



HEALING ESSENTIALS AROMATHERAPY NEWSLETTER JANUARY 2014

Issue #11 Featuring Nutmeg Essential Oil

Please Note: Aromatherapy Workshop has been rescheduled from January 18 to February 8. See attached flyer.

Nutmeg! We associate Nutmeg with holiday pies and eggnog. But historically, Nutmeg has many medicinal effects. As noted previously, essential oils come from nearly every type of organic material such as flowers, herbs, leaves, twigs, roots, and in the last newsletter, resins. The essential oil of Nutmeg comes from a seed.

Monthly Special Offered Below

History: Nutmeg is a spice that has long been prized for its medicinal properties. The history of nutmeg goes back to the 1st Century as evidenced in writings by Pliny, the Roman writer. In Indian Ayur-Vedic writings it is recommended for headaches, fever, and bad breath. Arabian writing praises as good for curing stomach ailments and as an aphrodisiac. Nutmeg became highly coveted in Europe. In the nineteenth century, Charles Dickens carried a monogrammed pocket nutmeg grater in his waistcoat.

The Fascinating History of Nutmeg and Manhattan: Nutmeg is native to the Banda islands of Indonesia. When the Portuguese rounded the Cape of Good Hope in Africa in the late 1400s, they took control of the spice trade because they could transport nutmeg far more cheaply in the hold of a ship than it could be transported by caravan. In time the Dutch became the predominant traders of this precious spice. At the time, the only source of nutmeg was on Run Island in the Bandas. Because the British also wanted in on the lucrative trade there were many struggles between the British and the Dutch over control of the Island.

In 1609 the English explorer Henry Hudson was contracted by the Netherlands to find a Northwest Passage in the New World. But Hudson found an island later called Manhattan, and a river that would later bear his name. Hudson claimed the land for the Netherlands which revved up fur trading in the area in the ensuing decades. The Netherlands then formed the Dutch West India Company in 1621 to colonize the land, and by this time it was known as New Netherland.

The Dutch Buy Manhattan from the American Indians: In 1626 the Dutch India Company proposed a deal with the American Indians, who occasionally used the island to hunt and fish. They didn't even live on the island which they called "Manahachtanienk" which "Manhattan" probably derived from. In exchange for the island of Manhattan, the Indians were offered a chest of beads and other trinkets worth 60 guilders. In the 19th century, this amount was famously estimated to be about \$24. In any case, the American Indians accepted payment for land they didn't consider theirs. And it should be noted that the Dutch offering payment at all was a sign of good faith to legitimize their claims, especially compared to the Spanish conquistadors who opted simply to take the land they wanted.

But the Dutch did not keep Manhattan for long. The scramble for land in North America was tame compared to the violent power struggles in the East Indies. European powers were vying for control of the spice trade, and the valuable

spice at the center of it all was Nutmeg. The Europeans valued Nutmeg for more than its distinct taste. Nutmeg was considered an aphrodisiac and hallucinogen. People even wore bags of the spice around their necks as a protection against the Black Plague. It may sound like superstition, but it's plausible that nutmeg actually repelled fleas that carried plague-causing bacteria. Nutmeg was so highly coveted that European traders were selling it at nearly a 6,000 percent markup.

Did the Dutch actually trade Manhattan for Nutmeg? The Dutch thought they had secured a monopoly on Nutmeg as they were in control of the Banda Islands; however the British owned one of the small islands named Run and a battle ensued for control. Meanwhile, compared to Nutmeg trade in the East, fur trade for the Dutch in the West wasn't as lucrative. To make matters worse, a British fleet had succeeded in taking over New Amsterdam (the Dutch name for Manhattan) in 1664. To settle their differences, the Dutch made a trade with the British. In exchange for official control of all the Islands of Banda, the Dutch relinquished their claims to New Amsterdam. Thus Manhattan was traded for Nutmeg. Though the British weren't very excited about the trade they kept the island later renaming it New York.

Bringing Nutmeg to the West: During the Napoleonic wars of the early 19th century; the British invaded the Banda Islands. Taking Nutmeg with them, they were able to replant it in places like the Caribbean island of Grenada. Grenada is now among the leading producers of the spice, and a Nutmeg is featured on the country's flag.



