

Aromatics in Chinese Medicine

Chinese Medicine has mentioned essential oils in its first herbal, Shen Nong Ben Cao, written in the 2nd century AD. It classifies plants as useful in the categories of prevention, restoration and treatment.

Commentaries to the Ben Cao have specified parts of plants such as leaves and stems but also their 'jing-essence' which would correspond to our understanding of essential oil. In the 16th century the famous herbal, Ben Cao Gang Mu, by Li Shih-zhen, details the therapeutic use of a number of essential oils - among them Ginger, Camphor and Rose.



Bird and Flower Market

Kunming, Yunnan Province, China

thirties and forties in the shape of conditions resulting from excess stress. While essential oils are relevant for the first two preconditions they are uniquely suited to help with challenges presented by the need to differentiate. Connecting with plants - even in the form of their essential oils - can become a key element to facilitate necessary changes in life or outlook.

As for suggesting actual methodologies Chinese medicine entertains various models of recognition and action. There are anatomical models focusing on concepts such as: inside to outside, extremities to trunk, or skin to marrow. Another model focuses on organs (Zang-Fu) and yet another one on the humors: qi, blood, body fluids, Jing essence and Shen. Terms describing elements and processes transcending the physical are Jing, Essence and Shen, Spirit. For more expansive narratives on these subjects please consult the ample literature on Chinese medicine.

As it comes to treating disease, or better individuals with a disease condition, Yuen emphasizes a major difference to the western approach. He states that pathology often arises from the influence of outside factors on our physiology creating an imbalance or blockage. Disease symptoms then often are not primarily caused by the original