

## SPIKENARD



**Plant/Part:** Dried and Crushed Rhizome and Roots (Source: India and Asia)

**Latin Name:** *Nardostachys jatamansi*

**Family:** Valerianaceae

**Extraction:** Distillation

**AROMA:** Warm, misty, heavy aroma, is pale yellow in color and medium in viscosity.

**PROPERTIES:** Antibacterial, antifungal, antiinflammatory, deodorant, relaxing, and skin tonic. Spikenard is helpful in the treatment of allergic skin reactions and skin cancer. It may also help with allergies, Candida, indigestion, insomnia, menstrual difficulties, migraines, nausea, rashes, bacterial infections, stress, tachycardia, tension, and wounds that will not heal. It strengthens the heart and circulatory system.

**CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS:** The main chemical components are bornyl acetate, valeranone, jnon, tetramethyloxatricyclodecanol, menthylthymyl-ether and 1,8-cineol.

**PRECAUTIONS:** The oil has no known contra-indications, but care should be taken as with all oils.

**BLENDS:** Blends particularly well with **Lavender**, **Lemon**, **Clary Sage**, **Neroli**, **Patchouli** and **Vetiver**.

Spikenard (*Nardostachys grandiflora* or *Nardostachys jatamansi*; also called nard, nardin and muskroot ) is a flowering plant of the Valerian family that grows in the Himalayas of China, India and Nepal. The plant grows to about 1 m in height and has pink, bell-shaped flowers. Spikenard rhizomes (underground stems) can be crushed and distilled into an intensely aromatic amber-colored essential oil, which is very thick in consistency. Nard oil is used as a perfume, an incense, a sedative, and an herbal medicine said to fight insomnia, birth difficulties, and other minor ailments. Lavender (genus *Lavandula*) was also known by the ancient Greeks as *naardus*, nard, after the Syrian city of Naarda.



The oil was known in ancient times and was part of the **Ayurvedic** herbal tradition of India. It was obtained as a luxury in ancient Egypt, the Near East, and Rome, where it was the main ingredient of the perfume nardinum. Nard was used to perfume the body of Patroklos by Achilles in Book 18 of Homer's Iliad. **Pliny's** Natural History lists twelve species of "nard", identifiable with varying assurance, in a range from lavender stoechas and tuberous valerian to true nard (in modern terms *Nardostachys jatamansi*).

Spikenard was very precious in ancient times, used only by kings, priests and high initiates in Egyptian, Hebrew, and Hindu civilizations. Nard is mentioned a number of times in the Old Testament. It was used as one of the Eleven Herbs for the Incense in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. And it is mentioned twice in the biblical love poem, the Song of Solomon (1:12 and 4:13).

In the New Testament John 12:1-10, six days before the passover, Mary, sister of Lazarus uses a pound of pure nard to anoint Jesus's feet. Judas Iscariot, the keeper of the money-bag, asked why the ointment wasn't sold for three hundred denarii instead, (About a year's wages, as the average agricultural worker received 1 denarius for 12 hours work: Matthew 20:2) and the money given to the poor. Two passages in parallel (Matthew 26:6-13, and Mark 14:3-9) speak of an occasion 2 days before the passover, in which an unnamed woman anoints Jesus's head. The costly perfume she used came from an alabaster jar, and contained nard according to the passage in Mark. On this occasion, the disciples also protest, saying that the perfume should have been sold to benefit the poor.



The powdered root of Spikenard is also mentioned in some Islamic traditions as the fruit which Adam ate in Paradise, which God had forbidden him to eat. Spikenard is also used to season foods in Medieval European cuisine, especially as a part of the spice blend used to flavor Hypocras, a sweetened and spiced wine drink. Spikenard was also used from the 17th century as one of the ingredients for a strong beer called Stingo.

Spikenard essential oil is used as a diuretic, useful for rashes and skin allergies, it is anti-fungal and has a balancing effect on the **menstrual cycle**. Emotionally this oil is reserved for deep seated grief or old pain. It is used in palliative care to help ease the transition from life to death.

Spikenard oil can be effective for tension, **stress**, **migraine**, nervous indigestion and **insomnia**. It seems to have rejuvenating qualities especially for the mature skin, and can help with **allergies**, skin inflammations and rashes.

Some ways in which to use Spikenard Essential Oil:

- For rough or wrinkled skin, try diluting a few drops of Spikenard essential oil with olive oil and apply as a natural moisturizer.
- Blend 50% Spikenard essential oil with 50% olive oil and apply on location for hemorrhoids. (Your first application may sting initially.)
- For help with cholesterol, apply 2-4 drops of Spikenard essential oil on wrists, inside elbows, or at the base of the throat two or three times daily.

- Apply 1-2 drops of Spikenard oil on your forehead, temples and mastoids (the bones just behind your ears) to help vitalize your brain.
- To soothe the tummy, apply a few drops of Spikenard oil on the stomach for indigestion or nausea.
- Wear a couple drops of Spikenard oil as perfume and/or use as a deodorant.
- To disinfect place a drop or two on the wound to speed up healing.

Spikenard is considered non-toxic, non-irritant, and non-sensitizing, and is closely related to common valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) with which it shares many of its sedative and tonic properties. It was traditionally used to anoint persons of high honor due to its expense and is considered to have spiritual applications for blessing and protection.