strong central stem emerges from the leafy matrix, until it obtains a height of 1 to 3 feet (30 cm - 1 m). Arranged alternately along the stem, which is covered with fine hairs, are more feathery leaves, up to 5 inches (13 cm) long.

In the heat and light around the time of the summer solstice the Yarrow unfolds its blossoms in a brilliant white canopy over its green foliage, seeming to glow with an almost incandescent radiance. Looking more closely, we see that the stem has branched many times to form the umbel (umbrella-like) inflorescence. The flower head is a extremely compact cluster of many flowers, each of which has five white petal-like rays, and central florets with little spots of yellow where the anthers first appear on the stamens. Remarkably, as summer ripens into autumn, the Yarrow continues to stand in full flower, only gradually drying out as the year wanes, yet still retaining its characteristic form.

Yarrow is found throughout the temperate zones of both the northern and southern hemispheres. It is a perennial herb, with a sturdy woody stem, and a strong root system which spreads vigorously from underground runners. Yarrow's traditional name "Millefoil," and its species name *millefolium* mean "thousand leaves," referring to its finely divided and highly defined leaves. Unlike many plants with broad fleshy leaves, or which have narrow



### **Yarrow *Achillea millefolium***

*The Yarrow plant is distinguished by its feathery leaves, strong, upright stem, and its umbel canopy of radiant white composite flowers.*



or divided leaves only in the upper part of the plant, even the lower leaves of the Yarrow are feathery. The whole plant is highly aromatic, filling the air with a very pungent smell, particularly in the heat of the sun.

Besides the white Yarrow, two other Yarrows are included in the *Repertory*. Pink Yarrow is nearly identical in appearance to the common white Yarrow, except for the deep pink to rose-red flowers. Pink Yarrow is often grown as a horticultural variety, but many lighter pink Yarrows occur naturally. The Golden Yarrow is a larger, sturdier plant, which is native to Asia Minor. Its golden yellow flowers have no petal-like rays, only yellow centers very tightly clustered together. Its leaves are larger, and more fern-like than feathery.

## **Elemental and alchemical forces in the plant**

As we refine our plant observation, we are able to move from the physical structure to a perception of how life forces work through the plant. One of the most basic ways of seeing the plant is through the four elements of earth, water, air, and fire, a system prominent in the alchemical tradition, and which can be traced back to Aristotle. We should not confuse these four elements with the approximately 100 chemical elements of the periodic table of modern science. The four alchemical elements represent *processes* and *qualities* of Nature, not physical “building blocks.” Earth is the quality of solidity and strength, water the quality of liquidity and life, air the quality of expansiveness and openness to light, and fire the principle of radiance, warmth, and transformation. In the human soul, each element expresses one of the four human *temperaments*, as they were known in classical thought. The earth-bound person is *melancholic*, the watery person *phlegmatic*, the airy person *sanguine*, and the fiery person *choleric*.

Each plant contains the working of all four elemental processes. However, we can observe that certain of the elements are more pronounced than others. In the Yarrow plant we see a strong relationship to the air in the feathery leaves and flowers, a fiery quality in the aromatic oils, a watery quality in its rapidly spreading rhizome roots, and an earthy quality in the strong structure of its woody stem. Compared to other plants, the elemental forces are exceptionally well-balanced in the Yarrow, with the water quality perhaps the least developed.

The forces working through the plant world encompass more than these four elemental qualities. Each of the chemical or nutritive constituents of a plant can be understood as a living *process*, as well as a chemical *substance*.

For example, the presence of a high percentage of potassium salt (potash) in the ash of Yarrow expresses what the alchemists call *sal*, a form-creating, earthy salt process evidenced in the strongly structured stem and roots. We know from chemical agriculture that physical potassium is used to strengthen stems and prolong the life of leaves. The extraordinary ability of Yarrow to build up a well-ordered structure, and to maintain it after having



reached the stage of flowering, is testimony to formative powers of potassium. It creates a kind of “boundary” for the more cosmic, fiery forces which operate in the plant, as expressed in the aromatic oils, the feathery leaves, and brilliant light-filled inflorescence. Thus the Yarrow is able to balance the polarity of cosmic and earthly processes, thriving in the heat and light of the summer sun, while holding its earthly form strongly intact.

This understanding of the forces working through the plant has been applied in a very practical way in biodynamic agriculture, a form of organic agriculture initiated by Rudolf Steiner in 1924. Yarrow is part of the biodynamic preparations, which are applied to compost in order to enliven the soil. According to Steiner, the Yarrow plant embodies such a remarkable balance of earthy and cosmic forces that it is able to sensitize the earth to receive quickening influences from the cosmos, and bring astral influences into the Earth in a harmonious way. This is a reflection of its effect on the human being, where Yarrow is used to strengthen weaknesses in the astral body.

Our goal in flower essence research is to become aware of these dynamic forces working through the plant, so that we can better understand how they relate to subtle properties within the human soul.

## **Herbal lore and medicinal uses**

Besides the direct study of the plant itself, we can learn much from the accumulated human knowledge about plants, how they are used for food and medicine, and the qualities which have been attributed to them. There is a rich heritage of plant use in all traditional cultures of the earth, only a fraction of which has survived in herbal texts and reports from primitive peoples. This wisdom represents not only a long history of practical experience, but also remnants of perceptions from an earlier time in history when humankind had a clairvoyant experience of plants, through unconscious unity with the soul of Nature. Much of this oral knowledge was lost, or never recorded in written form. However, because it was a product of a pre-scientific awareness, there is much projection and inaccuracy mingled with true insight. Thus, while we can receive many clues from herbal lore of plants, it can never substitute for original and thorough spiritual scientific investigation of the essences.

Some herbal lore about the physical properties of plants has been scientifically verified; in fact, the medical pharmacopoeia earlier in this century included many herbal remedies. These medicinal properties of plants are important clues in understanding flower essences. As we described earlier, flower essence qualities often express a higher “octave” of the physical property, a parallel expression in the astral or etheric body of what the physical herb is doing in the physical body.

Yarrow is an example of an herb with an extensive history of medicinal uses and lore. One of Yarrow’s folkloric names was Venus’ Eyebrow, and the herb has been traditionally

associated with the planet Venus, as reported by old herbalists like Culpeper. Soul qualities associated with Venus herbs include sensitivity, intuition, and compassion.

However, many plants encompass polar relationships, and this is certainly true of Yarrow. In addition to its Venusian nature, we also discern Mars-like qualities of strength and protection. Mars is associated with the “martial” arts, and Yarrow was carried into battle by soldiers as a talisman of protection. Yarrow was known by such names as “Soldier’s Woundwort,” “Knight’s Milfoil,” and “Herbe Militaris.” Its botanical genus, *Achillea*, is reportedly named for the Greek warrior Achilles, who used it to heal his soldiers’ wounds, but who himself was afflicted in his vulnerable heel.

Yarrow herb has the physical property of treating wounds by stanching bleeding, whether from outer injuries, internal hemorrhaging, or excessive menstrual flow. It was also believed to provide spiritual protection against one’s enemies. Yarrow tea, made from the whole flowering plant except the roots, has been used traditionally for inducing sweating during colds and fevers, for indigestion and gastric inflammation, as an expectorant, and to relieve internal bleeding.

Modern chemical analysis also yields information about the properties of Yarrow, which confirm many of its traditional uses. The herb contains a bitter substance *achillein* which helps stimulate digestion, and also tannins and resins with wound-healing capacities. The essential oil is found throughout the plant, particularly in the flowers. It is blue-green and, like chamomile oil, contains *azulene*, which is a bitter, astringent principle, and  *cineol*, which has antiseptic, expectorant, and stomachic attributes.

As we review the lore and herbal uses of Yarrow, we see several themes. Although it has releasing qualities in its expectorant and diaphoretic (sweat-inducing) properties, its strongest action seems to be its ability to create and hold form. This is expressed in its wound-healing and anti-hemorrhaging abilities, its astringent qualities and anti-inflammatory action. It also invigorates the fiery metabolic processes of digestion, demonstrating that its formative power is not static, but able to enter into a dynamic relationship with the mutable fire forces of life. Again we see Yarrow as an exceptionally *balanced* plant, with an outstanding capacity to integrate earthy and cosmic forces; it harmonizes the sensitivity of Venus with the strength and protection of Mars.

## **Botanical relationships**

We can also learn much about a plant by considering its botanical classification, and its botanical relationship to other plants. The alchemical tradition teaches us to approach Nature as book written in a language whose meaning we can learn to decipher. With this background, we can then use the scientific discipline of botanical classification as an encyclopedic guide to the living forms we wish to understand.

Developed over two centuries ago by Linnaeus, our modern botanical system has established universally accepted nomenclature for the myriad species of life on Earth. Yet, there is more to the families, genera, and species of the Linnean system than a convenient method of keeping order, like the arrangement of books in a library. Botanical classification represents thousands of meticulous observations of Nature's life forms, noting which characteristics are similar, and which differentiate one plant or animal from another. Although few botanists are aware of the alchemical tradition, or even Goethe's research, the structures and forms they so carefully study are themselves expressions of the living processes working in plants, and provide clues to understanding their essential qualities. Flower essence research can thus avail itself of existing scientific systems such as botanical classification, and then infuse them with a sensitive understanding of soul messages which speak through the physical life forms and processes.

In our research, we have found that plants which are related botanically generally exhibit affinity in their flower essence qualities. The plant families, in particular, express broad archetypal properties, with members of each family representing variations on a common theme.

For example, Lily Family plants have minimally-rooted, watery bulbs. They are thus only loosely connected with the earth, holding their forces in a womb-like water of life. On the other hand, their star-shaped, typically hexagonal flowers reflect the pristine harmony of the celestial spheres.



**Mariposa Lily**  
***Calochortus leichtlinii***

*This delicate white and mauve wildflower is found in the mountains of western North America. Its tiny bulb grows in rocky crevices, barely attached to the earth. A member of the Lily Family, it has three cup-like petals, offset by three smaller sepals.*



**Star of Bethlehem**  
***Ornithogalum umbellatum***

*Native to Europe and North Africa, the Star of Bethlehem is part of Dr. Bach's emergency combination formula. Its round bulb and perfect six-pointed star flower are typical of Lily Family plants that are related to the Onion (sometimes classified separately as the Amaryllis Family)*



Flower essences from Lily Family plants, such as Star Tulip, Mariposa Lily, Easter Lily and Alpine Lily, generally work with the feminine, receptive aspects of the human soul, more akin to the harmony of the spiritual world, yet learning to face the challenges of earthly life.

Rose Family plants, in contrast, are strongly rooted and have flowers and fruits with five-fold geometry, representing the perfection of the human form (as in Leonardo da Vinci's drawing of the star man with limbs outstretched). The Blackberry, Quince, and Rose plants, in particular, have long roots deeply anchored in the ground, thorn-covered stems, and vigorously-growing branches. These essences work with themes of incarnation, helping one to strongly take hold of life on Earth, and to bring forces of love, compassion, and commitment.

Yarrow is a member of the Compositae, or Sunflower family of Daisy-like flowers, whose essences generally deal with principles of synthesis or integration of the Self. Each composite flower is like a field of flowers in itself, containing many central disk florets, as well as petal-like ray florets. The Yarrow flower carries this principle of integration one step further, as its flower head is a tightly-organized cluster of many composite flowers, each of which is composed of ray and disk florets.



### **Blackberry *Rubus ursinus***

*The wild blackberry has five-petaled flowers with numerous stamens, which are characteristic of Rose Family plants. Its prolific, thorny branches, dark black fruits, and tenacious roots are among the most intense expressions of this plant family.*



### **California Wild Rose *Rosa californica***

*The delicate and sweetly fragrant pink blossoms of this wild rose are found on a vigorous shrub with sharp thorns and a deep, strong root system. Unlike more elaborate cultivated roses, it retains the simplicity of the five-petaled form.*

Although Sunflower family plants share a characteristic flower structure, the individual plant species exhibit a wide range of plant forms and gestures. In fact, each plant family is really a broad spectrum of qualities, or variations on a common theme. We see the Sunflower with its broad, rounded leaves and tall, radiant flower heads in contrast with the Star Thistle, with its narrow stem-hugging leaves, spiny thorns, and small clusters of tubular florets. Also within this plant family we have the contracted Tansy flowers, sometimes called “buttons” because they contain only disk florets (like the yellow centers of the daisy), contrasted with the Dandelion and Chicory, which contain only the ray florets.

The Yarrow is a particularly remarkable member of the



**Tansy *Tanacetum vulgare***

*This composite flower has only central disk florets, and thus resembles the center of a daisy, without any ray florets. The densely structured flower head gives an impression of compactness and containment.*



**Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale***

*Bursting into brilliant yellow blossoms in early spring, this composite flower has only ray florets. The stamens form the central structure; there are no disk florets. The expansive quality of the Dandelion is seen not only in the ray flowers, but also in the seed head which disperses easily into the wind.*





### **Queen Anne's Lace *Daucus carota***

*This member of the Umbelliferae family has a canopy of white flowers and lacy leaves like the Yarrow. However, the individual flowers are simple and five-petaled, and thus distinguish this plant from the Yarrow's composite disk and ray florets.*

Sunflower Family because in many ways it also resembles plants of the Umbelliferae, or Parsley family. With its umbel inflorescence, and its finely divided and aromatic leaves, penetrated by the light and air, Yarrow shares the qualities of openness and sensitivity of such Umbelliferae as Angelica, Dill, and Queen Anne's Lace. They have similar qualities of multiple branching in the finely-divided leaves and flower heads, strongly structured central stems, and aromatic qualities which penetrate into the leaves and stems. However, while these plants have complex umbel flower heads like Yarrow, the individual flowers are quite simple, unlike the composite Yarrow flowers. Thus, we see that while botanical classification is an important guide to understanding plant gestures and signatures, we need also to consider relationships of form which cross botanical boundaries.

