

Rose Geranium

AN OL-FACTORY OF THERAPEUTIC EFFECTS

In *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, author Robert Pirsig dichotomizes typical motorcycle enthusiasts between the classic and the romantic: You're either driven by scientific analysis—or by feeling, intuition, and creativity. With rose geranium aromatherapy, you can have a little of both.

BY MICHAEL A. MILLER



Rose geranium, or *Pelargonium roseum*, is one of many species of geranium but one of few that can produce essential oil. It is a close relative to geranium oil and is thought to offer very similar benefits. It is native to South Africa and cultivated primarily in China, Egypt, and Morocco. The oils are gathered through steam distillation of the leaves as they yellow.

Just as Pirsig categorizes the mechanical components of a motorcycle by type and function, rose geranium oil may be classified by its chemical constituents and their corresponding benefits. It consists mostly of the alcohols citronellol, geraniol, and linalol, and the esters geranyl acetate and citronellyl acetate. Although these elements vary slightly depending on growing conditions and geography, they remain fairly consistent and play a critical role in conferring the oil's many therapeutic properties.

The high concentration of alcohols (60-80 percent) in this herbaceous oil confer anti-microbial and immune-support properties on the user. In a study of antibacterial function against *Acinetobacter baumannii*, geranium essential oil was edged out by cinnamon oil, but showed higher efficiency than lavender oil in fighting infections caused by the bacteria malefactors.

Citronellol and geraniol make a stand as a delectably fragrant defense against inflammation. The alcohols have been shown to suppress prostaglandin E_2 —a loiterer in inflammatory sites and instigator of pain, redness, swelling, and heat. They also suppress nitric oxide, a pro-inflammatory in abnormal situations when overproduced. Prostaglandin E_2 is a derivative of enzyme COX-2, which is targeted by nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, so geranium oil is generating hype as a side-effect-free alternative to conventional anti-inflammatory drug use.

As if practical application against inflammatory diseases didn't make rose geranium oil's anti-inflammatory resume pop, it is also considered to be one of the best essential oils for a variety of skin conditions including dermatitis, eczema, and oily skin, thanks to its esters. The nontoxic and nonirritant oil can be applied topically to bacterial and fungal infections like athlete's foot and is an antiseptic, which promotes healing of cuts and burns. "When essential oils are applied to the skin, some of the molecules are absorbed and some evaporate off. Those that are absorbed affect the dermal layer of the skin where many of the skin's functions are housed," said Joni Keim, aromatherapy expert and author of four aromatherapy books. Furthermore, according to its therapeutic properties, it soothes, softens, and encourages growth of skin cells, and some say it can even reduce the appearance of stretch marks and scars.

Rose geranium oil is also believed to hold anti-depressive benefits. In one study, geranium essential oil was administered aromatically to full-term pregnant women, a demographic whose anxiety is generally heightened. A control group inhaled a placebo. Measuring anxiety levels with the Spielberger's questionnaire, rose geranium oil was found to significantly decrease anxiety scores and lower blood pressure.

Not all of rose geranium's secrets have been divulged by beaker and pipet, however. Distinct, potent fragrances make blind studies a challenge, and much about aromatherapy remains a mystery obscured beyond the limits of clinical study. But aromatherapy is more than a sum of its tangible parts. And you'd be remiss to ignore the uplifting benefits nestled comfortably on the "romantic" side of rose geranium oil—expert aromatherapists certainly don't.

Rose geranium exudes a pleasant mix of calming, nurturing, and uplifting properties. According to Chinese medicine, this oil reconnects users with life, emotional sensitivity, and a renewed hunger for enjoyment. Some say it balances the hormones due to its tonic effect on the adrenal glands and

possibly due to its beautiful scent. While the oil is said to deter mood swings and symptoms of PMS, its feminine qualities overflow into the subtle realm, too.

Subtle energy therapy is based on the principle that materials we perceive as solid are actually composed of vibrating energy, including our bodies. Vibrational medicine and, by subset, subtle aromatherapy conserve the proper vibrational patterns of cells to avoid physical, mental, and emotional imbalance.

Since every cell vibrates, they have energetic properties—vibrational patterns with specific healing qualities. Subtle aromatherapy is thought to restore erratic cellular vibration to its original, healthy pattern by "gently coaxing it to mirror the optimal vibrational model coming from the chosen essential oil," said Keim. Rose geranium's energetic properties are perfect for de-stressing and recalibrating your mood on a warm spring afternoon.

Regardless of whether you subscribe to Pirsig's classic or romantic modalities of thought, rose geranium essential oil has bountiful healing properties both grounded and subtle. But how do you use it? Alambika USA, a producer of high-quality, certified-organic essential oils, suggests three easy ways you can yield to rose geranium's extravagant relaxations:

BATH: An aromatherapy bath combines the therapeutic effects of the selected oil with the muscle relaxing therapeutic effects of water (hydrotherapy). Mix 8 drops essential oil with 1 teaspoon carrier oil and add to tub of warm water. Mix well and soothe your senses for 10 to 15 minutes as you gently massage your skin.

MASSAGE: Considered to be one of the most effective ways to use essential oils, a massage with rose geranium is a guaranteed ticket to luxury. The standard dilution for an aromatherapy massage is 2 percent—12 drops rose geranium oil to 1 ounce carrier oil. Enjoy the muscle toning and stress relieving effects of a good massage as well as the therapeutic properties of rose geranium.

THE ENERGETIC PROPERTIES OF ROSE GERANIUM ARE:

- **Rebirth, regrowth, and rejuvenation:** promotes skin cell growth and uplifting, calming, and nurturing properties
- **New awareness:** promotes intuition and helps balance emotions
- **New beginnings:** uplifts the mind and relieves emotional and physical fatigue
- **Hope:** uplifts the mind and opens our hearts to nurturing love

DIRECT INHALATION: To turn your frown upside down in a whiff, try wafting rose geranium oil. This method is easy, portable, and especially good for transforming moods and curing headaches. Simply put 1 to 3 drops rose geranium oil on a tissue and breathe in through the nose. Pause and repeat.

CHAKRAS: Aromatherapy can help connect body, mind, and spirit through your chakras. See how you can nurture your daily life through rose geranium essential oil's balancing effect on your chakras. If you need a refresher on chakras, flip to page 40.

First: Grounds and supports with a nurturing quality.

Second: Promotes feminine creativity and relaxed spontaneity. Promotes harmony in relationships. Helps to balance mood swings.

Third: Promotes positive self-esteem and self-acceptance.

Fourth: Helps to open our hearts to give and receive nurturing love.

Fifth: Increases capacity for intimate communication.

Sixth: Promotes intuition. Encourages the recollection of old memories.

Seventh: Promotes balanced spirituality, tranquility, and spiritual protection.

Hands: Promotes gentle, nurturing healing energy.

Feet: Grounds and stabilizes. ☺