

## Oils hyped by numerous aromatherapy suppliers.

**This is of particular relevance in the USA where laws on therapeutic claims and consumer safety issues of essential oils are rarely enforced.**

It would be beyond my means to name all of the suppliers involved as there are so many. However, if you see a lot of the oils below on their web sites, **along with medicinal claims**, beware of that supplier.

Below is a sample of a huge list of oils that are sold because therapists and the public have fallen into the trap of believing what oil suppliers and some aromatherapy teachers tell them. The main problems are:

1. 95% of aromatherapy courses and authors have never educated people on the significant **differences** between herbal medicines used internally, and the same plants essential oil used externally. Many in aromatherapy are misled into believing these oils work for the same conditions as herbal medicines.
2. Suppliers are constantly trying to keep a high profile by offering 'new' oils without knowing if they are safe, or more effective than existing oils. They will find a few pieces of academic scientific investigations and start plugging the oil to make sales. They will tell you "xxxxx author or course provider says it is wonderful" to get themselves off the hook without really having a clue about its use or safety.
3. **Many of these oils have no history of use in traditional medicine. Most were written about by aromatherapy authors because the perfume or food trade uses or used them.** That is misleading and fraught with dangers (see 5.) If an oil is used in fragrance production in small volumes it may be safe, **that does not mean that its use in aromatherapy on the skin, or internally, is also safe.**
4. It is crazy to base effectiveness or safe uses of essential oils based on aromatherapy urban rumours. That is the basis on which most of the uses of these novel oils are promoted. "Well my customers have used it for years and say it works". You will hear that frequently and it is just a technique used to sell novel oils. **Facebook blogs are the worst for these urban rumours becoming accepted as reality.**
5. Many oils have been produced for use in the food flavouring and fragrance trades. You should always remember that these trades usually only use **minute volumes** of oils in products, often as low as a few parts per million. Therefore, an oil that has GRAS status for use in food, may not be safe when used at the far higher volumes used in aromatherapy massage, or in some home produced cosmetics.

**The following comments apply only to skin application or internal use. The sale of many of these oils for non skin contact fragrances may be fine. What I have a problem with is:**

1. Aromatherapy suppliers and 'names' who make therapeutic claims with no real evidence.
2. Those who mislead about the activity of these oils with claims based on herbal medicine.
3. Claims based on academic research where the safety on humans has not yet been assessed.
4. Medicinal use claims based only on the major chemicals in the oil.
5. No warnings given on oils that are well recorded as being hazardous.
6. No warnings given on oils where safety is not known.

Do not interpret "safety unknown" as meaning anything other than what it says. It means that the oil has not (as far as I can ascertain) undergone formal safety assessment and therefore no one

knows if it is safe or not. Some judge safety based on the major chemicals in the oil, that is fundamentally flawed because minor components can cause allergic reactions. What chemistry is useful for is to assess **the potential shelf life** of essential oils due to chemicals that are known to degrade quickly in the presence of oxygen such as the pinenes, d-limonene, linalool, etc.

**The list below is not complete and never will be due to "new" oils constantly being introduced by small 'artisan' producers and aromatherapy suppliers. Note the large essential oil traders rarely use such oils because their big cosmetics and flavour trade customers will not use essential oils on which safety is unknown.**

**Alligator Juniper Wood**, Juniperus deppeana. **Safety unknown.** Hugely variable in composition depending on sub species and habitat. For example, a-pinene can be 5% up to 22% with huge variability in the other components. Therefore the reliability of any therapeutic claims is questionable.

**Aloe Wood:** A perfume and incense product - oil not used in traditional medicine - trees all endangered species.

**Amyris:** No traditional medicine use of this oil - trees all endangered.

**Angelica Root:** The oil was always produced for the fragrance trade - when introduced into aromatherapy, most attributes were based on traditional herbal use.

**Balsamita Carvone:** No idea on the oil and I doubt anyone really has!

**Balsam Peru Oil:** This oil is a known sensitising agent and sellers should give a warning.

**Balsam Poplar Oil**, Populus balsamifera: **No skin safety testing.**

**Basil Grand----Basil Bush----Basil Camphor----Basil Eugenol----Basil Thymol:**

All these have **No skin safety testing** - massive differences in chemical composition compared to the known tested Basil oils. Declared therapeutic differences are just guesswork based on the major chemicals, a very faulty concept.

