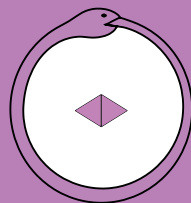
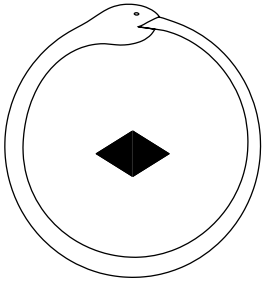


FRAGRANT PLANTS

Vera Fróes



notebooks
SELVAGEM



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Talk presented at the *Perfumosas* [*Fragrant*] discussion circle during the *Selvagem*, cycle of studies about life, at the Rio de Janeiro Botanical Garden's Theatre on November 15th, 2019

Fragrant plants, also known as aromatic plants, have essential oils as their active components. Once called *astroaromas* by the astrologers of antiquity, these oils have the ability to dissolve difficulties and enhance the positive and innate potential of individuals based on their zodiac sign.

Their volatile substances are highly complex and may contain up to 50 components. They dissolve easily in alcohol and oil but are difficult to dissolve in water.

Of all the senses, smell is the most closely connected to the central nervous system and memory. Aromatic molecules are released from flowers and the environment, and captured by the nasal sensors — about 20 million neurons located in the roof of the nasal cavities. These sensors recognize and decode information. The sense of smell is associated with memories — a grandmother's cooking, a mother's scent, or the special aromas that connect us to our ancestry.

The sense of smell regulates hormonal functions and is the main responsible for the sense of taste. It has specialised receptors that create memory points, interpret signals, and protect the organism, giving warnings when something is wrong — for instance when food is spoiled, or if there is a fire (burning smell). The nasal mucosa presents a receptive property for chemical exchanges with phytotherapeutic and psychotropic substances, holding an intimate connection with the most ancient part of the brain.

In aromatherapy, a specialised branch of phytotherapy, the essential oils work on the psychic centres, which capture cosmic energy and

transmit it to the cellular structures of the physical body, the chakras, a word that in Sanskrit means “wheel of light.” The chakras are energy centres that represent different aspects of the subtle nature of humans. This enables a conscious (intuitive) attunement to the self (the inner observer), other beings of nature (observation of the environment), and the cosmic glands of the soul.

The Egyptians had already developed the technology of mummification as early as 5000 B.C., using fragrant substances to preserve bodies, allowing mummies to last for centuries. The use of aromatic substances was part of the daily lives of these people, as they believed scents attracted the spirits of health while repelling spirits of disease.

The Arabs made significant advances in this field, as they invented the cooling coil, a key component in the distillation process. This invention was based on the “dissolve and coagulate” concept, meaning, dissolving the physical body and condensing the spirit, resulting in the quintessence, the soul of the plant: the essential oils.

Paracelsus, a sixteenth-century alchemical physician, stated in his book “Occult Botany” that, to handle plants — considered as pure as angels — one should follow a diet and abstain from sex and alcohol. This was based on the principle that “if a plant is alive, it is because something, the elemental being, animates it.” Basically, Paracelsus believed the plant would be the physical body of an elemental being.

We could say that the fragrant plants belong to the element air, as they are volatile, healing, flowery, and abundant in seeds. Their elementals are sylphs (air spirits), sylphides (female air spirits), and fairies, which are magical beings that interfere in the fate of those they protect. (The word “fairy” is derived from the Latin “factum,” associated with “fate.”)

According to Paracelsus, to access the elemental being and receive the benefits of their healing properties, a harvest ritual is necessary: a circle should be traced around the plant, symbolising the wheel of incarnations, as we have lived as plants in a previous stage. Then, facing east, one should recite a prayer, hymn, or chant, asking the elemental being to assist in the healing process.

In esoteric aromatherapy, rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) helps overcome inhibitions to free expression and facilitates intellectual work.

In antiquity, it was common for young people to place a small sprig of rosemary behind their ear to aid concentration during their studies.

Lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia* syn. *Lavandula spica*) relieves states of tension, neutralises disruptive vibrations within the personal magnetic aura, elevating the spirit. Sage (*Salvia officinalis*) relieves old resentments that evoke guilt and depressive feelings, while Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*) is recommended for confronting fear-inducing situations, as it promotes relaxation and mental clarity.

Sensitives, herbalists, healers, and shamans establish a tuned dialogue with the plant realm, learning from the plants their properties, uses, and combinations. The shaman connects with the spirit of the plant and the biomolecular dimension to find diagnosis and cure. Ayahuasca is one example.

