Everlasting is also commonly known as Everlast, Helichrysum and Immortelle. Everlasting essential oil is a relative newcomer to the practice of aromatherapy. The essential oil’s incredible performance in treating both chronic and acute skin disorders, with its combined skin-regenerating and anti-inflammatory action, means that it has secured itself a place as one of the most precious and important essential oils in aromatherapy.

Botany and Origins

The genus Helichrysum (Miller) belongs to the Asteraceae family. It is a very large genus with approximately 600 species all over the world. Approximately 25 species are native to the Mediterranean region. The most common and widespread species is Helichrysum italicum (Roth) G.Don (syn H.angustifolium DC). It is a small aromatic shrub, up to 40-50cm high with yellow flowers growing on dry cliffs and sandy soil. The essential oil extracted from the H.italicum species is the only one used in aromatherapy.1

The name Helichrysum comes from the Greek word helios (sun) and chrysos (gold) because of the way the plant blooms, giving the impression of little golden suns.2

Schnaubelt says that large quantities of Helichrysum essential oil were distilled in the former Yugoslavia. It was primarily used to fragrance pipe tobacco and was only discovered by aromatherapy in the early 1990s. Unfortunately, its popularity grew right around the time of the Balkan war. Supply from the Balkans dried up during the war and the only remaining production was coming from Corsica. This caused the price of the oil to increase dramatically.3

According to Schnaubelt, the production of everlasting from the hillsides of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina has returned to the market in the last ten years, however, the price remains high.3

Method of extraction

Everlasting oil is steam distilled from the flowering tops of H.angustifolium. which are cut by hand. About 1 ton of flowering tops produces 900g to 1.5kg of essential oil. Therefore, it is not surprising that it demands such a high price.1

Care must be taken to ensure that we are aware of the botanical source of the plant being harvested for the production of the essential oil.1,3

Characteristics

Everlasting oil is a pale-yellow, oily liquid with a powerful and diffusive aroma, which is considered quite unique. It is described as a sweet-fruity and tea-like aroma with an excellent tenacity.2

Holmes describes it as having a base note with a very high intensity and excellent persistence.5

Traditional Uses

In traditional herbal medicine everlasting is used as an expectorant, antitussive, choleretic, diuretic, anti-inflammatory and anti-allergenic agent. It has been used for bronchitis, asthma, whooping cough, psoriasis, burns rheumatism, headache, migraines, allergies and liver ailments and it is usually taken in the form of a decoction or infusion.2
Chemistry

*H. italicum* essential oil contains numerous monoterpenes and some unusual sesquiterpenes not found in other essential oils.\(^1\)

Schnaubelt suggests that the diketones found in the oil may contribute to everlasting's amazing wound-healing properties. However, some samples of everlasting seem to have very few or no diketones. Schnaubelt speculates that this may be a consequence of harvesting the flowers too early.\(^3\)

Tisserand provides us with a typical chemical profile of *Helichrysum italicum* subsp. *italicum*;\(^4\)
neryl acetate (34.5-39.9%), γ-curcumene (5.1-12.9%), (+)-limonene (5.1-7.3%), neryl propionate (4.8-6.7%), ar-curcumene (2.3-4.6%), Italidione I (3.5-4.5%), nerol (2.6-3.4%), Italicene (2.4-3.4%), α-pinene (1.5-2.9%), linalool (1.5-2.8%), Italidione II (0.6-2.6%), Eudesm-5-en-11-ol (0-2.3%), Italidione II isomer (0.6-2.0%), 4,6-dimethylcoctan-3,5-dione (1.0-1.1%), 4-methylhexan-3-one (0-1.1%), isoitalicene (0.7-1.0%), 1,8-cineole (0-1.0%).

According to Holmes, everlasting sourced from the Balkan region has a higher sesquiterpenes content, possibly making it more effective as an anti-inflammatory. Alternatively, the Corsican oil has a higher neryl acetate content, making it a better analgesic.\(^5\)

Properties

**Anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, antiphlogistic, antiseptic, chologogue, cicatrisant, expectorant, hepatic, mucolytic, phlebotonic.**\(^1,2,3,6,7,8,11\)

Pharmacology

Schnaubelt says that immortelle’s effects have been so convincing that it has never met with any kind of criticism, despite the absence of pharmacological scientific data on its effectiveness.\(^3\) The only pharmacological studies I could find on everlasting investigated the oils antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory and anti-viral properties.

**Antimicrobial**

Of all the properties attributed to *H. italicum*, the antimicrobial properties have received the most attention.

