



BENZOIN

Plant/Part: Tree/Gum from Trunk (Source:Java, Sumatra and Thailand)

Latin Name: Styrax benzoin

Family: Styracaceae

Extraction: Solvent Extraction

AROMA: Sweet like Vanilla

PROPERTIES: Benzoin is a warming, vanilla scented resin absolute from Sumatra with uplifting and soothing properties. Seems to have a rejuvenating effect on the body. It warms the heart and circulation and may ease general aches and pains as well as arthritis. Also helps with disorders of the urinary tract such as cystitis since it aids urine flow. A remedy for genital problems like leucorrhoea and may have a part to play with sexual difficulties, reputedly premature ejaculation. Calming effect on the stomach, expels flatulence and

strengthens the pancreas aiding digestion. Said to control blood sugar levels which could be helpful to sufferers of **diabetes**.

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS: Benzoic, Cinnamic (Acids), Benzoi Aldehyde, Vanillin (Aldehydes), Benzyl Benzoate (Ester) .

PRECAUTIONS: Best avoided when concentration is needed - could have a drowsy effect

BLENDS: Add to carrier oil/cream for protecting skin against chapping or cracking. / AKA Friars Balsam. **Bergamot, Coriander, Cypress, Frankincense, Juniper, Lavender, Lemon, Myrrh, Orange, Petitgrain, Rose, Sandalwood.**

Digestive: stimulates the production of gastric juices (carminative), helps digestion, calms the digestive tract and alleviates flatulence.

Genito-urinary: stimulates the production of urine (diuretic); it is used to fight leucorrhoea and yeast infections.

Respiratory: tones the lungs, helps to expel mucus, used for flu, bronchitis, laryngitis, coughs, asthma. circulatory: warms and tones the heart, improves circulation.

Muscles/Joints: used for rheumatism, arthritis, gout. helps to relieve sore muscles and stiff joints after strenuous physical activity.

Skin/Hair: astringent, antiseptic, reduces inflammation, helps to stop bleeding. useful where there is redness, irritation, itching, and for cracked or dry skin. helps to keep the skin supple and elastic. with regular application it can soften scar tissue.



Emotions/Mind: uplifting, soothing, warming; eases nervous tension, stress and anxiety, helps to overcome depression and restore confidence. dispels anger, diminishes irritability. clears the head.

Benzoin is derived from the tree *Styrax Benzoin* which grows in Thailand and adjacent islands. It is not, strictly speaking, an essential oil, as pure Benzoin is a resin, and has to be melted by heating over hot water before it can be used. When you buy Benzoin from an essential oil supplier it is usually dissolved in ethyl glycol, but this product is not very satisfactory from the point of view of a natural therapy using plant products, so it is worth finding a supplier who dissolves the Benzoin resin in wood alcohol, or buying it in the solid state and melting it when needed.



The granulated gum, called 'gum Benjamin' in old herbals, is a dark reddish-brown, and is often used as a fixative in pot pourris, but the form in which benzoin is probably best known is as 'Friar's Balsam' or compound tincture of benzoin. The active constituents of pure Benzoin include benzoic acid, benzoic resinol, siarasinotannol and vanillin, which gives it its characteristic 'ice cream' aroma.

Like Myrrh and Frankincense, Benzoin has been used for thousands of years as an ingredient of incense, and to drive out evil spirits, and like these two it is both soothing and stimulating. It is also very warming, and this makes it particularly helpful for **colds**, **'flu**, **coughs** and **sore throats**. Its use in the form of Friar's Balsam, as an **inhalation** for sore throats and loss of voice, is probably its best known virtue. Because of its ability to stimulate at the same time as soothing, it seems to 'get things moving' in the body, whether it is clearing mucus, stimulating the **circulation**, expelling gas or increasing the flow of urine. It is very comforting for griping pains in the stomach, and for **urinary tract** infections.

Benzoin is used for healing many kinds of skin lesions, from cracked and chapped hands to chilblains. Friars Balsam has long been used by ballet dancers to heal cracked toes and prevent further cracking. You can put Benzoin into hand creams for people who work in the open - gardeners, foresters, builders, etc., usually adding Lemon and/or Lavender, to mask the vanilla smell and contribute their own healing powers. It combines well with Rose.

On the psychological plane, as with many essential oils, we find a parallel with its physical properties - warming, soothing and stimulating. Benzoin is used to help people who are sad and lonely, **depressed** or **anxious**. We might perhaps see here an echo of its former use to 'cast out devils', for what are the devils of our time, if not such psychological states as these.