



## *A Druid Looks at Plants and Planets*

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Over the past several years, I have developed a way to work with astrology and flower essence therapy I find very satisfying for my clients and myself. This combination is not unique to me, but I have refined it through my own methods. Here is a description of that process and some background information on the roots of my inspiration.

When I began my astrology practice ten years ago, I felt constricted by the traditional once-per-year contact with the client. I could see that many clients became overwhelmed by the amount of information contained in the reading. Unless clients have some astrology background, they have few resources to interact with the information, symbols, and possibilities in the chart in a single session. Nor did I want to foster a dependence upon my interpretation of the chart that might keep a client asking for more information of the “what’s going to happen next?” variety.

With practice, I learned how to condense what the chart contained, but I knew something was missing. Astrology is a spiritual practice and an art that needs focused attention to be helpful at a deep level. Although most clients who come to see us are working on other aspects of their development, astrology should be seen as an ongoing exploration, unique in itself and deserving of time and reflection.

When working with clients over a period of several months, I find that the chart becomes a familiar map of possible action and response.

### **Arrival of Flower Essences**

There was something else missing from my practice. I have a strong connection to the natural world and earth spirit. I wanted to share my love of nature with my clients. In this vein, I urge them to get acquainted with astrology by watching the sky. I encourage them to become aware of the Moon's cycle, the seasonal placement of the Sun and the constellations, and the morning and evening stars. Astrology comes alive as we watch the Moon wax and wane and see Jupiter's bright eye in the sky. If I could connect my clients with plants through flower essences, I knew that they would discover the healing power within that is part of this natural world.

My acquaintance with flower essences began in 1988 when a friend brought me a little bottle of Dr. Bach's Rescue Remedy after I was injured in a car accident. I was lucky to escape the wreckage with only a broken nose, but I was incapacitated for a few days with bruises and torn ligaments in body and spirit[. I felt dark holes open suddenly in front of me, and rage would wash over me — a rage not connected to my thoughts. I drank a glass of water with a few drops of Dr. Bach's potent remedy and was put back together. I would fall back into deep depression and, once more, be rescued by those powerful flower

drops.

Flower essences became my friends and companions after that. I studied Dr. Bach's books and was drawn to the combination of energetic healing with the wisdom of plants and the natural healing that they provide. Like homeopathy, flower essences teach us that "less is more" — a new kind of physics where we come to value and work with the pattern of manifestation before it takes form on the physical plane. In sessions with astrology clients, I began to think: "This person could use flower essences!"

After taking a certification program in flower essences, I started using the client's chart to give me clues about the correct formula of essences to be taken between monthly appointments. We agree to meet for a minimum of three sessions, but most clients choose to continue longer with this process, which is so fruitful.

I introduce plants that have a connection to planets in an aspect or stellium in the client's chart, and the formula is often successful in aiding a movement toward greater consciousness. The flower essences that clients take between sessions work their gentle power to shift perspective. They offer the protection necessary to arrive at new, sometimes radical solutions to old problems.

### **What Are Flower Essences?**

When I work with flower essences, I am connecting the client to the vibrational energy of the plant, rather than the chemical content. Flower essences are not herbal preparations, nor are they essential oils, as used in Aromatherapy. The essences are gathered by floating blossoms on spring water and infusing them with sunlight. From here, they are diluted in brandy and water until no chemical effects from the plant are present. The essences work directly

with the subtle energy body.

Flower essences are traditionally taken in drops under the tongue. They are also effective in a glass of water, added to bath water, or sprayed in the air. Since flower essences are vibratory medicines, some clients find them helpful even when they are not ingested. People who have a strong connection to energy healing often carry a bottle of flower essence around with them.

When we experience ourselves as part of a network of light and movement rather than separate solid objects, we understand why \_ these simple preparations of flower soul energy can be so powerful. Theories about physical objects as light and energy flow have become part of our concept of physics. As we embrace energy therapies, such as acupuncture, and as we open ourselves to the healing power of shamanic cultures, we begin to appreciate our own healing traditions. Flower essences provide an effective bridge between the medical treatment of the past and the new, complementary healing methods of the present.



### **Dr. Bach**

Dr. Edward Bach developed flower essences during the 1930s in England. Bach was a famous bacteriologist and homeopath who had come to the

conclusion that illness begins in the emotional body before it manifests in the physical body. He wanted to find a source of healing easily available to country people who cannot afford to go to a doctor. Bach left a successful practice and a teaching position in London to search for a new kind of medicine. Certain that he would find this new medicine in nature, he wandered the English and Welsh countryside looking for inspiration. At first, he used the dew on plants as the essence. By touching the dew to his lips, he could sense the ailments and psychic imbalances that the healing power of the plant was able to address. Later, he arrived at the method of obtaining the essence by floating flowers on spring water and infusing them with sunlight. From this water, he made remedies that had amazing results with his patients.

