

## ROSEMARY



**Plant/Part:** Herb/Flowering Tops and Leaves (Source: France, Mediterranean, Tunisia )

**Latin Name:** Rosmarinus Officinalis

**Family:** Lamiaceae (Labiatae)

**Extraction:** Distillation

**AROMA:** Strong, clear and penetrating, a refreshing herbal fragrance.

**PROPERTIES:** Rosemary is an energising oil with a strong herbaceous aroma. It helps to relieve muscle aches and combats mental fatigue. Use it in the daytime as its energising effect may keep you awake at night. Perfect in Pre and Post sports rubs to maintain suppleness. Helps combat water retention and cellulite. Good hair tonic. An 'ideal pick me up'. Combats fatigue and clears stuffy atmosphere. Seems to revive the senses and in some

cases could play a part in restoring impediments of speech, hearing and sight. Clears headaches and migraines especially when connected to gastric problems. May be helpful for vertigo. A good nerve stimulant and helps to tone temporarily paralysed limbs. A pain relieving agent without being too sedative, helps ease gout, rheumatic pains and tired over-worked muscles.

**CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS:** Borneol, Camphene, Camphor, Cineol, Lineol, Pinene, Terpeneol.

**PRECAUTIONS:** Do not use Rosemary when pregnant, having high blood pressure, or suffering from epilepsy. It may cause irritation of the skin.

**BLENDS:** Lavender, Citronella, Thyme, Basil, Peppermint, Labdanum, Elemi, Cedarwood, Petitgrain and Cinnamon.

**Digestive:** stimulates the production of gastric juices (carminative) and bile (cholagogue), aids digestion, tones the stomach, tones and decongests the liver (hepatic). used to treat dyspepsia, flatulence, diarrhoea, intestinal and gallbladder infections, stomach pains, colic, liver disorders.

**Genito-Urinary:** stimulates the production of urine (diuretic) and menstrual blood (emmenagogue). used to treat leucorrhoea. analgesic, antispasmodic, used for menstrual cramps

**Circulation:** stimulates it, raises blood pressure, tones, warms and stimulates the heart, normalizes cholesterol levels. used to treat arteriosclerosis, palpitations, hypotension.

**Muscles/Joints:** relieves muscular pains and reduces swelling, used to treat rheumatism, arthritis, muscular spasms, sprains.



**Respiratory:** antispasmodic, antiseptic, expectorant, mucolytic, used to treat asthma, coughing, bronchitis, sinusitis, whooping cough.

**Skin/Hair:** antiseptic, gently pain-relieving, assists in the healing of wounds and scars. regulates oil secretions, stimulates circulation, encourages the elimination of cellular wastes, assists in the drainage of lymphatic fluid; improves dull-looking skin, used to treat acne, dermatitis, varicose veins, cellulite. stimulates the scalp, promotes hair growth, used for dandruff, seborrhea and alopecia areata (-> a scientific study).

**Emotions/Mind:** stimulates the adrenal cortex, used for nervous and emotional exhaustion, apathy, depression and stress. clears the head, improves memory and concentration, reduces mental fatigue, combats headaches. mailhebiau recommends it for "the psychologically inhibited".

**Other:** pain-relieving and anti-oxidant. nerve stimulant, used when there is loss of nerve function. excellent for ear infections (external massage), especially when blended with lavender.

**Caution:** best avoided in the first months of pregnancy or when there is hypertension. (both contradictions have been called into question, and the existence of two chemotypes of rosemary - camphor and verbenone - certainly adds to the confusion. however, better safe than sorry!)

After Lavender, Rosemary (*Rosmarinus Officinalis*) is probably the most important plant of the labiatae family used in aromatherapy. The bush, with its silver-green needle shaped leaves and pale blue flowers, grows freely all over Europe, but is most at home near the sea. This is reflected in its name, which is taken from two Latin words (*ros + marinus*) meaning 'dew of the sea', for the plant was originally a native of the Mediterranean coast. Legend says that the flowers were once white, but that they turned blue after the Virgin Mary hung her cloak on a rosemary bush when the Holy Family stopped to rest on the flight into Egypt.

