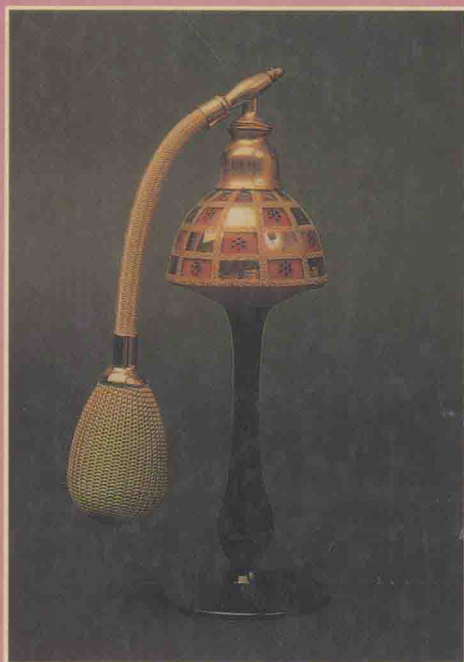


THE *Perfume* HANDBOOK



NIGEL GROOM



CHAPMAN & HALL



THE PERFUME HANDBOOK

NIGEL GROOM

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*THE
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The sources of perfume materials, as depicted in an early book on perfume – *Parfumeur Francoys* (Paris, 1680). They include civet cats and a goat, from the beard of which labdanum is being combed. Floating on the sea is ambergris.

Preface

In 1948 I was posted, as a Political Officer, to a remote part of south-west Arabia on the edge of the great desert called the Empty Quarter. In valleys made fertile by seasonal flood-waters lay the remains of an ancient civilization. I found inscriptions and the ruin sites of towns, palaces and temples. Almost buried under the sand dunes were the tumbled walls of a great city. From here, two thousand years before, huge camel caravans had trudged their way along 1600 miles of burning sand and rocks to Petra and Gaza, burdened with a most precious cargo – frankincense, myrrh and other perfume materials for the courts, temples and perfume shops of Rome.

My book *Frankincense and Myrrh* delved into the details of this romantic trade and led to a broader interest in the perfumes of ancient times. Then, researching on behalf of a perfume house into the Arab contribution to perfumery, I came across the collection of perfume recipes assembled by the Arab philosopher–scientist Yaqub al-Kindi, which have never been translated into English (some, which I have translated myself, are now included in an appendix to this book). I realized that in that work I had found key evidence to demonstrate how the medieval Arab perfume makers had been the bridge in perfume history between ancient and modern times. Perfumery could now be seen as an art with a continuous history of development since the dawn of civilization. This book has been compiled for a multitude of purposes, but among them is the object of affirming this continuity in the long story of perfumery. There is, therefore, no incongruity if an entry about a great ‘classic’ perfume of the 20th century appears next to one describing an unguent of ancient Greece; besides, both may well be found to contain some of the same exotic ingredients as were loaded on to camels in the spice market of that city in south-west Arabia all those centuries ago.

But it is for the person with a general interest in the perfumes of modern times that this book is principally intended, especially for the women (now about 40% of all women in this country) and, increasingly, the men, who like to use fragrances as a normal part of the process of getting dressed. Hitherto, they have been faced with a bewildering range of fragrances but have had little information to guide their selection of them. This book aims to help them choose their fragrances more confidently and to enable them to talk about the whole subject of

perfumery more intelligently. Others for whom it is hoped this book will be of value include those people who may wish to try making fragrances themselves. For them brief guidance notes, under the heading 'Perfume Making at Home', supported by an appendix of recipes and formulas, will provide an introduction into a fascinating occupation. Among other general monographs which will be found grouped together under the broad heading 'Perfume' is one on 'Perfume Containers', designed to help the growing number of persons who now follow the hobby of collecting perfume bottles. Throughout this work I have tried to give due recognition to the artists and craftsmen who design and manufacture the elegant and striking flacons in which perfumes are now contained.