Within the broad themes of botanical families, plants which share the same *genus* have an even closer relationship in form. For example, the white Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Pink Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium* var. *rubra*), and Golden Yarrow (*Achillea filipendulina*) are all members of the *Achillea* genus. Some other groups of essence plants in the *Repertory* which share the same genus are *Aesculus* (Chestnut Bud, Red Chestnut, White Chestnut); *Artemisia* (Mugwort, Sagebrush); *Calochortus* (Fairy Lantern, Mariposa Lily, Star Tulip, Yellow Star

Tulip); *Dicentra* (Bleeding Heart, Golden Ear Drops); *Lilium* (Alpine Lily, Easter Lily, Tiger Lily); *Mimulus* (Mimulus, Pink Monkeyflower, Purple Monkeyflower, Scarlet Monkeyflower, Sticky Monkeyflower); *Penstemon* (Mountain Pride, Penstemon); and *Rosa* (California Wild Rose, Wild Rose). We invite the reader to examine the descriptions of these essences in Part III of the *Repertory*, to explore how the botanical relationships of these plants are expressed in flower essence qualities.

Within the Sunflower family, which is so large it encompasses 10% of all flowering plants, there is also an intermediate grouping of plants, known as the “tribe.” For example, the genera *Cichorium* (Chicory) and *Taraxacum* (Dandelion), with their flowers of all rays, are in the *Cichorieae* tribe. The *Achillea* genus (Yarrow) belongs to the *Anthemideae* tribe, which also includes *Artemisia* (Mugwort, Sagebrush), *Anthemis* and *Matricaria* (Chamomile), *Tanacetum* (Tansy), and *Chrysanthemum* (Chrysanthemum, Shasta Daisy). We can see the relationship of Yarrow to plants within its tribe. It has finely divided leaves as Chamomile, and possesses strong aromatic oils like Mugwort and Sagebrush. The Golden Yarrow, in particular, strongly resembles the Tansy with its compact yellow, disc-only flowers and large, fern-like leaves.

Having gathered together all of these plant forms and relationships from our botanical studies, we have in effect assembled the various letters of the plant alphabet, and begun to arrange them into words. Our next step is discover the dynamic relationships among the words so we can create meaningful sentences to shape a “flower language.”

## **Plant attunement**

All of our plant observations and studies are important contributions to our understanding of the properties of a plant, but the whole is still more than the sum of its parts. As we begin to live with the plant on the many different levels which we have discussed, a higher relationship develops which builds from the sensory and mental understanding, gradually refining itself into *extra-sensory* and *meditative awareness*. In this way, we can begin to perceive the subtle energy fields of the plant, to hear its inner message or essence, and finally to experience the plant at a deep level of *being*. Such a path involves more than a brief mystical or psychic transmission; it is instead a grounded and very practical relationship with the plant, which begins in the physical dimension and only gradually becomes *meta-physical*.

Because this process of plant *attunement* is the result of a long and patient journey of discovery, it is really only possible here to give some indications, rather than a full description or “recipe.” If it is to be precise, plant attunement must be built on a foundation of physical *observation*, along with the attentive contemplation and study we have already outlined. Next comes the stage of *imagination*, in which a inner image is formed of what is observed, and the image is allowed to metamorphose as it unfolds in time (e.g. the movement from seed to sprout and root, to leaf, bud, blossom, and fruit), or in its

relationship to other plant forms. The next stage is one of *inspiration*, in which there is an inner listening to the qualities expressed in the previous process. Finally comes true *intuition*, which is a direct merging with the plant, in which the qualities of the plant are experienced as an inner reality.

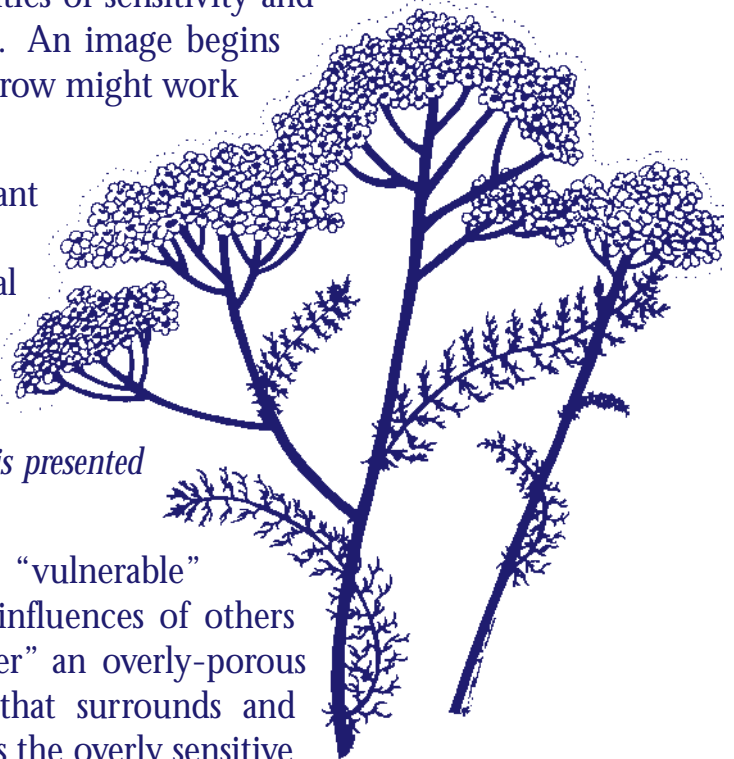
Such plant attunement must be repeated again and again until one develops the sensitivity and clarity to understand its soul message. This exploration must become as flexible and fluid as the growth process of the plant itself. Only through such inner *metamorphic* activity can we understand the dynamic relationships of form and meaning which underlie the phenomena of life.

As an illustration of this process, let us recall the Yarrow plant, in which we observed the sensitive quality of its finely divided leaves and flowers, its strongly structured stem and roots, the aromatic oils, and the umbel of radiant white composite flowers. We recollect the strong form-building principle of the Yarrow, its sturdy stem, the well-structured flower head, and its ability to hold its form through the light and heat of summer. We can also think of Yarrow's use as a wound herb and talisman of protection, as well as the other qualities which our study has led us to consider. As we re-create the Yarrow in our imagination, we may see feathery wings floating sensitively in the air, with a strong, central axis of support, while a canopy of white light envelops us with qualities of clarity, inner strength, and openness.

Releasing the image and becoming inwardly quiet, we may hear or feel compassion and vulnerability, balanced by feelings of strength and protection. As we encounter the Yarrow inwardly, the polarities of sensitivity and strength seek integration within our soul. An image begins to emerge within our mind of the way Yarrow might work in the human soul.

These impressions from our Yarrow plant study have been developed and refined over the years, and tested against empirical results of people using Yarrow flower essence. From this research, a clear portrait of the Yarrow essence has evolved. *(A description of empirical research is presented in the following section.)*

Yarrow essence helps those who feel “vulnerable” (literally: “able to be wounded”) to the influences of others and their environment. It “knits together” an overly-porous aura — the envelope of vital energy that surrounds and protects the body. Yarrow essence balances the overly sensitive



Venusian qualities of the astral body with the grounded Mars-like strength and stability of physical and etheric forces. It encourages a healthy sense of Self, imparting strength, integrity, and clarity of consciousness typical of members of the Composite family.

Yarrow is particularly helpful for healers and counselors whose natural sympathy and compassion may cause them to “absorb” the tensions and problems of their clients. This essence is also widely indicated for persons suffering from many forms of psychic distress, hypersensitivity, pronounced allergic reactions, and persistent disturbances of the immune system. Yarrow facilitates the integrity and strength of a healthy ego structure, while enabling the soul to retain its innate sensitivity and receptivity. It is an extremely important essence in our time, due to the rapid pace of spiritual and psychic opening, occurring at the same time that environmental and social forces threaten to overwhelm, harden, or annihilate the sensitive capacities within the human soul.

The question often arises if the signature of a plant expresses the “problem” it addresses, or the quality which is the “solution” to the problem. This recalls our earlier discussion of similars, contraries, and the *Union of Opposites*. Remembering that flower essences embody a *polarity* of opposites, it becomes understandable that the physical plant form may express one or the other — or both — sides of the polarity. In the Yarrow we experience soul sensitivity in the plant’s openness to the light and air in its finely divided leaves and volatile oils; but we also feel the strength and stability of its form, the sense of protection of its white umbel, and the integrity of the Self that characterizes the Compositae. Yarrow thus integrates within its form both sides of this polarity.

Our testing of the Pink Yarrow and Golden Yarrow essences in comparison with the Yarrow has also confirmed how variations in color and form are expressed in the flower essence qualities of these botanically-related plants. Pink Yarrow is *Achillea millefolium* var. *rubra*, a variety of the common Yarrow, *Achillea millefolium*. We recall that it is similar in form to the white Yarrow, but its characteristic deep pink-magenta flowers suggest a more emotional quality than the pure white Yarrow flowers. Pink Yarrow essence is used in situations of excessive emotional sensitivity, when we absorb the emotions of others, or allow our soul’s astrality to “bleed” and merge with others.

Golden Yarrow is a different species of the *Achillea* genus, *Achillea filipendulina*. It is larger, with stronger fern-like leaves, compared to the other Yarrows. Its golden flower head is more tightly-knit, and the flowers have only the central disk florets, resembling the Tansy. Yet, unlike the Tansy plant which collapses as it flowers, Golden Yarrow has the characteristic Yarrow form-holding quality, and is less pungent.

We can now develop an image of the polarities with which Golden Yarrow works. The compact flower structure and stability of form expresses an inwardizing gesture; while the open leaf structure and the brilliant golden-yellow color of the flowers suggest an outward-radiating quality. The Golden Yarrow essence integrates the polarities of introversion and



extroversion, as well as those of sensitivity and protective strength. It is often indicated for artists and performers whose creative sensitivity make them overly vulnerable in their very public roles.

There is one more Yarrow essence in the *Repertory*, Yarrow Special Formula, which is distinguished not by the plant species used, but in the preparation method. This formula was specifically devised at the request of European practitioners after the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster in 1986 to counteract the effects of radiation on the human etheric body. Radioactivity, which is the destruction of the physical structure of matter at an atomic level, is the very antithesis of the etheric formative forces which build up living structures. Yarrow contains potassium salts which help it maintain the integrity of its own structure. To augment this strong form-enhancing *sal* process, the Yarrow Special Formula is specially potentized from *Achillea millefolium* blossoms in a base of sea-salt water. Thus the Yarrow Special Formula strengthens and maintains the etheric formative forces which give strength and integrity to the human aura. While not a substitute for medical care, it is able to counteract the disruptive effects of radiation on human energy fields, whether from nuclear fallout, X-rays, televisions, computer monitors, electromagnetic fields, or other environmental hazards of contemporary life.

While it is not possible in this overview to present complete portraits of all the essence plants in the *Repertory*, we offer these few examples of the methods we have used in our plant studies. We do this not only to provide a small window into our field work with plants, but also with the hope that others will be inspired to join in the still embryonic work of developing a living science which can comprehend the forms and processes of Nature as a language which speaks to the human soul.

Such flower essence research requires a truly interdisciplinary investigation. It involves elements of a number of fields of study, including agriculture, astrology, astronomy, biology, botany, chemistry, ecology, geology, geomancy, herbology, mathematics (especially geometry), medicine, meteorology, nutrition, philosophy, physics, psychology, sociology, and artistic expressions such as poetry, painting, and music. In addition to these “outer” studies, self-knowledge and inner development is required for flower essence study. Only a broad collaborative effort which bridges traditional boundaries between specialized branches of knowledge can encompass the full meaning of flower essence research.



# **Clinical Studies of Flower Essences**

## **Case studies**

How can we be certain that our plant studies yield accurate descriptions of flower essence qualities? No matter how sincerely we may strive for clarity, setting aside preconceptions and biases, the fact remains that human beings are fallible. Particularly with such a pioneering discipline as researching the soul messages of flowers, the possibilities are great for error or distortion. If we are to carry the spirit of science into our work, we must develop a process of systematic verification of the insights we receive from our plant studies.

The primary means for verification of flower essence qualities is the collection of case reports from practitioners and users of flower essences who document their experiences. Although such “anecdotal evidence” may be discounted by strict science, it serves as a valuable source of information. In fact, this empirical (experience-based) approach is not only the most common form of flower essence research, it is also the sole basis by which homeopathic medicine has been verified for the last two centuries.

Just as the flower essence preparer needs to become a field scientist, making careful observation of flower essence plants, seeing how the individual parts form an expression of a whole; so also the flower essence practitioner needs to hone his or her skills as a scientific observer, starting with basic physical observations of the client such as voice intonation, body language, facial expression, and physical symptoms. A living picture of the evolving person can then be created, including the life story, aspirations and challenges, as well as thoughts and feelings. Like the plant which is observed again and again in various stages of growth, the soul also journeys through time, and its progress needs periodic review. Thus, the most successful case studies are longitudinal ones which extend over a number of months, incorporating several flower essence combinations and cycles of soul growth.

