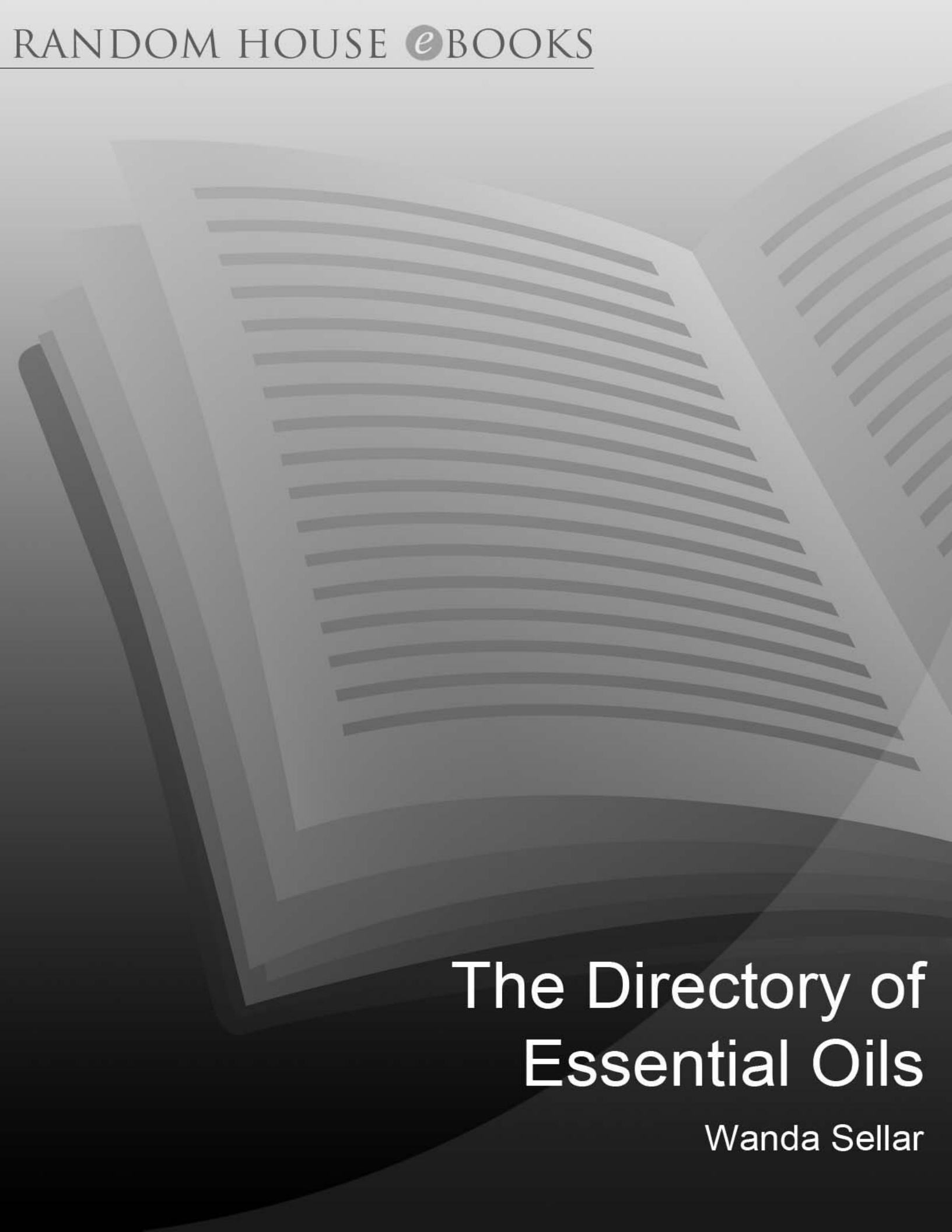


RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



The Directory of Essential Oils

Wanda Sellar

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ABOUT THE BOOK

This is a practical directory of 83 essential oils, covering many unusual oils as well as those that are in popular use. The oils are extensively categorised, with each entry offering valuable information at a glance. Helpful descriptions are given of the oils' aromas, their chemical constituents and their effects on the mind and body. Fascinating information is also included about the oils' histories, their extraction methods, and the myths and legends associated with them. There is also useful guidance on the effects of essential oils on the skin and their use in blends and treatments.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Wanda Sellar is a highly respected aromatherapist of many years' standing. She is based in the South East of England.