There has always been a mystique in perfumery, but in modern times it has been overplayed. Many couture designers, concerned with nebulous objectives like the 'image' of their fashion houses, have preferred to keep the art of perfumery obscure, sometimes even so that it will appear they have personally created the fragrances they market. Thus the skill of the highly trained perfumer, who alone is capable of assembling the multiple ingredients of a modern perfume into a satisfying compound (see the entry for 'Perfume Creation'), has tended to be hidden under a cloak of anonymity. It is hoped that this work will go some way towards reasserting the importance of the trained perfumer and reaffirming them as artists.

I have sought to make this work technically acceptable to the botanist. In preparing entries for the many hundreds of plants used in perfumery which are recorded here, I have therefore, for the sake of accurate, scientific identification, given botanical names; but this inevitably leads to the problem of the constant changes of nomenclature as botanists discover, for example, that a plant found in one part of the world is identical with a plant found elsewhere and already named differently. Where more than one botanical name has applied I have therefore quoted them all, using the conventional equation format, but I have not sought to put the currently definitive botanical name first in the equation, as that would have been too onerous and beyond my competence. I am grateful to Nigel Hepper, of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, for his help and advice over some botanical aspects, including the spelling of some of the botanical names, but he has seen only a portion of the text and errors in it are my own.

Inevitably in the writing of a book of this sort, there will be omissions and inaccuracies. For these I apologize. I would also be very grateful to hear of them, through the publishers, in the hope that they can be rectified should a second edition of this book be possible.

Nigel Groom
Fulham, London

Illustrations

The atomizer featured on the front cover is French, *c.* 1930, and is in the National Museum of Perfume, Grasse. The photograph is by Claude Muzzin of Grasse.

Line drawings are by the author except where otherwise stated.

The design on the title page and section headings depicts Oak Moss (see page 162).

Perfume bottles shown in the tail-piece drawing at the end of some of the alphabetical sections (also reproduced below) are as follows (left to right): Patou ('1000'); Levy ('Escada'); Guerlain ('Shalimar'); Guerlain ('Mitsouko'); Dior ('Diorissimo'); DeVilbiss atomizer (*c.* 1928); Hermes ('Caleche'); Matchabelli (1927); Lelong ('Mon Image', *c.* 1928); Giorgio Beverly Hills ('Red'); Balenciaga ('Le Dix'); Bijan; Amouage.



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The author and publishers are grateful to the following for permission to reproduce copyright perfume recipes in Appendix B:

- Darton, Longman & Todd/The Herb Society. Recipes nos. 22, 23, 27, 28 and 29. From Ivan Day: *Perfumery with Herbs* (1979);
 Dorling, Kindersley, London. Recipes nos. 3, 4 and 8. From Penny Black: *The Book of Pot Pourri* (1989);

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A

Abelmoschus moschatus see Ambrette

Abies alba see Silver Pine Needle Oil

balsamea see Canada Balsam

canadensis see Canada Balsam

pectinata see Silver Pine Needle Oil

pichta see Siberian Pine Oil

siberica see Siberian Pine Oil

Abir Also Abeer. A scented talcum powder sprinkled on clothes and linen in India. Composition of the powder varies; one variety is reportedly made from sandalwood, aloes, rose petals, zedoary, civet and kapur-kachri; another from curcuma, cardamon, cloves and sandalwood.

Absinthe Oil see Wormwood Oil

Absolute The essential oil of scented flowers and other aromatic plant parts in its purest and most concentrated form; this is obtained after stearoptene has been removed from the concrete by extraction with alcohol. It is extremely expensive. Among the most important oils used in an absolute form are cassie, champac, clary sage, geranium, ylang-ylang, jasmine, labdanum, lavender, lily, mimosa, orange flower, rose, tuberose, violet and violet leaf.

