

# An introduction to the Bach Flower Remedies

by Andrew Tresidder

The healing power of nature has been known almost since time began. Flowers and plants uplift us. Scents give pleasure, colours and forms entrance us, and the whole splendour of nature nurtures us. On a more physical level, plants give us food and medicines.

But it is the invisible level, the level of vibrations, that is really fascinating. Science is starting to get interested in what we all know is true – the healing power of flowers. In the 16th Century Paracelsus described the healing power of dew from flowers. Everything in the world is composed of vibrations, nature (and music) use these vibrations to provide harmonious patterns.

Masaru Emoto, in Japan, has done some fascinating work on the snowflake-like Patterns In Water, that can be left by the purity of the water (not surprising), the effect of music on water (really curious), and the patterns that words and flowers can leave in water (mind blowing) – see [www.hado.net](http://www.hado.net) for more information. What is more, everything in the world is connected at a vibrational level, as modern physics and relativity theory tell us.

We all know instinctively which flowers and plants we like to look at. We are now discovering that just seeing them and touching them can help us feel differently. Even more interesting, making a flower essence, and taking it, can help support our feelings. Nature can help support us to reflect on our experiences, moving us on from stuck frames of mind and uplift us. Nature helps us feel better!



*The first stage in making  
Gorse flower essence*

## Bach Flower Remedies

Dr Edward Bach (1886-1936) was a medical doctor, bacteriologist and homeopath. He is known in homeopathy for the Bach Nosodes, made from bowel flora. In the 1920s he practised homeopathy in Harley Street, London. However, he is better known for his work in creating the Bach Flower Remedies.

Bach had three key insights. First, he observed that people were of a number of different types, according to their outlook on life and personality (just as in homeopathy we have the great constitutional polycrests such as Pulsatilla, Nux vomica and others). Second, he developed his intuitive sensitivity to the point where he was able to experience an emotional state, and then find the support from nature (in the form of an essence from the appropriate flower) that resolved this state. Third, he developed a method of transferring the energy

from the trees and flowers that he found helpful to water, which he then preserved with brandy, and so was able to dispense remedies from this source.

Bach worked with his new remedies, in London, Cromer and finally settled for the last years of his life near Wallingford in Oxfordshire. His work was carried on after his death first by Norah Weeks and Victor Bullen, and then by others from the Bach Centre at his house, Mount Vernon in Sotwell. Gradually people around Britain and then the world became intrigued by the benefits of his “drops”.

Bach Flower Remedies are powerful yet gentle healing tools that can catalyse the resolution of deep emotional imbalances, as can homeopathy. Where they differ from homeopathy is firstly that being a complete system of only 38 remedies and one combination there is far less choice than faces the homeopath, even for an acute prescription. Second, there seems to be no possibility of a “proving” – that is an adverse effect of creating the medicine picture in a patient by taking a homeopathic medicine day in day out for a period of time – Bach remedies are not potentised sequentially by succussion, merely by the sun or by boiling, and then a one step dilution to stock essence, and one further to treatment bottle. Aggravations can occur, but they are rare and short-lived. Third, Bach remedies do not appear to have direct effects on the physical body or physical symptoms, as can homeopathy. Instead, they work through the “mentals and emotionals” – the more subtle aspects of a remedy picture.



*A selection of the flowers used in Bach Flower Remedies. Top row from left: Wild rose, Mustard, Mimulus, Gentian. Middle row: Red Chestnut, Gorse, Star of Bethlehem. Bottom row: Heather, Chicory. All photos: istockphoto.com*

### Emergency treatment

My first successful case using the combination Rescue Remedy™, also called Five Flower, Recovery, SOS or Emergency Essence was when I was called out by a midwife to treat a man. His wife had had a caesarean section in hospital, and she and the baby were fine. When I arrived, he was in a complete panic, hunched up on the sofa, crying, “She’s going to die, it’s all going to be awful, what’s going to happen to me?” repeatedly. His mother was there already, so my entrance had no great calming effect.

Into a glass of water I placed several drops of Rescue, and asked him to sip. He did this every minute, and kept repeating his distressed thoughts out loud. After five minutes, the words stayed the same, but the emotion seemed to evaporate. By the end of ten minutes, he was walking the room and said, “I don’t know why I’m crying like this, I’ll ring the hospital, find out how she is, and visit her later.” Next day, he bought six bottles of Rescue, one for each room in the house including the loo. Which misses the point about dosage – but he certainly felt that it had worked!

So which specific Bach Remedies do we use for what, and how do we choose? Well, Bach categorised his remedies into the Twelve Healers, the Seven Helpers and the Second Nineteen.

### The Twelve Healers

Bach felt these were for our primary soul types, the sort of person we are. He equated these with the soul lessons we have come to learn, such as inner peace (Agrimony), strength and ability to say no (Centaury) and wisdom (Cerato). We can see these types more easily in children – as adults we have accumulated other layers of imbalances – but when we are under pressure our soul type may betray itself.

The others of the Twelve are:

- Chicory – to dissolve self-pity and “me, me, me” into generosity of giving;
- Clematis – to bring dreamers down to earth;
- Gentian – to resolve discouragement and despondency into the positive quality of faith;
- Impatiens – to release the quick tense mind into gentleness;
- Mimulus – from fear of known things into bravery;
- Rock Rose – to transform terror and dread into courage;
- Scleranthus – to bring balance and determination from indecision;
- Vervain – to release over-enthusiasm into quiet and tolerance; and
- Water Violet – to change a proud aloof or quietly grieving person into the joy of service and taking part in life.