THE DIRECTORY OF ESSENTIAL OILS

Wanda Sellar
Illustrated by Sarah Young

Vermilion
LONDON

DEDICATION

For Pamela



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

THE HEALING ART of Aromatherapy needs little introduction nowadays. So I will be brief. Other books set out application methods of essential oils. This one just describes their character and the various ways they can help to enhance the Mind and Body and in so doing perhaps they can lift the Spirit too.

Each essential oil is categorised under different headings so the relevant information is immediately to hand. A compilation such as this one can serve as an aid to the Aromatherapist when choosing appropriate oils for treatment. Yet since each person is a wondrous mixture of individual qualities, the therapeutic claims associated with each oil can often be more of a promise than a cure. Perhaps finally, healing comes through the therapist's own intuition in pairing the oil with the client.

Ailments listed which are of a severe nature should of course only be treated in collaboration with a qualified medical doctor.

Though massage is the usual method of treatment in Aromatherapy – between 1 and 3 drops of essential oil to a teaspoon of base oil – some entries here may not be appropriate to this healing medium. The section headed Precautions usually indicates this, but it's important to remember that Aromatherapy is a very subtle form of healing and just a little goes a very long way. Some essential oils are listed more through general interest and perhaps are too potent to include within the Aromatherapists' pharmacopoeia. This is mentioned too.

The 'Notes' whether High, Middle or Base have not always found universal agreement; neither have the planetary rulerships. But maybe what we have here is a good starting point rather than the last word. In the same way, the section

under Blends is just a helpful guide in selecting combinations though personal preference can be paramount in healing. There is also a separate section on Blends at the back of the book, indicating possible combinations. Each group is said to blend well together as well as those adjacent to it. The chemical constituents also just hint at the complexity of each essential oil.

It was the History category which really brought the oils to life for me, though naturally many of the tales belonged more to the plant rather than the essential oil. Ginger and Black Pepper were very assertive, though others like Chamomile and Violet showed a gentler face.

A Glossary at the back provides a handy cross-reference for the Properties. Most of the main oils are included.

London 2001



THE ESSENTIAL OILS



AMYRIS

PLANT/PART	Tree/Wood
LATIN NAME	Amyris balsamifera
FAMILY	Rutaceae
NOTE	Base
PLANET	None
EXTRACTION	Distillation

AROMA Dry, burnt wood fragrance.

FEATURES Amyris grows wild on the mountain slopes of Haiti. Often found in small thickets, it is an evergreen with lovely white flowers though it is the bark which emits the valuable resinous fluid. Acclaimed as the West Indian Sandalwood although it does not belong to the same family, i.e. Santalaceae. Different regions of production seem to produce a slightly different type of oil, the quality of which largely depends upon moisture content and age of tree. If the wood is ground too finely, there is a reduction of oil.

HISTORY & MYTH The wood burns like a candle due to its plentiful oil content, hence its other popular pseudonym Candlewood. Not surprisingly, it was also chopped up for firewood. It was a familiar sight along the seashores of Haiti at night since fishermen used the twigs as a torch to catch sea crabs. Similarly villagers travelling at night-time would light their way with Amyris twigs when they brought farm produce from their mountain dwellings to the cities. Its durable quality found a practical use as fence posts too.

Prior to the Second World War, large quantities of small logs were exported from Venezuela, Haiti and Jamaica for distillation chiefly in Germany. The properties are said to be similar to that of East Indian Sandalwood, an oil it has been

known to adulterate. Principal use has been as a fixative in perfumes and as an ingredient of soaps and cosmetics.

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS Cadinene, Cadinole, Caryophyllene (Sesquiterpenes).

PROPERTIES Antiseptic, Antiphlogistic, Antispasmodic, Aphrodisiac, Expectorant, Hypotensive, Sedative.