All practitioners can observe and document the effects of flower essences on their clients, gradually cultivating the discipline of scientific observation. This is a fundamental skill necessary for becoming adept in the selection of flower essences and evaluating the results of one’s choices. It is essential to perceive and record the effects of the essences in order to support and guide the client’s development. Often clients will forget from one visit to the next a troubling issue or painful situation which is no longer pressing. Good case notes enable the practitioner to remind the client of the progress which has been made, or to re-examine issues which are still challenging.

Skillful observation and record-keeping are also essential for the collection of empirical data which builds upon the established body of flower essence research, and reports or verifies new insights about essence qualities and effects. Any one case may seem insignificant or inconclusive, since case reports are of necessity filtered through the perceptive abilities of both the practitioner and the subject. However, with enough care

and a large enough pool of data, we can gradually discern a pattern in how a particular essence works.

Empirical research is dramatically amplified when cases can be shared and cross-referenced from many sources. For this purpose, the Flower Essence Society has developed case study forms which cover the most significant aspects of flower essence therapy. These case studies are organized and entered into our computer data base, which is cross-indexed for a wide variety of therapeutic phenomena. Some of the most valuable case studies have been submitted for the FES Practitioner Certification Program, which follows the FES Practitioner Training Program. Candidates for certification are graduates of the training program who then go on to complete at least three in-depth cases and a related paper, demonstrating their record-keeping and observational skills. The cumulative weight of these cases and others submitted by numerous practitioners throughout the world, along with in-depth interviews and other surveys, form the backbone of our empirical understanding of flower essence qualities. This data can also be the basis for designing further studies which meet professional standards of scientific rigor.

## **Controlled clinical studies**

The conventional standard for scientific verification of the efficacy of remedies involves controlled studies with placebos and double-blind procedures. As described earlier, in such studies two or more groups are tested, at least one with an inert placebo, and one or more with the substances to be tested. The procedure is “double-blind” because neither the test subjects nor those administering the tests know which group has the placebo and which has the remedy being tested.

Rigorous double-blind studies have yet to be conducted with flower essences, partly because of lack of funding and interest in the scientific community, but also because of certain procedural problems which arise. Most controlled tests administer a standard remedy or remedy combination to each person in the test group. These persons are usually selected because they suffer from the same illness or set of symptoms. However, flower essences are typically selected specifically for each individual, as a result of an interview by the practitioner. People with the same physical or emotional symptoms may need very different essences; for example, there are many essences for various kinds of depression. Thus, a particular flower essence combination may not be beneficial for most of the individuals in the test group, not because the essences themselves are ineffective, but because that combination would not contain the most appropriate and efficacious essences for each person. Thus, it remains challenging to prove the validity of flower essences for a random group, as generally required for double-blind tests.

Another dilemma involves developing testing and evaluation procedures and questionnaires which meet professional standards, yet which are also appropriate to the emotional and psycho-spiritual changes typical of flower essence use. Many psychological

tests are geared to symptomatic alterations, and may not detect more subtle long-term soul growth. There is an inherent tension between the requirement of conventional scientific methodology for results which are *quantitatively* measurable, and the need for skillful evaluation of the *qualitative* experiences which characterize flower essence use. The Flower Essence Society is ready to assist any potential researchers and organizations in designing rigorous scientific studies which will successfully meet the criteria necessary for professional acceptance while remaining appropriate to the nature of flower essence phenomena.

Controlled studies can be important in communicating the value and validity of flower essences to professional and regulatory authorities, and can make a real contribution to knowledge of flower essence phenomena. However, such testing methods may be limited in their ability to truly assess and measure in-depth changes in human feeling and consciousness. Therefore, the path of spiritual scientific research for flower essence therapy can and must always depend on the trained perception skills of the practitioner who actively works with humans or other living beings in a therapeutic setting.

## **Research on Subtle Energy Phenomena**

### **The challenge of studying vibrational remedies**

Besides controlled studies, the other conventional method for authenticating health remedies is to study their constituents and their mode of operation in the human organism. This is a great challenge in the case of flower essences, because they are *vibrational* in nature. When one turns to a study of the actual substance of flower essences, biochemical analysis yields no meaningful results. The physical ingredients of the essences — water, alcohol, and an extremely dilute infusion of the flowers — cannot explain their beneficial effects. Their action lies in subtle forces not directly perceptible to physical senses, and thus not measurable by any physical apparatus.

Consequently, the authenticity of subtle remedies cannot be determined by typical scientific studies based on mechanistic paradigms which ignore the existence of force fields beyond the physical dimension. This limitation has both philosophical and medical implications, and very real legal and social consequences. Vibrational remedies such as flower essences and homeopathic remedies may be rejected by professional and regulatory agencies not because they lack effectiveness, but because these substances cannot be tested by methodologies which are designed for bio-chemically based medicines. Thus for flower essence therapy to gain wider acceptance, and for practitioners to have soundly based knowledge of subtle plant remedies, it is essential to develop new methods for perceiving and testing plant qualities.

We need to find methods which can bridge the gap between conventional scientific experimentation, whose materialistic premises exclude subtle energy phenomena, and

purely spiritual research methods, which depend solely on the consciousness of the investigator. Such intermediary methods do not substitute for the honing of our own observational and perceptive skills in the physical world and in other dimensions. However, these research techniques are potentially important both as demonstrations to those who question the reality of flower essences, and as ways of testing and clarifying the insights derived from direct spiritual research.

## **Detecting subtle energies**

Preliminary work has been done with several research techniques which investigate various quantifiable physical phenomena indicating the presence of subtle energy fields. Like tracking an invisible person through the snow by following his footprints, such methods are a way of perceiving the *effects* of invisible forces on sense-perceptible phenomena. These effects can then be observed, measured, and interpreted according to conventional scientific standards. Studying the physical effects of the invisible is exactly the procedure used in sub-atomic physics to study phenomena which are hidden to both the human senses and scientific instruments.

## **Sensitive crystallization**

Sensitive crystallization is a subtle-energy testing method in which various organic substances are added to a copper chloride solution to produce distinctive crystallization patterns according to the nature of the substance. This method was pioneered by the late Dr. Ehrenfried Pfeiffer, a scientist who was a student of Rudolf Steiner, and one of the developers of biodynamic agriculture in North America. Pfeiffer was able to use the sensitive crystallization method to investigate plant saps and juices, as an indication of the vitality of the plant. He also worked with samples of human fluids such as blood, and was able to use sensitive crystallization for early detection of various diseases. This was possible because the crystallization patterns were apparently influenced not simply by the physical structure of the substance in the solution, but also by its etheric forces, the field of vital energy which indicates a state of health or disease before it manifests in the physical body.

Pfeiffer's ability to interpret the meaning of the copper chloride crystallization patterns was based on many years of exacting research, in which he examined hundreds of tests of plant extracts and human blood. He was then able to develop a language of form which could reliably indicate something about the substance being tested. Unfortunately, Pfeiffer's method does not seem sensitive enough to register vibrational remedies.

A new, more sensitive method has been developed by a researcher in Europe, which appears capable of differentiating between various homeopathic remedies and flower essences. However, compared to Pfeiffer's work, this research is still in a very preliminary stage. Not enough tests have been completed at this time to confirm whether the variations



in crystallization patterns are due to the properties of the remedies themselves, or myriad other variables such as environmental influences or laboratory procedures.

If it can be established by further testing that each flower essence produces a distinct and recognizable pattern, then we may have important evidence that each flower essence carries a particular energetic pattern, a fact which cannot be demonstrated by conventional chemical analysis. Even if this is done, we will still have much more research to do before being able to use sensitive crystallization to yield any significant information about the properties of flower essences. We will need to create a sufficient quantity of data so that crystallization patterns can be correlated with flower essence qualities. Until this patient, methodical work is done, we will have no basis for interpreting the “language” of the crystallization patterns.

## **Kirlian photography**

Another method for demonstrating life energy fields is that of Kirlian photography, named for the Russian researchers Semyon and Valentina Kirlian, who used high-voltage electrical charges to create visible photographic images of plant or human energy fields. Although etheric forces are not the same as electrical or magnetic forces, etheric energies do seem to be able to influence electromagnetic fields. Again, this is a situation of subtle energies leaving their “footprints” in the physical world.

Kirlian photography was popularized in the 1970’s by Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder’s book, *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain*, and *The Kirlian Aura*, edited by Stanley Krippner and Daniel Rubin, which featured the famous “phantom” cut leaf on the cover. Because of difficulties in obtaining verifiable and repeatable results, interest in this methodology has waned in recent years. Nonetheless, some promising preliminary results have been obtained by researchers who have taken Kirlian photographs of flower essence bottles, as well as of the finger tips of people who have taken various essences. While these experiments apparently indicate distinctive photographic patterns for each essence, we caution that much more testing will be necessary to confirm these findings, and to be able to interpret what these patterns may indicate about flower essence properties.

Just as Pfeiffer needed to repeat his experiments many times in order to establish the exact correlations between crystallization patterns and their indications, so flower essence research using techniques such as those mentioned above will require results which can be independently duplicated by different laboratories and definitively correlated with particular essences. The Flower Essence Society encourages researchers to continue to develop sensitive crystallization and Kirlian photography as tools for flower essence research.

There are also many other techniques utilizing physical measurement of the effects of subtle energies which hold promise for flower essence research. Some of these are briefly summarized below, with the hope that potential researchers will be inspired to investigate these areas.

## **Plant geometry and celestial patterns**

Lawrence Edwards, a Scottish mathematician, has studied the geometric relationship of plant forms to the forces which shape plant growth. Early research in this area has indicated the correlation of these forces with the orbital movements of the moon and planets. Further documentation of these correspondences may help to verify the folkloric associations of plants with planetary influences, and their related properties.

## **Effects on plant growth**

Some homeopathic remedies have been tested by measuring their effects on plant growth. This method could be applied to flower essences, with the realization that such a study would be limited to demonstrating the effects of flower essences on physical and etheric vitality. However, such tests would not address the essence's impact on the mental and emotional life of the human being.

## **Testing devices**

Some practitioners use diagnostic devices which measure the relative disturbance of various meridians and organ systems. Other practitioners use direct methods, such as pulse diagnosis. Clinical experience shows that flower essences will balance certain disturbances. Research may be able to establish consistent patterns as verified by these diagnostic procedures. While such measures may not indicate the full dimensions of long-term soul transformation possible with flower essence therapy, they may at least confirm that some real short-term change has taken place in the energy fields of the person.

## **Capillary dynamolysis**

The method of capillary dynamolysis, also known as chromatography, was inspired by Rudolf Steiner and developed by Lilly and Eugen Kolisko early in this century. The Kolisko method involves combining a plant extract with a metallic salt such as silver nitrate, and allowing it to rise vertically in a cylinder of filter paper. A pattern or picture is formed which is an indication of the forces at work in the extract. Plant extracts have been tested to verify the vitality of medicinal and food plants, and human fluids have been tested to detect disease states. It is possible that this technique, heretofore used with physical extracts, might be adapted to indicate some properties of potentized remedies such as flower essences.

## **Water drop technique**

The water drop technique, developed by Theodor Schwenk, is another way of making etheric forces visible. It has been used to test the vitality of drinking water or other liquids by observing the wave patterns produced as a series of water drops impact the surface of a liquid. A similar method may be developed which can indicate the vibrational changes in water which take place as a result of it being potentized with a flower essence.

The techniques described above may need further refinement and organization in order to detect the range of effects produced by flower essences. The Flower Essence Society is highly interested in promoting and encouraging research using testing methods which detect the presence of subtle energy fields in flower essences. We have taken some initial steps to begin this research, and enthusiastically welcome the participation or added suggestions of other practitioners and researchers.

## **The Flower Essence Society Research Program**

It is clear that scientific investigation is still the predominant test of truth in our culture, and thus a prerequisite for the acceptance of the reality of flower essences by the general public as well as professional and governmental authorities. However, even among those who are convinced of the efficacy of flower essences through their own experience, scientific research on the essences is just as important to clarify one's knowledge of the qualities of the essences and the principles by which they work.

Although much has been done, we consider that our sixteen years of efforts in flower essence research are only a modest beginning. We urge readers to consider participating in the FES Research Program through any of a number of options, including:

1. Thorough documentation of client or home-care use of flower essences. This is the foundation of all flower essence knowledge, and we encourage every practitioner and user of flower essences to be involved in this level of research. FES will supply case study forms upon request.
2. Sharing insights and observations about various essences you have used with yourself or others. This involves keeping general notes and looking for over-all trends and patterns in your use of flower essences.
3. Developing controlled clinical studies of flower essences.
4. Studies in subtle plant properties based on the principles of spiritual science.
5. Developing research in detecting, analyzing, and interpreting the presence of subtle forces within flower essences.

To assist you in participating in the FES Research Program, we invite you to fill out and return the reporting form found on our web site at [www.flowersociety.org/reporting.htm](http://www.flowersociety.org/reporting.htm).

# Chapter 3:

## How Are Flower Essences Selected?

When we first discover the essences, it is a common experience to feel overwhelmed by having so many possibilities. How can we choose the most appropriate essences for ourselves, friends, or clients? Whether in a home health care or clinical setting, the key elements are the same. We must know ourselves or those whom we are helping, and we must learn the soul language of the flower essences.

### Identifying the Main Issues

#### Creating a dialogue

The first step in a selection process is to identify the key soul issues. This is best done through dialogue — conversation with others, or an inner examination which helps us contact our deepest feelings. In both cases, success in choosing appropriate essences is dependent on our ability to be honest and open about ourselves.