Communication with fragrant and entheogenic plants occurs through intuition, observation, sensitivity, cultural knowledge, and the unique gifts encoded in the genetic makeup of each shaman or sensitive. We have studies about the effects of Bach flower essences, Amazonian flower essences, and those from the *Cerrado*¹, as well as other biomes, on our subtle energetic fields.

In parallel, science has proven the therapeutic functions of the aromatic plants. Mint varieties are decongestants; calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) and barbatimão (*Stryphnodendron adstringens*), serve as wound-healing agents; espinheira-santa (*Maytenus ilicifolia*) and ginger, digestives. Passionfruit and lemon balm are calming agents, recommended for depression along with rosemary; and for low immunity, turmeric.

When combined, scientific information, ethnobotany and ancestral wisdom reveal that everything in the microcosm is also present in the macrocosm; the physical and spiritual are one, and all of nature originates from the same DNA. These are observations Indigenous peoples have long shared.

If we fail to perceive the virtues of plants — whether fragrant, entheogenic, or PANC (Non-Conventional Food Plants) — it is because our

1. Located in eastern Brazil, the *Cerrado* is the world's most biodiverse savanna, home to 5% of the planet's animals and plant. (T.N.)

personal GPSs are ‘turned off’. Plants send us key messages. But what are those messages?

The first key message is to observe, bringing awareness to the present moment, to the “now”. When we are observing, we are fully conscious, focused, and inspired. The brain sends electrical impulses that boost the body’s adrenaline and neuronal synapses.

Systemic observation extends to the plant’s habitat and behaviour, as well as identifying the element to which it belongs. The pursuit of attunement to the elemental is also a quest for connection with the plant’s spirit. When we look closely, we notice that nature, in its varied forms and colours, presents itself with virtuous geometry. Nature’s creator has imprinted it with a divine symmetry, marked by identical geometric proportions. We see it in flowers, trees, natural landscapes, ancient monuments, classical paintings, esoteric traditions (e.g., the Kabbalah), and Indigenous arts (e.g., the *kenês*). This noble, aureus geometry infuses beauty into human artistry, expressing harmony and well-being.

The second key message is interdependence. Planet Earth is an immense network where all beings are interconnected, even if they do not realize it. We see this in the most basic relationships, from the connection between photosynthesis and respiration, to the decisive influence of the climate on human life.

What happens in Africa affects the Amazon rainforest. Disruptions in these interrelationships lead to the destruction of ecosystems, environmental catastrophes, and physical and mental illnesses. One example of this interdependence is the phenomenon of the “flying rivers.” São Paulo state, in southeastern Brazil, is only able to produce aromatic plants and other agricultural products due to the rivers that form in the atmosphere.

In South America, it is common for rain to fall along the coastal regions, even though the southeastern region lies at the same latitude as desert areas in other parts of the planet. So, why do we have rain in a desert-prone region? Because the Amazon rainforest is a factory of environmental services: it irrigates the atmosphere thanks to its centenarian trees such as the *Samaúma* (*Ceiba pentandra*)², which pump thousands of

2. *Samaúma*, a.k.a. the “Queen of the Forest,” may reach heights of up to 60 metres (197 feet), making it one of the tallest trees in the Amazon. (T.N.)

litres of water daily. This process occurs due to evapotranspiration and the “flying rivers,” which collide with the Andes and then flow toward the continent’s southeastern region.

It is the Indigenous peoples who have maintained this environmental service factory working for centuries, as true guardians of the rainforest, to whom we owe recognition and support in protecting their lands and preserving their cultures.

The third key message is impermanence, which reveals that everything is in constant transformation. In nature, everything is in motion; alchemy is unceasing, as plants transmute phosphorus into sulphur, magnesium into limestone, and nitrogen into potassium. Roots communicate through fungi, sending messages of caution and alertness, thus activating teacher plants (entheogenic plants) in an effort to balance ecosystems. It is the phytosphere trying to communicate with the noosphere (us) to save the biosphere.

Above the ground, transformation is also constant. Seeds germinate, blossom, and then flowers turn into fruits that complete their vegetative cycle. The flora provides us with the foundations to comprehend the cycles responsible for the health and harmony of nature. These cycles are continuous, but impermanent: the seasons of the year, the lunar influence, and the movement of the tides. The plants are in tune with these cycles, flowing through transformations and fulfilling their roles. Humans undergo transformations, especially through the rites of passage of life and death. It is this connection to and understanding of these cycles that promote both individual and planetary health and healing.

The fourth key message is diversity, which shows that the coexistence of differences is necessary for the growth and balance of the system. Nature establishes sensitive and creative relationships with all beings, without prejudice; the greater the diversity, the more stable the ecosystem. There is a universal law by which nature renews itself creating new species while eliminating other species; constantly adapting with the aim of preserving its ecosystems.

