

## FRANKINCENSE



**Plant/Part:** Tree/Bark (Source: Middle East, China)

**Latin Name:** Boswellia Carteri/thurifera

**Family:** Burseraceae

**Extraction:** Distillation

**AROMA:** A haunting fragrance, woody, spicy and with a hint of lemon.

**PROPERTIES:** It is relaxing and, added to a moisturising facial oil, is wonderful for mature skin. Used for centuries, and burnt on alters and in temples. "Creates a 'spiritual' atmosphere". Comforting oil, by slowing down breathing and controlling tension it helps to focus the mind. Excellent for toning and caring for mature/ageing skin. (claimed to have rejuvenating qualities -the Egyptians used it in rejuvenation face-masks.) Has a pronounced effect on the mucous membranes, particularly helpful in clearing the lungs.

Excellent effect on respiration, eases shortness of breath and useful to asthma sufferers. Good remedy for catarrhal conditions and generally regulates secretions. Has a soothing action on head colds and a palliative for coughs, bronchitis and laryngitis. Seems to have a helpful action on the genito-urinary tract and mitigate the effects of cystitis, nephritis and genital infections generally. Its astringent properties may relieve uterine haemorrhages as well as heavy Periods and generally acts as a tonic to the uterus. Said to be of value during labour with its calming action and could ease post natal depression. May also treat breast inflammation. Also soothes the stomach, easing digestion, dyspepsia and belching!

**CHEMICAL CONSTITUENTS:** Cadinene (Sesquiterpene), Camphene, Dipentene, Pinene, Phellandrene (Terpenes), Olibanol (Alcohol).

**PRECAUTIONS:** Unknown.

**BLENDS:** Basil, Black Pepper, Geranium, Grapefruit, Lavender, Orange, Patchouli, Sandalwood.

### USES:

**Digestive:** stimulates the production of gastric juices (carminative), improves appetite and digestion

**Genito-Urinary:** stimulates the flow of menstrual blood (emmenagogue) and urine (diuretic), tones the uterus, used for scanty periods, leucorrhoea, infections of the urinary tract.

**Respiratory:** antiseptic, helps to expel mucus, relieves coughing, used for colds, flu, catarrh, asthma, bronchitis, laryngitis

**Skin/Hair:** anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, astringent, helps wounds and scars to heal; very good for dry and mature skin, used for wrinkles.



**Emotions/Mind:** sedative, elevating, warming, used for anxiety, apprehension, fears, nervous tension and stress-related conditions. It slows down and deepens the breath, which makes it helpful for meditation

This beautiful essential oil comes from a small tree (*Boswellia Carteri*) native to North Africa and some of the Arab countries. When the bark is damaged the tree exudes a resin in drops, or 'tears' and the essential oil is extracted from the resin by steam distillation. In past times the resin was collected from trees in which cracks had appeared naturally, but later cuts were made in the bark systematically to encourage resin production. The oil varies from colourless to very pale yellow, with a clear, fresh, slightly camphorous penetrating odour. Among the chemical constituents which make up this oil are 1-pinene, dipentene, phellandrene, camphene, olibanol and various resins.

Frankincense, in the form of the resin, has been burnt on altars and in temples since earliest antiquity. This use probably goes back far further than the earliest written records, and is perpetuated in the current practice of many religions. I find it fascinating to reflect on the fact that Frankincense has, among its physical properties, the ability to slow down and deepen the breath, and to breathe more slowly and deeply soon produces feelings of calm, which are very conducive to prayer and meditation. At what stage in the history of the use of Frankincense did our forbears discover this? Almost certainly, the origin of its use as an offering lay in the fact that Frankincense was among the most prized and costly substances in the ancient world. Both the Hebrews and the Egyptians spent vast amounts of money importing Frankincense from the Phoenicians.

Apart from its ceremonial and ritual use, Frankincense was much sought after as a perfume, and used in cosmetics and medicine. The Egyptians also used it in embalming. As already suggested, Frankincense is particularly active with regard to the lungs, and is one of the most valuable oils for use in respiratory infections. It is one of the best pulmonary antiseptics, calms coughs, and is indicated particularly where there is bronchial catarrh, for example, in chronic bronchitis. Use it in inhalations, massage and baths. This oil is very helpful for people with asthma, because of the way in which it slows and deepens the breathing. Massage is the best form of treatment, concentrating on strokes which open the chest, as this area is often constricted in asthmatics. The heat of steam inhalations may have an adverse effect in asthma, so this method should only be used cautiously.

In skincare, Frankincense is particularly helpful for older skins, and has a definite tonic effect, helping to restore some tone to slack-looking facial skin, and slowing down the appearance of wrinkles. It may even reduce the extent of wrinkles that have already formed. The oil has an affinity for the urino-genital tract, and was used a great deal in earlier times for treating infections in these organs. It is a uterine tonic and may be helpful for abnormally heavy periods, used in baths and gentle massage over the abdomen. It can safely be used during pregnancy.

Frankincense has a calming effect on the emotions, which can be seen as relating both to its use as a meditation aid, and in the treatment of asthma, where anxiety is often a trigger for attacks. In the past it was burnt to drive out evil spirits. It is also thought to help break links with the past and may be very valuable to people who tend to dwell on past events, to the detriment of their present situation. An Aitei native name for Frankincense is *Olibanum*. This occurs commonly in older texts, and is thought to derive from the Latin '*Olum Libanum*' {Oil from Lebanon}. The name Frankincense itself derives from Mediaeval French meaning 'Real Incense'.