



HEALING ESSENTIALS AROMATHERAPY NEWSLETTER July 2012

Issue # 2 Featuring Lavender Essential Oil

We are seeing the last wisps of fog as July ushers in the sunny summer in Ojai and we enter into the long, hot, dry days of our high desert climate. Suddenly, we are planning days at the beach, picnics, and family camping trips. A wonderful plant thrives in this hot, dry climate producing the world's most favorite and beloved essential oils, that of Lavender. So much has been written about the cultivation, history, and uses of Lavender that it is difficult to "distill" the information.

****Monthly Special Offered Below****

History: The name Lavender is thought to have come from either the Latin verb 'lavare' (to wash) or 'livendolo' (livid or bluish).

In Egypt, jars filled with unguents containing something resembling Lavender were found in Tutankhamen's tomb. In 77 AD, the Greek military physician, Dioscorides, noted that when taken internally, Lavender relieved indigestion, headaches and sore throats, and externally, it was useful for cleaning wounds and burns or treating skin ailments.

Lavender was little used in the Dark Ages, except by monks and nuns. In the twelfth century, Hildegard of Bingen noted that Lavender oil was effective in the treatment of head lice and fleas. The plant experienced a renaissance in Tudor England and ladies developed several uses for it. It was placed among linens, sewn into sweet bags, used to freshen the air and mixed with beeswax to make furniture polish. Queen Elizabeth I loved Lavender, and used it in tea to treat her frequent migraines. King Charles VI of France had his seat cushions stuffed with Lavender. Queen Victoria enthused in the use of Lavender, appointed Miss Sarah Sprules 'Purvey of Lavender Essence to the Queen'.

In France, one of the founders of modern day aromatherapy, Rene Gattefosse, badly burned his hand whilst working in his lab. Applying Lavender oil; the pain stopped and the wound healed quickly, with no infection or scarring, thus verifying the plant's healing properties. In 1937, Gattefosse wrote the first book on the healing properties of essential oils, *Aromatherapie*.



Plant Description: Lavender is one of the easiest plants to grow. The two basic requirements for successful lavender growing are full sun and good drainage. Lavender is a bushy shrub about 3 feet high. It is a very hardy plant and will tolerate neglect.¹ Lavender flower bracts range in color from white to pale blue to deep blue to lavender. It was brought to the Mediterranean, probably by the Romans long ago, where it now flourishes. Lavender does well in a dry, hot climate in rocky soil, and though the plants need water, they do not like to stand in water. This is similar to the climate of Ojai where Lavender grows very well.

Types of Lavender Essential Oil:

There are over 30 types of Lavender which produce essential oil. Each type contains differing amounts of chemicals contributing to differing fragrances. In addition, altitude, soil, temperature, precipitation, etc. contributes to some subtle changes in scent. The flowers are steam distilled. The essential oil is pale yellow, a thin consistency and is a top note. The combination of the bio chemicals *linalool* and *linalyl acetate* contained in Lavender essential oil gives it the beautiful fragrance. Be aware! Lavender is one of the most commonly adulterated essential oils. Of the many types there are five that are the most common. Remember, as mentioned in the previous newsletter on geranium essential oil, it is imperative to look at the botanical name to understand what you are purchasing.



1. English Lavender / True Lavender: *Lavandula angustifolia*, or *Lavandula officinalis*. There really is no "English" Lavender. The common names for *Lavandula angustifolia* are related to the region grown. Thus there is Bulgarian Lavender, Lavender Bareme, (grown high in France), Tasmanian Lavender, etc. Bulgarian Lavender has a rich lavender-floral scent which is less camphorous than the other lavenders.

2. Spanish Lavender (*Lavandula stoechas*): This type of lavender produced the most commonly distilled oil in the Middle Ages. Since that time, *L. stoechas* has come to be known as Spanish lavender and although it no longer is popular, it is ideal for making potpourris and sachets, and for using in floral arrangements. An active component of Spanish Lavender is the compound *fenchone* which contributes a fresh piney tang. *Lavandula stoechas* is said to alleviate nausea.



3. French Lavender (*Lavandula dentate*): The plant foliage is silvery grey and blooms nearly all year. Aroma is a sweet floral note. Popular cultivars grown are *Dentate var. Dentate*, and *Goodwin Creek*. Thus Lavender Dentata essential oil is mild and sweet.



4. Spike Lavender (*Lavandula latifolia*): The plant grows naturally in France, Spain, Italy and the Balkans. The main difference between Spike Lavender and True Lavender is the high camphor content which is certainly noted in its sharp floral scent. The flowers, and the essential oil derived from them, are anti-asthmatic, antiseptic, antispasmodic, digestive and expectorant. Externally, the essential oil is used as an antiseptic wash for wounds. It is used in diffusers to treat headaches.

5. Lavandin (*Lavendula x intermedia*): This is a hybrid between English lavender (*L. angustifolia*) and Spike Lavender (*L. latifolia*). A popular plant cultivar is *Abrialis* producing Lavandin Abrialis essential oil and the cultivar *Grosso*, producing Lavandin Grosso. Both have a strong, somewhat piercing camphor-like scent with light Lavender floral undertones. It is used in soaps and cosmetics.

Provence now leads the field in Lavender production. Other producers are Spain, Belgium, Germany, Russia, Bulgaria, Australia, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, America and Canada. We are blessed to have several Lavender farms near Ojai. Rivendell Aromatics, who sells their products at the Ojai Farmers market, produces very high quality Lavender essential oil. Buying locally is the best!