Sometimes, the soul issues with which we need to work are readily apparent. More frequently, identifying these issues takes some exploration. We may begin with a general sense of malaise, but not be able to distinguish specific problems. We may be more aware of physical distress, and need to see the inner message of our symptoms. We may experience frustration or overwhelm, but lack insight into the underlying causes.

The development of awareness in the self-reflection or counseling process can be aided by a process of questioning. Several good beginning questions to ask are: “What is my life purpose, and how is this purpose reflected in my daily work? What is my next step in life? How do I feel about my relationship with others? What lessons am I learning right now?” The questioning process itself contributes to an inner, meditative attitude, so that one can begin to see the soul life more effectively and choose priorities of development.

The importance of asking questions is illustrated by the story of Parzival’s quest for the Holy Grail. He enters the castle of the ailing Fisher King, but because he neglects to ask the question, “Brother, what ails thee?” he misses the opportunity to be an agent of healing. The king has the Grail, but he cannot partake of its power until the question is asked. The ability to listen, observe, and ask questions is fundamental to every flower essence selection process.



## **Soul issues — past, present, and future**

It is helpful to consider the development of soul issues in the light of past experiences, in relation to our present circumstances, and in terms of their influence on the future. Childhood emotional experiences or any significant episodes in past phases of life can be keys to understanding our current feelings and reactions. By bringing these often-repressed parts of our personal history into the light of consciousness, it is possible to identify the attitudes and emotional patterns which are underlying current life challenges. Such issues may involve experiences of abandonment, neglect, or abuse; they may include our response to parental or societal expectations, or deep feelings of anger, despair, or grief which the soul carries from the earliest moments of incarnation.

It is equally important to review the soul life in present time, particularly to examine the crucial areas of work and personal relationships. If we take an honest inventory of these two key areas of our life, it is likely we will discover a wealth of soul issues which deserve attention.

Besides evaluating the problems and challenges from the past and present, it is vital to consider future goals. We can ask questions such as, “How would I like my life to be in five (or ten) years? What inner potentials would I like to bring forward and develop in my life? What obstacles lie in the way of the realization of my goals?” Such questions allow us to identify those issues which can lead soul development forward toward its greater destiny.

Each person’s biography chronicles a unique journey of the soul. By sensitive listening we can discern not only the particular complaints or problems of the moment, but also intuit the whole stream of life destiny, as it surges out of the past, flows through the present moment, and courses towards its future possibility.

## **Selecting Appropriate Essences**

### **Learning the flower essences**

Once the main soul issues have been determined, the next step is to select flower essences which best address these issues. Although the number of flower essences may seem daunting, it is possible to gradually familiarize ourselves with their qualities, beginning with those to which we are most attracted. We can read about the psychological profiles associated with the essences, and reflect on these descriptions in terms of what we know of ourselves and others.

In addition, it can be quite helpful to learn something of the plants themselves, which are the sources of the essences. Looking at a picture of the flower, growing it in a garden or finding it in the wild, can greatly deepen our relationship with the soul message of that plant. It is also very beneficial to use pictures of the essence plants to aid in the selection

process. Often, the plants to which we are drawn have special significance. Apart from a knowledge of specific plants, our general willingness to experience the natural world, and especially the wonder and mystery of plant life, can open a vessel within the soul to receive the healing messages of the flowers.

## **The bi-polar nature of flower essences**

As we become familiar with the properties of various essences, we discover that they encompass a wide range of human qualities, many of which seem contradictory. For example, there are essences such as Manzanita or California Wild Rose for coming into a closer relationship with the physical world. However, essences such as Angel's Trumpet or Chrysanthemum help release the soul from its earthly connection. Goldenrod helps us distinguish ourselves from a group identity, while Quaking Grass harmonizes individual will within a common group purpose. With such apparently paradoxical indications, how do we know in which direction to proceed?

The solution to this dilemma is that there is no pre-set answer. Each individual must strive for balance, strengthening those qualities which are weak or blocked, and moderating that which is excessive. Thus, an overly spiritualized person with too little connection with the body may need grounding essences like Manzanita or Clematis, while someone deeply enmeshed in the material world may need uplifting or sensitizing essences such as Hound's Tongue or Star Tulip. The goal is to liberate the unique potential within each person, rather than attempting to follow an external model of how we should be.

As we strive for soul equanimity, we also learn that balance is not static. It is an ever-shifting, spiral path of evolution. Each issue successfully addressed leads us to a new challenge. Thus, while at one time essences such as Centaury or Buttercup may be required to develop a strong sense of selfhood, at another time Chicory or Heather may be indicated to overcome a selfish tendency or excessive preoccupation with one's personal problems.

Soul polarities can also be found within the attributes of an individual essence. For example, Sunflower assists the person with an overbearing ego, and it also helps the self-effacing person to find a stronger ego identity. Sticky Monkeyflower helps those who are over-active sexually, as well as those who fear sexual intimacy, assisting in both cases to bring sexual integration and balance.

Furthermore, the bi-polar nature of an essence is expressed in its working with both the "problem" and the "solution" of an issue. We may choose Morning Glory to overcome addictive habits, or out of a desire to enhance our feelings of vitality. Sweet Pea may be suggested for our lack of rootedness, or we may be aware of a desire to find community. The "negative" and "positive" aspects of these issues are like two sides of a coin. When choosing essences it is helpful to switch back and forth from one perspective to the other

in order to gain a fuller picture of how essence qualities can speak to us. In doing so, we are engaging the alchemical process of the *Union of Opposites* within our psyche.

## **Combining Flower Essences**

It is possible, and often desirable, to combine several flower essences together in a personal formula. The effect of the combination of essences can be greater than any individual essence, if they balance and enhance each other.

### **How many essences can be used?**

How many essences can be used in one combination? Indeed, it seems at times that we need all of them! However, it is important to remember that soul growth takes place gradually and progressively. It is best to focus on key issues, keeping in mind that the flowers work as catalysts which stimulate a whole process of change; when major issues shift, other minor or accompanying problems may also be transformed.

Therefore, it is best not to combine too many essences at one time, as this may confuse or unnecessarily overwhelm the psyche. Although absolute numbers cannot be given, practitioners report that the most common levels are three to six essences at one time. Experienced practitioners may be able to artfully combine and structure flower essence formulas with higher numbers of essences which work synergistically. However, for really key issues, it may be best to use only one central essence which can speak in a more archetypal way to the core part of the personality.

We can think of the repertory of flower essences as an artist's palette of colors. Combining several essences can produce some very beautiful hues. Mixing too many colors unskillfully creates a "muddy" result, without any clarity. The soul is our artist's canvas. It takes patience and practice to use the essence "colors" wisely. While guidelines can be given, there are no shortcuts to developing the *art* of flower essence combination.

### **Principles of flower essence combining**

Flower essence formulating requires practice in order to develop skill. However, there are some basic principles which can provide a starting point. The easiest way to combine essences is to choose those in close *affinity* with a single issue, creating unity and focus in the formula. (This is particularly important when emotional chaos and confusion predominates.) For example, Wild Oat, Larch, and Blackberry might be chosen to help deal with issues of self-actualization in one's career. A mix of Golden Ear Drops, Pink Monkeyflower, and Mariposa Lily could be used to address feelings of vulnerability and abandonment from childhood.

Another more challenging principle is to work with *polarity*, choosing essences for contrasting aspects of soul work. For instance, Sunflower and Star Tulip in a formula would

address the balance of the inner masculine and feminine. A combination of Yellow Star Tulip and Pink Yarrow would help someone who needs to address issues of sensitivity and compassion, while resolving inappropriate emotional merging. Polar formulas work to bring out inherent tensions in the soul, helping to resolve oppositions and bring them to higher synthesis. They are usually more dynamic, and require more skill in selection and follow-up counseling.

Essences can also be added to a combination to *regulate* the speed and rhythm with which the other essences work, or to *balance and tone* their effects. For example, essences such as Black-Eyed Susan or Cayenne may be used to stimulate awareness or action for someone who is in denial or stuck. Essences such as Self-Heal or Yerba Santa can give strength and comfort for someone working with particularly challenging issues.

Another way to adjust the effects of a combination is to vary the frequency of the dosage. Taking the essences at short intervals, such as every hour, will intensify their effects, while stretching out the dosages to once or twice a day generally makes the effects more gentle and gradual.

As we become more skilled in flower essences selection, we can apply the basic principles of either affinity or polarity to include other elements which work as integrating factors in the flower essence formula. These may include color, botanical relationships, thematic structures such as past, present, and future, or basic geometric configurations. The art of successfully combining and structuring flower essence formulas is one which can be progressively developed, as we acquire insight into the qualities and dynamics of the essences.

Sometimes it is not possible to develop a single formula to address all of the major soul issues without overloading the combination. In these cases, it is best to work sequentially, starting with one combination to address a constellation of issues, and developing other formulas as needed. For those who are quite skilled in flower essence use, it is possible to use one or more formulas for different situations. For example, we might have one combination we take in the morning and during our work day to address the way we act in the world, and another for home during evening hours to sensitize us to our feelings and relationships.

## **Adjusting the combination**

The essence combination needs to be evaluated and adjusted as cyclical transformation occurs; quite often the original essences are still needed, with perhaps a new one added and another deleted. At other times a whole new set of essences may be indicated. However, it is best to avoid constant changes in the formula, as this creates confusion and lack of continuity in the soul's healing process. It is important to gain a living imagination of how



the essences are working, and how the changes can be gradually and subtly enhanced through the artful metamorphosis of a flower essence combination.

## **Pre-mixed combinations**

Many practitioners report using key combinations of essences for initial breakthrough or entry-level work in flower essence therapy. If such formulas are skillfully combined and structured, they have the capacity to address broad themes or emotional *miasms* which may need to be cleared before specific developmental work is undertaken.

However, we should bear in mind that flower essence therapy ultimately addresses the unique aspects of each person's situation. Generally speaking, flower essence selection must take into consideration each individual's history, goals, strengths, weaknesses, relationships, work, and life experiences, to facilitate the full transformational process.

## **Working with Essences on Different Levels**

### **Type essences for life lesson and life purpose**

One of the most important aims in flower essence work is to discern the major archetypal issue for one's life, and then find a single flower essence, a *type remedy*, which can address this. An analogy can be made to the *constitutional remedy* in homeopathic practice, although it is possible for someone to have more than one flower essence type remedy in the course of a lifetime.

The type remedy is used to address both our *life lesson* and *life purpose*. The life lesson is a deep soul issue which is a recurring theme in our lives. Usually it will be connected to an experience of emotional wounding in childhood, or a challenge we brought with us into this life; it will color our experience at each stage of development. If the *life lesson* is what we bring from our past, then our *life purpose* is what orients us toward the future. It is our destiny, the inner calling our soul feels, to manifest its full potential in the world, and to serve others.

Life lesson and life purpose are closely intertwined, for it is often by mastering our life lesson that we are able to fulfill our life purpose. Our ability to heal or serve others generally grows out of the experience of our own wounding (the archetype of the *wounded healer*). Thus there is often one essence which works with both life lesson and life purpose. However, in some cases it may be necessary to use a different essence for each, at least until it becomes clear how these two aspects work together.

Although it may take some time to reach the clarity of a single archetypal essence, it is nonetheless beneficial to consider the issues of life lesson and life purpose and some possible essences as type remedies. Such essences serve as "anchors" in flower essence formulas, to which we can return periodically while we address other issues. Through such an approach

we set our sights on long-term soul development, rather than becoming preoccupied with transient moods and disturbances which may erupt from day to day.

Which flower essences can be type remedies? In truth, any flower essence can be a type remedy, if it is used for deep-seated, long-term patterns. The profound soul healing which is possible through the wise use of a type remedy requires a willingness to deeply examine core issues, skill in selecting the appropriate essence, and a commitment to long-term use.

## **Short-term use of flower essences**

Although it is important to keep such archetypal use of flower essences as an ultimate goal, it is useful and often necessary to use essences for short-term and immediate situations. The descriptions of the life lessons associated with each essence, written from a more archetypal level in Part III of the *Repertory*, need to be flexibly interpreted in light of such use.

For example, as a type essence Echinacea may be chosen by someone whose sense of selfhood has been totally devastated by a lifetime of violent abuse. However, this essence could be used in much less drastic situations, such as bolstering self-esteem after becoming unemployed. As a type essence, Manzanita corrects a deep aversion of the soul to the body and to physical matter, often the result of an overly strict religious or cultural belief system. However, this essence can also be used during pregnancy, to bring more acceptance of the changes in the woman's physical body, and to embrace the new life which is incarnating through her. While Lavender as a type essence helps the high-strung, nervous personality, it might be added to a bath (along with Lavender oil) to help us relax and get ready for sleep after a particularly stressful day.

Thus, flower essences can apply to a wide spectrum of situations, from life-long challenges to day-to-day struggles. However, it would be inappropriate to use essences to "fix" every feeling or mood we experience in the course of the day or week. These surface feelings are quite changeable and ephemeral, and can distract us from the opportunity to do deeper soul work. In general, it is best to pay less attention to the fluctuating waves on the surface, and put our focus on the deeper flowing currents of the feeling life.

## **Special Selection Situations**

### **Sharing the essences with others**

When first discovering flower essences there is often a strong temptation to try the essences with people we know and care about whether they want them or not. It should be remembered that, with adults, some conscious participation in the healing journey is necessary to gain real benefit from the essences. It is certainly appropriate to share our enthusiasm and experiences with others, and encourage them to discover flower essences.

