



CLARY SAGE

Plant/Part: Herb/Flowering tops and foliage

Latin Name: *Salvia sclarea*

Family: Labiatae

Extraction: Distillation

AROMA: A herbal, nutty fragrance, somewhat heavy.

PROPERTIES: Clary has uplifting and relaxing properties. It encourages sleep and is said to promote dreaming. Soothes, relaxes and warms. uplifts the spirit. Sclarea is from the Greek 'Skeria' meaning hardness referring to the white/blue powder petals which end in a hard point. A reddish tinged stem, which reaches to about two feet, supports large heart shaped wrinkled leaves. The plant is said to be native to Europe but also found in the United States. Distilled from the fresh herb and oil often comes from France and Morocco.

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS: Linalyl acetate, Linalol, Pionene, Myrcene, Sclareol, Phellandrene.

PRECAUTIONS: Very sedative and can make concentration difficult. It is best not to operate machinery or use before driving. Neither should alcohol be taken otherwise a feeling of nausea may result. Large doses can also produce headaches.

BLENDS: Bergamot, Cedarwood, Citronella, Cypress, Frankincense, Geranium, Grapefruit, Jasmine, Juniper, Lavendar, Lime, Sandalwood.

Digestive: stimulates the production of digestive juices (carminative), tones the stomach, relaxes the muscles of the digestive tract, aids digestion, improves appetite. used for colic, cramp, dyspepsia, flatulence.

Genito-Urinary: stimulates the flow of menstrual blood (emmenagogue), and contains substances similar to female hormones; used for difficult and painful menstruation, scanty or delayed periods, pms and menopausal problems. also used for leucorrhoea and kidney disorders.

Circulation: lowers blood pressure, used for hypertension.

Muscles/Joints: used for muscular aches and pains.

Respiratory: antiseptic, antispasmodic, used for asthma, throat infections, whooping cough, bronchitis, laryngitis, tonsillitis.

Skin/Hair: antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, aids in the regeneration of skin cells, used for acne, boils, inflammation, wrinkles, psoriasis, eczema. helps cuts, wounds and burns to heal. very useful in hair care: it controls the production of sebum, so it can be used for both dry and oily hair, as well as in the treatment of dandruff; encourages hair growth. for similar reasons (ie. controlling the production of sebum) it can be used for both dry



and oily skin. also used for cellulite.

Emotions/Mind: strengthens the nervous system (nervine), sedative, used for depression, nervous tension, headaches. "it slows one down, brings on a feeling of euphoria and makes concentration difficult" (tisserand). the same author compared the effect of clary sage to that of cannabis. i never tried cannabis, but i do feel drugged after using clary. it is also praised as combating "weakness of spirit" and recommended for "nervous, weak, fearful types".

Other: aphrodisiac, used for frigidity and impotence.

Caution: can give a headache (in larger doses).

Clary Sage (*Salvia Sclarea*) is used in aromatherapy in preference to Sage (*Salvia Officinalis*) because, while Clary shares many of the properties of sage, the essential oil contains a far lower proportion of thujone and so does not present the risks of toxicity associated with the high level of thujone in Sage oil (up to 45% of some Sage oils).



Various writers disagree about the derivation of the name Clary, some stating that it is a corruption of the Latin 'clams' meaning clear, and others that the Latin 'sclarea' is itself derived from the Greek 'skleria', meaning hardness, because the petals end in a hard point. Mediaeval authors call the herb Clear Eye and attribute to it the property of healing all kinds of eye disorders. Nicholas Culpeper, more realistically, says that the sticky mucilage from the seeds, put into the eyes, would clear from it any small foreign objects 'gotten within the lids to offend them'.

The plant is native to Italy, Syria and southern France, but will grow wherever the soil is dry enough. Damp soil will rot the roots. It is a dramatic plant growing to 2 or 3 feet, with tall flower spikes rising above hairy leaves. The flowers themselves are not very significant, but they are supported by yellow and purple bracts. The essential oil is distilled from the flowers and flowering tips, and contains borneol, salviol, cineol, sclareol, salvone and salvone.

Essential oil of Clary has a wonderfully nutty aroma, which is in itself far more agreeable to use in treatments than oil of

Sage. It used to be called Muscatel sage in Germany, as the taste was thought to resemble that of Muscatel wine. Dishonest merchants used Clary to adulterate cheaper wines to make them taste like true muscatel sometimes with disastrous results. Numerous writers have described how drinking wine or beer adulterated with Clary produced an exaggerated state of drunkenness followed by an equally exaggerated hangover! As one 18th century writer said, it was 'Fit to please drunkards who thereby, according to their several dispositions, become either dead drunke, or foolish drunke, or madde drunke.'

Amusing though this may seem, it is important to warn anybody using Clary oil not to take alcohol, as the combination can give rise to extremely severe nightmares, described by one person, who was unwise enough to combine the two, as being akin to a 'bad trip' on drugs. Clary alone I have found to induce very dramatic and colourful dreams, though these can be of a pleasant nature. The effects of Clary have been described as 'euphoric' though not everybody using it experiences such a heightened state. Most will simply



become very relaxed, and probably drowsy, so it is unwise to give massage treatment with this oil to any patient who will eventually have to drive home after the consultation. Better to give them a little of the oil for use in baths at home.

From this it will be obvious that Clary is a very helpful oil in all kinds of stress and tension. It is a powerful muscle relaxant, and of course it is especially useful where muscular tension arises from mental or emotional stress. Clary is very valuable in treating asthma, as it both relaxes spasms in the bronchial tubes, and helps the anxiety and emotional tension often found in asthma sufferers. The same properties seem to me to be potentially useful for migraine sufferers who often hold a lot of underlying tension.

As it is relaxing, warming and antispasmodic it is helpful in digestive problems, especially cramps or griping colicky pains. Either gentle massage over the stomach and abdomen, or hot compresses of Clary will be very comforting. The same methods can be used to relieve menstrual cramps, as the antispasmodic action of Clary will quite quickly stop the uterine contractions that cause the pain. It will also help to regulate scanty or missing periods.



As well as being very relaxing, Clary is a powerful tonic, and this makes it very helpful in convalescence, especially after 'flu, when many people feel very debilitated, during depression and in the post-natal recovery period. One of the useful actions of Clary is in preventing excessive sweating. When tuberculosis was widespread, Clary was used to combat the night sweats experienced by patients, as well as to strengthen their defence systems in the fight against the tuberculosis bacillus. In the same way, it can help to reduce excessive production of sebum, especially on the scalp, and can be put in a final rinsing water after shampooing, for people with very greasy hair and dandruff.

Clary is one of the essential oils which is reputed to be an aphrodisiac. In this case, the effect is undoubtedly due to the relaxing and euphoric action of the oil, and it has proved very helpful for couples, who are experiencing a 'bad patch' in their relationship, maybe because external stresses, such as financial or other worries, are creating tensions that affect the couple vis a vis each other.

However, whatever the physical benefits conferred by Clary, I am convinced that it is in the area of stress-related illness that it is most valuable. As one of the most powerful relaxants known to us in aromatherapy, it can be used with care and sensitivity to help the ever growing number of people whose suffering arises from the anxiety created by twentieth century life.