

## Flower Essence Plant Study for the FES Professional Course

**Purpose of the Plant Study:** Your practice as a flower essence therapist requires not only an affinity for the human soul, but also recognition and respect for plants as healers. While it is not necessary that you develop an extensive knowledge of all plants in detail, the FES Certification Program does require that you observe and research at least one plant, with full heartfelt attention. By deepening your appreciation and knowledge of one plant, the connection with the entire plant realm and your general abilities as a plant healer are made stronger. The plant study is an optional post-seminar activity, but completion is a **requirement** for the FES Case Certification Program.

During the class, you will be given a basic overview regarding observation of plants. For your plant study it is best to choose a plant growing in the wild or in a garden, ideally where you can observe the plant through various stages of growth. If you are in an urban environment, check out nearby parks or botanical gardens for possibilities if you don't have access to other plant habitats.

We give you time to complete this assignment so that you can observe the plant carefully and describe both its objective qualities and your inspirational response to it. The expectation is that one is working in physical time and space with an actual plant, with actual observation and experience.

**Direct observation** is the most important part of the plant study. Psychic channeling and on-line quotations are of much lesser value in this assignment. Your plant study may be returned for further work if it is "top heavy" in psychic channeling or **copied** on-line references.

Please begin with direct observation of a real plant that you encounter in Nature. Using the questions as a systematic guide, gather "raw" data, or field notes, rough sketches, photo studies and so forth. Bring this material together and then do the formal work of completing the plant study. This will also involve additional research into the botanical, mythological, historical or medicinal properties of the plant.

**Guidelines for using Internet information:** We would like to emphasize that this is a plant observation exercise. While we all benefit from the myriad of images and data available online, this easy accessibility can also pose a temptation to bypass the actual observation process. As noted in the instructions, please start with a direct experience of the plant you are studying, and use reference materials, in print or online, only later to supplement your own observations and insights.

**Order of Steps for the Plant Study:** Please note that the study is divided into three distinct parts: objective perception, imaginative perception and literature review. It is important that you do the steps in that basic order, although you can always return to an earlier part if you have additional insight. **When writing up your study, please follow the numbered steps so that each part of the exercise is clearly delineated.**

**The plant study is due by the time you complete the FES Certification Program,** and is one of the requirements to receive the FES Certification.. Read an [overview of the FES Certification program](#). We also enjoy receiving plant studies even if you do not intend to complete the rest of the Certification Program.



**I should be content  
to look at a mountain  
for what it is  
and not as a comment  
on my life.**

**David Ignatow**

## Part One: The Objective Perception Exercise

Direct perception of the plant forms the foundation for the entire plant study, so be sure to start with actual observation of the plant. The object of the exercise is to develop your ability to accurately perceive in Nature by a close study of one plant. This is simply a matter of recording just what you see as exactly as possible, without preconceptions. (In Zen, this is called “beginner’s mind.”) You may use sketching, written description, or both, as you feel comfortable. It is not important whether you have great artistic or literary talent. What is important is that you have initiated a process of inner development, through disciplining your perceptual faculties, in so far as you are able to do so.

1. Before you begin any work at all, simply sit quietly with the plant. Center your breath and your being, and try to establish a resonance between yourself and the plant. What do you see? Look carefully and note such characteristics as: size of the plant; colors; size and shape of leaves (rounded, indented, feathery, etc); arrangement of branches on stem, of leaves on branches; flower shape and orientation (which way it faces); plant geometry (numbers of flower parts, spiraling of branches, number of leaflets in a compound leaf, etc.); size and shape of fruit or seed.
2. Consider how the various parts of the plant relate to each other and to the whole plant. Does the shape of the leaves change from the base of the plant to the flower tops? Can you see common forms and patterns in the metamorphosis from root to stem and leaf to flower to fruit and seed? If there are plants in different stages of growth, look for differences and similarities.
3. In what environment does the plant grow? Is it sunny, shady, wet, dry, rocky? What other plants and minerals are nearby? What insects, if any, seem related to the plant?
4. Consider the four elements (earth, water, air, fire). Which seem predominant, which lacking? Describe specific aspects of the plant which indicate this.
5. Consider how the plant may grow through the four seasons – what are its characteristics during the cycle of the year? How does the plant change throughout the day?
6. Provide a sketch of the plant, looking carefully for detail. You may want to do separate sketches of portions of the plant: the leaf, the flower, and so forth.
7. Be open to other sensory experiences of the plant. What do you smell, touch, taste, feel, and so on.



