

# The Makings of Fragrances

## Part 2



### Bergamot

Our grandmothers swore by the invigorating effect of this feel-good fragrance. Bergamot oil was and still is an important ingredient in "aqua mirabilis," which went on to become world famous under the name "Kölnisch Wasser" or simply Cologne: Fresh, fruity and pronouncedly unique, with a gentle, floral component.

Bergamot is a cross between bitter orange and lemon. Native to the Canary Islands, today it is cultivated in Sicily, Asia and the Ivory Coast. The emerald-green oil that's obtained from its peels is one of the most important raw materials used in making perfume. It harmonizes with any number of other oils, like neroli, sandalwood and jasmine. But the aroma of bergamot also lends invigorating accents to beverages – like world famous Earl Grey tea.

### Violet

Violet stands for humility and modesty. But the scent of the sensitive, somehow innocent "little blue rose" is something you'll never forget: Leafy-sweet, floral, warm and romantic. "No sweeter scent is there than that of violet," enthused English philosopher, author and politician Sir Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

about this bluish-violet little blossom with its heart-shaped petals.

Violet is primarily cultivated in France and Italy. Its greenish, pungent oil is obtained from its petals through extraction, dissolved in alcohol and then distilled. The extract, "violet absolute," is a precious commodity, because it's only produced by the kilogram, not by the ton as in the case of lavender oil, for example. It is used sparingly to enhance floral perfumes like jasmine, bergamot or geranium compositions.



### Tuberose

It's proud and mysterious, a mistress of the night. Only in the dark of the evening does tuberose (night-blooming hyacinth) exude its highly feminine fragrance: Sensual, floral, sultry, with an all but intoxicating sweetness – and an almost intoxicating price. The oil obtained from tuberose blossoms numbers among the world's most costly perfume essences. One kilogram costs



around \_ 20,000; worldwide, only some 15 kilograms are produced annually.

The white tuberose has similarities with lily and freesia and is chiefly cultivated in southern France, Italy and Morocco. Its radiantly white blossoms are picked individually by hand early in the morning, wrapped in moist cloths and then immediately processed into tuberose absolute through solvent extraction.



### **Mimosa**

It has a reputation for being extremely sensitive. And this preconception applies to "true" mimosa (*Mimosa pudica*): It closes its petals at the slightest touch, and doesn't open them again until much later. However the mimosas that are used to make perfumes have nothing to do with this variety, which is also termed the "sensitive plant." Acacias, too, are also grown and traded under the name mimosa. But these "false" mimosas are indispensable for perfumers.

Mimosa absolute is obtained from the blossoms and stem tips of the species *Acacia decurrens*. Native to Australia, today it is cultivated in Provence (southern France) and in Piedmont (northern Italy). The pleasant, gentle scent of mimosa harmonizes well with sandalwood and ylang-ylang.

### **Narcissus**

The narcissus – also called daffodil – rings in the spring season and is considered to be a flower of promise: In days gone by, if a young man gave white narcissi to the love of his life, it was taken to be a token of his deep affection.

White narcissus (*Narcissus poeticus*) is cultivated in France, Morocco and Egypt. The absolute is obtained from its petals. It has an earthy scent and only develops its wonderfully floral-sultry



fragrance in diluted form. It is said to lend wings to the imagination and to soften the senses and make them receptive, even euphoric, with its appealing scent. It's an effect that should not be underestimated: After all, this beautiful flower owes its name to Narcissus, a young man from Greek mythology who fell in love with his own reflection