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Aromatic Wisdom Podcast Episode #015 **5 Ways To Use Hydrosols For Allergy Relief**

This is the Aromatic Wisdom Podcast, Episode 15. In today's show I'm going to talk about Hydrosols. I adore hydrosols, and you will too after this episode! I'm going to talk about just what a hydrosol is, how they are made, and then I will share five ways you can use hydrosols for seasonal allergy relief.

You're listening to the Aromatic Wisdom Podcast with your host, Liz Fulcher.

If you're interested in learning about Essential Oils, hearing interviews with industry experts, and discovering ways to grow your own Aromatherapy business, this is the podcast for you.

For more information and show notes, visit the website at www.AromaticWisdomInstitute.com. Now sit back. Relax. Take a deep breath and enjoy as Liz shares a dose of Aromatic Wisdom.

Hello everyone! Thank you so much for joining me today. I really appreciate your listening to this podcast. If you are new, thank you for trying it out and I hope that you return. If you are coming back to listen to another podcast, thank you again. I really love that you guys are joining me and hearing what I have to educate about essential oils and aromatherapy. And, I love the reviews you are giving me on iTunes and sharing with me in e-mails. Thank you very much!

My name is Liz Fulcher. I am a clinical aromatherapist and an essential oil educator. I have a school called the Aromatic Wisdom Institute (www.aromaticwisdominstitute.com), and I am your host for this podcast! Today is Thursday, September 17, 2015 and I just recently returned from an aromatherapy conference in Denver, Colorado. I am rested and full of all kinds of fun, new information that I gleaned from the conference.

The conference was held by the AIA (Alliance of International Aromatherapists). It was a beautiful opportunity for me to connect with a lot of friends. There are a lot of aromatherapists I am close with but we only see each other once a year at these



conferences. It was, more importantly, an opportunity for me to stay relevant, to stay current with what's happening in the industry. It's one big learning experience! There was a trade show, so I got to see lots of new products; of course I had to buy lots of fun, new things—mostly I bought books and oils. The speakers were fabulous. Rob Poppas of the Essential Oil University was the keynote speaker, and he did a great presentation on dispelling essential oil myths. Jane Buckle was one of my favorites. She spoke on really good ways on how to do research for case studies which may sound dry, but is really wasn't; it was fascinating. We had a woman talk about carriers. We had a gentleman who talked about adulteration, and how, in chemistry, you can determine if an essential oil has been adulterated. Anita James did an incredible presentation called "The Further Adventures of Smell Woman," about her work with children in schools in the United Kingdom and how the effects of using essential oils in massage has made a huge impact on kids, and especially kids who come from troubled homes. She got a standing ovation! That was a very wonderful presentation. Overall, it was a terrific conference. If you ever have an opportunity to go I invite you to do that.

The conferences are every other year, so AIA had their conference in 2013 and 2015 and the next one will be in 2017. The website is: www.alliance-aromatherapists.org (I'll add that to the show notes); it is a terrific organization. There are a lot of great organizations to join around the world in aromatherapy. In the United States we have AIA and NAHA—the National Association for Holistic Aromatherapy, and that website is: www.NAHA.org and I'll add that to the show notes as well. I should probably do a podcast just on these organizations because I think it would be very interesting. I don't want to get too deep into that because I want to get into today's topic that is *Five Ways to Use Hydrosols for Allergy Relief*.

Before I get into the five ways to use hydrosols, let's talk about what a hydrosol is in the first place. Hydrosols go by a lot of different names. In the United States we tend to use the word *hydrosol*, but they are also known as *hydrolats* which is European; you'll hear the word *distillant water* or sometimes even *floral waters*, although the term *floral waters* can be deceiving. Hydrosols are the aromatic water that results from a steam distillation of plant materials.

So here is a real quick tutorial on how hydrosols are made. First of all, know that plants contain glands that hold the essential oils. I'm going to use Peppermint for the example because most people are familiar with what a Peppermint plant looks like and what it smells like. If you were to take the leaf of a Peppermint and look at it through a microscope, you would see a whole lot of big, fat, juicy glands that contain the essential oil.