### The Seven Helpers

Julian Barnard describes these as Support Remedies, for long-term conditions:

- Gorse – hopelessness;
- Heather – fussy introspection;
- Rock Water – rigidity of attitude;
- Wild Oat – lack of direction in life;
- Olive – weariness and exhaustion;
- Oak – for the strong person who never gives up; and
- Vine – for a domineering forceful attitude, to bring the quality of calm wise leadership.

As a GP I saw a 52 year-old patient frequently. She was anxious and worried about her body. As a result of headaches and abdominal pains, over a period of two years her head and abdomen were scanned, her gall bladder removed, her stomach endoscoped, and so on, as new worries replaced the previous ones.

She took Heather for several weeks, and a complete change in attitude was seen. After this, she would still come to my surgery – but much less frequently – and now her opening gambit was: “Dr Tresidder, I don’t want you to think I’m worried, because I’m not – I’m taking my Heather – but I just wanted to run these symptoms past you,” – a striking change in attitude, and a much happier lady.

Interestingly, the next layer for her was Centaury (one of the Twelve Healers, and her constitutional type) because she would always say “Yes” when asked to do something, even if she didn’t want to. She came back after several weeks and said how pleased she was but that her friends didn’t like the fact that she was no longer a pushover! – “but they’ll have to get used to it!”

### The Second Nineteen

These (which complete the set of 38 Bach Remedies) relate to emotional states that result from life’s knocks and challenges. They include Holly, for jealousy, envy, revenge, suspicion and greed (in full negative), bringing the quality of love, and Pine which brings self-esteem, relieving a feeling of guilt and self-blame.

The flower essence that proved to me beyond any doubt that their effect was not placebo was Holly. A case of toddler jealousy presented, with three weeks of being jealous and hurtful towards the parents (though not the baby). The parents had tried presents from baby, special cuddles, and even paracetamol. None had worked! Reading the list of remedies, next to Holly were the words “jealousy, envy, revenge, suspicion and greed” – a perfect match

Photo: Jupiterimages



*Rescue Remedy is indicated for panic*



*Holly - the flower essence for "jealousy, envy, revenge, suspicion and greed"*

that caught my eye. Into each drink went two drops of Holly. In just two days, the girl had transformed into the loving person that was her true nature, all traces of jealousy dissolved and healed.

### Selecting a remedy

Choosing a remedy intellectually can be done from knowledge of the person, and their reaction to current circumstances, and reference to one of the small books, leaflets or websites available to help. It is important to be clear about what the exact feelings are – this can be quite easy when we are looking at a friend or someone we know well, but it's much more difficult to be objective about yourself.

One should aim to choose a maximum of six remedies – and the key point is always to look for the deep issues, not just the surface. "Surface disturbance can stop us seeing deeply" – but when the core issues are healed, sometimes by just a single remedy, many other aspects of our feelings just fall into line.

Choosing can also be done intuitively. However, intuitive choice should always be backed up by reading about the remedy pictures and using your discrimination before making up a treatment bottle. Reading about the ones you've chosen can be quite illuminating – and taking them can help you realise the accuracy of your choice.

A friend was having difficulties at work, and elsewhere in life. The remedies I really wanted to suggest for her were Holly, to bring love, Willow, to dissolve the chip of resentment on her shoulder, and Vine, because she was a very strong character, able to dominate others. (There is a crossover with Nux

vom here). In fact, she chose for herself just one, and took it. She told me that she lay awake most of that night, thinking about her job, her relationships, life and a number of personal issues.

Within two weeks, she had found another job and subsequently progressed successfully on a career path she had not expected. She told me, "There ought to be a warning on that one – I only took one drop once!" Which one did she take? Wild Oat, for finding your true direction in life.

Sometimes, an intuitive choice can just be to rebalance you "in the now", and not be at all appropriate for a treatment bottle. For when we are choosing intuitively, our default choice is our most pressing need – and only after rebalancing this over a few minutes or hours can the deeper issues become clearer.

At some point, if you are drawn to use Bach Flower Remedies, do take the trouble to try and find which your type remedy is – because it is taking this one remedy that will always help bring you back into balance, and, whilst taking it, give you insight into your character.

### Treatment bottle

Making a treatment bottle involves putting four drops of each chosen essence into a 30ml bottle containing approxi-



Andrew Tresidder MB BS MRCP, a Somerset GP since 1989, is interested in the many aspects of what makes people "tick", and how to tick better. He researches and teaches about "invisible software reprogramming" and uses flower essences in his daily work for self, family, patients and friends.



*Wild oat*

mately 20 per cent brandy and 80 per cent water. The brandy acts as a preservative. If the bottle is for someone who wishes to avoid alcohol, merely dropping some drops into very hot water will evaporate off the alcohol, or drops can be placed on the wrists, where a rich network of meridians is to be found.

### Dosage

The recommended dosage is three to four drops on the tongue four to six times daily for as long as needed, for up to about six weeks maximum. The remedies are entirely compatible with both prescribed medication and homeopathy. Sometimes one may be more appropriate than another – intuition and experience are useful guides here. Side-effects are rare, although sometimes people may get short-lived detoxifying symptoms such as a rash or a headache. Aggravations are very uncommon. Once one layer has been treated and felt to change, then it can be useful to reassess and see what lies beneath.

The real fun comes when you start using flower essences proactively, intuitively or intellectually chosen, week in week out for several years. They become teachers and valuable tools to help us transit life's lessons and experiences relatively effortlessly – but that's a story for another day!