But we must then wait for their response, their choice to participate, or accept that they choose not to do so. It is intrusive and unethical to give flower essences to people without their knowledge. This is a violation of their free will, and can lead to emotional distress for which they are not prepared if unconscious feelings are stirred up without any understanding of what is happening. It is also ineffective to give essences to a person who has begrudgingly agreed to take them to please someone else. Unless there is an inner openness to the flower essences, we cannot expect someone to be willing to examine painful feelings or make difficult changes.

## **Children**

Because children have not yet developed the ego structure or self-awareness of adults, it is appropriate for parents or other care-takers to choose essences for them. Nonetheless, it is helpful to engage children as much as possible in the selection and use of the essences. Children are usually quite willing to take their “flower drops,” and will often remind parents when it is time for more. Because their conceptual abilities are still undeveloped, it is not necessary to explain in detail to young children the emotional issues related to each essence. It is more appropriate to say something like “The flower drops will help you feel better,” or “We’re giving you some flower drops to help you relax and fall asleep at night.”

In order to select essences for children, we need a variety of methods to discern the issues with which they are struggling. One very successful method is to have the child do a drawing, and then tell the story associated with the picture. A number of child therapists use Jungian sand play therapy as a way of engaging the child in an activity which expresses deeper layers of the psyche. Of course, it is helpful to talk directly with the child, as well as with parents, other family members, and teachers, in order to gain a fuller understanding of the child’s situation. Yet these conversations should not substitute for the skillful observation of what the child reveals directly through art, play, body language, voice tone, and behavior.

Often the conflicts the child experiences are reflections of deeper tension and struggle in the family system. It is important to consider if there is marital conflict or a broken family, violence or substance abuse, a pattern of emotional repression and dishonesty, or a parental expectations for the child to fulfill unmet needs. The ideal situation is for the whole family to examine its issues through flower essence therapy. If the family is not open to the essences, an effort should be made at least to involve family members in counseling or discussion of conflicts which may be affecting the child.

## **Animals**

Flower essences are used very successfully with animals, both in home care and by professional veterinarians. In these cases the selection process must be modified. The person selecting the essences must know the animal well enough to be able to identify its

emotional moods and attitudes. With animals, the soul expresses itself in behaviors, so that a horse that kicks, a cat that scratches, a dog that growls, are all demonstrations of particular feelings. It is important, of course, to distinguish what is natural and instinctive in an animal, and what is excessive and out of balance. The art of selecting the essences consists of interpreting the essence qualities in terms of the animal's experience and soul states. We can be successful to the extent that we can empathize with an animal as a living being, rather than merely as an object to meet human needs. Some helpful suggestions may be found in Part II of the *Repertory*, under the category "Animals and Animal Care."

Animals, and particularly domestic pets, respond strongly to the influence of the people who care for them. Therefore, when giving essences to an animal, it is quite helpful to select essences for the human caretaker as well, if the person is willing to examine how his or her own attitudes and feelings may be impacting on the animal.

## **Home and Professional Use**

### **Home, self-care, and informal use**

Dr. Bach intended flower essences to be simple and safe method of home care, and in many ways this is true. The essences can become an integral part of a family home-health program, along with good nutrition and herbal home remedies. In order to skillfully select essences and other remedies for ourselves, family members, and friends, we should familiarize ourselves with general principles of health, and understand the specific properties of the home-care remedies which we use.

In flower essence therapy, it is also necessary to develop sufficient self-awareness or insight into others in order to identify key emotional issues. While it is possible to develop our ability for self-reflection and insight, generally it is difficult to see ourselves clearly, or those to whom we are quite close. We are often unaware or in denial of those issues which may be most significant for further development. Therefore, it is essential to gain the insights of another through conversation or informal counseling. Working with another person in this way provides a "mirror" which activates our own self-awareness, and helps us identify the issues which are the basis for our flower essence selection.

One possibility is to develop a co-counseling relationship with a friend or colleague, in which each can provide this mirroring function for the other. An extension of this concept is to form a flower essence study and support group in which each participant receives observations from other members of the group, and help in selecting essences. If there is not yet sufficient interest in flower essences in the local community, there may be other support groups available, which can provide perspective on soul issues and support for the changes which the essences stimulate.



## **Working with a practitioner**

The level at which flower essences can be used depends on our skill and experience. While there are many situations in which self-care is appropriate, it is important to know when further assistance is needed from a trained health practitioner. (*The Flower Essence Society is developing a Flower Essence Practitioner Referral Network. Please contact us for details.*)

Whenever there is a serious physical or psychological disturbance, it is crucial to find professional help. The ideal situation is to find a health practitioner or counselor who is also trained in flower essence therapy. If this is not possible, it may be necessary to use the services of one health professional to monitor or treat the serious condition, and use another practitioner to help with flower essence selection.

Even without extreme problems, it can be quite beneficial to work with a practitioner to select flower essences. Those just learning about the flower essences, or who are grappling with difficult problems, can benefit by working with a practitioner whose knowledge of essence qualities, counseling, and interview skills elicit awareness of underlying soul issues. An experienced practitioner can give support and insight when flower essences evoke painful feelings or confront us with hard choices.

## **Selection by Vibrational Techniques**

Many people employ vibrational techniques for selecting flower essences for themselves or others. These include various electronic devices, direct sensing through the hands or finger tips, radiesthesia (pendulum testing), and kinesiology (muscle-testing). Those who have developed sufficient skill with such methods may find that they have some value in flower essence selection. By contacting a deep, non-verbal level of awareness, vibrational methods may suggest issues and essences which are hidden from conscious awareness; or they may help to refine essence choices following the initial interview.

However, there are limitations in using such methods, which we have noted consistently in the practitioner case reports collected and analyzed for sixteen years. Those who rely primarily on vibrational methods such as radiesthesia or kinesiology frequently submit cases with essence combinations lacking continuity and cohesion. One flower essence formula seems unrelated to another, and the essences within each formula do not form a coherent whole.

When these cases are examined developmentally, it is difficult to discern clear metamorphic healing patterns. Instead, many chaotic symptoms or reactions to the essences may occur. Such cases generally demonstrate a lack of sensitive insight into deeper, underlying issues of the client's soul experience. Because personal knowledge or familiarity with the essences is usually absent or quite cursory, there is little understanding of how each

essence is actually working in the flower essence formula, or how the client is truly progressing through the therapy.

In interviewing many practitioners who depend primarily on vibrational selection methods, we have discovered two basic assumptions. First, many people prefer a less “intellectual” approach, and so are attracted to techniques like radiesthesia and kinesiology because they appear to be more “intuitive.” However, does this assumption correspond with actual experience?

In training flower essence practitioners, we have observed that the most effective intuitive flower essence selection has a solid foundation in conscious understanding of flower essence qualities and human soul issues. Over-reliance on external selection techniques can actually stymie genuine intuitive and creative capacities, which require conscious perception and deeply considered attunement using one’s own powers of observation, discrimination, and judgment. Furthermore, if the selection process does not include a considered evaluation of the qualities of various essences, there is no opportunity to grow in one’s wisdom and understanding of their fundamental meanings.

Secondly, some practitioners believe that vibrational selection techniques allow a more impartial process, since the conscious mind is set aside. They assume that these methods yield objective information independent of any personal bias or other limitation of the person doing the testing. This is highly ironic, for the model of the uninvolved, detached researcher is precisely the paradigm of mechanistic science that so many practitioners of “New Age” arts wish to avoid. In fact, the scientific researcher, as well as the kinesiologist and the pendulum dowser, are all very much participants in their respective testing processes.

Our own empirical evidence — through case studies and various tests — has verified that one’s level of knowledge and understanding of flower essences and of the client’s issues greatly impacts one’s ability to choose essences, especially when using vibrational methods. We have repeated an experiment in many different groups, whereby a number of practitioners independently choose essences for the same person using various vibrational methods. Invariably, each practitioner chooses an entirely different set of essences, whether they use the same or different vibrational selection methods.

In another test, some practitioners use vibrational selection techniques within the context of interview and counseling practices, referencing descriptions of essence qualities; while other practitioners use the same vibrational techniques in a “blind” manner, without talking with the client or considering the essence indications. The results show a wiser, more perceptive and effective choice of essences when the practitioner uses vibrational selection techniques in the context of full awareness of the essences used and of the client’s issues.

Our experiments indicate that vibrational selection techniques are *subjective* methods, whose accuracy very much reflects the knowledge, skill, experience, inner clarity, and empathetic attunement which the practitioner brings to the selection process. Even if it were possible to eliminate all unconscious projection or personal bias, there would still be no single definitive choice of essences for a particular person and situation. Whether or not vibrational techniques are employed, the essences chosen are always an expression of the practitioner's perception of the client's issues, familiarity with the essences, and the therapeutic goals which are established with the client. Similarly, vibrational selection techniques used for self-selection are no more accurate or objective than selection by other means, and thus are not substitutes for the insight and perspective which is to be gained by working with a practitioner, friend, or colleague.

In all therapeutic work, it is most important that we acknowledge and take *responsibility* for the choices we make. We need to ask fundamental questions: "What is the source of information used to make my selection? Can it yield reliable and consistent results? Have I tested that? If results differ with different practitioners, what does this mean? If the process is intimately related to my own state of consciousness, then *how* do I take responsibility for my own awareness and knowledge? What is my level of knowledge of the essences? How willing am I to perceive the needs of those I wish to help?"

Appropriately used, vibrational methods may *supplement* our conscious understanding of the essences and the issues they address; but they do not replace the process of attentive listening to our clients or developing our own perception and knowledge. Whatever choices are suggested by these procedures must be consciously tested in light of what we know about the flower essences and the appropriateness of the selection as the next step in soul development.

A similar caveat applies to use of electronic, radionic, and other related testing mechanisms, as well as computer selection programs. The accuracy of such devices and systems derives in large part from the abilities of the operator. In any case, they are supplementary, and not a substitute for personal dialogue with clients or for developing a conscious relationship with the healing language of the flowers.

Ultimately, flower essence therapy is a serious, soul-based *relationship* between practitioner and essence, between practitioner and client, and between client and essence. For these relationships to be effective, we must be willing to engage heart and mind, and to develop empathetic presence and sensitive attunement. It would not be appropriate to have fixed rules about which selection techniques to use, or how, when, or even whether to use them at all. Nonetheless, we urge those who use flower essences in professional practice and in home care to develop a thorough knowledge, love, and respect for the essences and for those whom they seek to help. The selection techniques used should be objectively tested and evaluated for one's ability to use them effectively, so that each practitioner can stand fully and responsibly behind his or her role in the therapeutic process.

# Using the *Flower Essence Repertory*

## **Part II — Soul Issues: Categories and Themes**

Part II of the *Flower Essence Repertory* contains over 3200 entries, grouped according to basic soul issues, situations, and age or population groups which share common themes. This section includes a broad range of topics, but it should not be viewed as an exhaustive compendium. It would hardly be possible to capture the countless subtle states of consciousness associated with flower essences, requiring a book not unlike a dictionary or encyclopedia. Instead, the *Repertory* is intended to survey general categories which can be considered in a practical yet creative manner, to assist flower essence selection.

The first step in using the *Repertory* is to identify the major soul issues through counseling and self-reflection, as described earlier. During a client interview, it can be helpful to jot down key words or phrases used by the client, and impressions of gestures and voice qualities, which give clues to important emotional issues.

The next step is to look under each appropriate listing of Part II to find the descriptions of specific soul issues and corresponding flower essences within that category. This should be done with an attitude of exploration and dialogue. “Is it a fear of things which are known (Mimulus) or unknown (Aspen)? Is it a fear of the hostility of others (Oregon Grape), or a fear that one’s own powerful emotions may erupt (Scarlet Monkeyflower)?” These inquiries can be part of the questioning process used to select essences for another person, and can help elicit further conversation and insights. As the essence choice is narrowed down, such questions can help confirm the accuracy of the selection.

Note that some entries address the negative state of mind, some the transformed state which is the goal, and some include both polarities. It is important that we become familiar with the bi-polar nature of flower essences: both the state of imbalance and the positive or transformative potential. In selecting appropriate essences we may start with the positive goal, and then uncover the emotional or mental pattern which blocks this purpose. Alternatively, we may start with the client’s pattern of imbalance or suffering, and then determine the positive quality which needs to be developed. Therefore, the listings in Part II are a mixture of both positive and negative indications for the essences.

Consider each statement and evaluate whether it is appropriate. If a description seems close, but not totally applicable to the situation, make note of it anyway. You may find another interpretation of the essence’s qualities which seems more suitable. As you survey the various categories related to the main soul issues, note any essences which appear in several listings. These may be important ones to consider.

Study also the related categories cross-referenced in the listings you check, marked as “*See also . . .*” You may find other appropriate essences, or new perspectives on essences you



are considering. Be aware of the various kinds of categories: emotional and mental states (Anger, Clarity), situations (Emergency, Study), conditions (Alcoholism, Eating Disorders), themes (Materialism, Personal Relationships), practices (Massage, Meditation), populations (Animals, Children), or stages of life (Adolescence, Aging). The listing at the beginning of Part II can be of assistance in locating appropriate categories.

### **Part III — Qualities and Portraits of the Flower Essences**

After selecting a number of essences for consideration, consult Part III of the *Repertory* for an in-depth description of their qualities. Each entry begins with a succinct summary of the positive qualities and patterns of imbalance of each essence. This is particularly helpful if the entry read in Part II indicated only the positive or negative side of the polarity. Next, there is a listing of all of the categories from Part II under which that essence is listed. These cross-references can be helpful in understanding further applications of the essence, or may suggest related issues to consider. This can lead to a study of new categories in Part II, possibly revealing essences which can complement the selection. In this way Parts II and III can be used reciprocally to create a more accurate selection.