In order to extract this essential oil from the plant, the distiller fills a cooker with this plant material, so, with our example, Peppermint leaves. The cooker is then filled with steam. So steam is actually propelled from underneath; you've got this big copper pot full of Peppermint leaves and steam being forced through the plant material from underneath. As the steam rises, the heat causes the glands of these plants to burst open and release the essential oils in the steam. If you can visualize it: you have a copper container with Peppermint leaves inside, steam coming up through, these glands are bursting open and carried up into the still through the steam. This oil and steam is carried up through something called the condenser that is cooling everything down. Finally, all of this steam and oil are released and collected in a vessel.

Of course what used to be steam is now cooled down. And, what happens to steam is cooled is that it turns back into water. What you have is a glass container that is collecting the water and the essential oil. Essential oils have a different molecular density than water so they are floating on the top. In the show notes I will put a photograph of a "separatory funnel", it's a glass container that will have water with essential oils floating on top. It's real pretty if you have the blue oils—it looks great!

Now you've got this product that's water with oils floating on top. The essential oils are removed, bottled as essential oils and now you have this water that is left over. That water is hydrosol. Hydrosols are not always aromatic so, for example, if you take something like Calendula, the flowers don't really have essential oils but the flowers themselves have a tremendous healing value. Even Calendula flowers can be distilled just for the hydrosol. You can distill all kinds of plants and all kinds of plant parts: roots, needles from the *conifers*, leaves from like the Peppermint, Oregano, and Marjoram. You can distill seeds like Fennel; you can distill fruit like Lime is commonly distilled. What you have is, is this incredible healing water. The distillate only contains a small portion of the volatile essential oil components and it's the components that are what we call *hydrophilic*; they dissolve in water. Some of the components are going to go over into the essential oil and some are going to go into the water. It depends on what the molecules like; if they like water, or if they don't like water.

Essential oils only account for much less than 1% of the total solution. There is a lot of other plant stuff in the distillate, in the water, than just essential oils. That is one reason why a hydrosol is a healing product of itself, different than aromatherapy. I actually feel like hydrosol therapy should just be a modality unto itself, the way herbalists have their healing plants and their modalities; aromatherapists have their essential oils and their



healing modalities. I feel like hydrosol therapists should have their own modality and should not be included with essential oils, but for now, we're lumping it all together.

Anyway, besides aromatic chemicals, hydrosols contain something really important. They contain a lot more of the plant acids than pure essential oils and although it may sound counterintuitive, plant acids are tremendously skin friendly. Hydrosols help restore your skin's natural acid mantle so they are great to use with anything to do with the skin, whether you are adding them to skincare products or using them straight on the face, like in a spray.

There are similarities between essential oils and hydrosols, but there are a lot of differences. The three really big differences between essential oils and hydrosols are: 1) the shelf life, 2) the usage, and 3) the storage. I'm going to talk about that for a minute here.

The shelf life: Every hydrosol will be a little bit different but most are going to have to be thrown out after two to three years. Hydrosols need to be kept in a cool, dark place with consistent temperature—you can keep them in the fridge; I keep mine in the fridge because of the warm room. But what they don't like is to be in the fridge—out—in—out—that change of temperature back and forth is not good for the hydrosol. It is better to keep them in a consistent space, even the basement if it's cool and dark. But you want to keep the temperature consistent, and most importantly, keep them cool.

Hydrosols are easily contaminated. The simple act of touching the neck of the bottle, or inside the cap with your fingers can contaminate a hydrosol. You've got to keep everything really sterile with something like Everclear or some sort of alcohol.

Usage: In terms of their usage, they have so, so many applications. Hydrosols are mild, yet effective, and most hydrosols are gentle enough to wash a cut or a scrape without worrying about dilution. They are unlike essential oils. If you've listened long enough you know that I am not a proponent of using essential oils neat on the skin. I feel that essential oils need to be diluted and then rubbed into the skin.