Acacia Different species of acacia produce cassie, mimosa and gum arabic. But the term 'acacia' is also used for a particular type of

2 Acacia

compound perfume, made to various formulas, with an intense flowery fragrance reminiscent of a blending of hawthorn with orange blossom.

Acacia cavenia see Cassie

dealbata see Mimosa

farnesiana see Cassie

floribunda see Mimosa

gummifera see Gum Arabic

nilotica see Gum Arabic

senegal see Gum Arabic

sorts see Gum Arabic

Accord In perfumery this signifies a combination of a number of different scents which blend together to produce a new fragrance.

Acerra A small box in which the Romans kept, and sometimes burned, incense used in the temples during a sacrificial ceremony. In ancient Greece it was called *libanotris*. See Roman Perfumes.

Achillea agoratum see Maudlin

decolorans see English Mace

moschata see Iva

Acorus calamus see Calamus

Adiantum amabile see Scented Maidenhair

Aframomum melegnata see Grains of Paradise

African Myrrh see Bdellium

Agar Wood see Aloewood

Agastache anethiodora see Giant Hyssop

pallidiclora see Giant Hyssop

Aglaia The flowers of a tree *Aglaia odorata*, known to the Chinese as Yu-chu-lan, are highly regarded in China for their exquisite fragrance and are used there for making joss sticks and scented necklaces and for flavouring tea. They retain their perfume when dried and are widely used in sachets and pot pourri.

Agrimony The dried flowers and leaves of Scented Agrimony (*Agrimonia odorata*), a perennial herb native to N. Europe, including Britain, are used for scenting pillows and in pot pourri.

Agrumen Oils The collective term in perfumery for the essential oils of citrus fruits (bergamot, colobot, cravo, grapefruit, lemon, lime, mandarin, bitter orange, sweet orange and tangerine). See also Hesperides.

Agua Mellis see Honey Water

Ague Tree see Sassafras

Ailanthus malabarica see Mattipaul

Ain Gum A fragrant gum obtained from the bark of the Ain tree (also called Asna, Sain, Saj and Laurel) of India (*Terminalia tomentosa*). It is used in cosmetics and as an incense.

Ajowan Also called Ajvan and True Bishops Weed. An erect herb

(*Carum copticum* = *Ammi copticum*) cultivated in Egypt, Iran and India. The seeds have a strong thyme-like scent and an oil obtained from them is used as an antiseptic and to aid digestion. The crushed seeds are dried for use in sachet powders and pot pourri.

An oil called Ajowan Oil, sometimes known as Oman Water, is also distilled from the seeds of *Ptychotis ajowan*, cultivated in India. The seeds are used locally as a spice and the oil is occasionally used in soaps.

Ajuga chamaepitys see Ground Pine

Akar Laka A vine (*Dalbergia junghuhnii* = *D. parviflora* = *D. zollingaria*), related to the rosewood tree, which grows in India and Malaysia. The heartwood of the stems and roots is scented and used for making joss sticks and as an incense in temples.

Alant see Elecampane

Alabastrum A vessel or pot used in Roman times to hold perfumed oils and unguents. They were usually made of alabaster or related stone (agate or onyx), but the term was also used to describe such vessels made of other materials (Theocritus speaks of 'golden alabstra'). Those for oils were usually tapering in shape, with a long narrow neck. See Roman Perfumes.

Aldehyde An important group of chemicals, derived from alcohol and some natural plant materials. They form one of a number of chemical groups known as benzenoid compounds which were discovered at the end of the 19th century and are used in manufacturing synthetic materials for modern perfumes. Anisic aldehyde, for example, provides the scent of hawthorn, while decylic aldehyde is used in reproducing the odours of violet, orris, neroli, cassie flowers, rose and orange. Aldehydes can also give perfumes a distinctly individual fragrance of their own. In their pure state aldehydes possess such a powerful and persistent odour that a single drop spilt on a person's clothes will make them so odoriferous as to be objectionable. They have therefore to be used with extreme care and discretion and in minute quantities, when they are of great value to a perfumer, providing fragrances with a new richness and strength. The use of aldehydes in perfumes was developed by Ernest Beaux for Chanel, leading to the first aldehydic perfume – 'Chanel No. 5'.

