

THYME



Plant/Part: Herb/Flowers and leaves (Source : Great Britain, America and France)

Latin Name: Thymus Vulgaris

Family: Labiatae

Extraction: Distillation

AROMA: A rather sweet and strongly herbal fragrance.

PROPERTIES: Fortifies the lungs when treating colds, coughs and sore throats particularly tonsillitis, laryngitis, pharyngitis, bronchitis, whooping cough and asthma. Rather warming and helps to eliminate phlegm. Basically stimulates action of white corpuscles and helps the body fight disease and deters the spread of germs. Beneficial to the immune system. Good for the circulation and raises low blood pressure. May be used for rheumatism, gout, arthritis and sciatica since its stimulating effect

and diuretic action facilitates the removal of **uric acid**. When used in a compress can reduce painful arthritic swelling.

CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS: Thymol, Carvacrol, Borneol, Cineol, Metnone and Pinene, may contain Geraniol, Linlol Thujanol-4 or Alpha-terpineol.

PRECAUTIONS: A very potent oil, one of the strongest antiseptics and toxicity is possible with prolonged use. inhalations may be preferable to massage or baths since could irritate the skin though the mucous membranes may be susceptible too. Not to be used in cases of high blood pressure, nor in pregnancy.

BLENDS: Bergamot, Cedarwood, Camomile, Juniper, Lemon, Niaouli, Mandarin, Melissa, Rosemary and TeaTree.

Digestive: stimulates the production of gastric juices (carminative), cleanses the gastro-intestinal area. used to treat diarrhoea (when caused by an infection), dyspepsia, colic, flatulence.

Genito-Urinary: stimulates the production of urine (diuretic) and menstrual blood (emmenagogue). antiseptic, used to treat genito-urinary infections, cystitis, urethritis.

Circulation: stimulates, raises blood pressure, used for hypotension. cleanses the blood.

Muscles/Joints: relaxing and pain-relieving, used for arthritis, muscular aches, sprains, rheumatism.

Respiratory: antispasmodic, antiseptic, helps to expel mucus, used to treat asthma, bronchitis, catarrh, coughs, laryngitis, sinusitis, sore throat, tonsillitis.

Immune System: strengthens.



Skin/Hair: antiseptic, astringent, assists in the healing of wounds and scars, kills fungi, combats putrefaction. used to treat acne, bruises, burns, cuts, dermatitis, cellulite, eczema, insect bites, gum infections. Also used to treat alopecia areata

Emotions/Mind: invigorating, used for headaches, mental and physical exhaustion, stress, insomnia, depression; clears the head and improves memory. "helps to revive and strengthen both body and mind" (culpeper, "complete herbal")

Thyme is yet another of the labiatae family, and another native of the Mediteranean. It was known as a medicinal plant to all the early civilisations of the Mediterranean basin, and both Hippocrates and Dioscorides described its uses. There are several varieties of Thyme, but the common Thyme (Thymus Vulgaris) is the one used in aromatherapy. Its familiar and pervasive scent is the origin of its name, which derives from the Greek 'thymos' -to perfume. The oil is distilled twice, to remove irritant substances present in the plant. The pink flowered variety of common Thyme is considered to yield an essential oil superior to the white-flowered variety. The active constituents of the oil include thymol and carvacrol, together making up about 60% of the volume, with terpinene, cymene, borneol and linalol. Carvacrol and thymol are frequently isolated and used in pharmacy.

The herb has always been used in cooking, and like many of the essential oils derived from culinary herbs, that of Thyme has the ability to delay the putrefaction of meat. It is also a good digestive stimulant, useful for people with a rather sluggish **digestive system**, or in convalescence when the whole body is less than normally efficient. It is an intestinal antiseptic, valuable in gastric infections, and can be used to expel intestinal worms: roundworm, threadworm and tapeworm. When we consider the conditions in which food, especially meat, was cooked and kept before refrigeration, especially in warm climates, the wisdom of adding this herb to so many dishes is obvious, and as happens so often with the culinary herbs, this wisdom has been substantiated in relatively recent times by laboratory tests, using bacilli cultured in meat broth. Essential oil of Thyme slowed down the proliferation of bacteria and prevented the broth going bad for three days.



Another traditional use of Thyme has been in treating COLDS, COUGHS and sore throats, and here again the 'old wives' knew what they were about, for Thyme is an excellent pulmonary disinfectant, useful for all respiratory infections, as well as being very effective against mouth and throat infections. It can be used as an inhalation for nose, throat and chest infections, or as a mouthwash or gargle. Even as little as 0.1% of essential oil of Thyme in toothpaste is effective against bacteria which cause mouth and gum infections.

It is also a urinary tract antiseptic, useful for all infections of the bladder or urinary tract, and as it is a diuretic as well, this doubles its effectiveness. Perhaps one of the most important actions of Thyme in all forms of infection, is that it stimulates the production of white corpuscles, so strengthening the body's resistance to invading organisms.

Thyme stimulates the circulation generally, and raises low blood pressure. It is particularly good for people who are fatigued, depressed or lethargic, making it very useful in convalescence, and it stimulates the appetite which is so often poor after an illness. Thyme helps to revive and strengthen both body and mind and it is reputed, like Rosemary, to stimulate the brain and improve memory.

Thyme is used in BATHS to help INSOMNIA, and this is not as paradoxical as it may seem in the light of its stimulating properties, for we find once again, as with so many essential oils, a balancing effect. Thyme will enliven when you need to be wakeful, but help you sleep when you need to.

It is sometimes used in hair rinses, aromatic waters for the skin and in compresses for SORES and WOUNDS. It has been used in soapy solutions for disinfecting the hands before surgery, being a much stronger antiseptic than many of those commonly used in hospitals (phenol, hydrogen peroxide and potassium permanganate, for example).

Thyme is sometimes used in hot COMPRESSES to relieve rheumatic pain, and the fresh herb, crushed, is a good first-aid for . Don't try using the neat essential oil for this, as it will sting the skin itself. It also stings in the bath, unless previously dissolved.

However, there are several variants of Thyme oil which are less irritant. These are all extracted from *Thymus vulgaris*, but although the plants are botanically identical, those found in different locations sometimes show a marked and consistent difference in the composition of their essential oil (see the entry on **CHEMOTYPES**). Three valuable chemotypes of Thyme oil are those containing a preponderance of Thymol (known as *Thymus c/type Thymol*), another with mainly Linalol, which is very gentle, non-irritant and suitable for treating even quite young children, and another known as *Thymus c/type Thuyanol IV* which is a very powerful anti-viral oil. One or two specialist suppliers import these chemotypes which have definite advantages over the basic Thyme oil.

