

GALBANUM



Galbanum is a gum-resin from the stems of *Ferula galbaniflua*, a tall plant of the Umbelliferae family which grows mainly in Iran and other parts of the Middle East. The thick juice oozes from natural cracks in old stems, but is collected commercially by making cuts near the base of the stem.

The essential oil is extracted by distillation and is thick, dark yellow, with a hot, strong aromatic odour. The active principles include carvone (50% or more) pinene, limonene, cadinene, myrcene and cadinol. Mrs Grieve says that dry distillation produces an oil with a blue colour similar to that obtained from Camomile (*Matricaria Chamomilla*) but I have never come across this oil.

Galbanum has been used as an incense in various religions for thousands of years, and is mentioned both in the Old Testament and Egyptian papyri. Dioscorides and other early medical writers describe Galbanum as painkilling, antispasmodic, diuretic and emmenagogue.

Although Galbanum is little used in modern aromatherapy, it offers interesting possibilities, especially in chronic conditions such as rheumatism. It will give a lot of relief from persistent pain, particularly when used in hot compresses. It is equally useful for skin infections and inflammations that are slow to heal. (In this it resembles another ancient incense: MYRRH.) Abscesses, boils and slow-healing ulcers respond well to this oil.

Galbanum is used in the perfume industry as a fixative.