*H. italicum* and *H. stoechas* showed significant activity towards *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Staph. epidermidis*, but were variable in activity towards gram-negative species. *H. italicum* was active against *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.\(^9\)

One very interesting study demonstrated that *H. italicum* essential oil significantly reduces the multidrug resistance (MDR) of several gram-negative strains of bacteria. Many bacteria have developed effective mechanisms of resistance such as efflux pumps overexpression. Efflux pumps play an important role in bacteria resistance to antibiotics and contribute to the spread of multidrug resistant pathogen (MDR phenotype). The researchers concluded that by blocking this mechanism with efflux pump inhibitors (EPIs), it is possible to restore the effectiveness of antibiotics.\(^1\)

**Anti-inflammatory**

*H. italicum* is known to contain ketones that contribute to the anti-inflammatory process. Arzanol, was identified as the major anti-inflammatory component. Studies have identified arzanol as a potent dual-inhibitor of pro-inflammatory mediators and inflammatory enzymes, providing a mechanistic rationale for the well-known anti-inflammatory activity of *H. italicum*.\(^1\)

Wound healing

Voinchet and Giraud-Robert investigated the therapeutic effects and potential clinical applications of *H. italicum* essential oil combined with rosehip oil after cosmetic and reconstructive surgery. They observed that the blend had excellent anti-inflammatory and wound healing properties as well as reducing pain, oedema and bruising.\(^1\)

They highlighted that neryl acetate, a main component of the oil contributed to pain relief. They also attributed the observed effects to the occurrence of italidiones. This class of molecules is also reputed to have anti-haematomal properties.\(^1\) Everlasting is often referred to as the "super arnica of aromatherapy". That is why it is referred to as a phlebotonic and is indicated for couperose skin (red veins), haematoma, thrombosis and the prevention of bruises.\(^8\)

Uses

**General applications**

- First aid remedy for injuries, strains, sprains, tissue trauma - apply undiluted (Schnaubelt, Holmes, Mojay)
- Bruises, swelling, cuts, open wounds (Fischer-Rizzi, Holmes, Price, Schnaubelt)
- Scar reduction (Fischer-Rizzi, Schnaubelt)
- Haemorrhoids – (Price, Schnaubelt) Schnaubelt recommends a 2% blend
of everlasting and German chamomile to calm acute haemorrhoid pain.

- Bed sores (Price)
- Joint pain, rheumatoid arthritis (Schnaubelt)
- Acute emotions (Holmes, Worwood)
- Acne, chronic dermatitis, psoriasis, burns, dermal inflammation (Fischer –Rizzi, Holmes, Price, Schnaubelt)

**Psychological**

Worwood recommends using everlasting to counteract stress and tension during an emotional crisis, to alleviate mental and emotional exhaustion, to alleviate loneliness and insecurity and to release emotional blockages. Holmes recommends everlasting for anxiety, suppressed anger, frustration, resentment, agitation, emotional instability, moodiness, sorrow and a negative outlook. He says that the oil promotes emotional stability and calm. He also describes everlasting as emotionally calming, softening and stabilizing. It helps one cope with deep frustration and long, bottled-up resentment.

**Wound healing and skincare**

Everlasting has exceptional healing properties on the skin - speeding cellular growth and assisting in wound healing. Price and Price attribute everlasting’s remarkable healing and rejuvenating properties to the oil’s cicatrisant, antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties.

Schnaubelt says that it will disinfect the wound, but unlike other essential oils with antiseptic properties, it will not be painful. It also prevents swelling and inflammation.

Schnaubelt also says that it is so mild it can be applied neat for the immediate treatment of injuries, especially bleeding wounds.

*dropping this oil into a bleeding wound sanitizes the wound, speeds its closure and effectively stops the pain. Using it undiluted on wounds avoids bringing other, less suited substances, such as fatty base oils, into the wound.*

However, he also explains that it can be very effective in a 1% dilution in a base oil.

**Detoxification**

Everlasting acts as a stimulant for the liver and gall bladder. Fischer-Rizzi says that the oil should be taken orally in small doses, 1 drop twice daily. She also recommends warm compresses of immortelle and rosemary (used in a 1-to-1 ratio).

Schnaubelt says everlasting regulates cholesterol and stimulates liver cells. He suggests topical application as the preferred mode of use, or internally in low doses combined with lemon and rosemary verbenone to stimulate detoxification.

**Personality profile**

Worwood beautifully describes the immortelle character as:

*Ever young at heart and youthful in appearance, immortelles will have an air of eternal youth about them, even in the last stages of their journey on this Earth.*

Everlasting character is described as gentle, harmonising, caring, warming and meditative. She beautifully describes the immortelle character.

*The immortelle profile is one of quietness, introversion and youth, with a quiet knowing that comes from being sure of the spirituality of all things, and the understanding that there are greater things in heaven and Earth than we can see.*

She suggests that the immortelle person is highly spiritually evolved and may often appear fairy-like. They have a high level of consciousness and mental agility.

Friendships are very precious to an immortelle personality. They are always encouraging and helpful, they can always see other peoples’ point of view even if they don’t agree with them, and will accept other peoples’ way of doing things.

Worwood also says that they can appear guarded, as if protecting themselves emotionally. However, she explains that this is an inaccurate judgement because they simply do not feel the need to externalise and express their emotions to everyone.

Immortelles can become apathetic and tired – both emotionally and mentally – often in middle age.

*When depressed they cannot be consoled and will often be irrational and irritable, preferring to shut themselves off from the world.*

According to Myers Briggs personality profile, I would describe everlasting as INFP (Introversion, Intuition, Feeling, Perception). This is the healer archetype.

