

## MELISSA



**Plant/Part:** Herb/leaves and Flowers (Source : France, Mediterranean)

**Latin Name:** Melissa Officinalis

**Family:** Labiatae

**Extraction:** Distillation

**AROMA:** Sweet and lemon-like with floral undertones.

**PROPERTIES:** A popular garden herb known also as 'Lemon Balm'. Soothing but uplifting effect on mind and body. Comforting oil during the cold season and when there is a high pollen count. It takes about 300 pounds of fresh lemon balm plants to yield 10ml of oil Its calming effect is a balm to the circulatory system easing high blood pressure, slowing down heartbeat and helpful where the system has been over-stimulated. A good tonic for the heart generally, useful in spasm and fatigue. Could help with colds and has

a cooling effect on fevers. Seems to ease migraine and headaches associated with colds. Effective as an insect repellent and has a soothing action on stings. A reputation for counteracting allergies may prove helpful for asthma sufferers - seems to have a calming action on rapid breathing.

**CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS:** Citral, Citronellol, Eugenol, Geraniol, Linalyl Acetate.

**PRECAUTIONS:** Do not use Melissa on the skin in direct sunlight. As it helps to regulate menstruation, best avoided in pregnancy. Dilute to 1% and use only 3 drops in a bath as it may cause irritation of the skin.

**BLENDS:** Basil, Bay, Camomile, Frankincense, Geranium, Ginger, Jasmine, Juniper, Lavender, Marjoram, Neroli, Rose, Rosemary, Violet, Ylang Ylang.

**Digestive:** stimulates the production of gastric juices (carminative), tones the stomach and improves appetite, relaxes the muscles of the digestive tract. used for colic, indigestion, flatulence, nausea

**Genito/Urinary:** tones the uterus, increases (a little) the flow of menstrual blood (emmenagogue), used for irregular periods and cramps

**Respiratory:** slows breathing, relaxes the respiratory muscles. used for asthma

**Circulatory:** tones the heart, relieves spasms, slows the pulse, lowers blood pressure. used for hypertension and palpitations.

**Skin/Hair:** relieves allergic conditions. p. davis recommends it for eczema and other skin problems

**Emotions/Mind:** sedative, calming and uplifting. tisserand recommends it for "constant, panicky type of



anxiety" and hysteria. relieves nervous tension, stress, irritability, restlessness.

**Other:** causes sweating, combats fever.

**Caution:** might cause dermal irritation - to be used only in low concentration. it is also frequently adulterated.

Melissa Officinalis is the botanical name of the lemon balm found in so many cottage gardens. It was introduced to the United Kingdom at a very early date, possibly by the Romans. The name derives from the Latin name for honey, and it is a plant much loved by bees. The word 'officinalis' in its name is a clear indication that its medicinal properties have been known for hundreds of years.

All parts of the plant yield essential oil, which has a very pronounced scent of lemon. It has at least three active principles in common with oil of LEMON (citral, citronellal and linalol) and should be treated with respect, as far as use on the skin is concerned, as it is capable of causing irritation. Use in low dilutions, both in massage oils - not above 1% - and in baths, where 3 or 4 drops to an average bath is the safe limit. Dilute the Oil before adding to the water. You can get weals, similar to burning, caused by only 5 drops of Melissa in a bath. In spite of these warnings, Melissa in very low concentration is a very valuable oil indeed in treating ECZEMA and other skin problems.

Melissa is frequently adulterated: Lemon grass. Lemon or lemon Verbena being mixed with, or substituted for the genuine oil. True Melissa is rare and costly.

The overriding property of Melissa is that it is soothing, both to the body and the mind. It is one of the two oils most often used to treat ALLERGIES, whether these manifest as skin problems or respiratory difficulty. The other one, of course, is CAMOMILE but where a particular individual has not responded to Camomile, Melissa has sometimes produced almost dramatic improvement. I never use Melissa in concentrations of more than 1% for fear of aggravating the very conditions I am seeking to help, and in many cases there will be a slight worsening of symptoms before healing begins. This 'healing crisis' is of course common to many systems of natural healing.



ASTHMA and COUGHS generally are often relieved by inhalations of Melissa. It has a calming and regulating effect on the menstrual cycle, and helps to regularise the pattern of ovulation where this is erratic. It may in this way be helpful to couples who wish to use natural methods of birth control, and also to those who have difficulty in conceiving because the time of ovulation is uncertain.

Melissa will also help to lower high blood pressure, and has a palming effect on over-rapid breathing and heartbeat, which makes it a good remedy for shock. The mental and emotional actions of Melissa mirror those of its effects on the physical body, as is so often found with essential oils. It is soothing and calming, but also uplifting in a similar manner to Bergamot. Gerard says that 'It maketh the heart merry and joyful and strengeth the vitall spirits'. A Swiss manuscript by an unknown author says that Melissa 'chasse les idees noirs', (chases away black thoughts) and with this in mind, Melissa has been used to help bereaved and shocked people who had lost

somebody close in an accident or through sudden, unexpected illness. Of course, it is necessary to grieve, but the subtle energy of Melissa, together with EDWARD BACH'S Rescue Remedy, can help people through the first terrible hours of shock and distress.

Minor uses of Melissa include room perfumes and insect repellent. (All the lemon-scented oils have this property.)

