

Essential Oil of the Month: Clary Sage

By Kathy Padecky, Aromatherapist, HHP, CBS

Clary Sage

Botanical Name: *Salvia sclarea*

Why I love clary sage: I love taking a bath in clary sage after a long day of teaching. The aroma is intoxicating and the warm bath is sedating, uplifting and relaxing. I feel rejuvenated and refreshed, ready for the next day.

Aroma and scent: The scent is herbal and earthy with a nutty fragrance. The essential oil is a pale yellow liquid.

Native to and history: Clary sage is a member of the mint family of plants. It is also known as clary wort and muscatel sage. Clary is derived from the Latin name *sclarea* derived from *clarus* meaning clear. Clary sage has been called "Clear eye". When the seeds soak in water they infuse an essence that has a soothing effect for irritated eyes. It was famous for healing a wide variety of eye problems.

In Latin, *salvia* means "good health" and it also means wisdom as in "sages." Clary sage originally grew in southern Europe. It was used for a wide variety of health issues. It was widely used for female complaints, kidney and digestive issues, skin disorders, inflammation, sore throats and wounds. It is planted in German vineyards with the grapes. Clary sage arrived in England in 1562. It was used in place of hops when brewing beer. In the Middle Ages clary sage was called "Oculus Christi" meaning the eye of Christ.

Egyptians used this medicinal herb to stimulate fertility. Hildegard of Bingen, a medieval healer, recommended clary sage as a stomach tonic. It was a popular tea in Britain before black tea was imported from China. In the Middle Ages, Germany used clary sage as a flavoring agent to wine.

Chemistry: Clary sage is approximately 10 to 20% alcohols, primarily linalol alcohol and 50 to 75% esters primarily linalyl acetate. It also contains sesquiterpenes (up to 14%) and a smattering of monoterpenes, diterpenols, oxides, ketones, sesquiterpenols, aldehydes and coumarines. Alcohols are the mildest essential oil components. They are used with young children and frail adults. The chemical compound alcohol are immune supportive and sedative. Esters are used frequently in the perfume industry for their pleasant floral aroma. They are sedative, antispasmodic and anti-inflammatory. The remaining components have traits that are calming, anti-microbial, skin healing as well as a tonic.

Part of the plant: It is a perennial growing to two to three feet. It is native to the Mediterranean regions. It has abundant small blue to purple and white flowers that grow from large pink/purple bracts. The slightly wrinkled leaves are medium-sized heart or oblong shaped. Clary sage is steam distilled from the flowering tops and leaves.

Clary sage may help the body recover from the following: acne, adrenal gland tonic, boils, constipation, cramps, dandruff, depression, dysmenorrhea, energy (lack of), exhaustion (nervous), hair growth (encourages), high blood pressure, hyperactivity, inflammation, insomnia, low libido, lymphatic congestion, migraines, muscular aches and pains, nervousness, premenstrual tension, sedative, skin (dry and oily), stress

Clary sage blends with: bergamot, black pepper, cedarwood, citronella, cypress, frankincense, geranium, grapefruit, jasmine, juniper, lavender, lemon, lime, orange, Roman chamomile, sandalwood, tea tree, ylang ylang.



Body, Mind and Spirit Connections: It benefits the physical and psychological aspects of a person. It relaxes us and calms the mind.

Certain essential oils are known as "phyto-hormones." They mimic some aspects of the activity of human hormones. The skin is affected by hormone activity. Clary sage can be used as a balancer for hormone activity. It is beneficial for oily skin and acne. Hormones are produced by the endocrine glands including the pituitary, thymus, thyroid, parathyroid, adrenal cortex, testes, ovaries and

pancreas. According to S. Clarke's (2002) *Essential Chemistry for Safe Aromatherapy*, London UK "has structural similarities to human steroid hormones and may have a balancing effect on the endocrine system."

Clary sage is multi-purposed when diffused. It stimulates and brings back into balance exhausted adrenal glands. It reduces inflammation in the lungs. It ameliorates the effects of hot flashes while stimulating the thyroid.

Contraindications and Precautions: Clary sage is very sedative. Avoid using clary sage during pregnancy and lactation. It has hormone like properties. It is contraindicated if there is a history of low blood pressure or epilepsy. Avoid using clary sage before driving a car or consuming alcohol. Large doses of clary sage may produce headaches.

Essential Oil Recipes:

Encouraging creative thinking

Diffuse clary sage to stimulate mental processes.

Relieving nervous exhaustion

5 drops clary sage

Add 5 drops to the evening bath to relax after a long day of intensive thought. The mixture can be enhanced with 2 drops of rose essential oil.

Sensual massage

4 drops ylang ylang

3 drops clary sage

1 oz. of your favorite massage lotion (unscented) or 1 oz. jojoba oil.

The aphrodisiac properties can help to stimulate sensual feelings. Blend ylang ylang and clary sage in the lotion/massage oil.

Lifting depression/anxiety/panic attack

6 drops clary sage

1 tablespoon massage oil

Mix together and massage into solar plexus area (stomach area) to uplift and inspire.

Stressless Massage oil blend

8 drops lavender

4 drops geranium

2 drops clary sage

2 drops spruce

2 oz. almond oil or your favorite unscented massage oil

Add the essential oils to the massage oil. Apply to the body.

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
- *Aromatherapy for the Beauty Therapist* by Valerie Ann Worwood
- *Natural Healing with Aromatherapy* by Dr. Gisela Bulla
- *The Chemistry of Essential Oils Made Simple* by Dr. David Stewart
- *Australasian College of Herbal Studies: Lesson Manual*
- *The Directory of Essential Oils* by Wanda Sellar
- *Guide to Aromatherapy* by Susanne Blake
- *Aromatherapy for Bodyworkers* by Jade Shutes and Christina Weaver
- *The Aromatherapy Book* by Jeanne Rose
- *The Encyclopedia of Aromatherapy* by Chrissie Wildwood

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.