INFPs are gentle, calm, easy going and affirming. Integrity and commitment to what they believe in is essential. They like time alone for their many interests. They like learning and researching new things and interests. They are highly reflective, especially in understanding the mysteries and meaning of life. They dislike rules,
orders, schedules and deadlines and they have little need to impose their values on others. Generally they prefer to gently influence and inspire. They can be indecisive because they have difficulty discerning what is most important to them. They value authenticity and depth in their relationships and are loyal, devoted and committed to family and friends. They are deeply caring but can appear indifferent and or antisocial.

**Subtle aromatherapy**

Robbie Zeck beautifully describes everlasting subtle effects;

> When you are knotted-up inside and unable to stop thinking, the earthy, warming aroma of everlasting unravels the tension that develops from thoughts going round and round.12

Everlasting will help to ground you. If you are one of the walking wounded, immobilised by your thinking and your feelings, then use everlasting to ground you.12

When describing the subtle qualities of everlasting, the term “walking wounded” is repeated by many aromatherapists. Valerie Ann Worwood explains that the fragrance of everlasting opens hearts to the unseen energies that affect our lives here on Earth. She says;

> It has a special purpose for “the walking wounded” – those who cannot reminisce for fear of the painful emotions that may be brought to the fore. It is also for those who feel their physical self has lost touch with their soul.13

Worwood says everlasting allows us to understand that to truly love also involves the acceptance of the pain of love – willingly and without compromise.13

Holmes also says that everlasting has a profoundly purifying and transformative effect on the emotional body and the heart as an energetic and spiritual organ.

> It can therefore potentially heal the core emotional trauma from which distressed feelings and negative emotions arose in the first place. As such, it is also a prime remedy for the closed and deeply wounded heart, whether from loss, betrayal or any other cause.5

Loughran and Bull say that everlasting dissolves emotional blockages and helps to balances the upper chakras. It resonates with the heart chakra by promoting compassion for self and others. They also say it integrates compassion and spirituality.14 I would also add that it has a strong affinity with the third eye chakra.

Fischer Rizzi says that everlasting increases dream activity and may help guide one toward an important stage of awareness. She says dreams become easier to remember and dreams with important messages occur more frequently.11

**Energetics**

Mojay compares the energetic qualities of everlasting with Roman chamomile and yarrow. He says that it regulates the flow of Qi and clears heat. Therefore, it would be beneficial for conditions associated with the liver and to encourage the flow of bile.7

According to the principles of the Five Elements, Holmes says everlasting has an affinity with Wood and Fire.5 However, I believe the character of everlasting is more aligned with the Water element. Holmes further explains that everlasting oil activates Qi and blood, settles the Heart and harmonises our Shen.5 According to Traditional Chinese Medicine the Shen is our spirit.

**How to use**

**Bath:** Typically, for a full body bath in a tub, use up to 5 drops of essential oils in the tub of warm water. Foot or hand baths may be prepared by adding 2-3 drops of essential oil to a bowl of warm water.

**Massage and topical:** Generally use a 2.5% dilution of the appropriate blend of essential oils to the chosen carrier oil. A 2.5% dilution equates to 5 drops of essential oil to 10mL of carrier oil.

Schnaubelt says because everlasting is so mild, it can be applied undiluted when immediate relief is needed to minimize pain after injury.

**Inhalation:** The best way to use essential oils for inhalation is by diffusing them. When you are using essential oils in an ultrasonic diffuser please follow the instructions of the diffuser that you are using.

**Internal:** As a liver stimulant, Fischer-Rizzi and Schnaubelt suggest that everlasting be taken orally in small doses. Fischer-Rizzi recommends taking one drop twice daily.3,11

**Blending tips**

Generally I use everlasting in blends for the skin. Indeed, everlasting at 1% dilution in rosehip oil creates the perfect synergy for treating the skin.

I recently experienced a massage with a blend of everlasting, German chamomile and French alpine lavender and it was absolutely divine - so soothing and relaxing. For nervous tension, stress and to calm agitation, I would suggest blending everlasting with German and Roman chamomile, clary sage, lavender, neroli, patchouli,
sandalwood, sweet orange, sweet marjoram and vetiver.

For emotional wounds or trauma, everlasting would blend well with neroli and/or sandalwood.

Fischer Rizzi recommends blending everlasting with rock rose and lavender for treating skin allergies, eczema, rashes and psoriasis. She says that when everlasting is combined with rosemary it makes an excellent liver stimulant. To create a very powerful liver tonic, I would also suggest blending it with carrot seed.

For thrombosis Holmes recommends blending everlasting with lemon oil.

For pain, swelling, muscle and joint pain, everlasting would blend well with spike lavender, Roman chamomile and peppermint. Schnaubelt recommends blending it with eucalyptus citriodora and yarrow, ideally applied in a base of comfrey cream.

Perfect Potion classics with fragonia

It is not surprising that we have made good use of everlasting essential oil’s amazing skin healing properties in all our Replenish range and our Skin Elixir range. It is also the star ingredient in our new Protect & Repair Balm alongside dragon’s blood resin.

Safety

Everlasting oil is considered non-toxic, non-irritant and non-sensitising. No contraindications known.

References