

ATLAS CEDARWOOD and HIMALAYAN CEDARWOOD

Cedrus atlantica and *Cedrus deodara*

Aka Atlantic cedarwood, Atlas cedar; Moroccan cedarwood, Himalayan cedar



Cedrus atlantica



Photo Saadia Zrira



Cedrus deodara



FAMILY: Pinaceae

DESCRIPTION AND BOTANICAL INFORMATION: These two cedars are very similar. Atlas is actually somewhat preferable but is classified as “vulnerable” in Morocco by the IUCN and since the conifer forests of Northern Morocco are mostly cedars, they have been severely damaged by the cedar wood industry.

It's not so much the demand for essential oil that has caused the problem but the demand for the wood. Since the essential oil is produced from the stumps and sawdust of trees harvested for wood the trees are going to be cut down regardless of whether essential oil is produced or not. There is also beginning to be some

very small scale production of Atlas cedar wood by sustainable methods (bark, twigs and leaves). Himalayan cedar is not endangered.

There are a number of other *Cedrus* species that produce essential oil but some of them have toxicity issues and should be avoided. Don't confuse true cedarwood oil with the oil from *Juniperus virginiana*, which also goes by the common name "cedarwood".

The Atlas cedar tree is a large, spreading evergreen conifer that can grow over 150 feet tall. The needles are grey-green in color and the species is native to the Atlas Mountains of Algeria and Morocco and is closely related to the famous Cedars of Lebanon. (If you have attended a live class at Wyldhaven, the beautiful bluish-green weeping tree planted over the large rock at the entrance to the garden is a weeping Blue Atlas cedar). The Himalayan cedar has somewhat longer needles that can vary in color from green to blue-green and it has large, barrel-shaped cones; it grows to a height of about 164 feet. The wood of cedar trees is very fragrant and is resistant to rot.

FOLKLORE AND HISTORY: The word "cedar" comes originally from the Arabic "kedron"; in Greek it became "kedros" and in Latin it was 'cedrus". Finally, it came into Old English as "ceder".

The cedar tree and its oil have a long and venerable history in religious and medical uses. People in the ancient world universally loved it for its fragrance and it has been widely used as sacred incense. The Egyptians used it in embalming. Cedar wood is highly resistant to rot and has been used for building purposes since ancient times. Solomon used it in building the temple at Jerusalem and the Asians used it in temple building as well. The Tibetans used it as incense and medicine. Various species of cedar have been venerated as sacred plants in all of the areas where they grow.

In traditional Eastern medicines cedar has been used for bronchial and urinary tract infections, inflammation and pain.

EXTRACTION: The oil is most commonly extracted by steam distillation of the stumps and sawdust.

PHYSICAL AND AROMATIC PROPERTIES: Cedarwood essential oil is fairly thick, somewhat sticky, and has a yellow to deep amber color with a slightly sharp, warm top note and sweet, woody, balsamic undertones. It blends well with woody and floral essential oils, such as clary sage, cypress, frankincense, juniper and ylang ylang; it also blends well with bergamot.

MAIN CONSTITUENTS (Atlas cedarwood: values given are approximations)

<u>beta-Himachalene</u>	44%
<u>alpha-Himachalene</u>	16%
<u>gamma-Himachalene</u>	10%

<u>Sesquiterpene hydrocarbons</u>	7%
<u>Sesquiterpenes, oxygen-containing-</u>	6%
<u>Sesquiterpene alcohols (unknown)</u>	2%
<u>delta-Cadinene</u>	2%
<u>alpha-Gurjunene</u>	2%
<u>ar-Curcumene</u>	<1%
<u>Calacorene (unknown isomer)</u>	<1%
<u>Aromadendrene</u>	
<u>Cubenol</u>	
<u>beta-Atlantone</u>	All remaining are < 1%
<u>gamma-Curcumene</u>	
<u>Calamenene</u>	
<u>Calamenol</u>	
<u>Himachalol</u>	
<u>1,8-Cineole</u>	
<u>alpha-Pinene</u>	
<u>alpha-Cedrene</u>	
<u>beta-Pinene</u>	
<u>Camphene</u>	
<u>alpha-Copaene</u>	
<u>beta-Spathulene</u>	
<u>Undecane</u>	
<u>para-Cymene</u>	
<u>Limonene</u>	
<u>Cadalene</u>	
<u>Dodecane</u>	
<u>1,4-Cineole</u>	
<u>Pentadecane</u>	
<u>Decane</u>	
<u>Tetradecane</u>	

