

Fragrances of the World

Understanding The Fragrance Wheel

Fragrance affects us on a deeply emotional level. We all have scents that we remember from our childhood, whether it's the aromas of mother's kitchen or the refreshing burst of green grass as we played outside. Such experiences invariably influence our tastes in perfume and yet it is sometimes quite daunting to approach the fragrance counter and make sense of the available choices. As far as our nose is concerned, the arrangement seems almost illogical.

Wouldn't it be better to group fragrances according to the way they smell? This simple, yet revealing premise is the basis for Michael Edwards' comprehensive classification system, the Fragrance Wheel. The Fragrance Wheel organizes fragrances by the dominant accords that give them their special character. It is a much more logical way to understand fragrance and is invaluable in understanding an individual's personal preferences.

Michael Edwards created the Fragrance Wheel in 1983. The families on which the Wheel is based hold the key to people's likes and dislikes because each family has a characteristic scent whose personality is reflected in its fragrances. In much the same way that vineyards classify their vintages by grape varietal, classifying fragrances by their main accords opens up a new way for understanding the language of scent.

The Fragrance Wheel also maps out the connections among groups of scents. It includes the three major families defined by perfumers—Floral, Oriental and Woody, as well as a fourth one, the Fresh, which was introduced by Edwards. These four groups are further subdivided to span the range of character within each major family, but their distribution within the Wheel clearly shows how one family blends into another as its composition is changed. "It makes selecting the right perfume an exciting process of discovery.

The Fragrance Wheel is the only complete, accurate and industry respected fragrance classification system. It is a proven market resource and continues to be the standard bearer for consumers and professionals. We invite you to explore how this comprehensive resource can broaden your fragrance horizons.

Around The Fragrance Wheel

The Fragrance Wheel allows you to uncover the true character of fragrances independent of brand and marketing campaigns. It also lets you see at a glance the relationship among different fragrances, thus instantly revealing preferences and market trends. We start our exploration of the Wheel with the **Citrus** family, which captures the zest, and vibrancy that we so often associate with citrus fruit. This family also permits a glimpse into perfume history, as the gradual addition of more complex citrus and herbal notes has elevated scents in this family beyond the realm of lightly scented waters and into real Citrus fragrances.

Layer the structure of the Citrus family with green notes reminiscent of crushed leaves and stems and you end up with fragrances from the **Green** family. Their elegant form and spirited character make this family fascinating. Modern green accords lend a radiant and effervescent quality to the Green family.

The **Water** family is characterized by marine and aquatic notes. If the Green family is marked by an assertive quality, the Water family offers the lively freshness of air after a thunderstorm as well as the purity of sea air.

The most popular of all families, the **Floral** family captures a wide range of fragrances, from crystalline etudes devoted to a single flower to complex symphonies capturing lush bouquets.

By adding the effervescent sparkle of aldehydes (aroma-materials naturally found in citrus and rose oils), as well as the velvety softness of iris or vanilla, the Florals become **Soft Florals**. The freshness of the blooming flowers is now rendered more impressionistic and abstract, taking familiar scents into a new realm.

In turn, Soft Florals are transformed into **Floral Orientals** by the presence of sweet spices and orange blossom. These notes make the compositions richer and deeper.

When the voluptuous warmth of amber and incense is added to Floral Oriental fragrances, we reach the **Soft Oriental** family. The fragrances in this family smolder rather than glitter. Their character is velvety and warm, deeper than that of Floral Orientals, although not as sweet and heavy as that of Orientals.

Exotic and evocative, the **Oriental** family plays upon sensual oriental resins, sumptuously rich flowers, warm vanilla and plush musks. Dramatic and complex, the fragrances in this family have an unforgettable aura.

The marriage between the spicy and resinous notes of the Oriental family with notes of sandalwood and patchouli produce the **Woody Oriental** family. Woods play the dominant role here, with the characteristic Oriental notes lending an opulent touch.

The **Woods** family brings the woody notes into the limelight. They are the divas that take the center stage in this family, with other notes serving merely as accents.

Oakmoss and amber, along with citrus, floral, woody and musky notes make for one of the most complex fragrance families, **Mossy Woods**. The fragrances in this family have a character that is polished and undeniably sensual, dramatic and restrained, warm and cool. These juxtapositions make the Mossy Woods family quite striking.

Cedar, tobacco, burnt wood and leather give the Mossy Woods family a new form, that of **Dry Woods**. With the more assertive notes playing the important role, the family's character changes to become deeper, drier and more somber. The floral accent of lavender gives a special character to the vivid **Aromatic Fougère** family. A universal family, it also includes elements of the spicy sweetness of a Floral Oriental, the ambery richness of an Oriental, and the Mossy Wood notes of oakmoss and sandalwood.

The addition of citrus notes is an important one, as the tartness lends a special radiance and effervescence. Increase the proportion of citrus notes dramatically, and you end up in the **Citrus** family, which concludes our journey around the **Fragrance Wheel**.