Properties: Aromatherapists regard Lavender as the most useful and versatile essential oil for therapeutic purposes. All Lavender essential oils contain the following properties in varying degrees: analgesic (relieves pain), anti-depressant, antiseptic, anti-rheumatic, anti-inflammatory (reduces inflammation), antispasmodic (relaxes muscles), bactericide (kills bacteria), carminative (settles GI complaints), cholagogue (stimulates liver function), cicatrisant (promotes scar tissue), deodorant, fungicide (kills fungi), harmonizing (especially to autonomic nervous system), hypotensive (may slightly lower BP), nervine (comforts and relaxes), restorative (restores balance to bodily functions), sedative (calms the mind).

Common Uses of Lavender Essential Oil:

Dermatological: Due to its analgesic properties, Lavender will ease the pain of a burn and prevent infection. It promotes rapid healing and reduces scarring. Can be applied directly to bee stings to reduce swelling. Spritz several drops of Lavender oil mixed with distilled water on sunburn to decrease pain. Drop Lavender oil on a cut to clean the wound, reduce bleeding, and kill bacteria. Apply 2-3 drops of Lavender oil to a rash to relieve itching and heal the skin. Apply 2 – 4 drops over the armpit area to act as a deodorant. Rub several drops of Lavender oil into the scalp to help eliminate dandruff.

Musculoskeletal: Diluted in a massage oil, Lavender relieves muscular aches and joint pain.

Reproductive: A clinical trial identified Lavender as the most popular essential oil used during childbirth to both relieve anxiety and pain.

Respiratory: Used in a diffuser, Lavender is beneficial for asthma as it reduces anxiety making it easier to breathe. Is known to relieve the symptoms of nasal allergies.

Nervous system: Many studies and trials demonstrate the calming and harmonizing effect of Lavender on the nervous system. It can exert a sedative or stimulant action depending on one's needs. It will act as a sedative in conditions of mental and emotional agitation comforting feelings and alleviating fears; while it is also uplifting and revives one who feels emotionally depleted and depressed. It is regarded as the first choice in the treatment of insomnia due to mental stress. It aids in meditation and has been known to relieve ADHD in children.

In short, is there any condition that Lavender essential oil cannot relieve? Lavender “the mother of all essential oils” is described beautifully:

Tireless, always even-tempered, with unfailing gentleness and devotion, Lavendula cares for and calms, listens to and remedies a thousand ills. She takes care of children, adults, and elderly, animals, plants, the earth and sky. She looks after everyone with equal love and if there is anyone in the world whom she neglects, it is herself. 6

Lavender Blends Well With: Bay, Bergamot, Chamomile, Citronella, Clary Sage, Geranium, Jasmine, Lemon, Mandarin, Orange, Palmarosa, Patchouli, Pine, Rosemary, Rosewood and Ylang-ylang.

Methods of Administration: Lavender is safe to use directly on the skin. Topically it can be used in a massage blend, bath, sitz bath, or ointment. For inhalation, use in a diffuser, steam inhalation, or direct from bottle.

Cautions: None. Lavender essential oil is non-toxic, non-irritating and non-sensitizing.

Case Histories:

A lavender blend was applied to a severe mouth injury that required 150 sutures to both lips. The doctor was amazed at the complete and rapid healing. After 17 months the scar was barely visible.²

In a hospice setting Lavender was diffused resulting in a calmer atmosphere, lowering anxiety, and helping to resolve sleep problems. Massage was also used to help with aches and pains.³

Loraine Kyle, RN, MSN, one of the two founders of IIA, the Institute of Integrative Aromatherapy, conducted an aromatherapy activity program on the psychiatric unit of Boulder Community Hospital, CO. Patients were taught the benefits of self-care and stress management using essential oils. Lavender, among other essential oils was frequently chosen by the patients. Loraine writes, "It was gratifying to witness how depressed and overtly psychotic patients responded to pleasant aromas."⁴

Stephane Query, is a massage therapist in Switzerland, who works at big events with cyclists, tri-athletes, and marathon runners. He has used essential oils for the past 20 years and chooses Lavender which "allows me to treat not only contusions and traumas but also helps with coagulation of blood vessels, reduces pain, relaxes muscles and reduces overheating of feet in sports shoes."⁵

In my own experience, I have used Lavender successfully to resolve blemishes, heal insect bites, heal dog tick bites, in the diffuser to relieve stress, and to relax for a beautiful night's sleep. I never cease to be amazed by its healing properties and lovely fragrance.

Healing Essentials News: The Healing Essentials workshop on June 2nd went very well and I would like to thank those who participated. Everyone had a great time making essential oil blends and bath salts. A more advanced workshop will be offered soon. Let me know if you are interested.

*****Healing Essential Special of the Month ***
Lavender Lotion
Sale Price: \$5.00 for 4 oz. (Orig. \$7.00)**

May you all enjoy a lovely summer and don't forget to bring along the Lavender to treat sunburn!

Patricia Wing, RN, IAC

1. Lavender the Growers Guide by Virginia McNaughton, 2004, Timber Press.
2. International Journal of Clinical Aromatherapy 2009, Vol. 6, Issue 1, pg.9-12.
3. International Journal of Clinical Aromatherapy 2009, Vol. 6, Issue 1, pg.38-30.
4. International Journal of Clinical Aromatherapy 2008, Vol. 5, Issue 2, pg.30-34.
5. International Journal of Clinical Aromatherapy 2009, Vol. 6, Issue 2, pg.24-25.
6. *Mailhebiau P, Portraits in oils. 1195.*