**Blue Lotus absolute:** **No known safety data** - no traditional use of the essential oil.

**Blue Tansy**, Tanacetum annuum: **No known safety data** - no traditional use of the essential oil. No traditional use of the herb. The therapeutics are speculation and invention. You will find this stuff being sold by hundreds of suppliers yet none of them know its real safety or efficacy. You will also see some who confuse it with Tanacetum vulgare which is an extremely toxic oil. **BEWARE!!!** [See below.](#)

**Boronia:** **No skin safety testing** - don't know about traditional use.

**Buddha Wood**, Eremophila Mitchellii: **No known safety data.** Sold by numerous suppliers with therapeutic claims for which there is no basis. This oil contains some unusual chemicals about which little if anything is known. That can be good or bad, but if the oil is not tested for safety nobody knows!!

**Buplevre:** **No skin safety testing**- don't know about traditional use.

**Bupleurum**, Bupleurum fruticosum: **No safety testing.** This oil does have some research on its potential therapeutic uses. However, its chemical composition is hugely variable and thus only research based on the actual source of oil used is valid. Oil from another location may be completely different.

**Cassie:** A Perfume absolute - never used in traditional medicine.

**Calamus:** Primary use as a chemical conversion starter material - the only use of the oil is modern; 100% based on extrapolations from the herb use - **a dangerous oil.**

**Calamint Lessor:** **No skin safety testing.** Extensive traditional use of the herb; the oil may have uses but we do not know the safety factors.

**Calamint Common:** (ditto)

**Calendula (Marigold):** **No skin safety testing:** No such essential oil is recognised by the big essential oil traders or data resources - it is a fragrance trade absolute which has no traditional use as a medicine - all claimed therapeutics are based on use as herbal medicine.

**Calophyllum:** **No known safety data** - no traditional use of the essential oil.

**Cape Chamomile, Eriocephalus Punctulatus.** **No known safety data.** Most therapeutics seem to be based on the fact this oil contains azulene and it is **assumed** to be similar to german chamomile, yet the main chemical does not even occur in german chamomile!!

**Cedarwood Himalayan:** **No known safety data,** probably OK, but trees are being over exploited and as a result causing flooding down stream from the mountains.

**Celery Plant:** This oil was produced for food trade use only. Only traditional use is the seed or its water or alcohol extracts in herbal medicine.

**Chamomile Moroccan:** **No known safety data** - only introduced to AT as a cheap substitute for german chamomile - chemistry is complex and contains unknown chemicals with unknown action - Moroccan traditional medicine does not list the oil.

**Chervil:** This oil was produced for food trade use only.

**Cinnamon Bark Essential Oil:** This oil is mentioned here because you will come across suppliers selling it with no warnings about how dangerous it is. You will also find stupid and dangerous claims such as "Great for digestion" along with several other medicinal claims most of which are based on the internal use of cinnamon bark or bark powder.

**Cistus:** Only the absolute has been tested - not used in traditional medicine.

**Cistus CT:** (Ditto).

**Coco absolute:** **No known safety data** on skin sensitisation.

**Coffee absolute:** **No known safety data** on skin sensitisation.

**Combava:** Another citrus oil.

**Combava Petitgrain** Another type of Petitgrain.

**Nettle and Copaiba, Codistilled Oil.** **No known safety data** on skin sensitisation. Since we know stinging nettles contain extremely complex chemistry, this means any oils yielded should be properly tested.

**Cyperus Round:** **No known safety data** - no traditional use of the essential oil.

Cyperus Nagar Matha: (ditto)

**Cypress Arizona:** **No known safety data** - no traditional use of the essential oil.

**Cypress Wood:** (ditto)

**Davana:** Extensive use of the herb - no traditional use of the essential oil.

**Elderflower absolute or CO2 extract: No known safety data** - no traditional use of these extracts.

**Eucalyptus, rosrata: No known safety data.**

**Eucalyptus, campanulata: No known safety data** - very different to globulus which is known.

**Eucalyptus, masala (camaldulensis): No known safety data.**

**Eucalyptus, dives: No known safety data** - very different to globulus which is known.

**Eucalyptus, polybractea - Cineole:** Similar to globulus safety of which is known.

**Eucalyptus, polybractea - Cryptone: No known safety data - safety of cryptone suspect.**

**Eucalyptus, radiata:** Similar to globulus safety of which is known.

**Eucalyptus, smithii: No known safety data.**

**Eucalyptus, staigeriana: No known safety data** - very different to globulus which is known.

For several of the above you will come across claims such as "antiviral" and even "Diuretic" etc. These claims are without any foundation, but people really believe them.