Dr. Bach discovered that flower essences encapsulate the pattern of the flower, and he developed 38 essences that he connected to various psychological profiles. Bach chose to use the homeopathic method of working with character types rather than physical ailments.

In the 1980s, new flower essences were developed by practitioners all over the world. Energetic plant medicine has blossomed and evolved in many directions. The Devic communication made manifest in the Findhorn Garden in Scotland took plant spirit medicine in a new direction. The pioneering work of the Flower Essence Society of California developed flower essences from plants are native to that part of the country. As the practices of shamans and herbalists from traditional societies are sought as teachers by Western practitioners, we acknowledge further cooperation between plant and human. There are now thousands of flower essences, which are collected and used in a variety of ways. The plant kingdom seems eager to collaborate with humans, to help us heal and evolve so that we may survive in peace and harmony on the planet.

## **Druid Integration**

I owe the integration of astrology and flower essence therapy to my Druid studies begun in 1990. As a practicing Druid, I see plants and planets in a network of life and energy, visible and invisible, which includes me and all else in its embrace. When I look at a plant, I see the energy pattern as well as the physical structure. I see lines of light that are the representation of some other current, perhaps not light, but translated into a comprehensible form, visible to my eye.

Until Druidry gave me the language to communicate directly with the spirits of natural places — trees, plants, stones, earth, and breezes — I had felt a terrible yearning and frustration. I knew the language exists that could connect me to nonhuman creation, but I did not know how to access it. I needed the wisdom and guidance of the natural world but was deaf to the language that I could only sense all around me. My Druid training opened my ears to this language.

Druidry sees all creation as imbued with spirit and recognizes many realms of parallel existence that are imperceptible to the senses. From this position, I am able to enter the “web” of communication. There is no concept of the superiority or separation of our species. There is no hierarchy in consciousness: A stone, a tree, a dog, an earth spirit, and a human perceive reality from their own viewpoint. Creation is interconnected and interdependent. Humans dwell in a small band of sight and sound and an even smaller range of smell and intuition, yet we can open up to keener perception when we understand our potential for listening, seeing, and sensing. Animals, plants, and minerals also evolve in their ability to communicate and adapt to changing circumstances. Druidry combines a respect for what has gone before with a responsibility to develop creative responses to what is going on in the present.



## **Plants and Planets:**

### **The Doctrine of Signatures**

Western healers were astrologers in many societies, and their medicine was plant material. The Doctrine of Signatures, as conveyed by Paracelsus, looks for the correspondence between the physical characteristics of plants and the organs of the human body. As an example, Mullein has furry leaves, which gives a clue to the use of this plant for chest and lung ailments: The “fur” is similar to the cilia of the trachea and the alveoli of the lung.

Correspondence between the zodiacal mapping of the human body and plant characteristics is another clue herbalists were trained to observe. Yellow flowers and roots are associated with the Sun; red flowers, leaves, and roots, with Mars. A thistle might also be associated with Mars because of its spikes. **"The signs and symptoms of the disease — the qualities of hot and cold, dry and moist — were related to the appropriate plants and planets. for instance, fever, because of its heat, and bleeding because of its red color, was associated with fire (heat) and with an excess of Mars. The White flowered yarrow plant, ruled by Venus, considered a balance for the excess**

**of Mars) is used to staunch the flow of blood and to cool fevers. Chiron used the herb to the bleeding of Achilles. The Latin name for Yarrow is Achilles millefolium.**

Nicholas Culpeper, a 17th-century social revolutionary, herbalist, apothecary, and astrologer, left us with several herbal guidebooks still in print today. These were the first such texts written in English, rather than Latin, so that the common people might have access to healing from easily available plants. Along with each herb, Culpeper noted its ruling planet. Folk tradition, which had always depended upon plants and astrology, had been devastated by the witch trials, so people were terrified to admit any knowledge of herbs. Culpeper was able to give the tradition back to those from whom it had been stolen.

Here is an example of how the Doctrine of Signatures can be used with flower essences to address a physical ailment: Snapdragon has a tiny mouth that opens and “snaps” shut and was thus a good remedy for a client with Bell’s Palsy, a disease causing pain and drooping paralysis of the head and face. My client had been diagnosed with this uncomfortable malady, which has no medicinal cure, and she was told that it would probably go away in six months to a year. Transiting Mars had just entered her 1st house. I suspected that this entry of Mars into Aries’s house had taken the form of this painful attack on her head and face, parts of the body traditionally ruled by Aries. I gave her an essence of Snapdragon, based upon the appearance of jaws in this flower. The pain and paralysis were gone in a few days.

