

## CITRONELLA



**Plant/Part:** Aerial Grass/Cut grass (Source: Sri Lanka, Indonesia South: America)

**Latin Name:** Cymbopogon nardus

**Family:** Graminae

**Extraction:** Steam Distillation

**AROMA:** Slightly sweet and lemony

**PROPERTIES:** A natural deodoriser, and is useful as an insect and cat repellent. However it has some reputation for helping to clear the mind and therefore may be effective against headaches, migraine and neuralgia. It may well act as a general tonic to the body, balancing the heart and nervous system. Could have similar effect on the digestive and reproductive systems, so may be useful at the end of illness to restore tone, spirit and equilibrium. Its antiseptic properties may well be of use

in a sick room by keeping germs at bay, again used in a diffuser. Its deodorant and stimulating qualities could refresh sweaty and tired feet, activating the whole system hereby. Reputedly helpful for rheumatic aches and pains.

**CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS:** Linalol, Salviol (Alcohol), Linalyl Acetate (Ester), Cineole (Ketone), Caryophyllene (Sesquiterpene).

**BLENDS:** Bergamot, Eucalyptus, Geranium, Lavender, Neroli, Peppermint, Petitgrain, Ylang Ylang, Lemon, Orange, Lemongrass.

### USES:

**Digestive:** tones the stomach, aids digestion, improves appetite.

**Genito-Urinary:** stimulates the flow of urine (diuretic), tones the kidneys, stimulates the flow of menstrual blood (emmenagogue)

**Respiratory:** antiseptic.

**Skin/Hair:** used for oily skin and excessive perspiration, as it is deodorising.

**General:** reduces fever (febrifuge); a general tonic.

**Other:** an insect repellent. according to s. arctander a mixture of citronella and virginian cedarwood is a very effective mosquito repellent.

Citronella is of little value in aromatherapy, being used mainly as an insect-repellent. The essential oil is obtained from a scented grass, Cymbopogon nardus, that grows wild and is cultivated in Sri Lanka and other tropical areas, It is usually a yellowish brown, with a very powerful lemony scent. The main chemical constituents are



citronellal and geraniol, with traces of other chemicals which vary as several varieties of the grass are used.

One possible therapeutic use which was suggested earlier this century is as a friction (diluted in alcohol) or massage oil for rheumatism. I have no evidence that this would be effective, but it seems possible, by comparison with similar uses of Lemon oil.

Citronella is cultivated in large amounts for use in the manufacture of soap, household disinfectants, etc and commercial insect-repellent preparations. It is also used to adulterate more expensive essential oils.

I have used this oil to keep my cats away from tubs and sinks full of plants, and it also features in some preparations sold in garden shops for the same purpose. It does need to be re-applied every few days but will effectively keep animals away from small areas of soil.