**Fleabane Common: No known safety data** - no traditional use of the essential oil.

**Fingerroot, Boesenbergia pandurata: No known safety data.** Any health claims are inventions.

**Fir - Corkbark, Abies lasiocarpa var. arizonica:** Any supplier who tells you such an oil can keep for 3 years cares nothing about their customers health and safety. All oils that are very high in a&b pinenes are capable of degrading in a matter of 6 months (depending on storage).

**Fragonia, Agonis fragrans: No known safety data.** No traditional use of the oil. Therapeutics 100% invented based on the oils composition. You will see a lot of hype over this oil.

**Ghandi Root, Sugandh mantri: No known safety data.** Therapeutic uses seem to be all based on the traditional use of the root as herbal preparations. The essential oil was NOT used.

**Garlic:** This oil was produced for food trade use only - crazy to use it in aromatherapy - **a known allergen.**

**Galanga Large:** This oil was produced for food trade use only. **Galanga Lessor:** (ditto)

**Gingergrass: No known safety data.** - no traditional use of the essential oil.

**Ginger Lilly, Kapur Kachari, Hedychium spicatum: No known safety data.** There are several varieties of Hedychium giving variable essential oil compositions. Most claimed effects seen on aromatherapy sites are taken from the traditional use of the root or alcoholic extracts, NOT the essential oil. The oil has been tested for antimicrobial activity but other safety tested oils give better results.

**Goldenrod, Solidago canadensis: No known safety data.** Therapeutic claims are nearly all based on the traditional use of the herb, NOT the essential oil.

**Gotu Kola: No known safety data.** No idea as an essential oil is not produced commercially. All info probably based on the herbal use or the macerated oil which is available.

**Greenland Moss-Labrador Tea, Ledum groenlandicum: No known safety data.** The therapeutic use claims made are dangerous and preposterous such as; "viral hepatitis, enteritis, toxemic nephritis, microbial nephritis and infectious prostatitis". I know of no validated research proving this and in any case it would have to be via internal use and not the external use of the oil. From my research it would seem once again we are looking at therapeutic use claims based on the traditional use of the herb rather than the essential oil.

**Grindelia, Grindelia squarrosa: No known safety data.** Therapeutics 100% invented based on the oils composition or traditional herbal use. High in a-pinene and d-limonene and therefore a 3-4

year shelf life (as some suppliers declare) is most unlikely unless they have added antioxidants.

**Guava Leaf, *Psidium guajava*: No known safety data.** Therapeutics 100% invented. Claims on a long shelf life are not reliable as this oil contains a lot of d-limonene known to degrade into skin sensitising agents.

**Helichrysum varieties:** This species is enormously variable in chemical composition depending on geographical location and variety. The safety of *H. angustifolia* is known, the other varieties it is not known and will vary with each variety.

**Khelkla - Ammi Seeds: No known safety data.** No traditional medicine use of this oil - mainly used as a herbal drink. Contains a lot of linalool which may degrade giving a short safe shelf life.

**Kunzea, *Kunzea ambigua*: No known safety data.** No traditional medicine use of this oil. Most claimed therapeutic uses seem to be from a French doctor well known for inventing the use of essential oils. Oil contains a lot of  $\alpha$ -pinene which degrades into sensitising agents making a claimed shelf life of 4-5 years improbable.

**Lanyana: No known safety data.** - traditional medicine use, no idea.

**Larch-Tamarack, *Larix laricina*: Safety data is vague.** Delta-3-carene has been implicated by some dermatologists as being the sensitising agent and there is a lot in this oil. It also has a fair amount of  $\alpha$ -pinene which degrades into skin sensitising agents.

**Lentisque Essential Oil, *Pistacia Lentiscus*:** The absolute has been tested and sensitisation on some people was produced, but **the essential oil is safety not known.**

**Lilac CO2 Extract, *Syringa vulgaris*: No known safety data.** Therapeutic uses unknown.

**Linaloe Berry, *Bursera delpechiana*: Safety data is limited**-rare reported cases of skin problems. Oil is variable in composition with some sources finding high levels of linalool which is known to degrade into skin sensitising agents. Therefore shelf life is limited. No sound therapeutic use information.

**Hemp Seed:** Only a fixed oil is recognised - any distilled oil is **100% safety unknown.**

**Inula graveolens: No known safety data** even though this oil is used by a lot of aromatherapists. The experience of aromatherapists and suppliers can in no way be considered an accurate monitor of any side effects of an essential oil. There is no centralised reporting system in place and suppliers cannot be trusted to report adverse reactions reported to them. Some samples of this oil contain a lot of p-cymene which is an acknowledged skin sensitiser.