Alecost see Costmary

Alectoria jujuba see Horsehair Lichen
usnesides see Fragrant Moss

Alehoof see Ground Ivy

Aleroot see Ground Ivy

Alespice see Costmary

Algerian Oil see Rue Oil

Alhagi camelorum see Aspalathus

Alkanet Also known as Dyer's Alkanet, Dyer's Bugloss, Orchanette and Anchusa. A small perennial herb (*Alkanna tinctoria*) native to south-east Europe and Turkey but now grown widely. It has a large root from which a red dye, called Alkanna or Alkanet, is extracted by maceration in oil, fat or alcohol. The dye was used to give perfumes an attractive red colour by the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. In the 17th century, French women made a cosmetic ointment from it to give their cheeks 'an oriental glow'. It is still used for colouring infused oils and pomatums.

A similar dye is also taken from *Macrotomia cephalotus*, a herb found from Greece to Asia Minor, Syria and the Caucasus, which is known as Syrian Alkanna and Turkish Alkanna.

Allheal see Valerian

'Alliage' A trend-setting 'green' perfume introduced by Estée Lauder in 1972. Green top notes cover a spicy, resinous heart which includes galbanum and nutmeg, with hints of rosewood, pine-needle and thyme, and a base note dominated by oak moss. The bottle was designed by Ira Levy.

Allspice, Oil of see Pimento

Allspice, Carolina see Calycanthus

Aloe The juice of aloe (*Aloe vera*, *A. succotrina* and related species), a succulent plant found in East Africa, Arabia, Socotra and S. Africa, was used by the women of ancient Egypt to perfume their bodies. It is thought to be the *ahaloth* of the Bible (*St John* 19:39), in which it was a perfuming agent, and was much used in ancient times as an ingredient of incenses. But some scholars have suggested that the references to aloes in the Old Testament related to sandalwood. Aloe vera oil is still used in cosmetics, particularly as an emollient in skin-care preparations.

Aloewood Also called Aloeswood, Lignum Aloes, Oriental Lignaloës, Xylaloës, Eaglewood, Columback Wood, Agar Wood and Lignum Rhodium. One of the most valuable of all perfume materials since it was introduced into Europe by the early Arabs during the 8th century AD.

Aloewood is the aromatic, resinous heartwood of a large evergreen tree (*Aquilaria agallocha*, also *A. malaccensis*), native to Assam, Malaysia and China. The wood becomes resinous and fragrant due to a disease which makes part of the heartwood black, oily, very hard and heavier than water. Aloewood Oil is distilled from the infected wood and has an odour reminiscent of ambergris and sandalwood. The early Arabs, who first obtained it from China, regarded it as one of the most desirable of all perfume materials and recognized ten different varieties. It was soon highly valued in Europe and became an important ingredient of pomanders. Most Aloewood Oil made today is distilled in India, where it is called Agar Attar or Chuwah, but the wood is

becoming increasingly rare and the oil extremely expensive, so that it is now little used in western perfumery. The dried wood left after distillation was used in sachets and pot pourri. The Eaglewood tree of Cambodia and Annam (*Aquilaria crasna*) produces a fragrant resin in the same manner.

Aloewood should not be confused with Aloes. Suggestions that it was the Aloes of the Bible are discounted.

Aloysia citriodora see Verbena

triphylla see Verbena

Alpine Rose A rose-like essential oil obtained from the roots of the Rusty-leaved Alprose (*Rhododendron ferrugineum* = *Chamaerhododendron ferrugineum*), which grows in Alpine Europe. It is occasionally used in perfumery.

