The Many Uses Of Flower Essences

by Cynthia Alves (more info)
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What flower essences are

Flower essences have virtually exploded into the world. Dr Bach's trailblazing work in the 1930s[1] with his set of 38 Remedies and Rescue RemedySM began a modern way of using plants, and in the 1970s the new world of flower essences began to mushroom. In Britain and Ireland alone there are now over 60 essence producers.[2] While most of these are small 'cottage' concerns, some are also suppliers for European and international customers. Outside Britain there are over 30 producers of international high renown and influence,[3] and flower and other essences are being made and used in almost every country of the world.

My first impression many years back, on learning that there were more flower essences than just the Bach Remedies, was that lots of people were just jumping on the bandwagon of another new but not important wave of new age remedies. I am glad I was wrong. Having met, listened to and talked with a wide range of essence makers from the UK and many other countries around the world, I have found courage, and profoundly motivated people of great integrity and compassion.

Current physical sciences don't have the means to measure or 'prove' flower essences. Nonetheless, we can exercise a scientific attitude and discipline toward exploring them, as do, for example, producers Arthur Bailey who was the first after Edward Bach in the UK to make flower essences commercially,[4] and Machaelle Small Wright whose essence work is part of an astonishingly comprehensive programme of research and co-creativity with nature.[5],[6]

What For?

Though 'nature' appears as outside of and separate from us, we are one with all that this planet is – her material is our body, we share the same natural patterns and are of the same life force of creation as all life on this planet. We are both shaped by our world and shapers of it. Vibrational essences are essences of life – patterns of plant, mineral, animal and event forms – 'patterns of life force', as Julian Barnard puts it. So what are they for? For life! Life flows and changes and evolves, with each part playing its individual role. When we become closed or stuck – whether through fears, family and karmic patterns, doubts, unloving and hurtful attitudes, whatever situation, outlooks and habits, through ill influences distorting our life path and purpose – however we become solidified against creation's flow of life force, then we can receive help from life for us to release our lives.

Put another way, people are using flower, gem and other essences of nature for a very wide variety of purposes. To give a mere glimpse: when needing day-to-day health improvement, developing emotional flow and strength, balance and articulation, to support a spiritual path, to cultivate positive mental attitudes and values, to enhance any form of therapy, to help the animals and plants in our care. As broad as our lives, the vast repertoire of essences available to us is as unlimited as our consciousness, and for the needs of living.

People worldwide have valued flower essences since the 1930s for the happy differences they experience in feeling, outlook and attitude, and how this helps all aspects of their life, finding that well-being is inextricably connected with our thoughts and emotions.

What Are They?

What we can say for sure about what flower essences are is how they are made.[7] And from this we'll see that they are not essential oils and are different from homeopathic medicines. Generally they are made by floating the flowers on water in the sunshine, so that the water records the subtle life pattern of the plant. This water is then stored with an equal amount of alcohol to preserve the water. This is the 'mother tincture'. A few drops of this are put into a dropper bottle of alcohol to make the 'stock essence' bottle that we use.

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And More Than Flowers!

'Flower essences' is an easy blanket term, and the best known so far. Yet as we grasp that they are about life, about nature of which we are a part, then it is not far to reach to the idea that an essence can be also of a gem or metal,[8] or of an animal such as dolphin and other sea creatures (e.g. Sabina Petit’s Pacific Essences), butterfly, deer, etc. We are also in time and space, with all our planet’s phenomena, events and extraordinary places. Thus we also have vibrational essences referred to as 'Environmental Essences'. You can be sure that there were many ‘Full Solar Eclipse essences made on 11 November 1999! Other examples include essences of sacred Buddhist sites of Nepal[9] to support spiritual development, and Alaskan Essences’ Northern Lights, Hot Springs, Rainbow Glacier and Tidal Forces. But humans are not just ‘taking’ from nature. Many people are using essences to help heal land, places and buildings, and water.

If this seems absurd, pause to consider the memory of an exceptional place, a profound event, a relationship with an animal, the feeling of a gemstone – all these and more – consider what a difference it has made in your life, health and consciousness. And, conversely, consider what the qualities of our attitudes, feelings and behaviours bring to a place, event and environment – not the least being how human values are shaping our planet as never before. The more we understand essences, so also we are understanding the relationships between humanity and our planet.
Understanding Essences

In Issue 64 (May 2001) of Positive Health we looked in detail at several approaches to understanding flower essences, which we now review.

Water

Much research has been done into the extraordinary properties of water, including the bonding angle. That is, the angle at which the 2 x Os (oxygen elements) are attached to the H (hydrogen), which can vary. It is thought that this angle is the key to how a particular vibrational pattern is recorded by the water molecule, and that the water molecules of our body (and remember that our physical body, and those of plants and animals, are mostly water) resonate and adjust to this signal of the essences water molecules.[10-12] In terms of practical application, this means that we look for the most efficient way for the water of the essence to permeate the body, whether internally (including inhalation) or externally.

