



# SNOW LOTUS

Aromatherapy, Education, Inspiration

## Jasmine

*The Queen of the Night*

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*"But who cared whether dawn we sipped or dusk ... as we lingered, long as the heart allowed, in silky, longtime passion."*

— Gloria J. Leitner *The Queen of the Night*

The Queen of the Night

The Fragrant Plant from Kashmir

The Woman's Medicine

Jasmine's Neuroendocrine Actions

Jasmine's Energetic Actions

The Specific Symptomatology

The darkness has nurtured the fragrant fields of white jasmine all night long. The night-blooming pearls have shimmered with silent joy in the luminous moonlight. Now the inkling dawn is a soft gushing of jasmine that colors the sky with opalescent streams. The queen of the night releases her final and most delirious wave of fragrance before yielding to the stricture of daylight. A true creature of the moon, her milky flowers will once more close to dream until the gathering dusk arrives. She knows her pallid petals will again disclose their aromatic nectar to the mysterious narcosis of darkness.

Emerging from the dawning daylight like a SWAT team, teenage children start to work their way through the white-tufted fields. It's July, and because the holidays have arrived they have to help the grown-ups pick the prime jasmine, which they will do at least until the end of September. Grown-ups always complain of what a back-breaking job this is, they think. They have to bend over while we just reach straight ahead! The children pick only the fully-opened

blossoms off the shrubs and throw them into a small, hand-held basket. They know not to squash any flower in the process, however, as this would mean a certain penalty.

### **The Floral Oil**

What these children may not know is that any bruise to the flower generates more of the compound indole, which is undesirable. Indole has a deep, raw animal note that should not dominate over the sweet, floral notes for which jasmine oil is valued. But then again, jasmine from India has a naturally high level of indole, giving it a green, earthy base note. Egyptian jasmine, however, has more floral top notes, with a hint of black pepper, while Italian jasmine has more fruity notes.

Although commonly known as an oil, Jasmine is only successfully extracted by solvent extraction, not by steam distillation. Like many flowers used in perfumery, the hot steam would alter and destroy the floral accords for which jasmine is so prized. In France jasmine is traditionally extracted by enfleurage, where the flowers are placed one by one onto a mix of beef suet and lard spread over a wooden-framed glass tray, called a chassis. They are left to release their oils to the fat over a 24 hour period, then removed. The whole process is repeated many times, which can last up to four weeks, until the fat is completely saturated with essential oil. Finally, the fat is separated through alcohol, which itself is then evaporated, resulting in an absolute extract. Moreover, enfleurage only works where the flower continues to produce volatile oils after it's picked -as with jasmine, tuberose and many others. Jasmine by enfleurage, or jasmin de chassis, is still produced in small quantities in Grasse (France) and Italy. This simple method produces the finest fragrance material as it retains most of the flower's aromatic components, producing the same rich, deep, natural version of its scent as when on the bush.

Not so with the most common extraction practiced today for jasmine, the concrete extraction. Here the essential oils, waxes and dyes are freed through petrochemical solvents that have a lower boiling point than water, thereby preserving most of the components otherwise lost through hot steam. For perfumery this concrete is then treated with alcohol to remove the waxes and the majority of pigments, which again results in an absolute. Egypt produces 70 -

80% of the world's jasmine absolute using this method, although India is gradually increasing its output. Many countries produce other very high quality floral absolutes besides jasmine, including jasmine sambac, tuberose, carnation, boronia, orange flower, oleander, frangipani and narcissus. Still, although the level of solvent in these absolutes has been found to be less than 10 parts per million, most aromatherapists believe that their use should be kept to topical applications in appropriately low dilutions.

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