Although there is a little research on the antimicrobial activity of this oil, most claimed therapeutic uses are based either on the traditional uses for the herb, or are inventions based on its individual components such as Borneol. In addition, the herb is subject to huge fluctuations in its composition depending on where it is grown.

**Jatamansi, *Nardostachys Jatamansi* (also known as green Spikenard): Safety on the skin is vague** as no authoritative testing seems to have been published. The **herb** has been widely used in Ayurveda, and the oil used in perfumery, but its use in aromatherapy seems to be based on traditional use of the herb.

**Juniper-Dwarf, *Juniperus communis var. nana*:**

**Juniper-Rocky Mountain, *Juniperus scopulorum*:** High in sabinene. Beware of medicinal claims you will come across for these oils such as "detoxifier, supports the kidneys, lymph and respiratory systems". External use will not achieve these claimed effects and **internal use would be very dangerous.**

**Mastic, Pistacia lentiscus: Safety on the skin is vague.** The absolute is known to cause skin reactions. Some samples are high in a-pinene which may limit shelf life. This tree produces two essential oils, the leaf and the fruit. Both oils differ markedly in chemical composition. Therefore it is vital to know which oil is being purchased. These distilled oils were not used in traditional medicine.

**Monarda Fistulosa: No formal skin safety data.** Traditional use was the herbal extracts. So if you see claims such as "Powerful anti-viral and anti infectious. Liver/gall bladder supporter", they are not the properties of the essential oil.

**Muhuhu - African Sandalwood, Brachyleana hutchinsii: No known safety data.** Composition is nothing like real sandalwood oils. This oil is typical of one of those where academic studies has found antimicrobial effects, yet no studies published on its safe use on the skin. The primary traditional use for this tree was for wood products.

**Neem, Azadirachta Indica: Safety on the skin is vague.** Although this herb and the fixed oil have been widely used in India, the essential oil was not. That was primarily used as an insecticide. Most therapeutic claims are based on the use of the herb or fixed oil.

**Opopanax - Sweet Myrrh, Commiphora guidotti: A safety warning should be given on this oil** because some people have shown sensitisation reactions. Its use in cosmetics is restricted to less than 1%.

**Palo Santo - Holy Wood, Bursera graveolens: No known safety data.** The vast majority of therapeutic use claims are taken from the traditional use of herbal extracts NOT the essential oil. Some samples contain a lot of d-limonene making this oil an easy target for adulteration. High d-limonene may reduce any safe shelf to less than a year.

**Plai, Zingiber cassumunar:** Only the toxicity is known, **no skin safety testing** results published. Most therapeutic use information seems to be gleaned from tests done on alcoholic or methanol extracts, or on the use of the oil in a cream base. Therefore, be wary of therapeutic claims on suppliers web sites for the oil.

**Rabbitbrush, Ericameria nauseosa: No known safety data.** Some samples contain a lot of d-limonene making this oil an easy target for adulteration. High d-limonene may reduce any safe shelf to less than a year. Any therapeutic use claims are speculation or invention.

**Ravintsara** sometimes called Ho leaf, Cinnamomum camphora: A vast amount of hype and misinformation surrounds this oil. To call it Ho leaf is not correct because the oil declared to be 'Ravintsara' is high in 1,8-cineole and true Ho leaf is nearly all linalool. As with several similar oils, the therapeutic uses were "made in France" by certain authors who invented therapeutic uses based on an extremely faulty knowledge of the true chemistry of essential oils.

**Rhododendron, Rhododendron Anthopogon: No known safety data.** Beware of any medicinal claims. There is no known traditional use of this oil. The a+b pinenes are high and therefore care with storage times is necessary. University studies - like with many oils - have shown medicinal activity in-vitro but without safety data its use on humans is unwise.

**Rosemary verbenone, chemotype: No known safety data,** and differs so much from the cineole variety that no guesses should be made. The chemical verbenone is available as a synthetic additive and trade sources claim it has been used by certain oil trade middlemen to 'create' this oil. Beware of all therapeutic use claims, most are those of ordinary rosemary or are complete fabrications originating from one or two French therapists.

**Rosalina, Melaleuca ericifolia: No known safety data.** Claimed traditional use is not correct because Australian natives never used distillation, this is a marketing ploy used by numerous suppliers.

