

TRAINING & EDUCATION.

Anyone considering a career in aromatherapy should study all the articles on this site carefully. You will then have an idea on what to be on the lookout for, and how to avoid wasting your money.

Do I need to take a training course?

Minor updating 2014

Aromatherapy is no different to many other subjects in that it is only worth paying for a course if **the teachers know their subject**. Sadly this is rarely the case in aromatherapy and yet many schools around the world charge exorbitant fees.

I have been contacted by dissatisfied students of UK colleges. Huge amounts of what they teach are still based on the popular books (I call them novels-see reviews). The majority of these books are packed with errors, misinformation, corrupted science and sometimes dangerous advice.

This situation of courses run by teachers who know little about their therapy is **endemic** in aromatherapy. This is an appalling indictment of the UK Department of Education and their lack of ability to monitor the quality of information provision. Their Civil Servants only listen to what trade association representatives tell them. Civil Servants have this strange idea that trade interests know best how to set standards and what is best to protect public interests! That crazy concept has been shown time and time again to be contrary to protecting the public from rogues in any trade.

The fact a course is "approved" by a so called leading trade association is almost meaningless. None of these organisations have ever undertaken an evaluation of the accuracy of what their members are teaching. **There are too many people making cash out of a gullible public to force change.**

A 'good' training course in aromatherapy should help improve therapists skills. It should maximise the effects they can achieve by using essential oils in a safe and effective manner.

If you want to use **massage**, then training is advisable because there are medical conditions where massage should not be used. A short course on massage is always worthwhile - in the UK there are many of those. In the USA the courses tend to be very expensive and lengthy, only worth doing if you want to become a professional.

In the USA, Canada, NZ, Australia, Japan, etc. there are so called "advanced" courses that can cost thousands of Dollars. However, the instruction on essential oils is mainly based around inaccurate aromatherapy books. These course providers pack their lessons with peripheral issues such as anatomy, chemistry, etc. simply because their knowledge on the important issues of essential oil use is so weak. Therefore, you are paying a high price for information that could be learnt better from other more expert sources. Many teach information based on the French aromatherapy system. A system that itself is packed with major errors and poor science. **To this day much of their information are theoretical considerations based on the major components found in the oils, NOT on research based on the whole oils – see the article 'Chemical-Families-effects' for more on this aspect.**

Paying thousands for aromatherapy courses can be a waste of money if you want quality, but many think it gives them more credibility within the trade if they have been trained by a popular 'name'.

If you are an **essential oil supplier, or natural product maker**, then you should gain a deeper insight into what you are doing rather than just reading the popular books. This is particularly

important over the safe and legal use of essential oils. Anyone can set themselves up as a supplier with a fancy website without any training. Many have done just that, even some of the suppliers who have been around a long time and are now thought to be very knowledgeable - some are after 20 odd years of trading. In the UK I know businesses established by people who had no knowledge of the essential oil trade or how to use the oils. Some of these people visited other UK and French suppliers to gain what knowledge they could. Some are still around and run training courses based on the French style of chemical misinformation. **Talk about the blind leading the blind!!**

If you want to take a course simply to enable you to better use the therapy for your Family and friends, then a good short term course may be worthwhile.

If you want to study anything as a career then you should always keep pace with developments in your trade and continue learning for very many years. I can never hope to learn all there is to know about this huge subject of essential oils in my lifetime.

You must also consider why you want to take a course.

If you want to become a professional therapist, then you should consider if after spending all that cash, "can I make a living"?

In the UK few can now make a living as a full time aromatherapist. This is because the market has become saturated with badly trained part timers. These people are still being churned out every year like a sausage machine. The trade organisations have never made any attempt to restrict the numbers being trained, this has resulted in professional full time work being all but eliminated.

There are still opportunities for those in the medical profession to utilise aromatherapy within conventional health care systems.

