



ARTFUL TEASING

P E T W O R T H

Guide to Lavender Oil



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Introduction

Every generation discovers the benefits of lavender oil - whether for its distinctive aroma or its health benefits. This e-book aims to reveal some of the uses to which you can put this natural material in your life.

All the facts presented here come directly from the scientific literature. We won't waste your time with things that don't stand up. If you want to do your own research or just check up on what we are saying about it there is a list of references at the end of the book.



About Lavender

Lavender has been popular for centuries. It is one of those smells that everyone knows. It is grown in great quantities in southern France. There is even a museum devoted to it in Grasse. Grasse is in Provence and lavender is one of the distinctive features of the cuisine of that region. It is one of the 'Herbes de Provence' blend.

There are lots of cultivated forms of lavender. The most common species in cultivation is Common Lavender (*Lavendula angustifolia*). Flower spikes are used for dried flower arrangements. Pouches of dried lavender are placed among stored items of clothing to give a fresh fragrance and to deter moths. The fragrant, pale purple flowers and flower buds are used in potpourris. The plant is also grown commercially for extraction of the oil from the flowers.

The oil is used as natural antiseptic and for aromatherapy. The traditional lavender pillow takes advantage of its calming properties.

Humans aren't the only ones who benefit from lavender. It is also a good source of honey for bees.



Lavender Oil- a natural calming agent

There has been a lot of work done on the calming activities of lavender.

One study compared the effect of the odour of lavender on gerbils in a maze. The gerbils became braver in exploring the maze and showed less anxious behaviour after only twenty four hours exposure, and the effect grew over the 2 weeks of the trial. The researchers estimated that the effect was the same as a dosage of 1mg per Kg of the well known anxiety treatment diazepam.

The use of lavender pillows to help sleeping is a long standing tradition. This effect has been shown by watching mice to see how quickly they move around when exposed to the fragrance of lavender oil. It turned out that the lavender oil slowed them down.

It is also supposed to be a relaxing agent. This is borne out by a study carried out in 2006 when a group of patients recovering from painful surgery were given lavender oil drops in their oxygen face masks in addition to the normal pain killing drugs. They found the drugs used to control the pain more satisfying than a group that weren't given the lavender. A 2002 study of hospice patients found small decreases in pain and anxiety compared to the non-treated group.

Perhaps the way it works is to affect your mood. This in turn can affect the signals your brain sends to the immune system giving it a bit of a boost. It is well known that your frame of mind has a lot to do with the way you cope with stress. The placebo effect is a well known feature of clinical trials, where simply the act of being treated is in itself beneficial even if no drug is being used. It doesn't seem too far-fetched to suppose that the sense of well being that lavender induces is also good for you.



Lavender Oil - A natural anti-bacterial

Lavender oil has a long history of use as an antibacterial. One of the main purposes the plant produces the oil itself in the first place is to protect itself from attack. It is interesting that the different lavender species have different profiles in how effective they are against particular microbes. Lab work shows a complex pattern where no one grade of oil is most effective against all the species of bacteria. The effectiveness of most lavender oils is on a par with tea tree oil.

English lavender oil, *Lavendula angustifolis*, has been shown to have a minimum inhibitory concentration of 0.32% against *staphylococcus aureas*. (This means that in the presence of 0.32% of the oil, the organism cannot grow.) This organism has been implicated in making eczema worse. In fact its name, aureus, is the latin for gold. The gold appearance of the scabs in impetigo, which is simply a very severe form of eczema, comes from colonisation by this organism. It seems that this organism is adept at colonising dry skin and when it does it triggers off a cascade of further reactions causing the eczema to flare up. Potentially lavender oil could break this cycle by preventing further development of the eczema.

Other Uses

Lavender is currently being investigated as an insecticide, both as a headlice treatment and most interestingly as an alternative to organophosphate sheep dips. These applications are still at their early stages and may not come to anything, but it shows that even in our modern technological age there are still new uses to be found for this very familiar material.



Conclusion

Lavender oil has been used for centuries and is likely to continue to be used long into the future. The benefits are so well known as to be commonplace, but many of them can be shown to be effective scientifically. And even now, new uses continue to be found for it.



This report has been sponsored by Artful Teasing, a company that uses essential oils for their genuine benefits, in naturally formulated products which don't use any synthetic fragrances. You can explore the Artful Teasing range by visiting their website at www.artfulteasing.com.



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Thanks for the photos to Aussiegael Limbo Poet, Jragon and Lana_aka_BADGRL on Flickr.