

## BLACK PEPPER



**Plant/Part:** Shrub/Fruit (Source: Singapore, India and Malaysia)

**Latin Name:** Piper Nigrum

**Family:** Piperaceae

**Extraction:** Distillation

**AROMA:** Very sharp and spicy.

**PROPERTIES:** Analgesic, Antiemetic, Antiseptic, Antispasmodic, Aphrodisiac, Cardiac, Carminative, Detoxicant, Digestive, Diuretic, Tebrifuge, Laxative, Rubefacient, Stimulant, Stomachic, Tonic. Fortifying effect on the stomach, increases flow of saliva and stimulates appetite. Expels wind, quells vomiting and encourages peristalsis. Useful in bowel problems generally as it restores tone to colon muscles. Promotes urine and stimulates the kidneys. Generally expels

toxins. Gives tone to skeletal muscles. Dilation of local blood vessels makes it useful for muscular aches and pains, tired and aching limbs and muscular stiffness. Good oil to use before excessive exertion like sport. Also helpful with rheumatoid arthritis and temporary paralysis of the limbs.

**CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS:** Eugenol, Myrsicin, Safrole (Phenol), Bisabolene, Camphene, Farnesene, Limonene, Myrcene, Phellandrene, Pinene, Sabinene, Selinene. Thujene (Terpenes), Caryophyllene,

**PRECAUTIONS:** Too much too often may over stimulate the kidneys. Possibility of skin irritation.

**BLENDS:** Basil, Bergamot, Cypress, Frankincense, Geranium, Grapefruit, Lemon, Palmarosa, Rosemary, Sandalwood, Ylang Ylang.

### USES:

**Digestive:** stimulates the production of gastric juices (carminative), aids digestion, strengthens the stomach, improves appetite, relieves constipation (laxative), tones the spleen. used for indigestion, colic, diarrhoea, flatulence, heartburn, nausea, loss of appetite. as an anti-toxic agent it is used in certain types of food poisoning

**Genito-Urinary:** stimulates the production of urine (diuretic).

**Respiratory:** antiseptic, antispasmodic. used for flu, colds, catarrh, coughing.

**Circulation:** used for hypotension (low blood pressure).

**Muscles/Joints:** improves the muscle tone, relieves pain, used for arthritis, muscular pains, rheumatism, sprains, stiffness.



**Skin/Hair:** rubefacient, stimulates circulation, used for chillblains.

**Emotions/Mind:** clears the head, improves memory, raises spirits, helps to clear emotional blockages and get rid of emotional coldness, apathy and mental exhaustion. v. a worwood recommends it for greater endurance, and for combating compulsions.



**Other:** causes sweating, reduces fever (febrifuge).

caution: irritant in high concentration.

Pepper (*Piper nigrum*) is a woody climbing plant, native to East Asia. In its natural state it can climb as high as 20 feet, but when grown commercially it is usually pruned to a maximum of 12 feet for convenience. It has been known as both a medicinal and a culinary spice in the Far East for over 4,000 years, and in Europe from at least the 5th century. Like many spices, it was highly prized, and Attila the Hun is reputed to have demanded 3,000 pounds of pepper as part of the ransom for the city of Rome.

The essential oil may vary from almost colourless to pale green, yellowing with age. Its principle constituent is piperine, and the odour is pleasantly warm, resembling fresh peppercorns, with a characteristic 'kick' in the after-taste. It is, as you would expect, a very warming oil and a fairly strong rubefacient, though strangely it can be used to bring down high temperatures, when used in very small

amounts.

It is particularly valuable in treating disorders of the digestive tract, for it is antispasmodic, carminative, tonic and stimulant. This means, for example, that it can be used to help a sluggish digestive system, without causing griping pains, as the antispasmodic action will soothe the smooth muscle of the gut.

It also stimulates the KIDNEYS, and is sometimes used as a diuretic, but this is a very questionable practice as the distinction between stimulating and irritating is a very fine one, and over-use of this oil could cause damage to the kidneys. It is also described as an aphrodisiac, but I would be inclined to advise against such use, since the amount needed to have a stimulant effect could produce kidney damage.

Oil of Black Pepper can be valuable in anaemia, as it is a stimulant of the spleen, which is involved in the production of new blood cells. This action is also of great use following heavy bleeding, or severe bruising.

The main use to which to put Black pepper is in MASSAGE blends for muscular pain, stiffness and fatigue, but it is important to keep the proportion of black pepper in a blend very low, as it is possible to produce local irritation by overdoing it. Because of its stimulant and tonic properties, I often include this oil in massage oils to be used by dancers and athletes. Used before training or performance, it seems to prevent pain and stiffness and possibly improves performance. Combined with **ROSEMARY** for use before running, it has been used by marathon runners, who report improved times and far less muscular fatigue and pain. Their training schedule also included massage as soon as possible after running, with a variety of blends based mainly on Lavender and **Marjoram**.



Black pepper can also be used in massage, though with discretion, to help rheumatic and arthritic pain. From the purely aesthetic point of view, in blending oils, a little Black Pepper can give an intriguing 'lift' to many blends.