

Storing Essential Oils

Heat, light and oxygen are the three main causes of essential oils deteriorating. The average shelf life of essential oils is six months to two years and the therapeutic effects will inevitably diminish with age.

Oils, particularly citrus oils, should be stored in a cool, dry place, no more than 15°C, to maximise their shelf life and prevent the heat from deteriorating the oils.

Ideally they should be stored in a refrigerator at 5°C or in a special box fit for the purpose with individual compartments for each bottle. Some oils do solidify at very low temperatures and may have to be left at room temperature for a couple of hours before use, some, however, only require holding in your hand for a few minutes to liquify the waxy oil.

The bottles containing the essential oil should be a dark, amber or cobalt blue colour, never clear, to prevent exposure to sunlight as this leads to evaporation of these highly volatile oils.

Image courtesy of Gareth Boden www.garethboden.com

Bottles should be made of glass as plastic interacts with essential oils and changes their chemical composition. They should have an air tight stopper to prevent oxidation and a small opening reducer incorporated into the neck of the bottle, allowing the essential oils to be released in drops for accurate measurement.



Rubber droppers may be used to measure out essential oils, however they must never be left in the essential oil bottle as the rubber will be destroyed by the potent essential oils. The bottles should also be stored in a sponge lined box for safety.

Essential oils must never be placed near a naked flame or other source of heat as they are highly flammable, or placed on a polished or painted surface as they will cause damage.

All bottles should be clearly labelled to prevent misuse, with the botanical or Latin name and ideally, the country of origin and the method of extraction.

Essential oils have 'common' names which most people use because they are familiar to them e.g. lavender, neroli, rose, chamomile. However, problems usually arise when the oil has more than one common name e.g. neroli is also called 'orange blossom'.



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There are also some essential oils that come in many different varieties each with its, own specific, therapeutic quality, for instance there are many varieties of eucalyptus oil each having its own unique effects.

The only way to recognise which essential oil is which, is to identify the oils by their Latin names e.g.

Sweet Eucalyptus is *Eucalyptus Globulus*

Lemon Eucalyptus is *Eucalyptus Citriadora*

Common Eucalyptus is *Eucalyptus Radiata*

Roman Chamomile is *Chamaemelum nobile*

German Chamomile is *Matricaria recutica*