In many other countries such as the USA and the Far East, there are still opportunities for full time work. However, overseas readers must be careful in assuming that a school or teacher being approved by a trade organisation means their course must be good, it does NOT.

Many people in the Far East in particular, have been misled into thinking that certain beauty therapy companies are in fact approved examination councils. **In reality they are private companies whose prime motive is making money, not in providing sound education.** So try not to be fooled by people who claim their courses are: "approved by standard setting organisations". These organisations officials often know nothing about the trades they are setting standards on. All they are interested in is procedures and protocols, not that the students get sound knowledge on their trade.

Also in **Japan, China and Taiwan** there are schools set up simply as money making businesses. They often try to get their courses endorsed by a well known Western author of aromatherapy books which students think gives the course credibility. Some of these businesses only care about making money. They do not care if what they are teaching is wrong, ineffective or dangerous. If you come across such a 'name' I suggest you try and contact the person to see if in fact they are associated with the school.

Overseas readers also need to be aware that certain UK based aromatherapy organisations continually lie about the true status of their organisation to their overseas clients. For example, I found out that publications in the Far East were carrying information saying that "the IFPA had merged with the IFA" this was one year after that merger failed!

Be wary of those courses claiming to supply "the latest scientific data". Some of these teachers are just copying articles from aromatherapy journals. Such journals tend to feature

information which has not been published by reputable medical and scientific publications. In addition, they often use database information where the differences between herbal preparations and essential oils have not been clearly defined.

Scientific information is misused in an attempt to prove that an essential oil has the same actions as in the research on the herb. See the articles on Canadian course for examples.

This aspect is one of the biggest blunders made within aromatherapy as a whole.

Below are my responses to an article *now removed* that used to be on <http://www.hindawi.com/journals/ecam/2004>

This paper has merits as an academic study of the fractions extracted from *Betula Pendula* buds. However, in several respects it is misleading, particularly for practitioners of Complementary Medicine. I question if this journal should publish such studies when there is no close connection between the research and traditional medicine.

1. The authors give references on the traditional uses of Birch. However, there is no clear link between the use of a herbal tea or tincture in phytotherapy with the extract that they produced. In a traditional herbal preparation the main active ingredients can be water soluble only and they may not occur in the same plants essential oil. On the other hand, so called "birch oil" in the marketplace is totally different to the lab extracts obtained by these authors. Therefore, their extract is only remotely related to the traditional uses the authors claim for birch buds.

2. The authors cite the use of birch oil in cosmetic and flavouring due to its characteristic fragrance. Any birch oil used in such products typically contains over 90% methyl salicylate which gives the characteristic fragrance. **The analysis made by these authors of their extract is lacking in that chemical.**

3. Birch wood does not possess oil bearing glands and therefore the extract commonly referred to as "birch oil" is a misnomer. Commercial birch oil (if it is genuine which it frequently is not) is made via enzymatic conversion of the starting materials and is no more 'natural' than coal tar in my view. If birch buds possess oil glands I do not know, but if they do, there has been no commercial extraction or traditional use of that essential oil or oil extract.

4. Whatever the extract produced by these authors could be called, it has unknown safety and no traditional uses.

I would therefore urge traditional therapists to treat such academic exercises as of vague interest rather than trying to use them as justification for the efficacy of certain extracts. Good science can be great to confirm traditional uses, but this paper is weak in that regard.

Important: If on a training course you have been provided with copies of my essential oils monographs by anyone not on the list below, it is without my knowledge. The materials that I license for teaching students are far more comprehensive than the simplified monographs intended for general publication. The only exception being the main database monographs and few schools could afford to supply those to students.

Please do not send me emails asking if one course is better than another. I can only recommend those schools below that I believe to be to be among the best around.

UK - See 'Publications' - course page.

CANADA Only I.A.T.A. approved schools and teachers. <http://www.aroma.net>

USA - Tampa, FL. Atlantic Institute of Aromatherapy <http://Atlanticinstitute.com>