



Monica Goldberg at work with essential oils

PHOTO BY MARTHA BUSSE

Scents and Sensibility

Aromatherapy consultant puts an end to bad air days By Amanda Wegner

WHEN MONICA GOLDBERG ENTERS A HOME, she sees more than its four walls. She sees a mood and a character. The walls speak to her and tell stories of memories past. And sometimes they ask for a spritz of refreshment, health and cheer.

Goldberg owns Radiant Rooms, an interior arranging company specializing in one-day makeovers, real estate staging and aromatherapy. A learned aromatherapy consultant and distributor, she uses aromatherapy to help sell homes, improve their character and make them healthier living spaces.

Aromatherapy is ancient, dating back to Biblical times. Using oils derived from flowers, herbs and trees, aromatherapy is used to reduce stress, pain and swelling, improve digestion and more. It's also found a cozy spot in the home as homeowners and industry professionals increasingly embrace it. It helps that Goldberg's filling the air with its accolades.

"Since I use these oils personally, it was easy to integrate them into my profession," Goldberg says. "Since I'm in homes regularly and people have the same needs I do, I started sharing with them what the oils can do."

Goldberg was introduced to aromatherapy in 2002 when her massage therapist used essential oils to relieve pain from a car

accident. The pain eased – immediately. Soon after, Goldberg's son developed pneumonia. The boy's lungs were filling with fluid, so the family physician prescribed an antibiotic – but he wouldn't take it. With some drops of essential oil on his body and in a cold-air diffuser that ran all night, he was improving by morning. The day after, everyone was breathing easy.

"With that powerful experience, I've been using oils for my family's well-being ever since," says Goldberg, who's returning to school this fall to become a master aromatherapist. "That's when I began to study and learn more. I integrate these therapeutic oils into my home on a daily basis."

Today's homes are filled with chemicals off-gassed from particleboard, wall paint, flooring, furniture, cleaners and more. Sick-building syndrome is no joke; these chemicals can – and do – make some people sick. And therapeutic grade-A essential oils are "nature's perfect solution," says Goldberg.

Aromatherapy works two ways. Does the smell of pine and cinnamon conjure Christmas memories? Smell is evocative, and it influences emotions. It even affects heart rate, blood pressure and respiration.

Second, some essential oils can kill germs and bacteria. A recent study from England's University of Manchester found that certain grade-A essential oil blends killed three kinds of bacteria commonly found in hospitals today, including E. coli.

Good Scents

A few ways to use grade-A essential oils in the home:

Lemon: Great for cleaning and disinfecting, especially in kitchens and bathrooms.

Peppermint:

Repels ants.

Western red cedar, lavender or lemongrass: Repels moths and other insects.

Eucalyptus: Kills dust mites.

Thieves: A blend of clove, lemon, cinnamon bark, eucalyptus and rosemary, "Thieves" can kill and prevent mold and help minimize colds and influenza.

Peppermint, lemon, clove or cinnamon:

Applied to the filter side of a water purifier, these oils can help purify water.

Note: Grade-A essential oils are highly concentrated. Never heat an essential oil; use as directed.

In the home, Goldberg works with homeowners, real estate agents and others to sop up noxious agents and the "new home smell."

"When people come into a house that smells of varnish, paint or chemicals ... it's a turnoff," says Jan Thiel, a real estate agent with Keller Williams.

Just painted? "Purification," an oil blend Goldberg sells that contains citronella, lemongrass and rosemary, can be added to paint to remove its odors. Need to move a home fast? Goldberg's "Abundance" blend, which includes orange, cinnamon bark, spruce and more, can evoke positive energy and calm.

A fifteen-year real-estate veteran, Thiel first called upon Goldberg to help sell a condominium that sat on the market for six months. With Goldberg's "magic touch," the condo sold in eight days. "I can't quite put a finger on it," says Thiel, "but with using aromatherapy, right then and there, you have something special without much effort."

Barry Lueck, owner of Barry's Wisconsin TNT, uses Goldberg's oils in his basement-waterproofing work. He diffuses essential oils into the ductwork to kill and prevent health-harming mold. It's a service he offers for free because he's "wowed" by the effects.

While the oils can do amazing things, they might not be for everyone. "There's no absolute guarantee that you'll sell your home or make it better," says Goldberg, "but these ancient oils have been successful for many people."

Amanda Wegner is a Madison-based freelance writer.