

Essential Oil of the Month: Neroli

-By. Kathy Padecky, Aromatherapist, HHP

Neroli

Botanical Name: Citrus aurantium or Citrus bigaradia

Common name: Neroli or orange blossom

Why I love Neroli: It is one of the most hauntingly beautiful aromas used in aromatherapy applications. I will share my story regarding neroli. I grew up in South Florida. The most abundant fruit is orange. My mom with my



brother and me always attended the 7:00 A.M. mass Sunday morning. We always sat in the last pew. Many of the people who stayed out late Saturday night sat near

us. The aromas we smelled were a wide variety of alcoholic concoctions. They tried to mask their alcoholic breath with orange toilet water. When I first smelled neroli, it brought back the cellular memory of being in church smelling the orange mixed with the different scents of alcohol. I avoided neroli for years. It has taken years to heal the traumas of my childhood. As I write this newsletter, I find the aroma of neroli pleasant, soothing, breathtaking and one of my favorite essential oils.

Aroma, scent and color: The orange plant is unique in that it provides three essential oils from different parts of the plant. Neroli is derived from the flowers of a bitter orange. Petitgrain essential oil is derived from the leaves and twigs of the orange blossom. We get orange essential oil from the peel.

The fragrance of neroli is complex, slightly sweet and floral. The oil has a light orange color. This joyful fragrance lingers long after one has inhaled it.

Native to and history: It was first cultivated in the Mediterranean region by the Arab conquerors in the 10th and 11th centuries. It was introduced to the New World to the West Indies, North, Central and South America. It was first distilled in 1563 by an Italian naturalist Della Porta. It is native to France, Morocco, Portugal and Italy. The best reported neroli comes from Citrus vulgaris known as Neroli Bigarade. Citrus aurantium, sweet orange is known as neroli of Portugal. Some suppliers make neroli from the lemon and mandarin blossoms.

The name neroli originates from an Italian princess, Anne-Marie, Countess of Neroli who introduced the fragrance to Maria do la Tremoille of France. She perfumed her bath water and gloves with this essence. Orange flower petals symbolize innocence and securing love. The orange flower petals were used in China for cosmetics. In Victorian times, the main ingredient in eau de cologne was neroli along with lavender, bergamot, lemon and rosemary. This eau de cologne was considered a general tonic for the nervous system. Orange flowered water is used in Eastern European dishes.

Chemistry: The chemistry of neroli varies considerably depending on whether it is steam distilled or an absolute (using a solvent). I avoid using an absolute so this section deals with the steam distilled or cold pressed chemistry. Neroli is a complex and pleasing mix of chemical compounds. Neroli has five known types (85-95%) of monoterpenes. Monoterpenes are volatile and absorb quickly into the bloodstream and have the quickest physiological effect on the body. They are immune stimulating, antiseptic, and a tonic. They are beneficial due to their mildness and safety. Neroli contains seven known types of (3-10%) aldehydes. Aldehydes are sedative and antimicrobial. They may be irritating in large amounts. Neroli contains two known types of tetraterpenes (4-8%). The tetraterpenes are basically pigments found in most and possibly all plants. In neroli they are antiseptic, volatile, immune stimulating and oxygenating. They give it the yellowish orange color. Neroli has six known types (3-7%) of esters. Esters are antispasmodic, sedative,

adaptogenic and anti-inflammatory. Neroli has five known types of furanocoumarins (2-6%). Furanocoumarins have traits that are calming, anti-microbial, skin healing as well as a tonic. Neroli contains four known alcohols (1-4%). Alcohols and they are anti-inflammatory, anti-microbial, antispasmodic, support the immune system and sedative. They are calming to the body. Neroli has three known types of coumarins (1-3%). Coumarins are calming, anti-microbial, skin healing as well as a tonic. They may be phototoxic so cover areas when in sunlight. Neroli contains three known sesquiterpenes (1-2%). Sesquiterpenes are anti-inflammatory, sedative and immune supportive. They are analgesic and calming to the body.

