

Lavender

Lavandula angustifolia - Lamiaceae (*Labiatae*)

Lavender is a hardy aromatic shrub, growing to a height of 1 metre, with narrow pointed leaves and grey - blue flowers borne on slender stalks. Native to the Mediterranean, lavender is now grown around the world, flourishing on poor, dry soils. Numerous varieties of lavender are grown and it is important to know which plant is being used for oil production as the chemical compositions vary greatly.

<u>Place of Origin</u>	<u>Part of plant used</u>	flowering tops, leaves
France, UK, Bulgaria, Russia	<u>Method of Extraction</u>	steam distillation
<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Yield</u>	0.5-2%
Colour: Colourless	<u>BF</u>	5-7
Perfume notes: Middle	<u>TR</u>	D
Aroma		

Chemical Composition

Monoterpenes	myrcene	%	Monoterpenols	linalool	%
	ocimene	1-2		terpinen-4-ol	18-42
	alpha & beta pinene				3
			Esters	linyl acetate	20-40
Sesquiterpenes	beta-caryophyllene				
Oxides	1,8 cineole				

There are several species and hybrids of lavender many of which yield an essential oil. It is important to use the Latin name when looking at oils, as the composition varies: Lavandula spica / latifolia produces an oil rich in 1,8 cineol (24%) and camphor (20%) - making it stimulating; Lavandula stoechas contains high levels of ketones.

Properties:

Analgesic, antispasmodic, antidepressant, antimicrobial, antiinflammatory, cicatrisant, cytophylactic, nervine, sedative, restorative, vulnerary, antitussive, gentle emmenagogue, diuretic, hypotensive, insecticidal, stimulant

Precautions:

Non-toxic, non-sensitising, non-irritant One of the safest essential oils

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Indications

Circulatory

High blood pressure, poor circulation

Digestive

Colic, cramps, dyspepsia, flatulence

Genito-Urinary / Gynaecological

Dysmenorrhoea, PMS, scanty periods, menopausal irregularities

Immune System

Musculo-skeletal

Headaches, cramps, muscular aches & pains, lumbago, sciatica, spasms, arthritis, rheumatism, sprains, injuries, neuralgia, pain anywhere in the body

Nervous

depression, mental fatigue & vulnerability, anger, frustration, tension, shock, insomnia, fear, anxiety

Respiratory

catarrh, colds, flu, sinusitis

Skin

Acne, skin infections, fungal infections, allergies, dermatitis, psoriasis, bruises, dandruff, sunburn, burns, wounds, inflamed & itching skin, insect bites & stings – can be used neat

Clinical Research

Lavender has been the subject of much research over the years with many of the claimed Properties being proven scientifically. A selection is provided:

Sedative activity demonstrated from inhaled oil; antibacterial activity shown against MRSA; insecticidal activity proven, antimicrobial activity shown against broad range of fungi and bacteria.

Psychological uses

Lavender is one of the best aromatic remedies for all stress related conditions, either stimulating the mind if appropriate or calming and sedating as needed. For example if "stuck in a rut", unable to accept new ideas or to adapt to a changing situation, lavender will smooth the way, gently breaking old habits and allowing one to embrace the new and vital.

Conversely in an acute crisis, the stress associated with a sudden change will be dispersed by lavender's ability to instil a feeling of calm control and inner strength. Aesthetically, lavender opens us up to the beauty around us, allowing the release of negative thoughts and habits. It has a profoundly softening effect upon the mind.

Summary

Balancer, adaptogen, most versatile oil