

## MARJORAM



**Plant/Part:** Herb/Flowering heads/leaves (Source : Libya, Egypt and Mediterranean)

**Latin Name:** Origanum majorana

**Family:** Lamiaceae (Labiatae)

**Extraction:** Distillation

**AROMA:** Warm, penetrating and slightly spicy.

**PROPERTIES:** This is a calming, soothing oil that has a warming effect on both mind and body. It helps to relieve the miseries of the common cold, including congestion and muscle aches and pains, and is also comforting in times of stress. It has a warm, woody odour with spicy undertones. Useful on tired muscles and for massaging on abdomen during menstruation. Used to regulate the nervous system and treat insomnia. Add to After-Sports Rub. It is pleasant in a hot bath, especially blended with Lavender.

**CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS:** Carvacrol, Thymol, Camphor, Borneol, Origanol, Pinene, Sabinene, Terpineol.

**PRECAUTIONS:** Do not use during pregnancy. Care must be taken due to its sedative action - use sparingly.

**BLENDS:** Cedarwood, Chamomile, Cypress, Lavender, Mandarin, Orange, Nutmeg, Rosemary, Ylang Ylang, Eucalyptus, Thyme.

### USES:

**Digestive:** stimulates the production of gastric juices (carminative), tones the stomach, aids digestion, improves appetite. used for colic, constipation, dyspepsia, flatulence.

**Genito-Urinary:** stimulates the production of urine (diuretic) and menstrual blood (emmenagogue). used for difficult menstruation, lack of menstruation, cramps, leucorrhoea.

**Circulatory:** lowers blood pressure, dilates the blood vessels, used for hypertension.

**Respiratory:** antiseptic, helps to expel mucus, used for coughing, colds, bronchitis, sinusitis, asthma.

**Muscles/Joints:** analgesic, antispasmodic, used for muscular aches and stiffness, sprains, rheumatism, arthritis, lumbago.



**General:** causes sweating. anti-aphrodisiac.

**Skin/Hair:** pain-relieving, antiseptic, helps wounds to heal, used for chillblains, cuts, bruises.

**Emotions/Mind:** comforting, soothing, strengthening. clears the head, strengthens the nervous system (nerine); used for insomnia, headaches, stress. according to mailhebiau, it possesses "warmth which arouses and fills the individual with elation for life". the same author recommends it for people who are excessively introverted - "it clarifies ideas and draws them towards the concrete reality of existence". tisserand claims it is "very good for conditions coming from grief". gerarde suggests it for "those who are given to over-much sighing".

**Caution:** not to be used in pregnancy.

The Latin name for Marjoram, *Origanum Majorana*, is derived from 'major', meaning greater; not because the plant has a smaller relative, but because it was thought, in ancient times, to confer longevity, hence a greater lifespan. The plants thrive on sunny hillsides, and are indigenous to the Mediterranean, Yugoslavia, parts of Hungary and Iran, though like most of the great labiatae family it grows in gardens almost everywhere. It was certainly well known in English country gardens, and even as an escapee along the edges of fields, by the early 17th century, for Culpeper says that 'It is so well known, being an inhabitant in every garden, that it is needless to write a description thereof.'

The essential oil, which is produced by steam distillation from the flowering tops, is yellowish, darkening towards brown as it ages, and its active constituents include borneol, camphor, origan-nol, pinene and sabinene. The aroma is warm, penetrating and slightly peppery, and indeed the outstanding property of Marjoram is its warming action, both on the mind and the body.

Culpeper says 'It helpeth all diseases of the chest which hinder the freeness of breathing' and it is one of the best oils to use in treating asthma, bronchitis and colds. Used as a steam inhalation it will clear the chest and ease respiratory difficulties very quickly. A hot bath containing 6 drops of Marjoram will often prevent some of the secondary miseries arising from the common cold. It can be massaged into the throat and chest to soothe tickly coughs, for it is warming, analgesic and sedative.

The sedative properties of Marjoram must not be abused, for it can dull the senses and cause drowsiness, and in large amounts is stupefying. Obviously no responsible aromatherapist will use Marjoram in the amounts that could entail such risks.

As you might expect from this. Marjoram is a very good remedy for insomnia, especially when used, together with Lavender, in a warm bath before bedtime. Its warm, nutty perfume is rather more masculine than many of the oils that can help with sleeplessness, and this makes it more acceptable to men who are unable to sleep, than some of the sweeter perfumes.



It is used in treating high blood-pressure and heart conditions, as it dilates the arteries, thereby reducing strain on the heart. The same action on the tiny capillaries just beneath the skin produces a feeling of local warmth when Marjoram is used in a massage oil, and this is one of the reasons why it is so valuable in massaging tired, tight and painful muscles, especially after heavy physical exertion. The increase in the local circulation helps to carry away the toxic wastes left in the muscle after heavy exercise, and this in turn reduces the pain and stiffness. It is in massage blends that I make the most use of Marjoram, not only for muscular stiffness, but

to reduce the pain of rheumatism and arthritis. Here again, the warming effect is very valuable and it will often permit a joint that is normally too stiff and painful to be moved to regain some mobility.

Marjoram, as we might expect from its ages-old use in cooking, has several helpful actions on the digestion. It reduces colicky intestinal cramps and strengthens peristalsis (the wavelike movements of the gut that propel the partly-digested food along). The antispasmodic effect is also very much welcomed for its action on the uterine muscle, and a hot compress of Marjoram over the abdomen will ease menstrual cramps more effectively than anything else I know.

Marjoram is used for its warming effect on the mental and emotional level, too, and can be very comforting for people who are lonely or suffering grief. It should not be abused, though, as over use can have a deadening effect on the emotions. While this may be welcome for a short time, prolonged use of this or any other essential oil is never a good idea.

By its action in lessening both emotional response and physical sensation, marjoram has the effect of being anti-aphrodisiac, and has been used in the past, particularly in religious institutions, for this reason. It may sometimes be useful to know about this effect when seeking to help a person who finds him/herself in a situation of enforced celibacy, such as in bereavement or after the breakdown of a relationship.