Part III contains expanded portraits of each flower essence. Please note that these descriptions are written from an archetypal level — from the point of view of the soul itself — characterizing the major life lesson and transformative journey addressed by each flower. If we can perceive the broad strokes contained within these archetypal pictures, it is then easier to comprehend the detailed symptoms and finer distinctions which are contained in Part II. We may not always need an essence at the archetypal level of soul healing; yet we should always be aware of its spiritual depth and potential. Flower essences have the capacity to arouse profound soul metamorphosis, and such healing should be our ultimate goal.

When using an essence in a supportive role, or in a less intense situation, it may be necessary to creatively interpret or “tone down” the essence’s description, so that it applies to that particular situation. In any case, we should not be limited by the exact words used to describe the essences. The messages of the flowers originate in a realm beyond human language. In our descriptions we can only capture a dim reflection of the fullness of its being, something like attempting to capture in words the beauty of a great painting or a musical masterpiece. With this understanding, try to use the essence descriptions in the *Repertory* to contact the underlying archetype of the essence, and then translate it into words which speak to the particular human experience for which it is being used.

### **Essences included in the *Flower Essence Repertory***

The *Flower Essence Repertory* is a reflection of the FES Research Program. All of the essences listed in this *Repertory* have been selected for inclusion based on extensive reports from practitioners over the years, validating the accuracy of the essence qualities. As our

knowledge of plant qualities has increased, along with our ability to verify the properties of the plants through empirical documentation, we have been able to expand the contents of the *Repertory*. This edition contains the following sets of essences:

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## **English flower essences**

During the 1930s in England, Dr. Edward Bach developed a range of 38 flower essences and one emergency combination formula. Since Dr. Bach's death in 1936 his original indications for the English flower essences have been substantiated by six decades of use in home and professional health care. Our knowledge of their therapeutic benefits continues to grow, and the reader will find new themes and insights on the use of these classic English remedies. Today the range of English Flower Essences formulated by Dr. Bach is available from several companies under different brand names. However, the indications for their use apply regardless of which line of English essences is used.

## **North American flower essences**

These essences have been developed by FES since 1978 based on the dual foundation of plant study and practitioner reports. They were released in sequential groups of 24 as Kits #1, # 2, and #3. After they had received convincing documentation in a variety of clinical and therapeutic settings in many countries of the world, they were consolidated into the Professional Kit. While the general archetypes of these essences are known, we are continually able to refine and expand our understanding of them through direct plant research and empirical case studies. These additional insights are reflected in this edition of the *Repertory*.

Additional essences which have been added to the *Repertory* in several stages, as we collect case reports and develop definitive information about them. These essences have been selected from a larger grouping of nearly 200 research essences which are in various stages of investigation and review. Some of these essences have remained in this preliminary research status for over a decade, awaiting sufficient confirmation of their qualities by practitioners. The Flower Essence Society intentionally withholds the release of preliminary findings regarding essences until sufficient research and empirical data are collected to verify their descriptions.

The 31 additional essences listed in this edition of the *Repertory* have already received extensive study as live plants and empirical documentation of essence use. Among these

newer essences are 24 essences introduced in the 1992 edition of the *Repertory*, identified as the Research Kit. Also listed is the unique Yarrow Environmental Solution, an adaptation of the Yarrow flower essence for protection against noxious environmental influences. Echinacea, Arnica Pink Yarrow and Golden Yarrow essences have been added to the formula, with the herbal tinctures of Echinacea and Yarrow. Three promising essences have been added to this edition of the *Repertory*: Love-Lies-Bleeding, Nicotiana, and Purple Monkeyflower. The remaining essences included are part of the Seven Herbs Kit described below.

Since the original publication of this edition of the *Repertory* in 1994, the qualities of these newer essences have received verification from extensive clinical experience, and we now consider them to have “graduated” from the status of “research remedy.” Please note also that the botanical names of Chamomile, Poison Oak, and Saguaro have been changed to conform with the latest botanical nomenclature.

## **The Seven Herbs**

Research on seven flower essences is described in *Seven Herbs, Plants as Healers*, by Matthew Wood, a long-time friend and colleague of the Society. Four of these remedies were already included in the Professional Kit: — Sagebrush, Iris, Star Tulip (or Cat’s Ears), and Yerba Santa. Matthew Wood uses the Blue Flag Iris, *Iris versicolor*, in his research, while FES uses the wild Iris of the Pacific Coast, *Iris douglasiana*. Both Irises exhibit similar properties, and are listed together. The three remaining essences — Black Cohosh, Easter Lily, and Lady’s Slipper — are included in the *Repertory*. .

## **Making new flower essences**

There are hundreds of thousands of plant species. Which ones should we make as flower essences? On the other hand, why make new essences at all? Some believe that Dr. Bach considered his 38 remedies to be a complete system, addressing all possible states of mind.

The only genuine reason to offer new flower essences is if they can meet real human needs and can provide healing for the suffering of the human soul. This was why Bach, during his eight years of flower essence research, constantly revised and expanded his repertory of flower essences. As he noticed attitudes and emotional states which were not adequately addressed by his existing remedies, he found new plants which would provide the needed qualities. Similar to Dr. Bach’s experience, new flower essences have been developed by FES in response to deep questions about the nature of human suffering. These questions may arise from the needs of a particular client, or a broader theme addressed by many practitioners. At other times, we find a plant with especially potent qualities, and as its message becomes clear through study and attunement, we come to recognize its particular gift for soul healing.

It has been sixty years since Dr. Bach's pioneering work. During this time, many portals for appreciating and understanding the life of the soul have been opened. At the same time grave conflicts and challenges beset our world and demand our utmost psychic strength, bodily health, and spiritual service. Now, as we approach the millennial threshold, humanity is wrestling with profound problems of social, sexual, and psychological pathology stemming from substance abuse and addiction, sudden psychic and spiritual openings, changing sexual roles, childhood abuse and family dysfunction, increasing psychic and physical violence, social and economic injustice, ethnic, racial, religious, and geopolitical conflicts, and the ecological destruction of the Earth. The flower essences we have developed, and which are described in this *Repertory*, are a response to these challenges of our time, helping the individual soul find its right connection to the world soul.

While we recognize that there are other significant vibrational remedies besides the ones included in this *Repertory*, we are confident, based on our research, that each of the essences included here has an important contribution to make to the alleviation of suffering and the soul evolution of humankind. The authors stand fully behind all research presented in this *Repertory*, and take responsibility for any possible errors or oversights. In the spirit of scientific inquiry, we continue to strive to clarify our research through updated editions of the *Repertory*. Because research is a process, rather than a static body of information, we urge practitioners and others to join in this effort, so that flower essence therapy may become a truly professional and respected health-care modality.



# Chapter 4:

## How Are Flower Essences Used?

Flower essences are most commonly taken orally from a dropper bottle directly under the tongue, or in a bit of water. In addition to oral use, flower essences are also quite effective when absorbed through the skin in baths or topical applications. The dosage preparation methods described below are guidelines for flower essence use, based on several decades of experience. Keep in mind, however, that there are many creative and effective ways to use flower essences.

There are several levels of dilution in the preparation of flower essences. The *mother essence* is derived from fresh blossoms in a bowl of water, infused with the morning sun (or heated by fire, in the case of some of the English essences). The mother essence is generally preserved with brandy. This infusion is then further diluted to the *stock* level, and sometimes again to a *dosage* level. Generally it is the stock level of dilution which is available commercially from flower essence companies, although there are some pre-mixed combinations sold at the dosage level of dilution.



*Making a mother essence of the Pink Monkeyflower flower essence: a solar infusion along side the mountain stream where the plant grows.*

# **Practical Directions for Administering Flower Essences**

## **Using directly from stock**

1. Flower essences can be taken directly from the stock bottle (the form in which most essences are sold).
2. Place four drops under the tongue, or in a little water. This dosage is most commonly taken four times daily.

## **Mixing the essences in a glass of water**

1. Add four drops from each essence stock in your combination to a large cup or glass about three-quarters full of fresh water.
2. Stir the water for about a minute in a clockwise and counter-clockwise motion.
3. The essence combination can then be sipped several times throughout the day. Cover the glass to provide protection.
4. This mixture can be newly prepared after one to three days. In any case, it should be freshly stirred each day.

## **Preparing a dosage bottle**

1. Fill a one-ounce (30 ml) glass dropper bottle nearly full of spring water or other fresh water.
2. Add a small amount of brandy (1/8 to 1/4 of the bottle) as a preservative. More brandy can be added if the dosage bottle is used over a number of months, or will be subject to high temperatures.
3. To the water and brandy mixture, add two to four drops of flower essences from the stock bottle of each essence selected.
4. After the essence stock has been added and before each subsequent use, you may want to rhythmically shake or lightly tap the bottle in order to keep the essences in a more potent or energized state.
5. Place four drops under the tongue, or in a bit of water. This dosage is most commonly taken four times daily. A 30 ml / 1 oz dosage bottle used in this manner will last approximately three weeks to one month.

6. The dosage bottle can be further diluted by adding four drops to a half-glass of water. Stir this mixture both clockwise and counter-clockwise, and sip slowly. This is one way to attenuate the taste of the brandy preservative.

Glass bottles and droppers are recommended, since plastic may adversely affect the subtle qualities of these natural plant remedies. It is best to use new bottles for new combinations of essences to ensure the cleanliness and clarity of the vibrational patterns.

## Using a glass spray bottle or mister

1. Prepare as you would a dosage bottle.
2. Rather than taking the drops internally, spray the mixture around the body and in the environment.
3. Shake the bottle before each application to sustain potency.

## Use in baths

1. Add about 20 drops of stock of each essence to a normal-sized bath tub of warm water.
2. Stir the water in a lemniscatory (figure-eight) motion for at least one minute to help potentize the remedies in the water.
3. Soak in this solution for approximately 20 minutes. Pat the skin gently dry, and then rest quietly or go to sleep to continue to absorb the subtle qualities of the essences.

## Topical use

1. Add 6-10 drops of stock of each essence selected per 30 gm (1 oz) of creme, oil, or lotion.
2. Use on a daily basis either exclusively, or to supplement oral use.
3. Essence drops can also be applied directly on the body in conjunction with massage, acupressure or acupuncture, or chiropractic treatments.

## Frequency and timing of dosage

Regular, rhythmic use of the flower remedies builds the strength of their catalytic action. Therefore, potency is increased not by taking more drops at one time, but by using them on a *frequent, consistent basis*. In most cases, the essences should be taken *four times daily*, although this may need to be increased in emergency or acute situations to once every hour, or even more often. On the other hand, children or other highly sensitive persons may need to *decrease the frequency* of use to once or twice daily.

The essences address the relationship between the body and soul, and therefore are most effective at the thresholds of *awakening* and *retiring*, since these are the times when the

boundaries between body and soul shift. Other transition times of the day are also important, such as just before the noon or evening meals. Even when the essences are used in the midst of a hectic schedule, it is beneficial to allow a quiet moment of receptivity so that the messages of the flowers can be received at a subtle level. Many people find it helpful to remember to take the essences by keeping one bottle of their flower essence formula right on the bed-stand, and another one of the same combination in their purse, briefcase, or in the kitchen.

Although flower essences can be used on a short-term basis for acute situations, their ideal use is for long-term or deep-seated mental-emotional change. At this level, the most common cycle of essence use is four weeks or one month, a time interval which is strongly correlated to the emotional or astral body. Seven-day or 14-day cycles may also be of significance in the growth process. For particularly deep changes, a whole series of monthly cycles may need to be considered. However, in most cases changes will be noticed in about one month. At this interval there is usually the need to re-formulate or re-assess the flower essence combination. We recommend continuing to use a formula, or at least one or two key essences from the mix, for a period of time even after some change has been noticed. This allows a possibility for the essences to be “anchored” at deeper levels of consciousness.

## **Use with alcohol-sensitive persons**

Many recovering alcoholics and other alcohol-sensitive persons have benefited greatly from the use of flower essences. Although flower remedies are preserved with brandy at the stock level, people have found much success in diluting the essences to the dosage level without the use of alcohol. Dilution methods insure that any alcohol ingested is chemically and physiologically insignificant, about one part in 600 when diluted in a one-ounce (30 ml) dosage bottle, or about one part in 4,800 in a eight-ounce glass of water. All of the following four methods have been reported to be effective:

1. Use two to four drops of stock in a large glass of water or juice, stir and sip slowly.
2. Prepare the essences in a dosage bottle, but fill it 1/4 to 1/3 full of apple cider vinegar as preservative, instead of brandy.
3. Prepare the essences in a dosage bottle, filled 1/3 to 1/2 full with vegetable glycerin. Vegetable glycerin is a derivative of coconut oil; it has a sweet taste and is used extensively to preserve herbal preparations.
4. The dosage bottle can also be prepared with no preservative if it is refrigerated, or used in a shorter period of time (several days to a week).

# **Enhancing Flower Essences**

## **Amplification techniques**

Because flower essences are vibrational in nature, it has been suggested that their effects can be further enhanced by such techniques as homeopathic potentization, or through the use of pyramids and crystals. Such methods may create new energy fields in or around the essences. However, we must ask whether they truly enhance the *process of soul development*, which is the ultimate goal of working with flower essences.

