

Vetiver Oil: A Deeply Grounding Oil

Vetiver oil, also known as khus oil, is a lesser-known plant oil that offers a heavy, earthy fragrance, which is reminiscent of patchouli but with a touch of lemon. It is believed to be very grounding, calming, and stabilizing, and provides a range of essential oil uses and benefits. Learn more about this herbal oil.

What Is Vetiver Oil?

Chrysopogon zizanioides, commonly known as vetiver, is a perennial grass that belongs to the Poaceae family, which is native to India.¹ Western and Northern India know this plant as khus. Vetiver (*Vetiveria zizanioides*), derived from a Tamil word that means "hatched up," can grow up to 1.5 meters, and have tall stems and long, thin, and rigid leaves. Its flowers are brownish-purple. Vetiver hails from India but is widely cultivated in the world's tropical regions.

Vetiver essential oil is derived through the steam distillation of the plant's roots. It has a strong initial aroma and is described as woody, smokey, earthy, herbaceous, and spicy.² While not widely known, it dates back centuries and, in the 12th century, even became a taxable item in India.³

Perhaps the most valued quality of vetiver oil is that it is deeply grounding,⁴ and often used for promoting sleep. It is said to also be equally helpful for restlessness.

Uses of Vetiver Oil

Almost the whole vetiver plant is used for various applications. The roots have been particularly used since ancient times.

Vetiver essential oil is extensively utilized in perfumery, including the creation of perfumes for the body, room fresheners, and coolers, as well as soaps, cosmetics, and oils. It is also a flavoring agent in beverages, sorbets, and other foodstuff.⁵ Its aromatic effect on the mind is grounding, calming, and balancing, while its other notable actions are antiseptic, antispasmodic, immune-stimulating, warming, sedative to the nervous system, and stimulating to the circulatory system, to name a few.⁶

Vetiver oil's calming and soothing properties are said to dispel anger, hysteria, and irritability, and reduce neurotic behavior.⁷ This in turn reduces stress and tension. These revitalizing qualities make it helpful with physical and mental exhaustion, and for addressing issues ranging from general aches and pains to insomnia and anxious feelings.

Composition of Vetiver Oil

According to a paper by U. C. Lavania from India,⁸ the chemical composition of vetiver oil is extremely complex. It mainly comprises sesquiterpenes and sesquiterpene derivatives, of which vetiverols, their carbonyl compounds and esters,

serve as the main constituents. Their relative abundance normally dictates the quality of the oil.

Three carbonyl compounds are deemed the primary odor-influencing components of this essential oil, which is used extensively to blend oriental-type perfumes and floral compounds, along with other cosmetic and aromatherapy applications. Vetiver oil is also a main ingredient in 36 percent of all Western-quality perfumes and 20 percent of all men's fragrances, says Lavania. The author adds that the main fibrous smooth roots are important for oil quality.

A separate study, published in the *Journal of Essential Oil Research*,⁹ looked at the chemical composition of selected vetiver essential oils. It found about 110 constituents, mainly sesquiterpenes. The characteristic constituents were beta-vetispirene (1.6 to 4.5 percent), khusimol (3.4 to 13.7 percent), vetiselinol (1.3 to 7.8 percent), and alpha-vetivone (2.5 to 6.3 percent).

Benefits of Vetiver Oil

According to Organic Facts,¹⁰ vetiver essential oil provides the following health benefits:

- Enhances libido and awakens sexual desire
- Provides relief to insomnia patients
- Speeds up eradication of scars and other skin marks
- Has antiseptic properties
- Provides relief from all types of inflammation
- Improves and maintains good nerve health
- Rejuvenates the body and helps boost immunity
- Helps heal wounds by promoting growth of new tissues

This plant oil is also believed to benefit those who are suffering from the following conditions:¹¹

Insomnia	Anxiety	Absentmindedness
Acne	Arthritis	ADHD
Depression	Joint stiffness	Menstrual cramps
Mental fatigue	Sore feet	Tendonitis
Vitiligo		

One specific area that vetiver oil can potentially address is ADHD, in large part because it is a calming essential oil.^{12,13} A 2001 study conducted by Dr. Terry Friedman found that the oil's aroma improved the performance of children with ADD and ADHD by 100 percent. The results emerged as much stronger than lavender's performance increase of 53 percent and cedarwood's 83 percent.

To harness these benefits, vetiver oil can be administered different ways. It can be applied topically (recommended diluted with a carrier oil), directly inhaled, diffused, or used as a supplement. The oil blends well with the essential oils of benzoin, grapefruit, jasmine, lavender, and ylang-ylang.

How to Make Vetiver Oil

The roots of the plant undergo steam distillation in order to produce the oil. Vetiver essential oil is painstaking and labor-intensive to manufacture, which drives its price up.¹⁴ To reduce cost, it is often diluted with less expensive and therefore less effective oils, or even synthetic fragrance oils. This is why I advise you to make sure you are buying the oil from a reputable source and getting only the real deal. Easy Aromatherapy Recipes provides several essential oil recipes for specific health concerns. Here are three you can try:

- **Injury blend** – Blend 4 drops vetiver, 3 drops lavender and 2 drops bergamot in 1oz carrier oil. Massage into affected area.
- **TMJ blend** – Blend 4 drops helichrysum, 3 drops white fir and 2 drops vetiver in 1oz carrier oil. Massage into jaw muscles morning and night.
- **Arthritis blend** – Blend 4 drops frankincense, 3 drops marjoram, and 2 drops each rosemary and vetiver in 1oz carrier oil. Massage into affected area.

Here is an eHow blend¹⁵ you can also try:

You will need:

- 4 drops Vetiver essential oil
- 4 drops Clary Sage essential oil
- 4 drops Ylang Ylang essential oil
- 5 drops Lavender essential oil
- 1/2 cup grapeseed oil

Combine oils well and store in an airtight container.

You may use this as an all-purpose massage oil, which can be massaged at your temples to calm an anxious mind. I recommend using it in a neck or shoulder massage to ease tension. This recipe also works in a standard massage for creating a more uplifting experience. Use it externally only and consult your doctor if you are pregnant or have any health condition.

How Does Vetiver Oil Work?

Since essential oils are extremely potent, I advise vetiver oil to be diluted with a carrier oil, such as coconut oil. You can start with one drop to one to three teaspoons of carrier oil. With caution, increase the essential oil as needed.

Vetiver oil works in vapor therapy¹⁶ – it can address nervous complaints, dispel anger and irritability, and relieve insomnia this way. It can also be blended in a massage oil or diluted in the bath. Through this mode of administration, it can assist with mental and physical exhaustion, nervous complaints, rheumatism and arthritic pain, and skin healing.

This essential oil also works in a cream or lotion, moisturizing and nourishing skin. It especially benefits dry, irritated, and dehydrated skin, and helps reduce wrinkles and stretch marks. On the other hand, it is generally NOT recommended to be taken internally.

Is Vetiver Oil Safe?

This essential oil is deemed non-irritating, non-sensitizing, and non-toxic, and therefore generally safe. But it should not be used by pregnant women, and you should use extreme caution and consult a doctor before using it on children. Prior to widespread use, always test for skin sensitivity by doing a patch test.

Always dilute vetiver oil using a carrier oil, such as coconut oil. Given their quality and composition, most brands should not be ingested.

Side Effects of Vetiver Oil

WebMD¹⁷ says that that the possible side effects of vetiver oil are not known. However, it adds that it is unsafe for pregnant and breastfeeding women to take vetiver, as it might cause a miscarriage.