

Essential Oil of the Month: Ginger

By Kathy Padecky, Aromatherapist, HHP, CBS

Ginger

Botanical Name: Zingiber officinale

Why I love ginger: Ginger invokes happy memories of living and eating wonderful foods in the Orient. Its inviting aroma warms my body on a cold winter day.

Aroma and scent: Its scent is warm, spicy and woody. Ginger's long lasting aroma with a hint of lemon and pepper reminds me of my travels throughout Southeast Asia.

Native to and history: Ginger is cultivated in many tropical and subtropical climates; Jamaica, West Africa, India, Vietnam and Australia. Jamaican ginger is the most highly sought after. Nigerian ginger is a great choice. The essential oil is produced in the United States and Europe from imported rhizomes (roots).

The Greeks and Romans highly prized this plant for its healing properties. Arabian traders introduced ginger to France and Germany in the 9th century and later to England in the 10th century. Spanish conquistadors introduced ginger to the West Indies and Mexico. In 1547, Jamaican ginger was introduced to Spain. Chinese medicine uses ginger in many of their remedies. "Under the 'Doctrine of Signatures,' the ginger shape shows an affinity for the human digestive system. The Doctrines of



Signatures is a system that explains the relationship between a plant's shape and the system or organ of the human body it corresponds to. Saint Hildegarde, in the 12th century, referred to it as having "aphrodisiac properties, especially for stimulating the vigor of older men married to young women."

During the middle Ages, ginger was used to combat the Black Plague. Its pungent chemical constituents help a person to sweat.

Pickled ginger is used as a condiment in Asian cooking.

Women from Senegal would entice their lovers by wearing ginger in their belts. Men from New Guinea would entice their lovers by wearing ginger in their arm bands and rub over their lips, chest and arms.

Chemistry: Ginger is 20-50% sesquiterpene, 4-22% monoterpenes, 9-20% alcohols, 3-20% aldehyde and 1-3% oxides. Sesquiterpenes are anti-inflammatory and calming. Monoterpenes are skin penetrating, tonic, antiseptic and immune stimulating. Alcohols are antimicrobial and immune supportive. Aldehydes are sedative and may have possible hormone effects. Oxides are an expectorant and antispasmodic.

Part of the plant: Ginger oil is steam distilled from the dried rhizome (root). The essential oil may also be distilled from peelings and shavings if used immediately. The ginger plant is a perennial with horizontal creeping rhizomes growing 2 to 3 feet long. In the cosmetic industry, ginger can be produced through a carbon dioxide process or by a chemical process called an absolute. Some aromatherapists believe the essential oil derived through absolute process leaves a trace chemical residue in the essential oil. Ginger is a pale amber liquid essential oil.

Ginger may help the body recover from the following: alcoholism, anger, angina, appetite (loss of), arthritis, broken bones, bronchitis, circulation (slow), chemotherapy, colds, colic, confusion, contagious diseases, coughs, cramps, dementia, diarrhea, digestive disorders, fatigue, fevers, flatulence, flu, impotence, loneliness, memory, motion sickness, muscular aches/pains, nausea, rheumatic pain, sadness, scurvy, sinusitis, sore throats, sprains and unfocused

Ginger blends with: cajuput, caraway, cardamom, cinnamon, coriander, clove, elemi, eucalyptus, frankincense, geranium, lemon, lime, myrtle, orange, rosemary, rosewood, spearmint, verbena and vetiver.

Body, Mind and Spirit Connections: Ginger's warming oil is indicated for lack of direction, sexual anxieties, loneliness, apathy and resignation (Worwood, 1996). In TCM (Traditional Chinese Medicine), ginger stimulates and tonifies the yang (excess) energy of the spleen, stomach, heart, lung and kidneys (Mojay, 1997). "Ginger was for centuries valued by the Chinese for its ability to promote strength and ensure a long life. It formed part of a medical

tradition that was geared toward curing disease and assists the art of longevity." Ginger stimulates the physical body to intimacy and attracting abundance (Leigh 2001).

Ginger is well known for eliminating pain especially arthritis and menstrual cramps. Place a small amount of lotion, carrier oil and one drop of ginger and massage the stomach area in a clockwise direction. Apply a warm compress to the abdomen area. The same method applies to any arthritic joint or muscle. The warming and antispasmodic properties of ginger increase circulation. Freshly grated ginger to a warm foot bath alleviates cold feet.

Contraindications and Precautions: Ginger must be diluted. Ginger is a blood thinner. Avoid using if you are taking prescription anticoagulant drugs or aspirin. Avoid using during morning sickness and sun exposure 3 to 6 hours after use. It may cause irritation to sensitive skin. Conduct a medical or naturopathic doctor if client has gallstones.

Essential Oil Recipes:

Ginger Tea Recipe

The ginger root can be grated into a tea. Boil 1 pint of water to 1 1/2 tablespoons of grated ginger and simmer for 7 minutes. Ginger tea is said to help detoxify the liver.

Sensual Massage

1 drop ginger
2 drops jasmine
5 drops sandalwood
1 oz. of your favorite unscented massage oil or lotion

Mix the above ingredients for a spicy aphrodisiac massage.

Sore muscle and rheumatism blend

6 drops of ginger
1 oz. (30ml) unscented massage oil

Blend the above ingredients. Massage in affected areas to help alleviate and reduce pain in muscles and joints. This is especially beneficial in cold damp weather.

A stimulating atmosphere

4 drops of ginger
2 drops of rosemary
Place in a diffuser to strengthen memory and keep the mind alert.

Travel and Jet lag recipe

10 drops lavender
7 drops grapefruit
4 drops peppermint
4 drops ginger

Blend the oils. When traveling by air, place on the air vent above your seat. Add 10 drops to a carrier (vegetable) oil

and apply to ear lobes, base of neck and inside of wrists while in the air. For internal use, take 1 drop in a little water three times daily, three days prior to travel, during and for three days following travel. It is important to drink at least two 8 oz. glasses of water hourly while traveling.

Did you know? Grated ginger may be frozen to extend shelf life. It thaws quickly. Freshly grated ginger is preferred for cooking and medicinal remedies.

Disclaimer: These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. Products and/or techniques mentioned are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. The information provided is for educational purposes only and is not intended as diagnosis, treatment, or prescription for any disease. The decision to use, or not use, any of this information is the sole responsibility of the reader.

Resources:

Aromatherapy for Massage Practitioner by Ingrid Martin
The Fragrant Heavens by Valerie Ann Worwood
Aromatherapy for Massage Practitioners by Ingrid Martin
Reference Guide for Essential Oils by Connie & Alan Higley
The Chemistry of Essential Oils made Simple by David Stewart Ph.D., D.N.M.
Australasian College of Herbal Studies by Lesson Manual
The Directory of Essential Oils by Wanda Sellar
Aromatherapy for Healing the Spirit by Gabriel Mojay

Disclaimer: These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. Products and/or techniques mentioned are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. The information provided is for educational purposes only and is not intended as diagnosis, treatment, or prescription for any disease. The decision to use, or not use, any of this information is the sole responsibility of the reader.



About the Author: Kathy Padecky is an Aromatherapist and a Holistic Health Practitioner (HHP). She began working in the holistic health field in 1981 and teaches various massage modalities, aromatherapy, and hydrotherapy at the International Professional School of Bodywork (IPSB). Ms. Padecky is

also publisher of the "Sacred Scents" Newsletter.

The Massage Therapy Center offers essential oils by Bon Vital to be used for aromatherapy purposes. Stop by to see our selection.