



GINGER

Plant/Part: Herb/root (Source: India, China, Jarva)

Latin Name: Zingiber Officinale

Family: Zingiberaceae

Extraction: Distillation

AROMA: Fiery and fortifying.

PROPERTIES: Good for nausea and sickness. Blend with orange for warming winter baths. Blends especially well with orange and other citrus oils. Especially helpful where there is excess of moisture as in catarrh, influenza and runny colds. Sore throats and tonsillitis can also be eased. Though a warming oil tending to counteract ailments caused by dampness, is so able to reduce feverish conditions by increasing activity of sweat glands subsequently cooling the body down.

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS: Gingerin, Linalol, Camphene, Phellandrene, Citral, Cineol, Borneol.

PRECAUTIONS: Could irritate sensitive skins.

BLENDS: Cinnamon, Coriander, Clove, Elemi, Eucalyptus, Geranium, Lemon, Lime, Myrtle, Orange, Rosemary, Spearmint.

Digestive: stimulates the production of gastric juices (carminative), relaxes the digestive muscles, relieves constipation ((laxative), tones the stomach, improves appetite, used for colic, cramp, dyspepsia, flatulence, indigestion, loss of appetite, nausea (also caused by sea or travel sickness, morning sickness and hangover), diarrhoea.

Genito-urinary: analgesic, anti-spasmodic, eases menstrual cramps.

Circulatory: improves circulation.

Respiratory: antispasmodic, antiseptic, helps to expel mucus, relieves coughing, used for colds, flu, catarrh, sinusitis, sore throat, tonsillitis

Muscles/joints: pain-relieving, antispasmodic, used for muscular pains, arthritis, rheumatism, sprains.

Skin/hair: used to treat varicose veins and cellulite.

Emotions/mind: warming, strengthening, encouraging. clears the head, increases mental alertness, improves memory; used for debility and nervous exhaustion. v.a worwood recommends it when there is a feeling of purposelessness, confusion and lack of direction.

General: causes sweating, combats fever

Caution: slightly phototoxic

Ginger (*Zingiber officinalis*), like so many of the spices, is a native of Asia, growing originally in India and China. It came to Europe via the 'Spice Route' in the Middle Ages, and was introduced into South America by the Spaniards. It is now grown commercially in all these places as well as the West Indies and Africa. It has been known since ancient times, and its medicinal and cooking uses overlap to a large degree.

The essential oil is produced from the root by steam distillation, and is a pale, slightly greenish yellow, darkening with age. Many people smelling it for the first time are surprised, and even disappointed because it does not smell like the dried or preserved ginger with which they are familiar in cakes, etc. In fact, it smells almost identical to the 'green' or fresh root ginger. Its principal constituents are gingerin, gingerol, gingerone and zingiberine.

In traditional Chinese medicine Ginger is used in any condition where the body is not coping effectively with moisture, whether the moisture originates within the body or without. Diarrhoea and catarrh are examples of inability to deal with moisture of internal origin, while rheumatism and many of our winter ills are aggravated by external damp, and the fiery properties of Ginger are used to combat this.



Rheumatic pain can be eased by massage or compresses, using a low dilution of the essential oil, since, as you may well imagine, it is a rubefacient and high concentrations will irritate the skin. For colds, 'flu and diarrhoea, stomach cramps (whether of digestive or menstrual origin) the most effective use of Ginger is an infusion (or 'tea') made from the fresh root. Cut very thin slivers from the Ginger root, and simmer them for about ten minutes, using about six thin slices from a root of average thickness, to each cupful of water. With a little honey this makes a very pleasant winter drink which is used in traditional Chinese medicine as a preventative against winter ailments. It quells nausea, and can be a great help with both travel sickness and the 'morning sickness' of pregnancy.

The infusion, without honey, can be used as a gargle for sore throats. Alternatively, add 2 drops of Ginger oil to a teaspoon of vodka and dilute this in hot water.

Oil of Ginger, in small proportions, blends well with many others, especially Orange and other citrus oils. A single drop can be added to a massage blend for arthritis, rheumatism, muscular pain and fatigue.

JEAN VALNET records that women in Senegal weave belts of pounded Ginger root to revive their husbands' flagging sexual prowess, but this may not be a fashion that European men would take to enthusiastically!