Nutmeg: *Myristica fragrans*

Plant Part: Seed.

Method of Extraction: Steam distilled.



Plant Description: Nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*) is also known by other common names such as muscdier, magic, muskatbaum, nox moscada, myristica, nuez moscada and nux moschata. The Nutmeg tree grows very tall and may reach up to 70 feet in height with smooth greyish-brown bark. When dried the fruit of this tree contains a seed. Nutmeg oil is obtained from the seed. Mace is derived from the red covering of the seed. Nutmeg and Mace are two distinctly separate spices and separate essential oils are distilled from them. Each tree can produce up to 8,000 Nutmegs per year. Today, Nutmeg is produced in many places including Indonesia, Malaysia, various Caribbean islands, New Guinea, and Sri Lanka. About 10,000 tons a year is produced and mainly used in the US, Japan, Europe and India.



Essential Oil Description:

Color: Colorless to pale yellow clear liquid. **Consistency:** Medium. **Note:** Middle. **Aromatic Scent:** Nutmeg Essential Oil has a rich, spicy, sweet, woody scent. It is similar to the cooking spice, but richer and more fragrant.

Chemical Constituents: Oral use of Nutmeg has long been known to produce a narcotic affect. The first recorded hallucinogenic effect was by Lobelius in 1576. The physiologist Purkinje in 1829 ate three nutmegs and described the effect as similar to cannabis intoxication, including disorientation, hallucinations and later deep sleep. Famously, Malcolm X wrote in his autobiography that he got “high” on Nutmeg while in prison. The response to Nutmeg intoxication is extremely varied. It appears that freshly grated nutmegs produce the most profound intoxication.

Chemically, Nutmeg contains the esters *eugenol* and *myristicine* which are analgesic, anti-spasmodic, and anti-microbial. It is thought that the psychotropic effect of Nutmeg occurs when *myristicine* is metabolized, however this is inconclusive. When isolated *myristicine* has no activity. It should be noted that in non-oral doses such as in a carrier oil, there is no psychotropic activity at all.

Essential Oil Properties: analgesic, anti-emetic, antioxidant, anti-rheumatic, antiseptic, antispasmodic, aphrodisiac, carminative, digestive, emmenagogue, purifying, stimulant, tonic.

Uses of Nutmeg Essential Oil: Nutmeg and Mace have been used as culinary spices in all corners of the world for many centuries. As with most well-known spices, Nutmeg also has a long history of medicinal use.

- ❖ **Dermatological and Cosmetic:** Since Nutmeg oil is antibacterial and antiseptic, it is used in many cosmetics meant for damaged skin. It is used in making after shave lotions, soaps, and creams.
- ❖ **Cardiovascular:** Nutmeg oil is a good stimulant not just for the mind but also for the entire body. Its relaxing aroma comforts the body, increases blood circulation and therefore helps those who have poor blood circulation. It is therefore is a good tonic for the heart. See diffuser blends below.
- ❖ **Gastro-Intestinal:** In small quantities, Nutmeg can stimulate the appetite and improve digestion. Nutmeg oil can be used to dispel indigestion and flatulence. It also helps prevent gas and buildup in the intestinal tract. Nutmeg is used to calm nausea and vomiting as well.
Massage Remedy: Combine with Ginger essential oil for a dramatic warming effect, though the concentration should be reduced to 5% or less. Apply to abdomen for poor or weak G.I. function.
Oral Remedy: In France, Nutmeg essential oil is given in drop doses in honey for digestive upsets. Use one to three drops Nutmeg oil on a sugar lump or in a teaspoon of honey for nausea, gastroenteritis, chronic diarrhea, and indigestion. *Note:* Care should be taken to consume Nutmeg oil internally in very small dosages.
- ❖ **Mouth:** Tooth pain: Like clove oil, can be applied as an emergency treatment to dull toothache. **Remedy:** For tooth pain, use one or two drops on a cotton swab and apply to the gums around an aching tooth until dental treatment can be obtained. The woody aroma of Nutmeg oil helps in removing bad breath. As a result, it is also added to numerous toothpastes.
- ❖ **Musculo-skeletal:** Externally, the oil is very useful for treating rheumatic and arthritic pain as it is an excellent relaxant as well as anti-inflammatory reducing swelling of joints. **Remedy:** A massage oil can be created combining Nutmeg with Rosemary essential oil. A warming combination.
- ❖ **Nervous System:** The uplifting and stimulating properties help to relieve mental exhaustion, anxiety, stress and depression. It is also believed that nutmeg oil improves the quality of your dreams, making them more intense and colorful. In the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, Nutmeg was popular as an effective brain tonic in spite of its high cost and rarity.
- ❖ **Detoxifying:** An important health benefit of Nutmeg oil is its ability to treat liver diseases. The oil is capable of removing toxins from the liver, thereby making it a good liver tonic.
- ❖ **Respiratory:** Nutmeg oil is an important ingredient in many cough syrups and cold rubs as it helps in relieving cough and cold. It is also believed that Nutmeg oil may help with asthma.
- ❖ **Reproductive:** Known to relieve menstrual cramps. Due to the ancient reports that Nutmeg can be an abortifacient, it should be avoided during pregnancy.
- ❖ **Urinary:** Nutmeg oil is often recommended for treating kidney infections and kidney diseases, as well as helping in dissolving kidney stones.

