

HEALING ESSENTIALS AROMATHERAPY NEWSLETTER MARCH 2015



Issue #17 Featuring Lemongrass Essential Oil

As previously discussed in many Healing Essential Newsletters, there are various sources for essential oils such as herbs, resins, rinds, flowers, etc. But we have not discussed essential oils from grasses. There are three main essential oils distilled from grasses: Lemongrass, Citronella, and Vetiver. This issue will focus on Lemongrass and Citronella and Vetiver will be covered in future issues.

See attached flyer: Healing Essentials Advanced Aromatherapy on Medicinal Use of Essential Oils.

Lemongrass (*Cymbopogon citratus*) Botony

Lemongrass essential oil is produced from two distinctly different species of *Cymbopogon* (pronounced sim-buh-POH-gon). They are *Cymbopogon citratus* also known as West Indian Lemongrass and Fever Grass; and *Cymbopogon flexuosus* (native to India) also known as East Indian Lemongrass. In a small area throughout South Western India, Lemongrass oil is being produced and exported and is said to be of extremely high quality due to excellent soil conditions and climate. Though grown throughout India, Africa, Madagascar, the Cormoron Islands and China; today Guatemala is the leading exporter of Lemongrass Essential Oil.



Cymbopogon citratus

Plant Description:

Lemongrass is easily grown in the garden. This tropical grass grows in dense clumps that can grow to 6 feet in height and about 4 feet in width. The strap-like leaves are 0.5-1 inches wide, about 3 feet long, and have gracefully drooping tips. The evergreen leaves are bright bluish-green and release a citrus aroma when crushed. It is the leaves that are used as flavoring and in medicine. The plant likes bright light and regular watering but will tolerate some drought, and low temperatures. Clumps can be divided in spring and summer. Gardeners in subtropical areas will enjoy using lemongrass in beds and borders. It also does well in tubs and containers. To harvest, dig up a clump, separate the sections, cut off the roots and tops keeping about 6 inches of the light colored base. Though not obvious in the pictures, *Cymbopogon citratus* has dark green leaves and *Cymbopogon flexuosus* has bluish green leaves.

WARNING! The leaves have sharp edges and can inflict razor cuts on the unwary! Do not use near walkways where the long leaves might reach out and slice exposed skin.

**Method of Distillation:**

When harvesting, the fresh grass is cut early in the morning, bundled, then distilled later that day. The extraction process is done by steam distillation. After the oil is distilled it goes through a process of dehydration as all water and moisture must be removed. Once the oil becomes clarified through filtration, the essential oil is then bottled and sealed. It must be stored away from light and high temperatures.

Note: In Guatemala there is a factory especially built to produce paper from the lemongrass residue after the distillation process.

Cymbopogon flexuosus**History:**

For centuries, Lemongrass has been used by indigenous peoples to reduce fevers, infections, and as a sedative. In Malaysia it has long been used against colds and fungus. It is noted that Lemongrass has been used in both Cuban and Brazilian folk medicine. In addition Lemongrass essential oil is extensively used in perfumery. Sometime before World War II, distillation began taking place in Madagascar and the Comoro Islands.

**Description of Lemongrass Essential Oil:**

Parts of plant used: leaves. **Method of Extraction:** Steam distilled. **Color:** Yellow or amber colored liquid. **Consistency:** Viscous. **Note:** Top with amazing strong aroma of lemon. **Aroma:** Strong, fresh, grassy, with sweet citrus odor.

Chemical constituents: The high content of geranial and neral in both types of Lemongrass combines to produce citral. The citral content is high in Citronella, thus Lemongrass is also a good insect repellent as well as being used to combat fungus.

Blends well with: Pine, Thyme, Lavender, Rosemary, Marjoram, Cedarwood, Eucalyptus and Lemon.

Properties of Lemongrass Essential Oil: analgesic, anti-depressant, anti-microbial, astringent, antiseptic, digestive, deodorant, febrifuge, fungicidal, insecticidal, sedative.