WESTERN ACTIONS WITH EMPIRICAL SUPPORT:

Anti-inflammatory
 Analgesic
 Soothing/anti-irritant
 Antibacterial
 Antispasmodic
 Immunomodulator

Anti-hyperglycemic
Anticancer
Anxiolytic
Insect repellent/insecticide

A sampling of research:

Chaudhary, A. K. et al. (2011) *Cedrus deodara* (Roxb.) Loud: A Review on its Ethnobotany, Phytochemical and Pharmacological Profile. *Pharmacognosy Journal*, 3 (23): 12-17.

Gupta, S. et al. (2011) Phytochemistry and pharmacology of *Cedrus deodera*: an overview. *International Journal of Pharmaceutical Sciences and Research*, 2 (8): 2010-2020.

Shinde, U.A. et al (1999) Studies on the anti-inflammatory and analgesic activity of *Cedrus deodara* (Roxb.) Loud. wood oil. *Journal of Ethnopharmacology*, 65 (1): 21-27.

TRADITIONAL AROMATHERAPY ACTIONS:

Antifungal, antiseptic (especially for bronchial, urinary tract and vaginal infections), aphrodisiac, astringent, diuretic, expectorant, mucolytic, lymphatic stimulant and tonic, sedative, general tonic, vulnerary, lipolytic

TYPICAL WESTERN INDICATIONS: Cedarwood oil is often used for acne, oily skin, and skin infections. It is also use for infections of the urinary (sitz bath) and respiratory tracts (inhalation) as well as vaginal infections (sitz bath). Applied in massage it is useful for a sluggish lymph system and/or for cellulite. Less commonly it is used for anxiety and stress and for rheumatism and arthritis.

CHINESE MEDICINE CORRELATES

Energy:	Warm and Dry
Main Element:	Water (also Metal acc'd to some sources)
Spheres of Actions:	Body, Mind, Spirit

CM ACTIONS:

- Qi tonic
- Rids Damp and Cold
- Strengthens the Zhi (the Spirit of the Water element – also referred to as The Will)

CM INDICATIONS: fatigue; debility; lower backache; poor concentration; “damp/cold” conditions like cystitis, vaginal infections and some respiratory infections; fear; lack of will power.

SUBTLE ACTIONS:

Cedarwood has etheric effects in terms of strengthening, fortifying and stabilizing. It's a good oil to use in times of crisis but when people are nearing death I find that it may be more earth bound and more strengthening of the ego than is desired.

The main elemental association for Cedarwood is Water and the main organ of the Water Element is the Kidneys. The Spirit of the Water element is the Zhi, which is the Spirit of the Will. So cedarwood strengthens the Will and is considered to be very fortifying and good for increasing courage and determination and for addressing issues related to fear and a lack of will power.

In its subtle effects, cedarwood is a good oil for someone who is facing a time of spiritual crisis (existential crisis) and who has lost their sense of connection with the cosmos and with their sense of purpose.

BEST USES BY SYSTEM:

SKIN CARE – acne, eczema, dandruff, fungal infections, oily skin, hair loss, boils, dermatitis, skin infection

MUSCULOSKELETAL COMPLAINTS – arthritis, rheumatism

NERVOUS SYSTEM ISSUES – nervous tension, anxiety, stress-related conditions

ENDOCRINE AND REPRODUCTIVE COMPLAINTS - vaginal and urinary tract infections

CIRCULATORY SYSTEM - sluggish lymph system; cellulite

RESPIRATORY SYSTEM COMPLAINTS – bronchitis, congestion, “wet” coughs

MENTAL/EMOTIONAL APPLICATIONS – anger, anxiety, nervous tension, stress, fear, poor willpower

<p>SAFETY: Cedarwood is generally described as fairly non-toxic; non-irritating and non-sensitizing but Shirley and Len Price note that in France it is considered neurotoxic and abortive and I assume that this is due to its ketone content. I believe it best to stay on the side of caution and avoid in pregnancy. I like to use it in moderation for fairly short periods of time because of the ketone content.</p> <p>DRUG INTERACTIONS: None identified; unlikely with standard topical use or inhalation .</p>
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