Good Vibrations

All life, while appearing solid, is vibrating, and there are vastly more subtle energies than can be measured with our conventional technologies. As the vibrational pattern of a plant resonates with our own patterns, we find a positive shift that restores a balanced flow of life energy. Pam Levack-Moir (Roadside Essences) calls this ‘tuning forks for the soul’. Then also our bodies’ immune, cleansing, nervous and other systems function more efficiently.

Electrical System

In short, we are all part of the vast electrical system of the universe. Thus we are connected ‘outwardly’ with all of life, and ‘inwardly’ our individual electrical system is connected to all parts, organs and cells of our physical body as well as our emotional, mental and spiritual bodies. Flower essences repair, balance and stabilize the circuitry of our electrical system so that life force and communication may flow well again. (Refer to Machaelle Small-Wright’s scientific research based at Perelandra, as arising from her understanding of the work of Bjorn Nordenstrum.[13]

Spirit Medicine

From this point of view, humans have particular relationships with spirits of the plant, gem, animal and elemental kingdoms, and it is the spirit of that aspect of nature that helps us to recover and maintain our wellness, and to develop and evolve in accord with the greater nature of which we are a part. Thus we are using essences – and ‘essence’ means ‘spirit’ – as a focus (consciously, or not so as, for example, for babies) for inviting the assistance of nature spirits. For those who use rituals in their healing work, essences may assist directly by using those appropriate to the purpose or focus of the ritual, as well as indirectly by supporting those preparing and leading the ritual.

Safe

However we come to understand them, most important is that vibrational essences are benign, with no toxic side effects, so you can feel safe to explore with them in your own way. And, if you need, you can find an essence maker who will provide them in a vinegar or vegetable glycerin preservative instead of alcohol.

"And This Is What You Do…" Many Ways of Using Flower Essences

Vibrational essence handbooks[14-16] suggest an astonishing range of what we might use essences for. With the now thousands of vibrational essences available internationally, one thing stands out about them: that there are so many ways we can use them according to our needs and imagination. Here are some tried and loved ways:

By Mouth

This is the best known way to use essences, as instructed on proprietary bottles available in shops: two drops in water and sip, or prepare a dose in a dropper bottle for longer term use – though I’ve sometimes wished I could set up a drip feed! Of course we can also just splash drops from the stock bottle straight into the mouth. For animals, plants and babies (and us too) we can add drops to their food or drink.
**Drinking Water**
I know that drinking lots of water (not tea, soda, juice, etc.) each day is very important to health maintenance, but I don’t like drinking water from the tap. I also like to use essences to support a particular focus of the week or month – such as self-worth, meditation practices, letting go a phase in my life or, as last year, finishing smoking. So I fill a water bottle with filtered water and add the appropriate essences. I’m an ‘odd number’ person, so I usually add three or five drops of each essence to a five-litre bottle. Having given the bottle a good shake, I leave it on a sunny windowsill for the day. Voilà! A personalized drinking water supportive of the current stage in my life.

**On the Skin**

**Bathing**
When prepared carefully, I’ve found bathing with essences to be a deeply touching and cleansing experience. Essences can also be added to baby’s bath. The best time is before noon when the body is focused on cleansing and elimination.[17] Clean the bath with bicarbonate of soda or fresh lemon juice. Add seven to ten drops of your chosen essence/s at dose strength. You may swirl the water with your hand in a figure of eight around the bath, first one way then the other, to make sure the bath is fully ‘charged’.

It’s important that the water is not hot, just body temperature or a little warmer. Gently scrub the body with a cotton flannel or loofah, bringing the blood to the surface, then if needed top up the bath water so the whole body can be submerged. Relax for 10-30 minutes. Rest afterwards, preferably with the feet up, and breathing well.

Especially for those unable to bathe fully submerged, remember that bathing the feet and/or hands – places of many meridian end points, minor chakras or reflexes – in this way can still be effective.

**Cream (or Lotion)**
Essences can be used for first aid or massage (in the oil or lotion). Mix two to five stock drops into your favourite cream or lotion (a cocktail stick is handy), or get an inexpensive, unscented base. To my surprise, I get along well with the very inexpensive aqueous cream (mineral based). Essences in your face- or hand creams mean you benefit from them with the frequent use. If what you’re needing is just for now, then put a bit of cream in your hand, add the required stock essence drops and mix before applying.

If you have a trauma or emergency mix of essences made up for you personally, ask for an extra bottle of stock mix as well. This can be used for bathing as well as a lotion or cream mix ready for the ‘everyday’ bumps, bruises, burns, etc. – remembering that the quicker you apply it, the more helpful it can be.

