Pliny the Elder wrote the encyclopedia, *Natural History*, in which he touched on perfume. In his work he speaks of boiling oil and herbal essences into perfume. He focused on different plants and what they smelled like when turned into perfume. Reading the basics from Pliny gave me enough to know where to start looking for ingredients and steps to create perfume. I started out by searching the internet for an herb shop in Green Bay. There was only one, The Good Herb Shop, so I was off to learn some more about herbs and art of creating perfume. Once I was there I met a nice woman, Lynn Austin, who helped me tremendously.

Perfume was referred to as unguents in ancient times. Unguents were perfumes meant for skin and were oil based. Unguents being oil based were used for aroma and moisture for the skin. “Though enduringly used in religious ritual, perfume was also now being used to anoint the body. Generously. By the 1st Century AD, Rome used about 2,800 tons of imported frankincense and 550 tons of myrrh a year.”¹ According to Pliny, use of unguents for cosmetic reasons most likely originated in India.² Perfumes were put at altars as offerings to gods.³ -Incense: Religious temples (everyday use and ceremonies) and households. Perfumes were used to mask foul smells in public areas. An example of such use was for masking the smell of dead

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³ Pliny, 29.
bodies. Theaters (rose water sprinkled throughout), Public baths, scenting and moisturizing skin, necklaces called pomanders were worn to ward off plague. There were many way ancients created perfumes: Enfleurage (pressing flower petals), steeping in oil, steeping in oil and water, pressing (pressing citrus out of fruit skins), boiling, and steaming.

In ancient times perfumes are composed of “two elements which enter into the composition of unguents, the juices and the solid parts. The former generally consist of various kinds of oils, the latter of odoriferous substances.” This was when I knew of the two basic substances I would need to recreate my own versions of ancient perfumes; oils and herbs. Resins or gums were put into unguents to preserve the perfume itself and the smell, “salt never used.” Pliny said salts were never used to preserve the perfumes in ancient times but among other sources, modern of course, said salt was a viable preservative to be used today. I used frankincense and myrrh as resins and base notes for my perfumes, of which were used in ancient times.

Getting into specific scents used in ancient times and the scents I used, rose was the most common. I used powdered rose petals because the smell was most agreeable to my liking and was “that the unguents which have been the most universally adopted, are those which are compounded of the rose, a flower that grows everywhere.” Lynn Austin also highly recommended rose to me. The oils I used were olive and apricot. The herbs I used were:

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6 Pliny, 46.
7 Pliny, 49.
8 Pliny, 54.
frankincense, myrrh, rose, sandalwood, honey, cinnamon, marjoram, anise, coriander, and tonka beans. I used these herbs based on what Pliny, internet sources, and Lynn told me. I used what was best available to me which was all bought at Lynn’s herb shop and a convenient store. When creating unguents one must use base notes, middle notes, and top notes. The top notes you smell first because they are the strongest smelling.9

Once I read a little from Pliny the Elder, that was when I checked out the internet in search of a nearby herb shop. Google found me Lynn Austin and her herb shop called The Good Herb Shop, wrote down directions and I was off. The Good Herb Shop is located on Morrow St. in Green Bay, WI. It is the cutest little shop, I believe she lives there as well. It is tucked away behind some trees so it took me a few times around the block before I actually found the place. Once there I rang the doorbell and there was Lynn, who immediately invited me and asked what she could help me with. As soon as I mentioned perfume, Lynn was ready to talk herbs and perfume and plants and history and ideas. I was at The Good Herb Shop for almost three hours talking, discussing, and planning with Lynn. I mentioned to Lynn about what I had read so far from Pliny about the process of making perfume which was said to be done by boiling oil and herbs, allowing the herbs to infuse with the oil. The heat brings out the fragrant scents of the herbs. Lynn and I talked it out and she said the best way I could recreate it in an ancient way was to use linen tea bags, oven-safe bowls, crock pots and water. We then discussed which herbs I would use. I pulled out my laptop to find some more sources and happened upon an article that came with step-by-step DIY instructions to ancient perfume making and we noticed the author did it similarly to the way Lynn suggested.10

and top notes that were commonly used. Lynn had most of them so I decided to go ahead and the listed ones plus a couple of extra herbs. I chose Tonka beans because the aroma from the beans is deliciously sweet. I chose Sandalwood because it was one of Lynn’s favorite, she did help me out tremendously after all. Lynn sold me some apricot oil (because that was cheapest and best available in her shop), a mortar and pestle, linen tea bags, 6 two-ounce glass perfume bottles, and herbs. She weighed everything out herself, bagged all of it up, and even added the sales tax herself. Lynn and I exchanged handshakes, smiles, goodbyes, and I promised to go visit her as soon as I could. If it was not for Lynn and her endless knowledge I would not have done so well on my project.

I had all the ingredients and materials needed so I headed home to get started. I started out by laying out all the ingredients and materials on my counter and took pictures for the blog post. To begin I put about an inch of water into two crockpots and a stovetop pot. I turned the crock pots on to the low setting and waited to start the stovetop. Then I began making the perfumes. Step one: Pick out the oil, base note, middle notes, and top notes. Step two: measure out two tablespoons of selected oil and put into an oven safe bowl, the bowls I used were simple custard bowls (as suggested by Lynn Austin). I used one custard bowl to hold the unguent mixture and one custard bowl to cover the other bowl in order to stop water from being added to the mixture. Step three: measure out ¼ teaspoon of a base note because it should not be too strong or else the perfume would smell pungent. Step four: pick out anywhere between one and three middle notes, measure out 1 teaspoon per herb. Step five: at first I thought only picking one top note and keeping it at 1 teaspoon would be necessary but after making six and only going crazy with top notes in one batch of perfume, I realized that having more than one top note with
a higher measurement was the way to go… it made for a delicious smelling perfume (because the

top note is the strongest and what is smelled first). Step six: put all of the chosen herbs into a

linen tea bag and tie it shut. Once tied shut, place the filled tea bag into the custard bowl

containing the oil. Be sure the tea bag is soaked in the oil. Step seven: place the custard bowl into

the crock pot and place another custard bowl on top to assure no water gets in the perfume

mixture. Step eight: let the perfume steep from anywhere between twenty-four and seventy-two

hours. Lynn advised me to keep the heat controlled and low so the oil did not burn, which is why

the crock pots were a perfect idea. If the oil were to burn it would make the perfume smell burnt,

no one wants to smell burnt. Step nine: after allowing the oil and herbs to steep, for a minimum

of twenty-four hours, turn off the crock pots, allow the custard bowls to cool, and remove those

from the crock pots. Once out, take the top bowl off and set aside. Now take the linen bag and

squeeze out as much excess liquid as possible out and into the bowl. Step ten: mix the contents

of the custard bowl, pour contents into perfume bottles and enjoy! I successfully created

unguents in a similar way the ancients did. My perfumes ended up smelling light and heavenly,

while the perfumes also moisturize my skin.

Perfume today is alcohol based. Natural materials such as plants and animal extracts are

collected and used, similarly to ancient times. A difference today is the large scale manufacturing

and some scents are created in a lab, also known as artificial scents. The alcohol base is the

biggest difference because the unguents, also known as oils, stay on the skin longer and

moisturize the skin while alcohol dries out the skin, the scent does not last as long and can be

smelled from far away. I learned that using unguents to scent one’s skin is more personal
because in order to really smell the unguents on someone’s skin, the other person must get closer to the wearer of the perfume.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{11} Perfume, How Products are Made (Advameg, Inc. 2015) http://www.madehow.com/Volume-2/Perfume.html