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**Menopause, Andropause And Other Hormone Imbalances**  
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**Sandalwood Oil: The Rescue Of Sandalwood**

**By Darryl Walters**

Indian Sandalwood (*Santalum album*) is on the verge of extinction. Only the heartwood and roots of

a mature tree produce the aromatic oil, which in some countries is considered to be more precious than gold. Sandalwood is one of the most recognized scents on earth. It has been used in wood carvings, temple decorations, incense, perfumes, soaps, food, and skin care and as an essential oil for 4,000 years. Asian and Sanskrit manuscripts describe sandalwood to be sacred. In temples, sandalwood was used as a ritual oil to bless congregations, and to achieve higher consciousness in meditation.

Sandalwood is known to be an extremely powerful anti-septic. It has many therapeutic qualities that include being: antidepressant, antiseptic, antiphlogistic, antispasmodic, aphrodisiac, astringent, bactericidal, carminative, cicatrizant, diuretic, expectorant, insecticidal, sedative, and tonic.

Sandalwood can be beneficial in the treatment and prevention of dry, cracked and chapped skin as well as: acne, greasy skin, bronchitis, catarrh, coughs, laryngitis, sore throat, diarrhea, nausea, depression, insomnia, nervous tension, and stress-related complaints. It is used as a pharmaceutical disinfectant and as fragrance in: soap, detergents, cosmetics, perfumes, aftershaves, incense, and is sometimes employed as a flavor ingredient in major food categories, including soft and alcoholic drinks.

The main constituents of sandalwood are: about 90 per cent santalols, 6 per cent sesquiterpene hydrocarbons, santene, teresantol, borneol, santalone, tri-cyclo-ekasantalal and other lesser constituents. Scientists have found sandalwood to be non-toxic, non-irritant and non-sensitizing when used topically.

The therapeutic qualities of sandalwood are indispensable in the treatment of a variety of skin ailments. Major perfume companies and skin care lines would be lost without sandalwood because it is added to almost every universally known fragrance. Consider the fragrance Joy by Patou (one of the most, if not the most expensive women's fragrances known to man), Dior's fragrance Diorissimo, Chloe by Lagerfeld, or Samsara by Guerlain: they all use sandalwood as a base note to add texture and depth to the perfumes. It is also used as a balancer and toner for sensitive skin in most top-of-the-line cosmetics.

## Sandalwood Oil: The Rescue Of Sandalwood

Sandalwood is used so incisively and globally in so many varieties of products that it has become an endangered species. It is now under the protection of the Indian Government. It is against the law in India to cut down a sandalwood tree until it has reached a mature age of at least 30 years old; however, the laws have neither stopped nor slowed poachers. The best oil is produced from trees that have matured and are in the age group of 50–60 years, yet because of such high demands sandalwood has become an endangered species. *Santalum album* is so rare it has become closely guarded in the providence where the trees grow. Somehow poachers are finding a way to export this plant out of east India to the Middle East where it is considered to be "liquid gold" due to such high prices, and to the rest of the world. Sandalwood in the black market is a hot commodity and big money.

Mysore, India is known worldwide as "Sandalwood City". In 1792 the Sultan of Mysore declared sandalwood to be a royal tree and since then the city of Mysore has revolved around sandalwood,

manufacturing wood carvings, incense and essential oils. In Mysore, sandalwood is respected by the local populace because it is the only major source of income and is protected by the government. If a land owner in Mysore has sandalwood trees on his property, he does not own the tree: it belongs to the government and can not be cut down. They wait for the tree to mature to proper age before harvesting; however, the demands of sandalwood have grown in recent years, the supply has diminished, and the price has sky rocketed.

Other countries such as Australia and Thailand have tried to help relinquish the burden by growing the trees. However the chemo–types of sandalwood from these other regions are not as therapeutic or as aromatic as the trees from east India. The Indian government has passed laws that control the rate in which the trees are harvested. Distilleries that conduct business legally have limited the production of sandalwood to help the deforestation of the trees recover from years of abuse; however, there are companies that buy sandalwood on the black market and continue to keep sandalwood on the endangered species list.

In India the government is trying to find a solution to the illegal exportation of sandalwood, but they act slowly for fear that implementing harsher exportation laws will result in growth of the black market and poaching of sandalwood. As a consumer you can help by knowing that the company you are purchasing essential oil or sandalwood products from is a reputable company and purchases sandalwood from regions in east India such as Mysore that protect the trees. Purchasing Sandalwood from sources where it is properly harvested supports the reforestation efforts of Mysore and other regions that protect the future of this species, and gives them greater financial resources to combat and reduce the damage caused by black market demand and illegal exportation.