Rosemary was one of the earliest plants to have been used in medicine, and this undoubtedly overlapped with its use in cooking and in religious rites. The country people in ancient Greece, who did not have access to prepared incense, burnt sprigs of Rosemary on their shrines, and it was often called the 'incense bush'. The Romans, too, revered it as a sacred plant, and traces have been found in Egyptian tombs. The perfume of Rosemary does bear some resemblance to that of Frankincense. Both are very penetrating. It was used throughout the Middle Ages to smoke out devils during exorcisms, and continued to be burnt in sickrooms as a fumigant for many centuries. The practice of burning Rosemary in hospital wards in France, persisted into the present century, ironically being abandoned at about the same time that modern research proved its antiseptic properties. Because of its strong antiseptic action, Rosemary can delay or prevent putrefaction in meat, but we shall never know whether it was first used in cooking for the flavour, or to preserve meat in distant times, when there was no refrigeration or other means of keeping cooked meat fresh in a hot climate.



Unlike some essential oils, that of Rosemary is distilled from the whole plant, and its active principles include borneol, camphene, camphor, cineol, lineol, pinene, resins and saponin. It is a stimulating oil, both warm and penetrating in its odour and its actions. The stimulant effect of Rosemary on the central nervous system is very marked, and for this reason Rosemary is used where there is loss or reduction of functions, such as loss of smell, poor sight, etc.; where the sensory nerves have been affected; for some kinds of speech impairment; and for temporary paralysis, where the motor nerves are affected. Of course, if the nerve cells are permanently damaged, as in injuries to the spinal cord, paralysis is irreversible. Rosemary is also an excellent brain stimulant (the brain being, of course, the most vital part of the central nervous system). Ophelia in 'Hamlet' says 'There's rosemary, that's for remembrance' and Rosemary has long had the reputation of improving memory. Inhaling a few drops of this oil certainly produces

a feeling of great mental clarity, which undoubtedly aids all thought processes.

Caution must be used with Rosemary, for in too large an amount it can cause epileptic-type fits, or even poisoning, though in very small amounts it is used to treat epilepsy. We can see here something akin to homoeopathy; a substance which, in large amounts, would provoke a symptom, can be used in tiny amounts to treat it. NICHOLAS CULPEPER cautions his readers on this point in his Complete Herbal 'The oil drawn from the leaves and flowers is a sovereign help ... to touch the temples and nostrils with two or three drops for all the diseases of the brain spoken of before; as also to take one drop, two, or three as the case requires, for the inward disease; yet it must be done with discretion, for it is very quick and piercing, and therefore but little must be taken at a time.'

Culpeper also says that Rosemary is good for 'wasting' diseases, and this, combined with its known effects on the central nervous system, suggests that it might be of some help in degenerative conditions such as multiple sclerosis, though I have to emphasise that this is pure speculation. I have certainly seen some relief of pain resulting from aromatherapy treatment with this oil, but far more work would need to be done before anything more than that could be suggested.

Returning to the known actions of Rosemary, it is an excellent tonic for the heart, liver and gallbladder, and helps to lower cholesterol levels in the blood. It could be described as the middle-aged executive's best friend, though Rosemary alone would do little good unless diet and lifestyle were taken into account as well. The piercing quality of the aroma of Rosemary makes it a valuable oil for many respiratory problems, ranging from the common cold, catarrh and sinusitis, through to asthma. For all these it is best used as a steam inhalation - its ability to 'clear the head' works on the physical as well as the mental plane.

It is a good analgesic, without having the sedative effects of many of the other painkilling oils, and I often use it in massage, baths and compresses to relieve pain in rheumatism and arthritis. It is also a very good oil to use for tired, stiff and overworked muscles. I have used it very successfully in treating athletes, particularly long-distance runners, using Rosemary in combination with other oils before training or competitive events, and Lavender, usually combined with Marjoram, for massage after training or competing.

Rosemary has traditionally been used in skin and hair care for many hundreds of years. It is an ingredient of true eau de cologne, and a major ingredient of Hungary Water (or the Queen of Hungary's Water) which is reputed to have almost miraculous rejuvenating effects. It is used in rinsing water for dark hair, and as a scalp friction, which is really valuable for poor hair health, excessive hair loss, etc., especially when these follow a period of illness or convalescence. It is reputed to restore colour to grey hair and even to cure baldness, but I am afraid that these actions are more or less mythical.

