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Essential oils are very popular today, but did you know their production and use are thousands of years old? It's wonderful to see the upsurge in interest in this method, and the careful use and enjoyment of these concentrated oils. Perfumers use these oils every day, but they are often purchased from suppliers because the amount of plant material needed is huge, and the yield often tiny. When making your own, you'll obtain a small amount of essential oil, and a larger amount of scented hydrosol, the water that comes along in the process. This chapter provides a good introduction to this fascinating art.

A fun fact is that, aside from plant material, various other substances can be distilled, such as seashells, soil (yes, dirt!), leather, and pretty much anything that can be put into a still.

Left: There are many sizes and types of stills available. I have two that serve my purposes, and I encourage you to read more, contact suppliers, and decide which is best for you. Shown here from left to right are a 2-liter glass steam still (with rosemary in the steam chamber) and a 20-liter copper steam-and-hydro still.