**Patch**
We don’t have to be giving up smoking to make use of a ‘patch’! Flower essence drops on a plaster can be put wherever it is needed (see also ‘Meridians, Chakras and Reflexology Systems’). With the range of colours and patterns now available, plaster patches can be fun too.

**Compress**
This can be useful especially where there is a sore place – whether an acute situation such as a burn, bruise, sting, sprain etc., or chronic condition such as a sore, eczema, joint pain, scarring, and so on. Also if there feels to be a place in the body where, for instance, anger, grief, fear or past trauma is being held, a compress may be a great help and comfort. Simply put the essence drops into a bowl of comfortably warm water (unless a cold compress is indicated), wetting a cloth and holding it to the area. In general terms, I would say apply a compress hourly for an acute situation, and three times daily for a chronic complaint. For either it may be appropriate to follow up with an application of cream.

**Proximity and Ambiance**
Essences can be effective not only in or on the body, but also near to it. Our subtle bodies (and electrical system) extend outwards from our skin, and we are sensitive to energies in a room or place. So, especially with intention and awareness, we can simply hold a bottle of essence/s in the hand, place it or a 3ml vial of essences in a pocket, or put it in a pouch and hang it on a necklace. I know several people who prepare a room for visitors by putting essences into a bowl of water on the mantelpiece. If using an essential oil burner, flower essences can be put in the water with the oil.

**Spray**
Using sprays is how I have the most fun, including creating recipes such as Relax, Cleanse or Uplift, and co-creating personalized mixes for people and homes. Spraying over my head, the mist falls all the way down through the subtle bodies. I may spray the heart area or the back of the neck. It’s great to mist around the room, my bedding, and the ironing so the essences permeate my clothes. Then there’s the car, the greenhouse, the office…

Chemists sell small plastic spray bottles in the travel goods section. Though I prefer essences in glass, for general purposes the plastic bottles do well enough. I reckon two to three drops of each vibrational essence required are plenty for a 75-125ml fine-mist spray bottle. The larger garden sprayers are fine for plants, outside, and ironing.

If adding essential oils to the spray, remember that they are very strong and concentrated, and some can be harmful, so use them with great care – a drop is usually plenty.

**Meridian, Chakra and Reflexology Systems**
We can use essences according to our knowledge of the various energetic philosophies, sciences and arts. With a minimal amount of knowledge of chakra, meridian or reflex systems, we can see that applying essences to a chakra area (major or minor), or to meridian or reflex points, may be even more effective than to a place of physical ill symptom, though there is no harm putting essences on both places if they are different. A therapist using these systems can tell you the relevant places needing attention, and you may be able to feel for yourself the best place to apply an essence.

Sometimes you or a friend can feel an area becoming suddenly cooler or hotter as you hold an essence bottle and move the other hand over the body. If you practise dowsing, or muscle testing and finger kinesiology, you can use these means to test the most helpful applications of how and where. I find that a dowsing arc is useful for choosing among various applications, and then, if indicated, to which chakra, reflex or meridian point/s (end points seem to be particularly efficient for essences).

**Meridian Massage**
This is a favourite way I use essences now:

Put a drop or two in your hand, rub your palms together, then inhale from them. Move the hand a couple inches away from the body, ‘stroke’ from the heart area down the inside of the other arm and up the outside, and the same for the other arm. Then move both hands from the heart area up over the face and over the head, then down the back of the head and, as best as possible, reach down the back and then the backs of the legs, up the inside of the legs and back to rest at the heart area.

Got that? Give it a go two or three times, even if without flower essences, and notice how you feel.
However – Just Use Them!

However flower and other essences may be used, and whatever my understanding of them may be, I am deeply grateful that we have these wonderful gifts of nature for our use. In my experience, the more I use them for my general care and evolution, the more easily I remember them in times of crisis. Then as I use them something deep and quiet within me remembers that whatever is going on, just as I am a part of the whole of life, so also the whole of life, creation, is helping me on my journey.

For me the wonder is even more than a whole new branch of health and development, the abundance and profundity offered, their simplicity, the low environmental impact in their making, their myriad uses, and my now countless happy experiences with them – even more than all this with the world of flower essences, it is about recalling and refreshing the wonder of life on Earth.

References

4. Bailey Essences (for book and essences Tel: 01943 432012; e-mail: baileyfe@aol.com).
10. Contact International Flower Essence Repertoire (IFER) for full details: tel: 01428 741572; e-mail: flower@atlas.co.uk
15. Titchiner et al. ibid.
16. Harvey and Cochrane. ibid.

Books


Further Information

Bach and a few other essence ranges are now generally available in health store and chemists.

Also mail order: Barbara Olive, Essence World (for British and Irish); Tel: 1344 891884; barb@essenceworld.com

Websites of interest: www.essences.com/ vibration; www.floweressences.com

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