

the unfolding heart

NEW YEAR'S 2011 BLEND

Sources of Inspiration

Inspiration comes from many sources. Sometimes I feel the Divine uses whatever means necessary to get our attention and when many signals come in a short timeframe, I always feel I REALLY need to pay attention! Whether it be a weekend seminar with my favorite teacher, an email to a sibling, my son's college applications, a friend's cancer diagnosis or words jumping off the page, we ignore such messages to our own detriment.

My first bit of inspiration came from a weekend seminar, titled *Nurturing the Unfolding of Life*. The dictionary defines *unfolding* as:

- To make known;
- To reveal gradually;
- To remove coverings from, disclose to view; and
- To open, to extend.

These different meanings gave me a lot to ponder. So much of what I know and

have learned in my life has been made known and revealed over time. To be sure, there have been those moments of instant revelation, but upon further analysis, I realize that what seemed like a lightening bolt of awareness had been percolating for some time in the weeks, months and days leading there. I also like the idea that what is being unfolded has been there all along—it's not about adding or creating anything new or in addition, but rather uncovering, revealing, extending what is already.

The message is that I have everything I need for my life to be all it needs and can be; all that may be missing is my awareness and intention.



NEROLI BLOSSOMS WITH PETIT-GRAIN LEAVES—JUST AS NATURE INTENDED!

*The unexamined life
is not worth living.*

- Socrates



Cultivating Life

This is where another concept from the seminar comes in: *cultivation*. My teacher spoke at length about the need to cultivate our lives. This was another word I thought I knew before I looked up the meaning in the dictionary:

- To improve and prepare;
- To grow and to tend;
- To nurture and foster, and
- To form and refine.

Upon further reflection, I realized that cultivation is intention in action. Just as I would never expect to harvest without first having sown the seeds, so too, I must sow the seeds in my life if I expect to reap any benefits. Not only that, but I must continue to nurture, foster and tend to those seeds, making adjustments as necessary for the changes life 'throws' as us. As I write this, my son is completing his college applications. I realize how diligently we have

cultivated his life to this point: planning and monitoring his education, refining his extracurricular activities, preparing for this moment. I realize how little attention I've been paying to my own life: yes, there must be fallow times when we allow our lives to 'rest' in order to restore them for the next season, but too often, at least in my personal journey, I have simply allowed my life to go untended, 'gone to seed' as it were from neglect.

I find this particularly true in the areas of diet, health and exercise in my life.

I realize I am not a good steward of my own life's cultivation. Socrates said, 'The unexamined life is not worth living.' I would respectfully amend this to: 'The unintentional life is not worth living.'



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The Unfolding Heart Blend



So, by now you must be asking, ‘What does this have to do with essential oils?’ And, although essential oils were not specifically discussed at the seminar, my inspiration leads me to believe they are a perfect partner in the cultivation of our unfolding. Essential oils are distilled plant material – the linkage to cultivation couldn’t be stronger. And, the distillation process is believed to reveal a plant’s true essence. In other words, the process of distillation is one of unfolding (revealing) the plant’s spirit. A blend of oils to remind us of these concepts in our own life seemed a fitting way for me to re-commit to the cultivation of my own unfolding.

Our 2011 New Year’s Blend is **the unfolding heart**

A blend that will help us remember to nurture our own essence, open us to the gentle unfolding that takes place moment to moment and to commit ourselves to our own cultivation when our resolve falters.

The blend is composed of the following essential oils:

- **Petitgrain sur Neroli** is the centerpiece of the blend. This is a co-distillation of both the leaves and blossoms of the bitter orange tree. As the word implies, co-distillation means the plants were distilled together. The intentional co-distilling of plants is a relatively new phenomenon, although when you visit the fields during harvest and distillation time, you will see that plants are co-distilled all the time. I have seen helichrysum, basil and other herbs growing wild in lavender fields. No one stops the harvest to pull the helichrysum from the lavender. I always considered this nature’s way of blending on our behalf. It seems we continue to learn from Mother Nature and are now intentionally distilling plants together. Petitgrain comes from the leaves of the Bitter Orange tree, while Neroli is distilled from the orange blossom. The photo above illustrates that the two co-exist quite nicely in nature.

My reasons for including them in this blend were many:

- Blossoms are prized for their ability to ‘unfold’. I think of tulips that open in the warmth of the morning and then close again at night. Witnessing these cycles of unfolding informs

my own life and emphasizes the notion that unfolding is a gradual process that I may cultivate but not force.