PRECAUTIONS A lingering aroma which might not please all. Otherwise other contraindications unknown.

MIND Possibly effective in easing nervous tension.



Body We start with an oil about which little is known except its colourful and interesting history. Therapeutics are little more than guesswork based on its similarity to Sandalwood and Sesquiterpene content.

This indicates a soothing, sedative quality which is also associated with base notes, Amyris being used as a fixative in perfumes. Its antispasmodic nature ties in with its calming character and, like Sandalwood, could well ease

coughs and chest complaints. Possibly hypotensive too, helping to bring down blood pressure.

Since most oils are antiseptic, no doubt Amyris also has this quality and may help to ward off infection. The strength of its potency in this regard is, however, uncertain.

Is it possible that, like Sandalwood, it could well have an effect on urinary complaints? However, its competence as an aphrodisiac must, no doubt, be left to personal investigation!

EFFECT ON SKIN Antiphlogistic qualities are often characteristic of Sesquiterpenes, so it is possible that Amyris may well have a soothing effect on inflammatory conditions. However, with its 'burnt wood' aroma could this in fact also point to a 'drying' effect on oily skin conditions?

BLENDS Benzoin, Clary Sage, Elemi, Frankincense, Galbanum, Geranium, Jasmine, Lavender, Melissa, Rose, Rosewood, Ylang Ylang.

ANGELICA

PLANT/PART	Herb/Seeds/Roots
LATIN NAME	Angelica archangelica
FAMILY	Umbelliferae
NOTE	Base
PLANET	Sun
EXTRACTION	Distillation

AROMA Sweet, herbaceous and a little musky.

FEATURES A water-loving herb often found near rivers and streams. Grows quite tall with large, broad pointed leaves dividing into smaller leaflets adorned by tiny greenish-white flowers. Many varieties of Angelica grow over Northern Europe as well as Iceland, Greenland and central Russia and the oil is often obtained from England and Belgium.

HISTORY & MYTH Some time during the 16th century, Angelica came out of North Africa and into the warmer climes of Europe. Since first flowering on 8th May – St Michael the Archangel’s Day – it has been used in mystical rituals. Perhaps not surprisingly, it was frequently grown in monasteries and known in those ancient dwellings as ‘Angel Grass’.

Popular French liqueurs such as Chartreuse and Benedictine include this delightful herb. It grew to be a favourite garden plant, and was widely regarded as an antidote to the Plague. ‘Angelica Water’ formed part of a royal prescription and was published in pamphlet form by the College of Physicians in 1665, the year of London’s Great Plague. The old medic Paracelsus esteemed it highly and reckoned it to be a cure-all. Often used to flavour gin and perfumes and traditionally candied for cake decoration and confectionery.

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS Borneol, Linalool (Alcohols), Bergaptene (Lactone), Limonene, Phellandrene, Pinene (Terpenes).

PROPERTIES Antispasmodic, Aphrodisiac, Carminative, Diuretic, Emmenagogue, Expectorant, Hepatic, Stimulant, Stomachic, Sudorific, Tonic.

PRECAUTIONS Excessive use may over stimulate the nervous system, possibly causing insomnia. Could be phototoxic, i.e. causing irritation when the skin is exposed to the sun. Best avoided in pregnancy and, some say, diabetes.

MIND A fillip to the nervous system quickly relieving exhaustion and stress. Promotes a feeling of balance and appears to revitalise a tired mind and a flagging heart. Gives incentive to face difficult problems.



Body Its tonic action has a potent healing effect on the body particularly at the start of treatment by strengthening the constitution. It invigorates the lymphatic system, speeds up cleansing through its sweating action, drains fluids and relieves the body of poisons especially after a long illness.

Helps with indigestion, flatulence, dyspepsia (feeling of nausea and discomfort), stomach ulcers and colic.

Stimulates appetite and may help with anorexia nervosa. Said to be a tonic to the liver and spleen. A urinary antiseptic, hence useful in cystitis.

Its expectorant qualities work on feverish colds, chronic bronchitis and pleurisy. Seems to ease nervous asthma, shortness of breath and smokers cough as well as restoring sense of smell. Appears to be a general tonic to the lungs.

