

# Essential oil index

This month, in our continuing series on essential oils,  
we take a look at lavender



## Lavender

(*Lavandula angustifolia*)

Growing up to one metre tall, lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) is an evergreen woody shrub with green, narrow leaves and small violet-blue flowers. Having many varieties, this hugely popular plant is cultivated worldwide, but was originally native to the Mediterranean regions. The proportion of its various constituents will vary according to the soil and conditions in which the plants are grown, for example alpine lavender is always higher in esters than plants grown at lower altitudes. Also commonly used in aromatherapy are spike lavender and lavandin, the latter of which is a hybrid with similar uses to true lavender – only being more penetrating and rubefacient with a sharper scent. The oil, which has a middle keynote, is extracted by steam distillation from the flowers and stems.

WITH THANKS TO PURPLE FLAME, ST JOHN'S SPINNEY,  
GUN HILL, NEW ARLEY, WARWICKSHIRE CV7 8HB

### Key constituents

1,8-cineole caryophyllene, lavandulol, lavandulyl acetate, limonene, linalool (up to 40 per cent), linalyl acetate (up to 40 per cent), ocimene and terpinen-4-Ol.

### Main properties

Anti-convulsive, anti-depressant, anti-rheumatic, antiseptic, antispasmodic, carminative, cholagogue, cicatrisant, cordial, cytophylactic, deodorant, diuretic, emmenagogue, hypotensive, insecticide, nervine, parasiticide, parturient, sedative, splenetic, sudorific, tonic and vulnerary.

### Main therapeutic uses

Abrasions, abscesses, acne, allergies, alopecia, asthma, athlete's foot, boils, bronchitis, bruises, burns, carbuncles, catarrh, colds, colic, conjunctivitis, convulsion, cystitis, debility, depression, dermatitis, diphtheria, dysmenorrhoea, dyspepsia, ear infections, eczema, epilepsy, exfoliation, fainting, flatulence, flu, frozen shoulder, gangrenous wounds, glandular problems, halitosis, high blood pressure, hysteria, infantile earache, insect bites, insomnia, irritability, laryngitis, leucorrhoea, lumbago, migraine, muscular aches and pains, nausea, nervous exhaustion, tension, nose infections, oliguria, palpitations, panic, paralysis, PMT, psoriasis, rheumatism, ringworm, scabies, scanty periods, sciatica, shock, skin (sensitive, ulcerated, dry or greasy), stings, stomach cramps, sunstroke, throat infections, tuberculosis, typhoid fever, vertigo, vomiting, whooping cough and wounds.

### Secondary properties

Analgesic, anti-microbial, anti-toxic, rubefacient, vermifuge.

### Secondary therapeutic uses

Diarrhoea, gallstones, roundworms.

### Blends with

Bergamot, cedarwood, chamomile (German), clary sage, cypress, eucalyptus, fennel (sweet), geranium, jasmine, laurel leaf, lemon, lemongrass, mandarin, marigold, marjoram, melissa, myrrh, neroli, patchouli, rose, rosemary, sage, sandalwood, sweet orange, tagetes, thyme, vetiver and ylang ylang.

### Safety data

Non-toxic, non-irritant, non-sensitising. Should be avoided during the first trimester of pregnancy and used with caution during the remaining months.<sup>1</sup>

### Other information

Lavender is probably one of the most versatile essential oils as it benefits every body system and helps to restore mental and physical balance. It is an excellent skin antiseptic and rejuvenator and is particularly useful in the treatment of burns.

<sup>1</sup> Davis, Patricia. *Aromatherapy A-Z*. 2005. Published by Vermilion, London. (ISBN: 9780091906610)