

Perfume makers seek natural, sustainable scents

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In 1921, perfumer Ernest Beaux discovered that adding synthetic aldehydes to natural rose and jasmine scents produced just the right fragrance combination for the iconic CHANEL No. 5 perfume. Today,

perfume makers have more than 3,000 synthetic scent molecules in their palettes. However, according to an article in *Chemical & Engineering News (C&EN)*, the weekly newsmagazine of the American Chemical Society, consumer demand for natural ingredients has challenged perfumers to find natural, yet sustainable, scents.

In a 2017 survey of 1,000 U.S. beauty consumers by Harris Poll, 19% of shoppers said that buying all-natural fragrance products is important to them, up 4% from 2016. "All-natural" scents can command premium prices, but they also present challenges for perfume makers, Senior Editor Melody Bomgardner writes. Many natural ingredients lack sustainable, responsible sources. For example, the harvest of Indian sandalwood for perfume has driven that evergreen tree nearly to extinction. And before chemists developed synthetic musk, the scent was derived from the glands of deer. Even when they can be responsibly sourced, natural scents often fluctuate wildly in price and supply.

Some large fragrance firms are trying to strike a balance between sustainable natural and synthetic ingredients: They are seeking non-endangered sources of [natural ingredients](#), while also trying to make their synthetic processes more environmentally friendly. Givaudan, the world's largest fragrance firm, has boosted its natural portfolio. The [company](#) has also implemented a "Five-Carbon Path" to produce [scent](#) molecules more efficiently, for example, by upcycling carbon from side streams of other processes rather than having new petroleum-based inputs. Other companies are using microbial fermentation to sustainably make fragrance ingredients. Although the industry doesn't currently consider fermentation-derived molecules as "natural," they are renewable.

More information: "How perfumers walk the fine line between natural and synthetic," cen.acs.org/business/consumer-between/97/i16

Provided by American Chemical Society

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