Said to encourage production of oestrogen, thereby regulating menstruation and easing painful periods as well as helping to expel afterbirth. Reputedly useful with male and female infertility.

Controls uric acid and may be beneficial to rheumatic conditions and arthritis as well as gout and sciatica.

A speedy pain reliever – headaches, migraines and toothache may all benefit by its action.

And last but not least, neutralises snake bites!

EFFECT ON SKIN A good skin tonic and also said to be anti-inflammatory which might be beneficial to various skin problems. Reputedly deals with fungal growths.

BLENDS Basil, Chamomile, Geranium, Grapefruit, Lavender, Lemon, Mandarin.

ANISEED

PLANT/PART	Herb/Seeds
LATIN NAME	Pimpinella anisum
FAMILY	Umbelliferae
NOTE	Top to Middle
PLANET	Sun
EXTRACTION	Distillation



AROMA Pungent, liquorice-like, very warming.

FEATURES The Middle East first gave us Aniseed and it is now found in the warmer parts of Europe as well as North Africa and the USA. Cultivated to about two feet, it has delicate feathery leaves with tiny white blossoms. The greyish-brown seeds are crushed before distillation, increasing the oil yield. Low temperatures tend to solidify the oil and it may need to be hand-warmed before use.

HISTORY & MYTH Revered by ancient civilisations, particularly in the Middle East. The practical Egyptians used

Aniseed in breadmaking probably for its carminative properties. The Romans hailed it as an aphrodisiac! They also used the seeds for a spicy cake known as 'mustaceus'. The Greeks recognised its calmative influence on the digestive tract. More recently it has been used in liqueurs and cordials such as pernod and absinthe. In India the seeds are chewed to sweeten the breath. Has been used as an ingredient in toothpastes and mouthwashes.

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS Anisic (Aldehyde), Anethole, Methylchavicol (Phenols), Limonene (Terpene).

PROPERTIES Antiemetic, Antispasmodic, Aphrodisiac, Cardiac, Carminative, Digestive, Diuretic, Expectorant, Galactagogue, Insecticide, Laxative, Parasiticide, Parturient, Pectoral, Stimulant, Stomachic.

PRECAUTIONS A very potent oil, not often used in massage as skin sensitisation may occur. Generally a stimulant, but excessive use could cause sluggishness. In extreme cases possibility of circulatory problems and cerebral congestion. Certainly should be avoided in pregnancy and perhaps altogether.

MIND Could invigorate a tired mind.

BODY Well known for its effect on the digestive system. May be helpful with dyspepsia, colic and flatulence. Seems to quell vomiting and nausea, especially of nervous origin. Gets things moving by stimulating peristalsis. Apparently helpful with oliguria (low quantity of urine).

Has been used as a stimulant in cardiac fatigue though at the same time could ease palpitations. A general tonic to the circulatory system and respiratory tract. Used in lung and heart disease generally and may have a good effect on

asthma and breathing difficulties. Appears to help with colds due to its warming properties.

Sexual problems such as impotence and frigidity may be helped – the Romans thought so anyway! Stimulates the glands and its oestrogen content seems to have a regulating effect on the reproductive system. Also calms menstrual pain, aids quick delivery in childbirth and stimulates the flow of milk in nursing mothers.

Migraine and vertigo sufferers benefit and those prone to hangovers!

EFFECT ON SKIN Said to control lice and the 'itch mite', a cause of scabies. Generally has a reputation for dealing with infectious skin diseases.

BLENDS Amyris, Bay, Cardamom, Caraway, Cedarwood, Coriander, Dill, Fennel, Galbanum, Mandarin, Petitgrain, Rosewood.

ANISE-STAR

PLANT/PART	Tree/Fruit
LATIN NAME	Illicium verum
FAMILY	Magnoliaceae
NOTE	Top
PLANET	Sun
EXTRACTION	Distillation

AROMA Penetrating, pungent, similar to Aniseed.