Hydrosols though, can be used straight on the skin because they are subtle and gentle. You can tackle a rash from poison ivy or fungal issues or anything chronic like eczema or psoriasis, acne—you can use directly on the skin with hydrosols—and they are so healing. Unlike essential oils, hydrosols can be used safely internally. I know a lot of people take essential oils by mouth—that can be done, absolutely. I have used essential oils internally, but I have 25 years of experience, and I feel that unless someone has had at least 250 hours



of professional training that they should not be taking essential oils by mouth. Instead, use a hydrosol. An easy way to think of a hydrosol is to replace water with hydrosol. I like to use Peppermint hydrosol and mix it in with my 32 ounces of water that I drink during the day—two or three Tablespoons of Peppermint hydrosol in a liter of water; it's refreshing and really good for your tummy.

If you are cooking, replace the water with hydrosol. If you are making lotions and creams and there is a water phase, instead of water maybe use Rose hydrosol or Rose/Geranium hydrosol, which is fabulous for the skin. There are so many applications for hydrosols. You can add a shot of hydrosol to your favorite hot drink in the wintertime! In the Northern Hemisphere the weather is getting cool and I like to get a teeny bit of Cinnamon hydrosol and put it in my tea and makes it kind of like a chai flavor. Hydrosols can be a great substitute for a mouthwash or a healing rinse if your mouth or gums are irritated or if you have a mouth ulcer. If your child has braces, hydrosols can be a great way to maintain good oral health because they are healing to the gums and they taste good they are safe.

Last year my husband took a mouthful of really hot soup and burned his tongue, and you know how painful that is. I ran to the kitchen, I got a little bit of lavender hydrosol and him basically rinse out his mouth and hold it there against his tongue, because Lavender hydrosol is good for burns. He spit it out and did another application and he said in no time at all his tongue stopped burning, and he didn't have that next day burn; it just healed his tongue very quickly. You can tell I'm excited about hydrosols. Once you start using them, you'll find so many applications.

There's a point I'd like to make right now, and this is important: hydrosols should be purchased as a primary product, not a by-product. What do I mean by this? A lot of people will refer to hydrosols as the by-product of essential oil distillation. This could not be further from the truth. I don't like this term because it's not accurate. The highest quality hydrosols come from artisan distillers who steam the plant material specifically to produce hydrosols. In other words, if an artisan hydrosol distiller is putting the plant material in the pot and creating a hydrosol that is their purpose. The essential oil becomes the by-product. There are different ways to distill if you are distilling for hydrosols or if you are distilling for essential oils. Temperatures change, the length of time—you want to buy hydrosols from someone who has made them just for the hydrosol not for the essential oil.

The other thing I'd like you to keep in mind is, there are a lot of products out there sold as floral water, which can be very deceiving, because it is often essential oils mixed with water. Before you purchase floral water ask your vendor to explain how the product is



made. If they don't know, do not purchase from them. If they say it is essential oil and water, know that, that is not a hydrosol. Hydrosols are made specifically from distilling the plants.

Let's talk for a minute about hydrosol care and storage. I've made it pretty clear that they have a short shelf life and are easily contaminated. Here are some tips for keeping your hydrosols healthy and fresh:

1. Keep them cool and in a dark location; keep them out of light particularly sunlight which and be damaging to hydrosols.
2. You want to store your hydrosols in a sterile, clear glass. I know the trend for essential oils is to use dark glass like cobalt blue or amber brown because it does protect the oils from UV rays. The thing with hydrosols is you want to store them in clear glass so you can see if there is contamination. You can actually see the contamination and they are called "blooms" which can be seen floating around in the hydrosol. As soon as you see a bloom, throw away the hydrosol—it's not good. I will go ahead and put a picture of a hydrosol with a bloom in it in the show notes so you know what I am talking about.
3. When a bottle of hydrosol is partially full, and actually the same is true for an essential oil, that empty space above the liquid is called "head space". Head space is not your friend. Head space contains oxygen that over time is going to react with your hydrosol and cause it to deteriorate. So, how do you prolong the shelf life? You just reduce the head space by transferring your hydrosol to a smaller bottle. Let's say for example you have a 16-ounce bottle of Lavender hydrosol. Now you're down to eight ounces left in the bottle. You want to get another clear eight-ounce bottle, sterilize it with something like Everclear, and you want to transfer the hydrosol into the eight-ounce bottle so you don't have space at the top. You could also put in two four-ounce bottles. The point is you do not want a lot of head space at the top.
4. The other thing I want to say on hydrosol storage is record the purchase date when you buy it. Write it on the bottle so you know how long you've had it and you know how old it is.