**Samphire** Essential Oil, *Cristhmum Maritimum*: **No known safety data**. p-cymene can be rather high in this oil which makes it a potential sensitiser.

**Sandalwood Australian**: **Safety on the skin is vague**, animal tests done by Scantox on behalf of Mt Romance in Australia indicate low toxicity. Oil is extracted from wild trees which are \*not being replaced in the wild\*.

**Saro**, *Cinnamosma fragrans*: **No known safety data**. Therapeutic claims seem to be traditional uses of the herb, NOT the oil.

**Snakeweed**, *Gutierrezia arizonica*: **No known safety data**. No known therapeutic use data. Oil composition likely to be highly variable due to the numerous sub varieties used.

**St. John's Wort Essential Oil**, *Hypericum perforatum*: **No known safety data**. The herb is a known photosensitiser making the need for proper skin safety testing of the essential oil vital. All therapeutic use data likely to be drawn from the extensive traditional uses of the infused oil and herbal extract. The essential oil was NEVER used in traditional medicine. Yet another oil that was an experimental distillation and then half the worlds suppliers jump on the band wagon without any knowledge on uses or safety.

**Sugandha Kokila**, *Cinnamomum glaucescens*: **No known safety data**. Contains lot of methyl cinnamate which puts question marks over its skin safety. No known therapeutic use data. If someone is allergic to cinnamon, or balsams such as Peru balsam they should not touch this oil.

**Tagetes** - Marigold Essential Oil, *Tagetes minuta*: **A known photosensitiser and sensitiser**. However you will find it being sold with no warnings. Most of the therapeutic claims are once again based on the traditional use of a herbal extract, NOT the essential oil about which little is known.

**Tamala**, *Cinnamomum tamala*: **No known safety data**. The oil is high in linalool which is known to degrade into sensitising agents and that can happen rapidly, see old lavender. Therefore anyone who claims a shelf life of 4 years does not give a hoot about your health.

**Thyme chemotypes** other than the thymol type: The chemical composition of most of these chemotypes is so different to the thymol type (the safety of which is known), that these chemotypes should be considered **as safety unknown**.

**Trinity blend**: This blended oil contains sagebrush (*Artemisia tridentata*) on which there is **no known safety data**. It also contains a lot of a-pinene which is know to decay into sensitising agents. Therefore do not believe any web site who claim this oil lasts 3-4 years.

**Verbena (Lemon)** - *Lippia citriodora*: Safety well recorded and so dangerous **it is banned in cosmetic products**. Most therapeutics on web sites are based on the traditional use of the herb, NOT the oil.

**Vitex agnus castus** - Leaf and Berry oils: **No safety data** on either essential oil. Great concerns over possible side effects on the female hormone system. No sound clinical studies on its safety or therapeutic uses have been published to date. An oil which has been promoted purely on the basis of urban rumour and on the acknowledged actions as a herbal medicine. Certainly an oil to be treated with the utmost caution, if it were up to me I would ban its use as a human medicine until adequate studies have been conducted.

**Xanthoxylum** - *Xanthoxylum armatum*: **No known safety data**. Traditional therapeutics based only on herbal extracts NOT the essential oil.

**Wild Tansy Oil** - *Tanacetum vulgare*: **An extremely toxic oil** which no reputable aromatherapy association would permit members to use. The chemistry is hugely variable making any

therapeutic uses unreliable. Most seen on web sites is 100 percent based on the past uses of the herbal extract NOT the oil. **Ignore statements such as** "A premier oil for immune system. Known to fight the flu, cold and infections".

**White Ginger Lily Absolute** Hedychium coronarium: **No known safety data.** Do some simple arithmetic on GLC/MS analysis you will find on websites. I have found analysis of this absolute which only gives 66 percent of the components. In such a case the question has to be posed "well what is the rest of it made of", could it be just bulked out with fixed oil, fragrance chemicals, or a cheap analysis which has failed to identify all of the components in the oil? It is common to find 5 percent unidentified, but 35 percent is peculiar. **No confirmed therapeutic data.**

**White Sage Oil** Salvia apiana: **No known safety data.** Although this oil contains around 70 percent of 1,8-cineol, there are 30 percent of other constituents including the pine's which are known to decay into sensitising agents.

**Yarrow oil** - Achillea millefolium: **No known safety data.** Not an essential oil ever used in traditional medicine. It only came into aromatherapy as a cheaper substitute for german chamomile. Most of the claimed therapeutic uses you will see on the Internet are taken from the traditional use of the **herbal extract** given internally.

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