After her Bell’s Palsy lifted, my client was then able to carry out some plans for a community group. Mars in her 1st house could now support her personal talents, she became ‘the head’ of the civic organization rather than a woman with a painful attack upon her head. The energy and determination of Mars in her first house was transformed by the use of this particular flower



essence. Astrology gives me the symbolic language to move between emotional **expression** and bodily symptoms.

Although astrology is now disdained in the West, Asian herbal and energetic medicine retains its connection to the elements and the workings of the heavens. Western patients who fully appreciate Chinese medicine (such as acupuncture and herbs) are often unaware of the PARALLEL traditional connection between Western astrology and medicine.

### **Combining Astrology and Flower Essences**

In my own work with clients, I rarely use the model of personality types (or descriptions of the use of particular flowers) employed by other flower essence practitioners. This is because the astrology chart has so much to offer as clues to flower essence formulas. Quite often, I am delighted to discover how an essence has worked on an issue that was not discussed in the session. Here's an example where one essence worked on a variety of issues, all connected with Pisces:

Water Lily blossoms on top of water but has deep taproots that anchor the plant to the bottom of the lake. I used Water Lily essence with a client who has the Sun and Venus in Pisces. She had terrible pains in her feet, a part of the body ruled by Pisces. This client also has Neptune conjunct her North Node in Libra, which suggests that she needs to listen to her Pisces, Jupiter (RULER OF PISCES), Neptune, and Venus (ruler of Libra) voices to move into new territory. The pains in her feet came at a time when she was about to take a "big step." I believed that this client was not able to trust her Piscean energy to solve problems and feel secure. Instead, she tended to fall back on her South Node in Aries and Mars in Capricorn, often using a sledgehammer where a gentle touch was needed.

The Water Lily eased the pain in her feet and allowed her to trust herself to make decisions based on feeling rather than a need for certainty. She could explore Piscean and Libran modes of trust and could thus release her reliance on survival methods. As a side benefit, she found that Water Lily enhanced her sexual desire (Venus in Pisces), which enriched her relationship with her husband. She also set aside time in her busy schedule to meditate. Like the Water Lily, she opened to her potential to float while feeling the roots deep beneath her.

Sometimes I hear the name of a plant as I am listening to the client and working with the astrology chart. Knowing that this person has an issue with a particular astrological transit, I look for plants that, by tradition or appearance or name, connect to the planet or sign involved.

When I am gathering a new flower essence, I may hear the voice of the plant in my head. For example, I sit next to a Rue plant while gathering an essence and hear a dialogue of sorrow and isolation, loss and a higher octave of perception, which I weave into my future relationship with this essence. When I am learning about a new essence, I look in books for clues about the plant I am considering. It might be a book about flower essences or a field guide or an herbal text. Occasionally, clients have told me about a plant to which they feel drawn, or I may suggest a flower and they are excited to recall a recent connection to that plant.

Leaning on the traditional connection between herbs and astrology, I have a good foundation for reaching out to new plants — even those not generally used by herbalists because of their toxic chemistry. There is no chemical content from the plant in flower essences. They are potent as vibrational remedies that act upon a pattern of the human body and spirit before it becomes manifest physically. Here, we can SEE a parallel with astrology and how a chart can

reflect something that happens in the symbolic representation of the sky during a particular moment in time.

The connection between plants and planets and signs takes a variety of forms, shapes, colors, and even numbers. For example, the Rose family has five petals and thus a traditional connection to Venus. Why Venus? Because, with her five-step cycle as evening and morning star, she has been portrayed as a five-pointed star, the pentacle; the number 5 is often associated with the feminine energy of the Goddess. When Venus is uncomfortable in a natal chart because of sign, placement, or aspect to other planets or is under siege during a transit, flower essences with Venus characteristics can be tried as an antidote. This has to be done very carefully over several sessions, to avoid ACTIVATING the pattern of resistance to Venus energy.

A variety of Rose-family essences have helped clients who yearn for satisfying relationships but who are discouraged by a history of failed love affairs. As progressed Venus changes signs or houses, it's not unusual for this despair to lift and for clients to find room in their hearts to try love again.

A client who had been reluctantly willing to stay in a marriage that she felt had "no relationship left in it" found that she could take advantage of her Venus progressing into the 7th house. Venus had been focusing on practical 6th-house matters that were now inadequate in the house of partnership. Working over several months, this client was able to attract more love into her life, which resulted in "a deep and profound intimate relationship which continues to enrich my life two years later. Flower essences helped me get ready." she chose to leave the marriage, as so often happens, once my client found an outlet for her progressed Venus in the sphere of a vital relationship, she was also able to make a radical career change as well.

## **Flower Power**

A man who has a Virgo Ascendant, a Scorpio Moon, and natal Pluto conjunct his Leo Sun had spent the first 45 years of his life keeping a low profile. At work, he resented people who were not doing their share of the tasks and was critical of supervisors who were not offering direction. As Uranus opposed his Sun–Pluto conjunction, he came to me, angry and frustrated, convinced that nothing could be done yet hopeful that a new way of looking at the problem might help.