FEATURES This ancient and exotic evergreen tree comes from East Asia and reaches to about thirty feet. Preferring its native land, it eschews other locations. Yellow flowers and star-shaped fruits adorn a white bark. The fruits are distilled in their fresh green state, the oil having a similar though stronger aroma to Aniseed. Anise-Star is derived from Chinese Anise and sometimes referred to as 'Anise Vert' due to its green colouring. There is a Japanese variety (*Illicium religiosum*) which is poisonous.

HISTORY & MYTH The village industries of Indochina included essential oil of Anise-Star. Though it is often said to be of inferior quality to Aniseed the Chinese were still quite keen to use it as an ingredient of their medicines. Certainly it was a popular aperitif and was sometimes ground in tea and coffee to sweeten the breath. Meat dishes such as pork and duck were flavoured with Anise-Star and it found a way into sweet dishes as well. English navigators brought it to Europe in the 16th century and it was soon much in demand for flavouring liqueurs in France, Germany and Italy.

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS Cineole (Ketone), Anethole, Safrole (Phenol), Carene, Cymene, Dipentene, Limonene, Pinene, Phellandrene (Terpenes).

PROPERTIES Carminative, Diuretic, Expectorant, Stimulant, Stomachic.

PRECAUTIONS A potent oil which may over-stimulate the nervous system – best avoided by people prone to allergies. Does not generally have a widespread use in Aromatherapy, and it may be best to avoid it all together.

MIND Generally stimulating effects.

BODY Seems to do an all-purpose job on the digestive system due to its strongly carminative nature. Settles the stomach, dispels flatulence and relieves nausea. Effective against constipation by stimulating peristalsis. Its beneficial action on the gut generally is probably the basis for its soothing effect on hernias.

Its diuretic properties could help with bladder problems, typically cystitis and oliguria.

A warming effect on colds points to a beneficial action on the respiratory system. Has a reputation for soothing sore throats and chest infections. Apparently helpful with lumbago, a rheumatic condition usually resulting from cold weather.

Also said to encourage production of oestrogen and could be useful with pre-menstrual tension, painful periods and acts as a regulator of menstruation.

EFFECT ON SKIN Should not be used on the skin.

BLENDS Caraway, Cardamom, Coriander, Cypress, Dill, Fennel, Ginger, Mandarin, Petitgrain, Rosewood.



BASIL

PLANT/PART	Herb/Flowering tops and leaves
LATIN NAME	Ocimum basilicum
FAMILY	Labiatae
NOTE	Top
PLANET	Mars
EXTRACTION	Distillation

AROMA Very clear, sweet and slightly spicy.

FEATURES The many varieties of Basil originate from Asia and the Pacific islands. The broadly oval and pointed green leaves support lovely purple-white flowers on a sixteen inch stem. Swarms of bees hover around this plant in summer. North Africa, France, Cyprus and the Seychelles give us the essential oil though, European Basil is said to be the best quality.

HISTORY & MYTH Basilicum is from the Greek word 'Basilicos', meaning 'royal'. A mix-up with the Latin 'Basilicus' referring to serpent briefly gave Basil an unsavoury reputation. Unscrupulous Magicians thought they could create scorpions by crushing Basil between two stones. Wiser Indian folklore held Basil sacred to Krishna and Vishnu, endowing it with protective qualities. Indeed, some Indian tribes chew Basil leaves before taking part in religious ceremonies to gain inspiration. It is used extensively in Ayurvedic medicine.

The Chinese favoured it for many centuries as a useful medicine and it seems to have a reputation for curing epilepsy. It soared in popularity during the Second World War, when spices were hard to come by. The essential oil is used in perfumery.

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS Linalool (Alcohol), Borneone, Camphor, Cineole (Ketones), Methylchavicol, Eugenol (Phenols), Ocimene, Pinene, Sylvestrene (Terpenes).

PROPERTIES Analgesic, Antidepressant, Antiseptic, Antispasmodic, Antivenomous, Aphrodisiac, Bactericide, Carminative, Cephalic, Digestive, Emmenagogue, Expectorant, Febrifuge, Galactagogue, Insecticide, Nervine, Stomachic, Sudorific, Tonic, Restorative, Stimulant, Vermifuge.