Uses of Lemongrass Essential Oil:

- ❖ **Internal Use:** Drinking Lemongrass Tea helps to treat internal Candida (Yeast Infections). See Culinary Uses below.
- ❖ **Antiseptic:** Excellent diffused to purify the air.

- ❖ **Anti-Cancer Activity:** Lemongrass and Frankincense are the two essential oils with the largest bodies of research in the field. Published in the May 2009 the *Journal of Chemico-Biological Interactions* stated “Our results indicate that the (Lemongrass) oil has a promising anti-cancer activity and causes loss in sum or increasing cell viability by activating the apoptotic process as identified by electron microscopy.” (Apoptosis is the normal process of cell death. In cancer the normal process of death to diseased cells is inhibited. Activating apoptosis increases cell death of diseased cells.) See pubmed.gov/lemongrass/cancer.
- ❖ **Dermatologic:** Due to astringent properties, is used in cleansing creams and lotions. As an anti-fungal, combats athletes foot and dandruff when added to a carrier oil. Can also be used as a topical insect repellent but must be added to a carrier oil base as Lemongrass neat may be an irritant to the skin.
- ❖ **Digestive:** Acts as a tonic to the GI system and helps to relieve indigestion, colitis, and gastroenteritis.
- ❖ **Immune supportive:** Due to the oil’s strong anti-microbial properties, it supports and works together with the immune system to ward off airborne infections. **Remedy:** One study shows that the vapors from combining Geranium and Lemongrass essential oils in a diffuser may be effective against MRSA. See *Letters in Applied Microbiology*.
Remedy: to support immunity, add to carrier oil and massage into soles of feet.
- ❖ **Insect repellent:** combine Lemongrass essential oils with Citronella and Lemon Eucalyptus in a carrier oil.
- ❖ **Musculo-skeletal:** referred to as the *connective tissue oil*. Lemongrass tightens the elastin fibers in the epidermis and subcutaneous tissue. **Remedy:** combine 8 drops Lemongrass into 1 ounce Epsom Salts and add to bath.
- ❖ **Nervous System (CNS):** Uplifting, helps relieve mental fatigue and improve concentration when diffused.

Method of Application: May be used topically in massage, compress, bath, ointment and skin care. May be inhaled directly, in diffuser or steam inhalation. Use with caution applying neat to skin. **Safety:** Lemongrass Essential Oil should not be used during pregnancy.



Culinary Uses of Lemongrass: Lemongrass is widely used in Asian cooking especially Thai and Vietnamese dishes. Lemongrass is too tough to eat without crushing it prior to adding to the dish. It can be minced or finely sliced. To mince, smash with the back of a knife.



Benefits of drinking Lemongrass Tea.

USES OF LEMONGRASS

- Kill cancer cells
- Blood pressure
- Fever
- Flu and cold
- Digestion
- Stress
- Lose weight
- Gout
- Anti-oxidant
- Detoxifier
- Pain killer
- Diarrhea and stomachache
- Antibacterial and antifungal
- Clean the kidney, liver, pancreas, digestive tract and bladder



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- **Contains Essential Oils of Lemongrass, Eucalyptus, Lime, Cinnamon, And Clove in Lemon Witch Hazel and Lemon Verbena Hydrosol.**
- **Purifies Air**
- **Reduces Microbes, Fungus, and Mold**
- **Spray in Bedrooms, Bathrooms, Car, Closets, Shoes, etc.**

We have a nice group signed up for the Healing Essentials Medicinal Presentation on Saturday, March 14 from 1-4 p.m. at the Ojai Retreat Center. We'll discuss the systems of the body and the various essential oils that benefit conditions relating to each system. I am looking forward to sharing this with you and to being at the beautiful Ojai Retreat Center location. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Patricia Wing, RN, IAC, Clinical Aromatherapist

References:

1. [The Complete Guide to Aromatherapy](#), by Battaglia, S., P. 223-224.
2. Information on the history and images of Lemongrass are adapted from Wikipedia and various internet sites.
3. *Aromatherapy Today* :*International Aromatherapy Journal*, Volume 57, August 2013.
4. [Aromatherapy: A Practical Approach to the Use of Essential Oils for Health and Well-being](#) by Julia Lawless.