Part of the plant: This plant grows up to 32 feet tall. It produces a small white, waxy flower from the bitter orange tree known as the sour or Seville orange tree.

Neroli may help the body recover from the following: acne, ageing, anxiety before any stressful event, bacteria infections, broken capillaries, colitis, depression, diarrhea, dry skin, eczema, emotional stress, exhaustion, heartache, hemorrhoids, high blood pressure (reduce), hysteria, inflamed skin, insomnia, irritable bowel syndrome, mature skin, menopause, muscle spasms, neuralgia (nerve pain), panic attacks, PMS, circulation, shock, sexual fidgety, stretch marks, tachycardia, thread vein, wrinkles

Neroli blends with: bergamot, cedarwood, coriander, frankincense, geranium, grapefruit, jasmine, juniper, lavender, lemon, lime, mandarin, orange, palmarosa, petitgrain, Roman chamomile, rose, rosemary, rosewood, sandalwood, ylang ylang

Contraindications and Precautions: Avoid around those who have with epilepsy or are pregnant. Avoid sun exposure or tanning booths for 24 hours. This essential oil is phototoxic.

Body, Mind and Spirit: Neroli has a profound effect on regeneration of skin cells (cytophylactic) and improved skin elasticity. It is beneficial for dry, sensitive, mature skin, thread veins, or stretch marks. It is reported to protect the skin during X-Ray treatments.

It has a wonderful quality of relaxing the body and soothing the nerves especially for those in shock or after a traumatic event. Research entitled *Evidence of the sedative effects of neroli oil, citronellal and phenylethyl acetate on mice states* by W. Jager, G. Buchbauer, L. Jirovetz, et al, works to assist people dealing with fear, anxiety and gives them strength to deal with the crisis. Examples are fear of flying, exam fears and anxiety before or after surgery.

Peter Holmes, a well known aromatherapist in his article *The lightness of being*, written in the 1995 issue of

International Journal of Aromatherapy, states neroli nourishes the heart, calms the spirit and relieves anxiety. It is cooling in nature relaxes the nerves and uplifts an individual. It benefits the liver, spleen and pancreas. It is comforting to a person with repressed emotions, or is in despair. This oil stimulates the brain waves to relax the body.

Neroli is easily adulterated, diluted with lesser oils, or completely synthetic from a laboratory. It takes one ton of orange blossoms to make one quart of neroli oil. It is very expensive. Other essential oils easily adulterated with synthetics are bergamot, frankincense, jasmine, melissa (lemon balm), myrrh, rose and sandalwood. Probably any essential oil can be synthesized.

In *Subtle Aromatherapy* by Patricia Davis writes neroli brings one closer to nature and to their Higher Self or soul. Also, rose and neroli are two essences benefiting a newborn. It eases the shock of birth trauma or entering the physical world.

In the 1990's, some patients at the Middlesex Hospital, post-cardiac surgery, intensive therapy unit were given 20 minute foot massages with and without neroli. A patient on the day of the neroli foot massage showed significant physiological benefit to their respiratory rate. After five days, there was a noticeable reduction of anxiety compared with the control group using a bland massage vegetable oil (Stevenson 1994).



Essential Oil Recipes:

Sleep enhancer

- Inhale neroli to induce sleep

Relaxing bath

- 3-4 drops of neroli
- Add to your bath water after you enter the bath tub.

Uplifting massage formula

- 8 drops neroli
- 4 drops petitgrain
- 3 drops orange
- 1 oz. carrier oil

- Blend all ingredients together in your favorite carrier oil to relax and rejuvenate.

Massage blend to relieve stress and tension

- 8 drops neroli
- 7 drops geranium
- 4 drops coriander
- 1 oz. of your favorite carrier oil
- Blend all ingredients together in your favorite carrier oil to relieve tension and stress.

Did You Know: Traditionally orange blossoms are weaved into bridal wreaths? The main ingredient in the popular perfume *Poison*© is neroli. Prostitutes in Madrid used orange blossoms to lure their customers.

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.