

Essential Oil Index

This month in our continuing series of essential oils, we take a look at ...

Frankincense



Frankincense (*Boswellia carteri*) is a small tree or shrub with abundant leaves and white or pale pink flowers. It yields a natural oleo gum resin, which is collected by making incisions into the bark. The milky white liquid that exudes then solidifies into pea-sized, tear-shaped amber/orange-brown lumps.

The oil, which has a middle to base keynote, is extracted from the plant's gum resin by steam distillation.

Frankincense has a pronounced effect on the respiratory system, and also has an affinity for the urino-genital tract.

With thanks to Purple Flame Aromatherapy, St. John's Spinney, Gun Hill, Arley, CV7 8IT.

Key constituents

Alpha phellandrene, alpha-pinene, beta-phellandrene, beta-pinene, dipentene, incensyl acetate, limonene, myrcene, octanol, octyl acetate, p-cymene, terpinene, thujene, viridiforal.

Body systems affected

Nervous, immune, respiratory, urinary, skin.

Main therapeutic properties

Anti-inflammatory, astringent, cicatrisant, expectorant, sedative, tonic, vulnerary.

Secondary therapeutic properties

Antiseptic, carminative, digestive, diuretic, tonic, emmenagogue, uterine.

Main therapeutic uses

Anxiety, asthma, bronchitis, catarrh, coughs, dry skin conditions, laryngitis, lung congestion, mature complexions, nervous tension, scars, shallow breathing, stress related conditions.

Secondary therapeutic uses

Colds, cystitis, dysmenorrhoea, dyspepsia, flu, leucorrhoea, metrorrhagia, uterine disorders.

Blends with

Basil, black pepper, camphor, cedarwood, geranium, ginger, jasmine, juniper, lavender, lemon, lemongrass, marjoram, myrrh, neroli, patchouli, rose, thyme.

Safety data

Non-toxic, non-irritant, non-sensitizing.

Other information

Frankincense was used medicinally and ceremonially by the ancient Egyptians and is mentioned in the Song of Solomon. The gum resin of this plant is perhaps most famous as one of the three gifts brought to baby Jesus by the Wise Men.

Frankincense is believed to symbolise divinity.

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