This has been a super quick little primer on what is a hydrosol, how they are made, how do you care for them, and, it's not exhaustive by any means. I teach a three-day class called *Hydrosols for Health*, and am also currently working on an on-line class—there's a lot, lot more we can say about hydrosols, but my goal to day was to have you have an understanding of what they are and how to care for them. Most importantly (!), they are not a by-product but they are the primary product.



Next, let's move into today's topic which is hydrosols for allergies. I'm going to talk about recommended hydrosols for allergies, and then I'm going to talk about five ways you can use hydrosols for allergies. The number "five" seems to be some sort of theme for me today since I'm going to talk about five specific hydrosols that are really good for those times when you have all sorts of that nasty stuff from seasonal allergies like itchy eyes and runny nose. Then, I'm going to talk about five ways you can use hydrosols. I'm going to share these hydrosols in alphabetical order, they are not necessarily in order of how I would use them because it would depend on what you would want them for, so I'm just giving them to you in alphabetical order.

Recommended hydrosol for allergies:

1. Calendula: The Calendula flowers offer anti-inflammatory, anti-microbial, astringent, anti-fungal, anti-viral, and immune-stimulant properties. This is a great hydrosol. It doesn't have a great aroma because it doesn't contain volatile essential oils, but it does have a really gentle and sweetly herbal aroma that I find delightful. It's incredibly safe and it has a million applications, especially for the skin. You can use Calendula apart from allergies for with babies for diaper rash—it's fabulous.
2. Cornflower: This is my go to hydrosol as an eye wash. If you suffer from seasonal allergies you know how uncomfortable your eyes feel. They get itchy and scratchy, and instead of using Visine that a lot of people use for their eyes, I would go to Cornflower. Please make sure that the Cornflower hydrosol you are buying is fresh, it is the real deal; please don't be putting anything with preservatives in it in your eyes, just pure Cornflower hydrosol. It's very cooling, it's gentle; you can do a cool compress for swollen eyes. You can even get a small bottle with a tiny dropper and use one or two drops in your eyes to help soothe them.
3. German Chamomile: This is fabulously anti-inflammatory and I'm going to share with you in a few minutes how you can use the German Chamomile. It's great: it's cooling, and is also great if you have eczema, psoriasis, rashes, burns—it's great for that sort of stuff.
4. Lavender: The standard that seems to be good for everything both as an essential oil and as a hydrosol. It's anti-inflammatory, calming and cooling for irritation or itching, or any skin issue.
5. Peppermint: Peppermint is super cooling, refreshing, you want to be super careful you don't get it around your eyes because it contains menthol and that can burn. But it has some great applications for allergy relief.



Let's move in to the purpose of today's topic on hydrosols, which is *Five Ways to Use Hydrosols for Allergy Relief*.

One of my favorite ways to use hydrosol is when I have sinus congestion is, number 1, the Neti pot. A Neti pot is ayurvedic method of clearing and flushing and washing the sinuses. Generally what is recommended for a Neti pot is a little bit of saline solution, or saline with a little bit of salt that comes with the Neti pot, in tepid water and you use it to rinse out your sinuses. What I recommend, especially if your sinuses are enflamed, is to take one tablespoon of German Chamomile hydrosol and add it to your Neti pot water and flush out your sinuses with it. I've even used Peppermint in my Neti pot, which was incredibly refreshing. It may burn so you may not want to start out with Peppermint hydrosol. Lavender, German Chamomile, Calendula, all of the hydrosols I recommended today are superb in your Neti pot. I did a blog post on how to use hydrosols in a Neti pot, and so you can read a lot more about that, and I'll put a link to that blog post in the show notes to make it easy for you to find.

The second way that I would recommend using hydrosols for allergy relief is through a simple steam inhalation. Now, you can do a steam inhalation with essential oils, where you take hot water and a drop of essential oil and put your face over the bowl, and do a steam inhalation that way. But you can also, instead of water, use hydrosols. Heat the hydrosol until it's just warm enough for steam to be coming off, put your face over the bowl, put a towel over your head and breathe in deeply. It won't be as strong or as piercing as if you were using an essential oil, much more gentle. This would be a great way to use hydrosols with children. Any of the essential oils recommended in today's podcast would be super in a steam inhalation.