PRECAUTIONS Usually stimulating but has a stupefying effect when used in excess. An emmenagogue so perhaps best to avoid in pregnancy. Also might be irritant to people with sensitive skin.



MIND A good tonic for the nerves especially when feeling fragile, sharpening the senses and encouraging concentration. Apparently calms hysteria and nervous disorders, yet seems to have an uplifting effect on depression.

BODY First rate with headaches and migraine, probably due to its cephalic properties. Said to revive fainting spells and temporary paralysis. It is claimed to get rid of nasal polyps

and earache. Could reduce allergies since it has an effect on the adrenal cortex which controls allergies related to stress.

Basil seems to have a beneficial action on the respiratory tract and is often used for sinus congestion, asthma, bronchitis, emphysema (excess air in tissues), influenza and whooping cough. Restores sense of smell lost through catarrh.

Also effective in digestive disorders such as vomiting, gastric spasm, nausea, dyspepsia (discomfort in upper digestive tract), and hiccups. Seems to cleanse the intestines and kidneys through its antiseptic action.

Imitates the oestrogen hormone and often useful with menstrual problems such as scanty periods and engorgement of breasts. It gives rapid expulsion of afterbirth. Could well have some effect on conception difficulties.

Useful for wasp and insect bites: indeed, once reduced severe fevers like Malaria caused by parasites in the blood from mosquito bites.

May help to minimise uric acid in the blood and relieve gout as well as muscular pain generally. Stimulates blood flow and useful for deep muscle spasm.

EFFECT ON SKIN A refreshing and tonic action benefits sluggish and congested skins and may also help to control acne.

BLENDS Bergamot, Black Pepper, Clary Sage, Geranium, Hyssop, Lavender, Marjoram, Melissa, Neroli, Sandalwood, Verbena.

BAY

PLANT/PART	Tree/Leaf
LATIN NAME	Laurus nobilis
FAMILY	Lauraceae
NOTE	Top
PLANET	Sun
EXTRACTION	Distillation

AROMA Sweet and spicy, a little like Cinnamon.

FEATURES This sturdy evergreen tree grows to over thirty feet and is actually native to southern Europe. Another variety, 'Pimenta racemosa', flavours West Indian Bay Rum. Our Bay tree has long lance-shaped leaves which are rather leathery and glossy and bear small creamy-yellow flowers and black berries. The oil is often obtained from Morocco and Spain.

HISTORY & MYTH Extensively used by the ancient Egyptians and popular with the Romans, who saw the Bay as a symbol of wisdom, protection and peace. Apollo, the god of healing was associated with the Bay tree. Its Latin derivative, 'Laudis', means 'to praise', hence the presentation of laurel wreaths to victors at the Olympic Games. The idea of the 'Poet Laureate' descends from this practice.

A myth states that pleasant and prophetic dreams occur if a Bay leaf is placed under the pillow. More practically, it has long been used in soups and sauces since it aids the digestion by increasing salivary secretion. Church floors in Greece are still strewn with Bay leaves perhaps due to their antiseptic quality. The durable wood has been used for making walking sticks. Sometimes referred to as 'Laurel'.

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS Geraniol, Linalool, Terpineol (Alcohols), Cineole (Ketone), Eugenol (Phenol), Phellandrene, Pinene (Terpenes).

PROPERTIES Analgesic, Antineuralgic, Antiseptic, Antispasmodic, Aperitif, Astringent, Cholagogue, Diuretic, Emmenagogue, Febrifuge, Hepatic, Insecticide, Parturient, Stimulant, Stomachic, Sudorific, Tonic.

PRECAUTIONS The Romans liked nothing better than to soak in a bath sprinkled with Bay leaves. The essential oil, however, may irritate the skin and possibly the mucous membranes, so best used with caution or not at all. Pregnant women should stay clear of it.



MIND Has a mildly narcotic and warming effect on the emotions.

BODY Gives a pronounced action on the digestive system and could act as an appetite stimulant. Expels wind, settles stomach pain and has a tonic effect on the liver and kidneys. Promotes the flow of urine.