

how to spend it

Springtime in a bottle

The myriad scents of a top perfume blogger's favourite season



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Two weeks ago, my husband and I had a picnic at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, one of the most serene spots in New York. The pink confetti of cherry petals kept getting caught in my hair and the sky was a perfect robin's-egg blue. I felt lightheaded and happy, both from our surreptitious sips of well-concealed champagne and the fragrance of peonies and wisteria.

Two weeks later, the cherry blossoms were swept away, the rains robbed the lilacs of their perfume, and the weekly routine of meetings and household chores threatened to suffocate me. Since I live by my nose, scent invariably becomes my escape. That's how I became determined to find a perfume that would put me in a springtime mood no matter what the calendar month.

What does spring smell like? To me, its aroma is the bitterness of apricot blossoms, the musky richness of wet earth and the mineral sharpness of melting snow. Whenever I wear Chanel No 18 (first picture, about £70 for 70ml) I feel caught in the gust of a spring breeze. The cool ambrette seed creates an icy effect against the iris and rose, but just like the crisp days of early spring turn into the sultry exuberance of late May, the base of musk lends No 18 sensual richness.

Although Frédéric Malle L'Eau d'Hiver (first picture, £90 for 50ml) is named "Winter Water", I find that it recreates my spring fantasy of white blossoms on bare branches and the metallic taste of rain on the lips – the days when it's still too early to put winter coats in storage, but when every breath of crisp air already feels intoxicating. This delicate violet and angelica étude has a wistful aura, but it's also full of surprises. The silvery glitter of cool floral notes soon melts away, leaving behind a drizzle of honey folded into the tender softness of almond.

As I was searching for spring in a bottle, I discovered that it can have many different expressions, ranging from romantic to sultry. Jo Malone White Lilac and Rhubarb (about £58 for 100ml) smells like an English garden on a warm April morning, a mélange of almond-scented lilacs, peonies and bluebells. Hermès Osmanthe Yunnan (second picture, about £149 for 100ml), the ethereal accord of tea and osmanthus, recreates perfumer Jean-Claude Ellena's recollections of his springtime trip to China.

In a dramatic contrast, L'Artisan Parfumeur Séville à L'Aube (first picture, about £80 for 100ml) was inspired by the Spanish spring, richly perfumed with orange blossom and jasmine, but also with the incense of Easter processions and tobacco-scented kisses. Even if it is not a spring I've ever experienced, I felt the thrill of being swept away in its fantasy. If that's not a perfect escape, I don't know what is.

www.artisanparfumeur.com. www.chanel.com. www.fredericmalle.com. www.hermes.com.
www.jomalone.co.uk.

Victoria Frolova has been writing her perfume blog, www.boisdejasmin.com, since 2005. It began as a hobby – her interest in perfume had been kindled while growing up in a family of chemical engineers – but it quickly turned into a full-time undertaking. Her blog is so-called because, she says, “the scent that never fails to move me is the aroma of jasmine in the warm evening air.”