The third recommendation for hydrosols and allergy relief I've talked about already, but that's eyewash for itchy eyes. The only two hydrosols I recommend to use in your eyes are Cornflower or Roman Chamomile. Again, make sure it is fresh, organic, and of highest quality because you are putting it in your precious eyes! You can put it in a dropper; you can do a compress over your eyes, or gently wash your eyes with Cornflower or Roman Chamomile hydrosol. It will really help soothe the itch and bring some of that swelling down.

Method number four is a sinus compress with a washcloth. You're going to soak your washcloth in a hydrosol and place it across your sinuses and your eyes. Now, this is awesome to do instead of with essential oils because you don't want to get essential oils anywhere near your eyes, and you can do this with a washcloth! You have to determine



yourself if you want heat or cold, so you'll need to heat the hydrosol if you want a warm compress across your sinuses or just keep it cold if that feels better.

I personally like heat, so what I would do is take a washcloth and put it in warmed hydrosol, wring it out and fold it so it's long and just lay it over my sinuses, across your nose and across your cheeks. It can be wonderfully anti-inflammatory for the sinuses; it feels divine. Or, you can just lay the washcloth over your entire face! Breathe in through the washcloth, maybe put on some soft music and relax.

In terms of which hydrosol to use in a sinus compress, any of the ones that are recommended today, but I would not use Peppermint. Again, because of the menthol being that close to your eyes will be very uncomfortable.

And finally, the fifth way I would recommend using a hydrosol for allergy relief is in a gargle. We often get that dry, scratchy throat when we have sinus issues and any of the hydrosols I recommended today, even the Peppermint will do. Put about two or three tablespoons in eight ounces of water and gargle. And, you can drink it if you want when you are done gargling. That will help soothe the throat and help bring some of that inflammation down, and help to get rid of some of the scratchy, itchiness, especially if you use Peppermint.

So, in today's podcast we talked about what is a hydrosol? How are they made? How do you take care of Hydrosols? We talked about five recommended hydrosols for allergy relief? And then we talked about five ways to use those five hydrosols for allergy relief. Be real careful where you are buying your hydrosols and make sure it is a true hydrosol made for the product, not as a by-product. Because it can be hard to find really good hydrosols, I am providing a list for you today of good suppliers that I personally trust and use their hydrosols in my classroom. You'll find those in the show notes.

The show notes for today you can find at www.aromaticwisdominstitute.com/015

Are you ready for the next segment?

*You know it! It's called **Smell My Life**.* In the Smell My Life segment I always share some way in which I've used essential oils in my real life during the week. This week, as I shared at the beginning of the podcast, I was at a conference and stayed in a hotel. I always make sure I have a lot of hydrosols and essential oils with me when I stay in a hotel because I often want to use essential oils for their anti-bacterial properties, to clean things, and the air is



one of those things in hotels that makes me crazy. I never know how often they clean the ducts. My bed was directly underneath the air conditioning, so as I lay in bed sleeping, air was being forced out over my head. Real simple, I took three tissues and I soaked them in Tea Tree essential oil and I stuck them up in the air vents. As I lay there, the essential oil molecules were falling on me, if that makes sense. I felt as though, I'm not sure how old or how pure is this air that I'm breathing in my hotel room, but I know I had the Tea Tree protecting me while I was sleeping. I could have used Lavender or just about any relaxing essential oil because they all have anti-bacterial properties. Tea Tree is what I felt lead to use and Tea Tree doesn't keep me awake at all.

So that was how I used essential oils in my life this week!

And that, my friends, concludes Episode 15 of the Aromatic Wisdom Podcast. I sure hope that this was helpful and that you learned a lot. If you would like to leave me a glowing review on iTunes so that other people can find the podcast, I would love that!

You can find me at www.AromaticWisdomInstitute.com/iTunes.

Until next week, be well. Be happy.

Bye, bye.

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