We talked about the Sun–Pluto combination; it might make him eager to use power as a means to communicate who he was, but also fearful of that power. Uranus was now demanding he express himself through the use of power in some way, but nothing about his life choices had thus far prepared him for dealing with his conflict and frustration. I began with a flower formula to support his Sun.

For a long time, this man had felt that he had no right to be angry with other people and had no power to ask them to change behaviors that annoyed him. As a Leo, he had a special responsibility to allow his Sun to shine; yet, that was distasteful to him, as is so often the case with Leo Sun–Pluto combinations.

Even in my descriptions of the flowers I was giving him, he felt a new kind of hopeful enthusiasm. We talked about how joyful the Sun and dandelions could make you feel on an early spring morning. Dandelion is a good flower essence for courage, since the flowers resemble the Sun but do not seem overly ostentatious to those who are afraid of their own solar heat.

I also gave him Angelica and Yarrow. I thought the Angelica would help him to feel protected and safe as he ventured into new places, and Yarrow is the hollow tube that can bring the voice of our inner guides to consciousness.

A month later, my client came in, delighted with the flower formula he said had helped him to “stop being angry and start suggesting ideas.” He had

organized a weekly coffee meeting so that new projects could be discussed and reviewed between supervisors and workers. \_ The weekly gatherings put his supervisors on the spot to come up with some guidance, but In the context of a social gathering people felt more comfortable with each other as they tackled difficult issues.

We worked next on issues of releasing old resentments. My client felt blocked from full participation in the process he had set up. There was a certain amount of regret in the ease with which he could now see solutions to situations that had previously been so bothersome. This feeling of regret and “why didn’t I do this sooner?” kept him in a state of subdued anger with himself and others. I gave him Willow, which pulls out tears and resentment. I mixed this with Snapdragon, to release the tension he felt in his jaws from not speaking for so long, and Lemon Balm to allow him a sense of general comfort.

At the third session, he was quite elated with his turnaround in attitude. There were still problems at work, but he could separate himself from the more persistent and deep-seated knots to work at the level of practical solutions to issues.

He decided to run for shop steward of his union, although he was unsure whether people resented or liked the changes he had suggested. This time, I made up a formula of Sunflower and Trumpet Vine to project his desire for leadership so that others could see and hear him. I also added Potato to give him grounding in the element of earth for his spirited quest for change. Buttercup was the fourth essence of this quartet. This bright yellow flower acts to support a sense of equality and community, reminding him that he is neither superior nor inferior to those he was asking to represent.

He won the union election, much to his own amazement, and in further sessions went on to work on personal relationships and the search for his true

spiritual path.

### **Movement in Chart Expression**

We all know that people experience and express an astrological event on many levels. Flower essences help clients to shift how they react to a natal aspect or transit.

Low energy and lack of fire often indicate that Mars is unable to function at its best. Mars in the chart represents our vital energy, our life force, as well as our sexual dynamic and how we feel and express anger. If the basic energy of the person is thwarted by Mars's sign, placement OR ASPECT in the chart, the life force can feel frustrated or can be expressed only in aggression or competition.

A client who has Mars and Mercury conjunct Neptune placed near the MC of her chart felt confused and “lifeless” about career issues. I tried a formula with Habañero Pepper, so she could feel the fire in her Mars. Rosemary essence gave a clear vision of Mercury through the mist of Neptune. Honeysuckle as symbolized in its spiral growth upward, offered a model for the indirect approach to Mercury and Mars. Instead of demanding action and information from her Mars and Mercury she began to hear and speak the messages that Neptune conjunct Mercury has to offer her. When Mars, Neptune, and Mercury worked together, my client found an outlet for her considerable talents in the realm of spiritual counseling. The work she finally settled on had no previous description in her experience but is a new profession with a constantly changing format.

This is where the invisible director, the soul, makes choices. The astrologer and the client contemplate a variety of dance steps to a well-known melody. The chart becomes a stage; the planets, dynamic actors in an endless, cosmic drama — a mythology constantly in the making. As I make an essence

from a living plant and as I work with clients, I am constantly reminded to step back from my own perspective to hear what chart, client, and flowers all have to say. Permission must be asked at every step.

As an astrologer and flower essence practitioner, I hope to provide a bridge between the astrological symbols and my clients. When clients become familiar with the dynamics of the chart and the action of flower essence formulas, they begin to grasp the resources available to them in astrology. The plants connect them to the transpersonal assistance of other realms and to the healing momentum that is within each person.

My clients (and their charts), the flowers, and I form a triangle of experiment and inquiry. The threads of evidence that alert me to a connection between the plants, the planets in the charts, and the issues that trouble clients are **woven** from tradition and intuition. This process continues to evolve.

### **Further Reading**

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