The desire to “amplify” flower essences often reflects the materialistic bias of our culture that “more is better.” The gentle, gradual action of flower essences is generally the most appropriate way to work with soul development, for it allows us the freedom to choose and to change. In preparing the mother and stock levels of FES essences, we implement certain rhythmical procedures to stabilize their subtle properties. However, we have observed that if flower essences are subjected to repeated dilutions and succussions in the classical homeopathic method, they may take on some of the coercive qualities of high potency homeopathic remedies, and incur the danger of provoking reactions if used incorrectly. Rather than attempting to obtain quicker results by magnifying the essence formula, *flower essence therapy aims to deepen the inner life*. In this way the subtle resonance between the flowering of the plant and unfoldment of the human soul can best be enhanced.

## **The importance of self-awareness practices**

In the case studies collected by the Flower Essence Society, we have found that the most profound soul shifts occur when flower essence work is accompanied by practices which cultivate awareness of inner thoughts and feelings. Flower essence therapy is a journey of self-discovery. Whether through conscientious self-observation, dialogue with a support group or friends, or a therapeutic relationship with a professional counselor or health practitioner, it is important to have a way of consciously addressing the issues which are represented by the flower essences.

If our results with flower essences appear negligible and we wish to strengthen the effects of flower essences, we should look to the whole therapeutic process rather than just the essence itself. The following supportive practices can enhance the self-awareness and openness to inner change which the essences elicit.

## **Journal-keeping**

Because of the materialistic bias of our culture, we can often be quite oblivious to the profound changes in our soul life engendered by the flower essences. In order to perceive shifts in consciousness, we must be prepared to lead ourselves and our clients into a much more intimate relationship with the life of the soul.



Keeping a journal while using the essences is one effective way of observing inner changes. Such mindfulness is particularly important because we are usually much less aware of the dynamics of our soul life than we are of bodily pain and sensation. It is especially helpful to keep a dream journal, since inner movement often comes to expression in dream life before surfacing to conscious awareness.

## **Affirmations**

Another way of reinforcing the subtle message of the flowers is through the use of meditative thoughts, affirmations, or reflective prayer. By taking just a few minutes each day to work inwardly and consciously with the positive or “affirmative” changes toward which the flower essences point us, we can greatly increase their effect. The Flower Essence Society publishes a book, *Affirmations, The Messages of the Flowers in Transformative Words for the Soul*, which can provide guidance and suggestions for this work. Written and verbal affirmations can also be combined with inner images, visualization, or artistic work.

We should distinguish the transformative use of affirmations from the popular idea of positive thinking, which is frequently a part of “New Age” philosophy. If we use positive thoughts as a way of denying pain and suffering, or as a refusal to face our inner shadow, it creates distortion, imbalance, or illness rather than well-being. The wise use of affirmations with flower essences enables us to acknowledge pain and conflict, and steadfastly work toward transformation.

## **Artistic expression**

Art is an expression *par excellence* of the soul. It can play a special role in flower essence therapy, both as a means of self-discovery, and as a transformational tool acting in synergy with the flower essences. A painting can be worth a thousand words about the soul, for its subtle language can often be expressed more clearly through form and color than through words. Many successful practitioners use some form of art with their clients to help assess their underlying issues. This is particularly important with children, who lack adult verbal and cognitive abilities.

In addition, art can be a very soul-satisfying way of expressing the growth which is experienced through flower essence therapy. The newly awakened feeling life may be more capable of revealing itself through a painting, song, poem, dance or movement, rather than through prosaic words. The goal is not necessarily to produce professional art, but to encourage expression of the richness and diversity of soul life which is evoked by flower essences.

# **Flower Essence Therapy and Other Health Modalities**

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## **The holistic health movement**

Flower essence therapy can be considered part of the *holistic health movement*, a wide range of modalities both traditional and modern which support mind-body wellness. Included are such practices as herbology or phytotherapy, homeopathy, acupuncture, naturopathy, chiropractic, nutritional therapy, therapeutic massage, psychological and spiritual counseling, yoga, meditation, prayer, visualization, affirmations, various movement therapies, art and music therapy, flower essences, and many more. Furthermore, progressive medical doctors and nurses are expanding their practices to include a more holistic orientation.

Despite the fact that conventional scientists and medical practitioners remain generally skeptical about holistic health practices, they are receiving increasing public recognition. In the United States, a recent study by Dr. David Eisenberg in the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* showed that 37% of the U.S. adult population had used one or more holistic health practices, although about 70% of them had not told their physicians. In 1992 the United States National Institutes of Health set up an Office of Alternative Medicine to fund research in various alternative health modalities.

Although there are many political and scientific challenges remaining, it is clear that in one form or another, the holistic perspective will have an important role to play in the development of health care in our society. It is within this context that flower essence therapy will receive increasing recognition.

## **Flower essences in the spectrum of health care**

The soul occupies a middle realm between body and spirit. Flower essence therapy is fundamentally a therapy of the soul; thus it must always take into account how change is grounded and stabilized in the body, and how it is freed and illumined through the spirit. Because of the soul's mediating relationship between body and spirit, flower essences combine very effectively with other modalities which address various aspects of body, soul, and spirit.

Health practitioners who work primarily with physical problems, for example, use flower essences to address some of the underlying emotional causes of these problems. Practitioners of deep-tissue therapeutic massage are principally concerned with the structure of muscles and connective tissue. Yet, muscle tension is often the result of emotional trauma and stress held in the body. Flower essences bring such issues into awareness, and allow for a mutual release of physical and emotional strain. Many chiropractors report that their spinal adjustments last longer when flower essences are used

to help their patients deal with stressful emotions. Nutritional counselors use flower essences to enable their clients to overcome the emotional causes of eating disorders. Progressive medical doctors use flower essences to address emotional issues connected with physical illness, as well as their patients' attitudes toward the healing process itself.

When used with other soul-oriented modalities, flower essences work in a complementary way. For example, depth psychotherapy is an exceptional context for flower essence use, in which the essences can stimulate real breakthroughs in the developmental process. Other soul work which is combined synergistically with flower essences includes art and music therapy, poetry, drama, and dream work.

Flower essences also have an important contribution to make to spiritual practice. Many people following a spiritual path have difficulty coming to terms with the "shadow side" of emotional life, attempting to suppress these aspects of their being, rather than to acknowledge and transform them. Flower essences are a vehicle for developing honest self-awareness, as well as releasing the vital forces often trapped in emotional repression. In this way spiritual practices such as meditation can become truly integrated with moral and emotional development.

## **Flower essences in perspective**

While flower essences have nearly universal application in a wide range of circumstances, they are neither a cure-all nor an answer for every problem. Health and illness are multifaceted experiences, involving many diverse factors. While it is true that the state of the soul is reflected in the health of the body, it is also true that a body which is out of balance can negatively impact the soul. For example, hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) can contribute to depression and anxiety by depriving the brain of proper nutrition. These emotions will be difficult to overcome unless there is a change in diet to reduce or eliminate sweets. At the same time, changing food habits may be difficult unless the emotional sources of food cravings are addressed. In such situations a program combining nutritional counseling with flower essence therapy will be more effective than either modality by itself.

Those who use flower essences for themselves or others must know when to consult other professionals for assistance. Flower essences work best when they are part of an overall program of health enhancement, which includes good nutrition, proper exercise, healthy relationships, involvement in work and community, artistic expression, and consultation with a variety of health practitioners and modalities, including medical care when appropriate.

# **Results of Flower Essence Therapy**

## **The effects are often subtle and long-term.**

There is a full spectrum of responses to flower essences. Some people report immediate, discernible, and very dramatic results. Others appear to notice no differences at all, and may only slightly perceive shifts in well-being and in mental-emotional states after a considerable period of time. Most people typically respond to the essences somewhere in the middle of this range.

The effects of flower essences are subtle and cumulative. In other words, it is rare that someone will experience an immediate catharsis or total transformation. The essences work day by day, gradually from the inside out, by awakening forces of health and inner transformation. Patience, backed by consistency and regularity, is therefore crucial for flower essences to be effective.

Because the essences are used for transformation of the inner life, we may not experience them in a very direct way. We are more apt to observe their effect over a period of time, as we notice subtle shifts in the way we act, in the way we view ourselves and others, or even very real differences in our sense of physical well-being. Often it is others — friends, family, or work associates — who first notice and call to attention changes in our attitudes and patterns of behavior.

## **Unrealistic expectations about flower essences**

We live in a culture that promotes quick answers and avoidance of pain. Advertising entices us with promises of instant symptom relief to enable us to cope with daily life. Because flower essences are liquids in glass dropper bottles, it is easy to approach them as if they are just another “quick-fix” remedy. This may lead to unrealistic expectations, and hinder our ability to experience their full benefits.

Flower essences are strengtheners of our own soul forces, enabling us to learn and grow from life’s challenges. They invite us on a *healing journey*, and can be our allies and guides along the way. The essences are not intended to painlessly obliterate our problems, or provide instantaneous gratification. Such an expectation inevitably leads to impatience, disappointment, disillusion, or passivity. Most importantly, it results in an unwillingness to become an active participant in the healing process.

In situations of acute stress, emergency essence combinations such as the Five-Flower Formula may afford immediate relief and calming, providing an introduction to the “reality” of vibrational remedies. However, this is only a first step. Authentic flower essence therapy is an opportunity to explore foundational, long-term emotional issues, which cannot be effectively addressed by general emergency formulas.

For example, consider a person who leads a frenetic life and feels constant fatigue, to the point of creating health problems. Such a person may be tempted to take a flower essence combination with essences such as Olive and Nasturtium to feel more energized, without addressing the underlying causes of the stress and fatigue. A wiser approach would be to choose essences that deal with the ability to release tension and to examine fundamental lifestyle choices and underlying attitudes which lead to competitiveness, insecurity, workaholism, and other related syndromes.

In reading the flower essence descriptions in this *Repertory* and other publications, we may feel a desire to design a new personality for ourselves. It is easy to think that if we acquire the right list of desirable traits, we can become someone who will impress friends, family, or work associates. Such an attitude is a totally externalized perspective of ourselves, seeking to mold the soul's *persona* — the mask it wears to face the world — to fit the expectations and values of others.

Flower essences can indeed stimulate amazing personality changes by developing innate capacities which have been blocked or thwarted. Following the principle of resonance, the essences evoke only the potential already within us. They do not impose something from without (as do biochemical drugs), but catalyze what is an unrealized possibility, and help us to choose freely to fulfill our own purpose in life. We need to select essences to help address attitudes and emotions which are blocking realization of that purpose, as well as essences which activate those qualities which can help us fulfill our greater destiny.

## **Flower essences and inner development**

Use of flower essences can enhance self-awareness practices such as meditation and, conversely, these practices deepen the effects of the essences. The essences are not substitutes for self-awareness and inner development, nor are they instant “consciousness in a bottle.” Spiritual and psychic abilities emerge in a gradual way when we take an honest moral inventory of our shortcomings, strive to correct these faults, and work to fulfill our soul's destiny. As inner catalysts, flower essences stimulate our ability to respond, or take responsibility for our growth by deepening awareness of our feelings, underlying attitudes, and our spiritual Self.

This attitude of self-responsibility is especially important in our modern age, when many persons who pursue a path of inner development do so without the guidance of traditional religious authority or discipleship. Such a quest brings increased freedom, but it lacks the protection which spiritual community provided seekers in the past. This modern spiritual path challenges us to face the violence and confusion of the world without blocking the sensitivity and openness which spiritual unfoldment brings. In addition, because the modern seeker lives in the world rather than in the protection of ashrams and monasteries, there is an unprecedented opportunity to apply spiritual principles to the worldly challenges of family responsibility, money, desire, power, and relationships.



Flower essences help us come to terms with these challenges to the modern soul. They help us to maintain our spiritual sensitivity, and impart strength to meet adversity in the world. They insure that our spiritual awareness is physically and emotionally embodied. In this way spiritual seeking will not be a flight from the soul, but rather a way of enhancing our soul's capacity to be a bridge between the earthly and spiritual worlds.

## **Flower essences and physical conditions**

Physical conditions can be important indicators for issues facing the soul. For example, a cold may indicate a disconnection with vital forces, for which *Nasturtium* essence would help. A sore throat may reveal constriction in self-expression for which an essence such as *Larch* may be chosen. Digestive problems may reveal emotional tension in the solar plexus for which *Chamomile* may be of assistance.

Because flower essences are soul remedies, they should not be used as are drugs or even herbal remedies for directly treating particular physical symptoms or illnesses. *Nasturtium* is not the flower essence for colds, nor is *Larch* the one for sore throats, nor *Chamomile* for all digestive problems. Essences are chosen according to the unique issues and experiences of the individual; those with the same physical symptoms may have quite different emotional patterns and life issues. Physical indications included in the *Repertory* are only guidelines for identifying the overall body-mind configuration which is the basis for essence selection.

While flower essences are not cures for particular physical ailments, the emotional and attitudinal shifts engendered by the flower essences can facilitate remarkable changes in physical health. Qualified medical practitioners report many cases in which flower essences play a key role in treatment programs for various diseases.

However, there are legal and ethical considerations concerning the use of flower essences for physical conditions by those who are not medical practitioners. First, there is the practical problem of not violating local laws specifying what licenses and qualifications are necessary for treating particular conditions. There are also important ethical issues, which would deserve attention even if there were no legal restrictions.