Biodiversity is sustained through coevolution. Insects and flowers coevolve, as do animals and forests. Coevolution is an ascending spiral, much like DNA itself. The great Brazil nut tree, with 50 metres (164

feet) in height, will only bear fruit if specific bees—those with long tongues—pollinate its closed flower. These bees, in turn, will multiply if nourished by a certain orchid that lives on the large trees of the forest.

Nature does not discriminate; no part is better than another. Biodiversity is what makes life on the planet possible. The human realm is becoming increasingly homogeneous, driven by a system of exclusion and limiting beliefs. In contrast, agroforestry, which mimics nature, teaches us how to be sustainable in diversity.

So, we hold the keys and access to knowledge, which is available to everyone, especially those who make use of the visionary entheogenic plants, and know how to decode information. Plant technology serves as a powerful interface with the cosmic DNA.

The vegetable technology can dialogue with virtual technology, creating a quantum culture: individual awareness for collective action in benefit of the common good.

The focus is on relationships: no being is better than another. We are all connected to the source creator.

The keys bring us in touch with intuition and creativity, stimulating us to cultivate our inner virtues. The combined keys open a portal — a new paradigm for the creation of self-managing networks.

The cooperation network is what sustains life on the planet. Humans, attuned to the plants through the creator's channel, can create a new paradise on Earth.



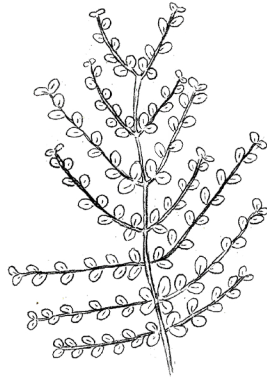
Rosemary
(*Rosmarinos officinalis*)



Lavander
(*Lavandula spica*)



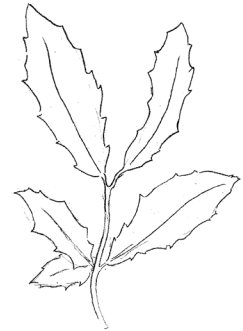
Eucalyptus
(*Eucalyptus*)



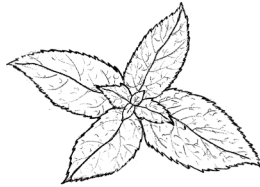
Barbatimão
(*Stryphnodendron*)



Turmeric
(*Curcuma longa*)



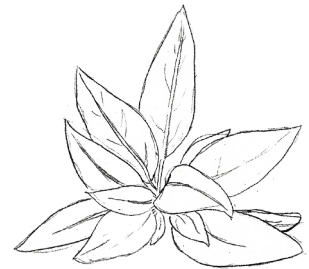
Espinheira-santa
(*Maytenus ilicifolia*)



Mint
(*Mentha spicata*)



Calendula
(*Calendula officinalis*)



Sage
(*Salvia officinalis*)



Passion fruit
(*Passiflora edulis*)



Lemon balm
(*Melissa officinalis*)



Ginger
(*Zingiber officinalis*)

Vera is a historian and researcher, as well as the founder of Viridis Produtos Naturais [Viridis Natural Products]. She has 30 years of experience in Amazonian ethnobotany and holds a specialisation degree in Innovation Management in Phytomedicine of Brazilian Biodiversity, from Fiocruz*. Currently, she is vice-president of the Institute of Cultural and Environmental Studies (IECAM) and cultivates phytotherapeutics in the mountains of Rio de Janeiro.

* Prominent public health institution dedicated to research, development, and production of vaccines, medicines, and public health policies, founded in Brazil in 1900 (N.T.)

TRANSLATION
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Rayane is a Brazilian junior researcher specialising in the ethnobotany of Brazilian traditional groups and the ethnopharmacology of their medicinal plants. Having followed Selvagem for years, she now appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the study cycle as a translator.

TRANSLATION REVISION
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Harebella is a Brazilian artist based in Berlin. She works as a cinematographer, creative director and photographer in documentary, fiction and commercial projects.

The editorial production work of the Selvagem Notebooks is carried out collectively with the Selvagem community. The editorial coordination is by Alice Faria and the design by Tania Grillo and Érico Peretta. The coordinator of English translations is Marina Matheus.

More information at selvagemciclo.com.br

All Selvagem activities and materials are shared free of charge. For those who wish to give something back, we invite you to financially support the Living Schools, a network of 5 educational centres for the transmission of Indigenous culture and knowledge.

Find out more at selvagemciclo.com.br/colabore

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