**Additional Uses:**

Spice: Popular as a spice, nutmeg is versatile and can be used in many dessert dishes, in garam masala in India, and as a curry ingredient in Japan. It is used in baked goods, sauces, ice cream, custard, etc. Commercially it is used in Coca Cola and Pepsi.
Incense: Nutmeg is used in various incense sticks due to its woody fragrance. It is believed that Roman priests burned nutmeg as incense.
Tobacco: Nutmeg oil is also used in the tobacco industry.

Diffuser Blends: Combine the following essential oils in an aromatherapy lamp or diffuser and enjoy.

HOLIDAY EGGNOG AROMATHERAPY: 2 drops Nutmeg, 1 drop Cinnamon, 10 drops Vanilla.

BUTTERY PUMPKIN SPICE AROMATHERAPY: 1 drop Nutmeg, 1 drop Cinnamon, 3 drops Vanilla, 1 drop Cardamom.

Nutmeg essential oil blends well with: Bay Leaf, Black Pepper, Cardamom, Cinnamon, Clary Sage, Clove, Coriander, Geranium, Ginger, Lavender, Lime, Mandarin, Orange, Petitgrain, Rosemary, Vanilla, Ylang Ylang. And a plethora of other culinary spice oils. In perfumery nutmeg oil is used as a fixative for citrus oils.

Safety: In a massage blend, Nutmeg essential oil is considered non-toxic, non-sensitizing, and non-irritant when carefully diluted in a carrier oil. **Oral Use of Nutmeg:** Nutmeg is regarded as safe when used as a spice; however, it is mildly hallucinogenic, much like marijuana, so caution must be used when using Nutmeg to treat a condition. In addition to hallucinations and elation, eating Nutmeg will give you stomach pain, double vision, delirium, and other symptoms of poisoning. Do not use if you are pregnant or nursing without consulting your health care provider. Do not use as a treatment on young children. Safety in those with severe liver or kidney disease is not known. Avoid contact with eyes.

****Monthly Special****

Custom Abdominal Massage Oil Blend: 15 ml. (1/2 oz.) = \$10.00

**(Contains: Essential oils of Nutmeg, Ginger, Rosemary, Mandarin, and Vanilla in base of Almond Oil)
Relieves abdominal discomfort due to indigestion, gas, irregularity.**

May each and every one enjoy happiness and good health in 2014!!

Patricia Wing, RN, IAC, Clinical Aromatherapist

References:

1. The Scent Trail by Celia Lyttelton, 2007. P. 151-175
2. The Complete Guide to Aromatherapy, by. Battaglia, S., P. 239-241.
3. Information on the history of Nutmeg was adapted from Wikipedia.