Aromatic Wonders: Sandalwood

Posted on

The heavenly aromatic fragrance of sandalwood has grabbed the attention of royal regalia for centuries and is known to be native to Sri Lanka. It has been a much-loved aroma. Sandalwood is extracted from the wood for a diverse range of purposes. Sandalwood trees have been cultivated since ancient times for their yellowish heartwood (central of tree), with many purposes. The woods are heavy, yellow, and fine-grained, and unlike many other aromatic kinds of wood, they retain their fragrance for decades.

The sandalwood root sucks in the nutrients needed for its growth from nearby trees. An ancient Indian belief says the smell of the wood is so intoxicating that snakes are lured to wrap themselves around the tree. Sandalwood (*Santalum album*) has long been used as a health and beauty aid with its sweet and woody scent.

This classic scent is used to prepare essential oils, perfumes, and creams.

Sandalwood scent is a preferred choice in aromatherapy, which uses aromatic oils to soothe the mind and body.

Its history dates back 4,000 years to India, with its origins in Mysore (in Karnataka). It still grows in India in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and in the Timor Islands of Indonesia. In Sri Lanka, it flourishes in the Rajawaka area in the town of Balangoda. These native trees are also found in Diyaluma. The sandalwood tree can grow up to nine meters(30 feet) high and has a brown-grey trunk, smooth, slender branches, leathery leaves, and small pink-purple flowers. The tree reaches its full maturity in 60 to 80 years when the center of the slender trunk (the heartwood) has achieved its most excellent oil content. The sandalwood tree is never felled but uprooted in the rainy season when the roots are richer in its precocious oil. Sandalwood oil is an almost clear, viscous liquid with a yellowish, brownish or greenish tint and a sweet-woody balsamic odor. The scent is faint but long-lasting. Several types of sandalwood trees yield essential oils with different somewhat milder fragrances, such as Australian Sandalwood oil, Fiji Sandalwood oil, and East African Sandalwood oil. Sandalwood properties are many, including anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antispasmodic, aphrodisiac, diuretic, and sedative. However, as it has antispasmodic properties, it should not be used during pregnancy or in states of depression (when it may cause an even lowered mood). It can treat different ailments such as skin diseases, bronchitis, fatigue, impotence, nervous tension, sore throat, urinary infections, biliary disorders, and water retention. In the Ayurvedic tradition, sandalwood is known to have a cooling and blood purifying effect and is used mainly for respiratory and urinary infections.

Sandalwood is ingested for ailments and is generally used in varying forms such as powder or oil. With such a heavenly smell, sandalwood is widely used in the cosmetics industry, generally in powder or oil form: a sandalwood and turmeric powder paste can be rubbed on for blemish-free skin. A drink of cold milk scented with a drop of sandalwood is good for preventing sunstroke or boils caused by excessive heat in the body. An anti-wrinkle face pack of sandalwood oil, milk, and honey or sandalwood paste rubbed on the body for excessive sweating and rashes is efficacious. Sandal oil (in combination with other essential oils and ingredients) is useful in curing scabies. Besides being used for cosmetics, sandalwood is used for various other purposes, including exquisite wood carvings, statues and ornamental boxes, jewelry such as prayer beads, pens and pen holders, and incense. It is also used to make decorative home decors. It can be used as a flavor ingredient in food and soft and alcohol drinks and fixative for soaps and detergents.

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Golden colored sandalwood powder has plenty of benefits.

Young fruits of the sandalwood branch.

The aromatic, chunky block has many purposes.

Bunches of sandalwood flowers bloom from the plant.

The “National Sandun Uyana” in Battaramulla, Sri Lanka’s first-ever state-funded national Sandalwood Garden, is a latest addition to the bustling hub. The development of the garden on nine acres of land is home to 300 rare and valuable red sandalwood plants and 900 white sandalwood plants.