

Basil

Ocimum basilicum - Lamiaceae (Labiatae)

Common or Sweet Basil is a hairy, labiate plant, growing to about 0.5 - 1 metre high. The stem is square, the flowers white and the leaves are liberally dotted with dark oil cells, which readily release their scent if bruised. The herb is sacred to Hindus and has a long tradition of use in Indian medicine.

<u>Place of Origin</u>	<u>Part of plant used</u>	Flowering tops, leaves
France, USA, Bulgaria	<u>Method of Extraction</u>	Steam Distillation
<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Yield</u>	1-1.5%
Colour: Light green-yellow	<u>BF</u>	1-3
Perfume notes: Top, middle	<u>TR</u>	C

Aroma:

Chemical Composition

Monoterpenes	Alpha-pinene	0.5-1	Phenols	Eugenol	5-6
	Ocimene	1-3			
	Limonene	1-2	Ethers	Methyl chavicol	0-5
Monoterpenols	Geraniol	0-1	Esters	Methyl cinnamate	4
	Linalool	35-54		Geranyl acetate	
	Citronellol	2-4			
	Terpinen-4-ol	2-4			

Constituents vary widely according to geographic source. 4 major chemotypes have been identified, methyl chavicol, linalool, methyl eugenol and methyl cinnamate. Exotic oils from Reunion, Comoro Islands, Madagascar, Thailand and Vietnam are rich in methyl chavicol (80-90%). It is recommended that oils with levels below 50% be used in aromatherapy

Properties: Antispasmodic, carminative, cephalic, emmenagogue, expectorant, nervine, stomachic, antimicrobial, antidepressant, febrifuge, antifungal, insecticide, restorative

Precautions: Possible sensitisation in some individuals
Avoid use on babies, children, sensitive skins
Methyl chavicol is potentially carcinogenic in very *high oral doses*
Use correct chemotype / verify chemical composition
Avoid in pregnancy

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Indications

Circulatory

Digestive

Colic, Cramps, Dyspepsia, Flatulence, Nausea

Genito-Urinary / Gynaecological

Dysmenorrhea, PMS, scanty periods

Immune System

Musculo-skeletal

Headaches, cramps, muscular aches and pains

Nervous

Depression, anxiety, tension, mental fatigue, poor memory & concentration, apathy, migraine

Respiratory

Bronchitis, sinusitis, cough, asthma, colds & flu

Skin

Insect Bites, fungal skin infections

Clinical Research

Essential oil of *Ocimum basilicum* was tested against 22 species of fungi. It inhibited growth of all strains - fungistatic at low concentrations, fungicidal at higher levels. Insect repelling activity was also demonstrated. It was found to be more effective than commercial fungicides and fumigants.

Antimicrobial activity against a range of bacteria has also been proven and it has been found that less predominant components in the oil contribute greatly to this activity

Psychological uses

One of the best nerve tonics, basil acts as a reviving restorative for depression, apathy and melancholia, clearing the mind of confusion and apprehension.

It is believed to stimulate the memory, promote mental clarity and concentration. Basil's cephalic properties and activity make it useful for people who worry and fret or who use their intellect a lot, leading to mental exhaustion and collapse.

Summary

Cephalic, stimulant