

Essential Oil Index

In this issue of *International Therapist*, we begin our Essential Oil Index page with ...

Sweet basil



Sweet basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) is an annual herb and a member of the Labiatae family. Though a native to Asia and Africa, sweet basil is now cultivated world-wide for culinary as well as therapeutic use.

The essential oil, which has a top keynote, is extracted from the plant's flowering tops and leaves by steam distillation. The oil is a colourless or pale yellow liquid and has a fresh sweet-spicy scent and balsamic undertone.

Sweet basil is used extensively in Ayurvedic medicine, and is considered sacred to Krishna and Vishnu. The herb is also used in Chinese medicine to treat stomach problems and kidney ailments.

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

Constituents:

Linalool, citronellol, eugenol, methyl chavicol, limonene.

Body systems affected:

Digestive, nervous, immune, respiratory, glandular, skin, structural.

Main properties:

Antidepressant, antispasmodic, carminative, cephalic, digestive, emmenagogue, expectorant, nervine, stimulant, stomachic, sudorific, tonic.

Main uses:

Anorexia, anxiety, bronchitis, coughs, cramp, depression, digestive spasm, dyspepsia, ear infections, fatigue, flatulence, gout, hysteria, insomnia, mental fatigue, migraine, multiple sclerosis, muscular aches and pains, nausea, nervous tension, neurasthenia, paralysis, respiratory disorders, rheumatism, scanty periods, sedentary state, sinus problems, spinal problems, stress related conditions, vomiting, whooping cough.

Secondary system:

Nervous.

Secondary properties:

Antiseptic, febrifuge, galactagogue.

Secondary uses:

Colds, congested skin/tissues, constipation, fevers (intermittent), 'flu, infections, intestinal infections/spasms.

Blends with:

Laurel leaf, bergamot, black pepper, clary sage, coriander, frankincense, galbanum, geranium, hyssop, jasmine, juniper, lime, marjoram.

Safety data:

Possible toxicity with some chemo-types, e.g. exotic or standard basil. Use in moderation. The French, true or sweet variety is relatively non-toxic. Do not use during pregnancy.

Additional comments:

Basil has a strong stimulating affect on the mind. It is a subtle remedy for emotional and mind-based disorders. It is a nerve tonic and a good hormone balancer. Synonyms include sweet basil, common basil, and reunion basil.