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## **Sandalwood Oil – Aromatherapy For The Mind, Body, And Spirit**

**By "Misty Rae Cech, ND"**

Sandalwood is one of the world's most widely used essential oils, prized for its scent in perfumery, for its therapeutic effects in Chinese, Ayurvedic and Tibetan medicine systems, and for its ability to center the mind in meditative yogic traditions.

Sandalwood essential oil is most often extracted via steam distillation from the wood of the Sandalwood tree, with the heartwood of the roots producing the highest quality oil. Sandalwood is an evergreen, growing to a height of 9 meters, with leathery leaves and small purple flowers. Native to southern tropical Asia, the tree is parasitic, gaining its nutrients from one of several other tree species. Because it can only be grown this way, and due to its seemingly strict set of environmental conditions, Sandalwood is difficult to propagate. To add to the challenge of successful cultivation, Sandalwood takes nearly 30 years to mature before yielding oil of any worth.

Sandalwood essential oil has a woody, balsamic, sweet and slightly musky aroma; it is a pale yellow, greenish or brownish liquid with excellent tenacity (the aroma tends to last a long time) and superior fixative properties. There are several varieties available, with *Santalum album* is considered the most important therapeutically. The Mysore region of eastern India is thought to produce the highest quality of this oil type, though its harvesting is creating a strain on the area's natural environment. Recently, an oil of the *austrocaledonia* species has been produced on the South Pacific island of Vanuatu from successfully cultivated Sandalwood trees. This oil has a fantastic aroma, with a woody, smoky scent that can remind one of being at the beach – an excellent base note in perfume and cosmetic blends.

In the West, Sandalwood oil is perhaps best known in the west as a natural, woody, sweet body perfume used 'as is', or as a familiar aroma in many cosmetics, aftershaves and the like. In the east, however, Sandalwood's importance in cultural and spiritual traditions cannot be overstated. The wood is carved into furniture, religious icons, used to build temples and burned as incense in a great variety of ceremonies. The oil is used to anoint the dead, helping their transition to the next life. In Burma, women sprinkle it on passersby on the last day of the year for the release of sins. In Hindu marriages, Sandalwood is burned in a tent such that the smoke surrounds the bridal couple. For the meditative yogi, the oil and incense encourage a serene state of mind, supporting alignment of the individual with the universal Self.

In the traditional Indian medicine system of Ayurveda, Sandalwood is valued for its ability to cool the fire of pitta. It is indicated for inflammatory conditions, such as inflamed skin, or intestinal and genitor–urinary conditions that require cooling. Modern aromatherapy considers the oil an effective skin care agent for dry skin, general irritation and acne; it can help in cases of bronchitis, catarrh, dry persistent coughs, laryngitis and sore throat; it may relieve diarrhea and nausea, and can be supportive in cases of cystitis.

## Sandalwood Oil: The Rescue Of Sandalwood

Beyond the physical body, Sandalwood essential oil is a great tonic for the hyper-active mind. In practical terms, the oil is considered an anti-depressant through its ability to relieve hot, agitated emotional states, and to assist in release from over-thinking and worry. More esoterically, the aroma is considered 'divinely sweet' and softly balsamic, characteristics which evoke the grounding of the Earth element. It is said to release one from the 'tyranny of the intellect' which can cloud one's true nature, bringing about a more serene state unifying body, mind and spirit. From this quiet, unified state comes

forth the true creative mind, finding infinite possibility in the here and now. It is in this peaceful, unified state where meditation can affect profound transformation.

Recommended essential oil blends for calming the mind are as follows – these can be used for general massage, reflexology, or applied to pulse points and temples: For 'obsessive' thinking, try four (4) drops of Sandalwood and two (2) drops of Vetiver in one tablespoon of carrier; for a detached analytical state try three (3) drops Geranium, two (2) drops Sandalwood and one (1) drop Patchouli in one tablespoon of carrier. These blends can also be created for use in a diffuser by omitting the carrier oil. For a great perfume also with soothing qualities, combine three parts Sandalwood and two parts Vanilla oil – the blend produces a wonderful tropical island aroma.

Finally, Sandalwood is one of the few essential oils which improves with age. Due to increasing demand, the oil's price is climbing significantly every year – it can be worthwhile to purchase a little more than you think you'll need immediately, as storing it for some time will only result in a richer oil in the future. Of course, samples are also a great place to start, as you can first find a Sandalwood that truly suits you.

Misty Rae Cech ND, is a naturopath and yoga teacher practicing in Boulder, Colorado, and owner of

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. She regularly employs essential oils and flower essences in her practice.

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