- Blossoms are complex structures to which the plant devotes considerable time and energy creating – a considerable act of cultivation.
- Most blossoms are designed to attract some other creature (insect, bird, animal) in order to pollinate and/or distribute the resulting fruit and or seeds of the plant. That a plant would evolve to rely on another species for its own continued success is a critical aspect that fits into my reflections on the unfolding of life: neither are we, as humans, completely self-sufficient. This became a gentle reminder that all too often the unfolding events of my life have had an external catalyst – typically another person.

The inclusion of the **petitgrain** was perhaps a bit less obvious, but upon consideration, no less important to the intention of the blend. At the beginning of this essay, I referenced the notion of ‘inspiration’. Leaves are the plant where *respiration* takes place. In the East, many spiritual traditions developed practices that emphasize the importance of breath and the act of breathing in the attainment of enlightenment. So, the inclusion of leaf oils such as **petitgrain, melissa, clary sage** and **rosemary** emphasize the need to relax and breath into

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ESSENTIAL OILS AND THE PROCESS OF UNFOLDING



The Mighty Atlas Cedar

our life's unfolding. I love that *inspiration* and *respiration* both have the same root, evidence that our ancestors had a certain wisdom we seem to have forgotten. The other oils in the blend symbolize other aspects of cultivating our unfolding heart:

- **Frankincense** is a resinous oil, often used to heal wounds, both physical and psycho-spiritual. Of course, many of us will recognize it as one of the Magi's gifts to the infant Jesus. What is less understood is the ancient use of frankincense in sacred ritual. Today, frankincense's ability to calm the diaphragm, open the chest and relax our breathing makes it a staple for treating asthma.
- **Atlas Cedar** is a tree oil and as such helps connect us to both heaven and earth. It helps bring to the surface any long-held illusions and emotions that we are ready to release. In ancient times, Atlas Cedar was planted to act as a wind-shield. It can protect us, too, when we feel we are being buffeted by the winds of change.
- **Clary Sage**, mentioned above, was an oil that 'jumped off the page' at me when I began thinking about this blend. The name, *clary sage*, comes from the traditional use of the herb to impart clarity and wisdom to our lives. Its scent has a sharpness that helps tone-down the sweetness of the petitgrain sur neroli. So, to will clary sage give us that sharpness necessary when cultivating our life.
- **Melissa** is another herb and leafy oil, but with some very important properties. Its lemon-y and earthy scent add that grounding necessary for the blend as well as the unfolding process. Most especially, melissa is known to 'open the portals', meaning it can help release any illusions we are clinging to and change the way we perceive the world.
- **Rosemary verbenon** was the 'surprise' inspiration to the blend. As I was blending the above oil, I 'mistakenly' pulled the bottle of rosemary and added it to the blend in place of the clary sage. When I realized my 'mistake', I re-did the blend as I had intended with clary sage and no rosemary. Not surprisingly, I realized the blend did indeed need the rosemary! Rosemary is considered the most *yang* of essential oils, as such, it is very moving which can be useful when we find ourselves stuck.



Rosemary adds a special quality to the blend



Suggestions for Using the unfolding heart

There are many ways to use a blend such as THE UNFOLDING HEART. It can be worn as a perfume, on the pulse points, as a reminder of my intention to cultivate the unfolding of my life. I have used it prior to my morning meditation.

Additionally, there are a number of acupuncture points that have a particular resonance to the blend:

- REN 22—Heaven Rushing Out is a window of the sky point and is located right at the top of the sternum (breast bone). This point is known to help connect us to our higher-self and reconnect us to Spirit. On a physiological level, the point is known to transform phlegm and restore one's voice, enabling us to express our heart's desire. It is a point between the

Heart and Throat chakras, as such it is a connecting point for the two chakras and their energetic.

- LR 14—Gate of Hope is another point on which I've used the blend. It is located about 4-finger widths below the nipples on the chest. LR 14 is an integration point of multiple meridians and, therefore, is a very powerful point. It is another point that helps us reconnect with our Spirit, especially when we find we are stagnated in our thoughts. As the point's name implies, we can often feel hopeless and this point will invigorate us, as it invigorates blood.
- KI 9—Guest Building is the third point I like for this blend. Often when we begin the process of intentionally cultivating our life, we can become overwhelmed by the responsibility of it all. This point helps to calm our mind and spirit, allowing us to connect with our innate knowledge and wisdom of how to live. It is a point that disperses obstructions and stagnations, imparting the courage to live an intentioned life.

Ultimately, it matters not where we use the blend, or even if we use it at all. It is merely a reminder to set our intention to nurture the unfolding of our hearts and of our life.



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