Particularly when working with severe conditions, health practitioners and home-care users of essences need to know the limits of their knowledge and skill. Using flower essences should not be an excuse to neglect medical help from a practitioner with the appropriate training and experience. Flower essences can be quite beneficial in such circumstances, but there also needs to be a qualified medical practitioner who can monitor any serious medical condition, and provide treatment if necessary. The same caution applies to extreme psychological dysfunction, which may need the intervention of a trained counselor, psychologist, or psychiatrist.

## Possible side-effects

What happens if the wrong flower essences are selected? Are there dangers or side effects associated with flower essence use? In general, flower essences are among the safest, most self-regulating health remedies available. If we take essences that are totally inappropriate and have little relationship to our real issues, then we will experience little effect.

Flower essences work by resonance; thus the wrong essences will not stimulate a “soul chord” within us. If we take too many essences, or essences which address only minor issues, they may be ineffective; substantive changes will not be achieved, or will take much longer to occur. Sometimes inappropriate or chaotic essence selections will stimulate confusion or a sense of uneasiness. Perhaps too many issues are “stirred up,” or change happens faster than can be tolerated. On occasion, rapid psychological transformation — or our resistance to it — can produce unpleasant physical sensations such as fatigue, skin rashes, or headaches. Such reactions are generally short-lived, and may be an indication to re-formulate the flower essence combination, or to work with counseling and other practices to remove any psychological impediments to the therapeutic process.

## The awareness crisis

One common experience reported by people using flower essences is an intensification of certain traits prior to experiencing a transformation. For example, someone taking Willow essence for resentment may have an acute awareness of resentment, before being able to let go and forgive. This seeming increase of an emotional trait has similarities to an “aggravation” produced by a homeopathic remedy, or a “healing crisis” stimulated by such cleansing practices as fasting.

We call this phenomenon an *awareness crisis*, because it is caused by bringing unconscious emotions and attitudes to the surface of awareness. Since they were previously hidden or disowned, these qualities seem more intense when brought to consciousness. Such experiences provide us with a clear opportunity to witness and acknowledge negative or dysfunctional aspects of ourselves.

Support from counseling, self-reflection, journal-writing, and other means of strengthening the “witnessing” aspect of consciousness can help create a smoother journey through the sometimes rough waters of this experience. If the awareness crisis becomes unusually intense (beyond a healthy level of discomfort), then one may reduce the frequency of dosage, or change the flower essence selection to ease the process.

With awareness comes the ability to understand and to change. It is difficult to let go of resentment and forgive if one is unaware or in denial of having any resentment. If self-awareness has already been cultivated, there often is no need for an awareness crisis; one is most likely to move directly into the transformative stage of the flower essence process.

## **Long-term changes possible with flower essence therapy**

Although flower essences are typically chosen for specific emotional issues, profound soul growth can occur which goes beyond resolving the particular situation for which the essences were selected. Case studies and in-depth interviews with practitioners over a sixteen-year period have provided us with a comprehensive picture of seven major areas of soul development possible through long-term flower essence therapy.

These *meta-levels* of soul development are generally not envisioned at the commencement of the flower essence journey, but emerge as the soul opens with regular, sustained use of the flower essences and supportive practices. Together, these qualities give a beautiful picture of the soul in full blossom.

### **1. Emotional awareness and vitality are enhanced.**

For the thousands of people who have experienced flower essence therapy, its most basic contribution has been to enhance the emotional life of the soul. Those who have felt emotionally numb or inhibited have developed new awareness of their issues, as well as an ability to experience and express a wider range of feelings. Those who have felt overwhelmed or drained by chaotic emotions have acquired a capacity for detached self-observation and mindfulness, thus maintaining a strong center of balance within emotional experiences.

The principal effect of the essences has been to enhance emotional flexibility and resilience, rather than simply to make people more — or less — emotional. Most people's soul repertoire is severely limited, often stuck in anger, depression, fear, or other habitual responses to life; others believe they must control or suppress their emotions altogether. Through flower essence therapy the soul becomes capable of experiencing the full spectrum of human emotional expression, including joy, grief, awe, anger, compassion, reverence, and so forth.

### **2. Awareness of the body is encouraged, with a greater sense of physical well-being.**

Many people begin their healing journey with an awareness of discomfort or illness in the physical body. Practitioners report that flower essences lend support to programs of physical health by activating the vitalizing forces of the etheric body, bringing spiritual and soul forces into a closer relationship with the physical body, and generally mobilizing inner healing powers.

Furthermore, flower essence therapy often leads to a fundamentally new relationship with the physical body, an awareness of how the body is speaking through its physical symptoms. Instead of feeling *victimized* by illness, people begin to *take responsibility* for caring for their bodies, eliminating habits which are destructive to their health, and

cultivating practices which nourish and strengthen the body. Moreover, they come to recognize that *the soul expresses itself through the physical body*, and that physical pains and tensions are frequently indications of anger, fear, overwhelm, depression, and other emotions which need to be addressed. It is a common experience that once underlying emotional issues are resolved, many physical symptoms can be released.

For those who suffer debilitating illness or injury, or who struggle with the effects of aging, flower essence therapy brings more acceptance of the body's condition, and an ability to honor the teachings of pain or limitation. At the same time, many generally healthy people report awakening to new possibilities for a vital, fulfilling life, without needing to compare themselves to the idealized images of youth, strength, and beauty promoted by our culture through its mass media.

For many sensitive souls, the journey from the expansive realms of spirit into the limited temporal and spatial dimensions of a physical body is inherently problematic. This often results in a desire to disown or deny the body, commonly manifesting in eating disorders and other destructive habits, or as a hesitation to become fully engaged in life. Flower essence therapy helps such individuals to overcome their fundamental ambivalence about the body by anchoring the soul in the physical world. They become more embodied physically and emotionally, and feel empowered to take an active role in their communities and society. In this way the soul is able to wholeheartedly accept its incarnation into physical matter, and enthusiastically experience life.

### **3. Attunement with Nature is developed.**

One of the most remarkable experiences which practitioners regularly report is the awakening of a deep relationship with Nature, even on the part of those who have had little previous interest or connection with the natural world. Apartment dwellers may purchase a plant or start a window-sill garden. City residents will take walks in the park, or trips to the country side. They may remember a favorite flower or nature retreat from childhood, become motivated to take outdoor excursions more frequently, seek nature-oriented recreation, or plant a garden. There may be a deepened interest in ecological issues and protecting the Earth. Sometimes people using flower essences will even take an active interest in learning the botany and habitat of the flowers used in their healing.

Besides connecting us with the specific healing energies of particular flowers, the essences evoke the healing mantle of Natura, of *Nature as a living being*. We can then experience how Nature can nourish and protect us, and how our own healing is inseparable from our respect and care for the being of the Earth. In this way the individual soul finds a connection to the world soul of Nature.

## **4. Awareness of vocation in relationship to life purpose and world-service is clarified.**

A fundamental soul issue which is addressed in flower essence therapy concerns the way in which people express themselves through their work. Many feel dissatisfaction with their job, or the lack of one. The first consequence of addressing this issue may be simply to raise deeper questions into awareness: “Am I working in this job only for survival needs or to fulfill others’ expectations of me? Is my work truly a *vocation*, something I feel inwardly called to do as an expression of life purpose and service to others? Do I even know what I want to do with my life?”

Often such questioning has been repressed due to the painfulness of the likely answers. Flower essence therapy can lead to an honest self-examination, realistically addressing our capacities and untapped inner resources, as well as the passions and ideals which stir us. We learn to distinguish between the expectations of others, the demands of the personality for material success, and the true longing of our soul for a vocation which is authentically our own, an expression of our deepest desires. In the words of the contemporary poet David Whyte, “The soul prefers to fail at its own life, than succeed at someone else’s.”

It can be a daunting challenge to translate this new self-awareness into action in a world where economic constraints make choosing meaningful work difficult. Nonetheless, it is extraordinary just how many opportunities open up to someone who has made the commitment to act out of an inner sense of purpose. Whether it is transforming one’s current job with a fresh attitude and a surge of creative energy, or finding a totally new situation, profound shifts in work and career are a remarkably frequent outcome of flower essence therapy. As people come into greater alignment with their life purpose, they also realize how their own development and personal destiny is inseparable from world destiny. They are then able to recognize that right livelihood necessarily involves world-service, facilitating the development of the individual soul within the larger world soul.

## **5. There is an awakening to the language of the soul.**

As the soul life is awakened and emotional life harmonized, higher sensibilities become possible. Flower essence therapy facilitates an enhanced sense of the sacred and subtle dimension of life. Many people are inspired to create beauty in their environments; they also become more aware of soul symbols and inner meaning in daily activity and personal relationships.

Such an awareness allows the fecund world of dreams to enrich the waking life. Many people are surprised to find that dreams are greatly enlivened after using flower essences for several weeks or months. Dream recall is enhanced, and the dreams themselves become more vivid and pregnant with meaning. It is quite common for people to start dream



journals, and to gain a sense of how their soul is speaking to them through the language of dreams.

As the soul awakens, it expresses itself most fully through the feeling life of the arts. Many people who have worked with flower essences report renewed appreciation and interest in the arts, discovering or re-discovering music, painting, sculpture, drama, writing, poetry, and other art forms — not necessarily to pursue as a career, but rather as an enrichment of their own soul life. Such artistic capacities develop profound sensitivity in the soul, which in its highest expression becomes an ability to serve others selflessly and with deep compassion.

## **6. A deeper understanding of relationships and karma is developed.**

With the new self-understanding awakened by flower essence therapy, relationships with others also receive greater consideration. Often people realize the ways they have been hurt by others, including their family of origin. Flower essence therapy aids in acknowledging these feelings, and releasing them through forgiveness. Greater self-awareness also brings new responsibility. In further stages of flower essence therapy, people report being able to admit their own shortcomings, and make amends to those they have hurt — either family, friends, work associates, or the larger community.

Flower essences stimulate an enhanced perception of the deeper strands of experience and karma which link people with the lives of others. Those working with relationship issues gain a new appreciation of common purposes they share, and an increased understanding of unresolved issues from the past. These realizations often engender profound life changes. Many existing relationships which have been locked in destructive patterns for years can suddenly become intolerable to this newly sensitized awareness. As a result, new efforts may be made to heal a marriage, or a clear decision formed to end a harmful or dysfunctional relationship. Many people who have avoided relationships out of fear of being hurt find new courage to reach out to others, to seek intimacy, develop friendships, and participate in community life. The individual soul thus learns how its identity is woven together with other souls in the larger web of life.

## **7. There is a renewed commitment to spiritual seeking and expression.**

The pre-eminent gift of flower essence therapy is to enable the soul to become a chalice to receive spiritual forces. People from a wide variety of religious and non-religious backgrounds report developing an interest in spiritual philosophy and ethics, even when this was not a conscious goal in their use of flower essences. Many persons awaken to the need to re-examine the religious, cultural, and spiritual roots of their childhood, while others find the courage to explore new dimensions of spirituality, or to find new forms of worship which are uniquely suited to their soul needs.

Questions such as “Who am I? Is there a purpose to life? Is there a life beyond the physical world?” assume a new importance. Many persons who first sought therapy for apparently physical problems or acute emotional stress are inspired to examine cultural and moral values — and ultimately the meaning of life itself — with renewed interest and dedication. This quest for meaning leads to a deeper experience of the Self beyond the confines of the day-to-day personality.

When flower essence therapy is carried to its full development, the Spiritual Self becomes the central organizing principle in the life of the soul. Just as the Sun shines its light on the many dimensions of soul life, awareness of the Self gives context and meaning to the other six *meta-levels* of soul development, involving our emotions, relationship with the body, attunement with Nature, vocation and life purpose, inner life and artistic development, and personal relationships and life karma. We come to realize that the awakening of the spiritual core within us, and its expression in all aspects of our lives, is the true goal of flower essence therapy and, indeed, of the healing quest.

## **Do we ever finish with flower essences?**

If working with flower essences is a healing journey, do we ever arrive at the end? Is there a time when we have dealt with all our emotional issues and we no longer need flower essences? Such questions are based on an assumption that there is a static state of normality, health, happiness, perfection, bliss, or enlightenment that can be permanently achieved. In truth, as long as we are alive on this Earth our soul will always face challenges, and will always have the need to learn and evolve in the school of life. If we understand flower essences as catalysts for soul growth, rather than as remedies to fix our problems, they will always have the possibility of helping us. While there may be times we choose not to work with essences, or use other methods, flower essences can remain allies through many cycles and spirals of our soul's evolution.

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# The Flower Essence Society

The Flower Essence Society is an international membership organization of health practitioners, researchers, students, and others interested in deepening knowledge of flower essence therapy. Founded in 1979 by Richard Katz, it was incorporated as part of the non-profit organization Earth-Spirit in 1982. Since 1980 the Society has been directed by Patricia Kaminski and Richard Katz, who are married and professional partners. There are four major purposes of the Society: 1) to promote plant research and empirical clinical research on the therapeutic effects of flower essences; 2) to conduct training and certification programs for active flower essence practitioners, as well as public classes and seminars throughout the world; 3) to disseminate publications about flower essence therapy to practitioners and to the general public throughout the world; and 4) to provide a communication and referral network for those who are teaching, researching, or practicing in the field of flower essence therapy.

Tax-deductible donations or memberships to the Flower Essence Society to help sustain its educational and research programs are greatly appreciated. Case studies and practitioner reports are actively encouraged and warmly welcomed. Please contact the Society for further information on our research program, membership rates, discounts, class schedules, newsletters and announcements, books, and other educational resources.

*Wild Iris*

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