

VERBENA



Verbena, or Lemon verbena, is the common name of the shrub *Lippia Citriodora*, a native of Chile and Peru, which was introduced to Europe in the 18th century. A good deal of confusion exists around the naming of this oil. Certain authors give the Latin name as *Andropogon Citratus*, which is in fact Lemongrass, or give Lemongrass as an alternative name to Verbena, although they are totally different plants. This is probably due to the fact that there is some similarity of in the lemony smell, and the cheaper oil of Lemongrass is sometimes used to adulterate Verbena oil, which is more costly to produce.

Further confusion arises between this and Vervain, or Verbena Officinalis, particularly as the oil is most often sold under its French name of Verveine. Vervain is an odourless, bitter plant used in herbal medicine and homoeopathy. Because of this, descriptions of Verbena oil sometimes include properties which should be more rightly attributed to the Verbena Officinalis plant.

The true Verbena oil is obtained by steam distillation from the flowering stalks of the plant, and is a lovely greeny-yellow colour. The yield of oil from the plants is quite small, which accounts for the high cost of real Verbena oil, so if you are offered this oil quite cheaply you should be aware that it is most likely to be either mixed with Lemongrass or Citronella, or is Lemongrass incorrectly named.

Verbena is an excellent digestive stimulant, stomachic and antispasmodic, and useful in all kinds of digestive upsets. It is an ingredient of several liqueurs with reputedly valuable digestive properties.

It is a good FEBRIFUGE, taken as a 'tea' or infusion made from the fresh or dried leaves. This makes a delicious and cooling summertime drink. It is also mildly sedative, as is the essential oil, so can be considered as another of the various essential oils useful to help insomnia. When using it in night-time baths for this purpose, be extremely careful, for more than two or three drops in an average bath will cause stinging and blistering of the skin. Just two drops in a bath, with perhaps three or four drops of Lavender, is an excellent sedative bath which will help with many sleep problems.