Alpinia galanga see Galingale

malaccensis see Galingale

officinarum see Galingale

Amantilla see Valerian

Amaracus dictamus see Dittany

Amarante A name given to a type of compound perfume. The word means cock's comb or prince's feathers. Perfumes so named usually contain synthetic muguet, with rose, sandalwood, musk and jasmine to round off the bouquet.

'Amarige' A quality floral perfume, with woody undertones, launched by Givenchy in 1991. Created by Dominique Ropion of Roure, its main ingredients are neroli, rosewood, violet and mandarin leaf oil in the top notes, with gardenia, mimosa, cassie and ylang-ylang prominent in the heart, finishing with a base which includes sandalwood, musk, ambergris, vanilla and tonka.

Amaryllis A name given in perfumery to perfumes of the lily type, usually with added traces of rose and neroli.

'Amazoné' A light floral fruity perfume with green notes first introduced by Hermès in 1975 and relaunched in 1989 with a revised formula created by Hilton McConnus. The dominating fragrances in the heart are rose and jasmine. In the top notes narcissus is supported by bergamot, lemon, orange and blackcurrant buds. The base notes are underlined by sandalwood and cedar. The flacon was designed by Jean Rene Guerrand Hermès and Joël Desgrippes.

Amber An abbreviated form of ambergris. In perfumery this is nothing to do with the semi-precious fossilized resin of the same name which is used in jewellery. The word denotes a fragrance found not only in ambergris itself but also in several other natural materials, such as labdanum. It is also sometimes used to describe the fragrance of oak moss, and sometimes used to designate the family of perfumes more usually called 'oriental'. See Perfume: Classification of Fragrances,

Perfume Families and Perfume Notes. For 'Artificial ambers' see Ambres.

Amber, Sweet *see* St John's Wort

Ambergris Since antiquity, one of the most valuable of perfume ingredients and also one of the most legendary. Ambergris is found in oily, grey lumps floating in the sea, mainly in the Indian Ocean, or cast on to its shores. Speculation about the origin of this material persisted until the 19th century. The substance is excreted by the sperm whale (*Physeter macrocephalus*) after it has been feeding on cuttle fish. The lumps usually weigh a pound or two, but may be up to seventy pounds weight and occasionally much larger. Its odour is most unpleasant in the raw state and it has to be considerably diluted, by dissolving in alcohol, when it becomes highly fragrant, with a scent which has a similarity with labdanum. It is usually used in the form of a tincture. The fragrance is very persistent. The weathering of ambergris while it is in the sea is an important factor in its fragranciness; ambergris removed directly from the body of a whale, or freshly expelled from it, is nauseating and must be aged over several years before it can be used in perfumery.

Ambergris was not known to the Greeks and Romans and appears to have come into use during early Arab times. It was included in a list of items sent as tribute from the Yemen to the Persian Emperor in the 6th century AD, and al-Kindi, early 9th century AD, used it in a number of his perfume recipes. It also appeared in a Byzantine list of perfumes permitted to be sold in Constantinople in about 895 AD. It enjoyed a reputation as an aphrodisiac.

Solid ambergris is said to retain its perfume for three centuries or more. In Elizabethan times it was used to perfume gloves because its scent remained on them despite repeated washing. For centuries it has been very highly valued by perfumers as a fixative. However, because of the growing scarcity and consequent costliness of 'floating' ambergris and environmental objections to obtaining it by killing whales, it is now rarely used in perfumery other than in a synthesized form. Quality perfumes which contain ambergris include 'Amouage', 'Miss Dior', 'Parure' and 'Vol de Nuit'.

Ambon Sandalwood The scented wood of the Ambon Sandalwood tree, also called Sasooroo and Rozemarijnhout (*Osmoxylon umbelliferum*), native to Indonesia, is burnt as an incense.

Ambrein A substance extracted from purified labdanum which has an ambergris-like fragrance and is of considerable value in perfumery as a fixative.

Ambres Also called Artificial ambers. A name given in perfumery to a group of powerful fixatives of similar type which generally contain an animal material, such as musk, civet or castoreum, together with