

## PATCHOULI



**Plant/Part:** Shrub/Leaves (Source: Seychelles/Malay )

**Latin Name:** Pogostemon cablin

**Family:** Lamiaceae (Labiatae)

**Extraction:** Distillation

**AROMA:** A strong, earthy and exotic fragrance yet sweet and spicy too.

**PROPERTIES:** Soothes and uplifts the spirit. Is soothing to the skin and is reported to be especially good for mature skin. Useful in protecting dry, mature or blemished skin, Sensual properties, Musky aroma lingers. Use on scalp for dandruff. Used in the East to scent linen and clothes and to repel fleas and lice. Perhaps Patchouli's most outstanding feature is its binding action due to strong astringent and cicatrisant properties. This could be helpful for loose skin

especially after excessive dieting. Since it also seems to curb appetite its probably useful for overall weight reduction. Could well be helpful in cases of diarrhoea too. There is some association between Patchouli and increasing libido. Its bracing action on the central nervous system may account for this! However, it is neither too sedative nor too stimulating which effectively assists feelings of balance. In any event, it seems to relieve the nasty effects from insect (and snake) bites.

**CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS:** Patchoulil, Pogostol, Bulnesol, Nor Patchoulenol, Bulnese, Patchoulene.

**PRECAUTIONS:** Can prevent sleep with its nerve stimulating properties in strong quantities, but has a sedative effect in small doses.

**BLENDS:** Bergamot, Black Pepper, Clary Sage, Elemi, Frankincense, Geranium, Ginger, Lavender, Lemongrass, Myrrh, Neroli, Pine, Rose, Rosewood and Sandalwood.

**Digestive:** stimulates the production of gastric juices (carminative), aids digestion. some authorities mention its appetite-suppressing properties, suggesting that it can be useful for dieters (see also: skin/hair)

**Genito-Urinary:** stimulates the production of urine (diuretic), thus diminishing water retention, one of the major causes of discomfort associated with pms.

**Skin/Hair:** anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, astringent, used for acne, dermatitis, eczema, fungal infections. encourages the regeneration of skin cells, speeds up the healing of wounds and sores, helps to fade scars. tightens and tones the skin (thus it can prevent sagging after weight loss); used for wrinkles and cellulite. cools and calms sunburn, soothes rough and cracked skin. controls the



production of sebum, used for dandruff and seborrhea.

**Emotions/Mind:** diminishes depression, fights anxiety and nervous exhaustion. calms, clears the mind, improves concentration. sedative in small doses, stimulating in larger quantities.

**Other:** deodorising. aphrodisiac. febrifuge.

Patchouli (*Pogostemon patchouli*) is a native of Malaysia and is now cultivated in a number of S.E. Asian countries, the West Indies and Paraguay. It is a bushy plant, growing to as much as a metre in height, with large, soft, furry leaves. Although it is a member of the same plant family as many of our herbs of Mediterranean origin (Basil, Hyssop, Lavender, Marjoram, Melissa, Peppermint, Rosemary, Thyme, etc.) it is unlike most of them in its appearance, habitat and medicinal properties.

The essential oil is thick and a dark yellowish-brown, often with a green tinge. The odour is not easy to describe: hot, musty and pungent, very strong and penetrating and so persistent that it is known it to linger on clothes for as much as two weeks, even after laundering. This latter property is perhaps unfortunate, given the fact that quite a lot of people find the smell extremely unpleasant! It has perhaps a more animal than plant quality to it. Even so, it is widely used in the perfumery trade as a fixative due to its long-lasting character, and in fact in very small proportions in a blend can give a mysterious oriental characteristic.

The active principles include patchoulene, patchoulol (or patchouli camphor), norpatchoulol and traces of eugenol, cadinene, carvone, caryophyllene, seychellene, humulene, ben-zoic and cinnamic aldehydes. Of these, it is interesting to note that patchoulene is very similar in structure to azulene (found in Camomile) and has the same anti-inflammatory properties.



The plant, which it known as Pucha-put in its native habitats, has a long history of use in the traditional medicine of China, Japan and Malaysia as a stimulant, tonic, antiseptic and febrifuge, as well as in treating snake-bites and the stings of poisonous insects, and it has always been used as a perfume, insecticide and antiseptic in the countries of origin.

In aromatherapy Patchouli has some valuable uses in SKIN CARE and treatment, provided always that the client does not find the smell repugnant. In many places in this databse it is stressed that the client's choice should guide the aromatherapist' or user's selection of oils, and nowhere is this more important than in dealing with Patchouli, as the perfume is so strong, distinctive - and to some people quite repulsive - that little or no therapeutic effect could be expected if it was used contrary to the client/users preference.

As mentioned already, it is anti-inflammatory and antiseptic in effect. It is also fungicidal and is a cell-regenerator in much the same way as Lavender and Neroli and this combination of properties makes it useful in treating ACNE, cracked skin, certain types of ECZEMA, fungal infections such as ATHLETE'S FOOT, some skin allergies and dandruff.

It may have an antidepressant effect, and has been used in treatments for obesity, possibly because of (unsubstantiated) reports that it induces loss of appetite and possibly because it reduces fluid retention. Some writers consider Patchouli an aphrodisiac, but this would certainly depend a great deal on whether both partners found the perfume pleasing.