## To Look at Any Thing

To look at any thing,  
If you would know that thing,  
You must look at it long:

To look at this green and say,  
"I have seen spring in these  
Woods," will not do - you must  
Be the thing you see:

You must be the dark snakes of  
Stems and ferny plumes of leaves,

You must enter in  
To the small silences between  
The leaves,

You must take your time  
And touch the very peace  
They issue from.

~ John Moffitt~

## Part Two: The Imaginative Perception Exercise

This part of the plant study involves attunement on a more subtle level. Through imagining and listening, we can begin to see the archetypal qualities of the plant. True imagination is not the same as fantasy; it is the ability to create living images or insights that are true to the phenomena, but not limited by the mundane dimensions of weight, measure and other directly perceived phenomena. In other words, when we have developed a foundation of keen sense perception, our imagination can then lift us into more subtle realms of soul perception, in which the living qualities of a plant or other phenomena are experienced as inward realities.

Such imaginative experiences can be expressed in a variety of ways: through written prose and/or poetry, drawing, a song or melody, a dance, or even a "fairy tale" you compose. Your insights should be imaginative and artistic, conveying how you experience the plant and what soul qualities it imparts. It is not necessary to have prior artistic skill. Please express yourself in a manner that is real and sincere for you and that reaches into a deeper level of your being - this is the most important factor.

1. Before you begin any work at all, sit quietly with the plant again. Establish a resonant feeling space between the plant and yourself. In the first exercise, you have looked with your physical eyes at the plant. Now close your eyes and reconstruct the plant through your imagination. First attempt to see it just as it is in the physical world. Then allow your imagination to take another step, and see if there are other aspects of the plant which open up to your inner eye.
2. Give your imagination a chance to relax. Allow yourself the chance to see the plant as *if* you could see it on a more subtle level. Look inward with your eyes closed. Then look with your physical eyes in a softened gaze around the plant. What do you see?
3. Does the plant have an overall gesture or form? What is it?
4. What colors or subtle energies surround the plant? What do they look or feel like? Are there movements or patterns around the plant? What are these like? If it is possible, try to draw, sketch, or describe these aspects of the plant which you see imaginatively. Now sit still again. Don't attempt to "see." This time simply *listen*. What do you hear? What "words" is the plant speaking? Is there a melody or musical presence around the plant? What does this plant *inspire* within your heart?
5. What *qualities* does this plant seem to have? Try to capture these in words, music, in a drawing, or any other artistic medium which appeals to you.

## Part Three: Literature Review

Your understanding of a plant can be enhanced by reviewing information available in print and online about the history, botany, ecology, lore and medicinal value of the plant. This information is especially useful if you have first encountered the plant through your own direct perception, and then integrate the knowledge coming from other sources with your own experience of the plant.

If you include texts, images, or information from outside sources, in print or online, please reference the source of the material, and indicate where you have direct quotes or have copied material. This allows us to be clear which are your own insights and which are the ideas of others that you are referencing.

1. What is the botanical classification of this plant? How does it compare to other plants you know (especially flower essence plants) that are in the same genus or family? What insights did you gain from this comparison?
2. What are the herbal and/or medicinal qualities of the plant, if known? How are these properties related to what you observed about the plant?
3. Have you found out anything about the biochemistry of the plant? Can you see anything about the physical composition of the plant that relates to its other qualities?
4. What have you learned (if available) about the history and lore of this plant? Is there a folk wisdom associated with this plant? How do these insights compare to your own observations?
5. How does the information you gathered from your literature review enhance your understanding of the plant and its qualities? What new insights did you gain?
6. Review the essay on the [Twelve Windows of Plant Perception](#). Consider how the additional information you have gathered completes your picture of this plant. Note any areas in which you need to do further research. (Not every category is applicable to each plant.)



When night was drawing near, I ran down the flowery slopes exhilarated, thanking God for the gift of this great day. The setting sun fired the clouds. All the world seemed newborn. Every thing, even the commonest, was seen in new light and was looked at with new interest as if never seen before. The plant people seemed glad, as if rejoicing with me, the little ones as well as the trees, while every feature of the peak and its traveled boulders seemed to know where I had been and the depth of my joy, as if they could read faces.

John Muir, *Mountaineer Essays*