

Juniper

Latin Name: *Juniperus communis*

Other Common Names: Common Juniper, Dwarf Juniper, Ground Juniper, Hackmatack

Genus: Juniperus

Plant Family: Cupressaceae (Cypress)

Parts Used: leaves, berries

Herbal Energetics and Actions: analgesic, antibacterial, antifungal, anti-infectious, anti-inflammatory, antilithic, antimicrobial, antirheumatic, antiseptic, antispasmodic, antiviral, astringent, blood purifier, carminative, cholagogue, cicatrizant, decongestant, diaphoretic, digestive, disinfectant, diuretic (strong), diaphoretic, emmenagogue, expectorant, hemostatic, insecticide, nervine, neurotonic, parasiticide, rubefacient, stimulant (genitourinary tract), stomachic, sudorific, tonic, tonifying, vermifuge, vulnerary

Body Systems Affiliation: musculoskeletal system, digestive system, genitourinary system, respiratory system, integumentary system (skin & hair)

Elemental Correspondence: Fire

Aroma: bright, fresh, fruity, piney, green, balsamic-woody, cleansing

Source Recommendations:

- [Juniper Berry \(*Juniperus communis*\) Essential Oil](#) - Aromatics International (high-quality, certified organic & sustainable)
- [Juniper Leaf \(*Juniperus osteosperma*\) Essential Oil](#) - Aromatics International (high-quality, certified organic & sustainable)
- [Juniper Berries, Organic](#) - Mountain Rose Herbs (high-quality, organic & sustainable)
- [Juniper Incense](#) - Higher Mind Incense (high-quality, sustainable & ethically sourced)

Botany

Common Juniper (*Juniperus communis*) belongs to the Cupressaceae, or Cypress, family and is one of over 50 Juniper species found growing throughout the Northern

Hemisphere. These hardy evergreens have adapted to thrive in some of the world's most extreme environments, from the arid hills of North Africa to the icy tundra of Greenland.

Botanically, Juniper is a versatile plant that can grow as a sprawling shrub or a stately tree, ranging anywhere from 2 to 50 feet tall. Remarkably long-lived, some specimens are known to survive for up to 2,000 years!

Fun fact: What we know as Juniper berries aren't really berries at all! Common Junipers are dioecious, meaning individual plants are either male or female. Male trees produce small yellow cones, while female trees bear bluish-green cones that mature into berrylike structures. These "berries" are technically fleshy cones with fused scales, known as a galbulus, which take 2-3 years to ripen from green to a deep blue-black color.

Junipers are particularly adept at establishing themselves in rocky, nutrient-poor soils where other plants struggle. Their deep taproots allow them to anchor securely and access water from deep underground sources, enabling some species, like Western Juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*), to survive on as little as 8 inches of rainfall per year.

Seed dispersal is largely aided by birds, who love feasting on the ripe cones. The seeds pass unharmed through their digestive systems, and the process of scarification enhances germination. This symbiotic relationship helps Juniper spread widely across diverse and often inhospitable landscapes.

The bark of *Juniperus communis* is thin and papery, ranging in color from reddish-brown to gray, and it peels away in loose, vertical strips. Its leaves are sharp, silvery-green, and needle-like, forming a striking contrast against its signature berry-like cones. Unlike some other Juniper species, such as *Juniperus virginiana*, which has both juvenile needle-like leaves and mature scale-like foliage, *Juniperus communis* retains its prickly, needle-like leaves throughout its life.

Juniperus communis is the most widely used Juniper in the essential oil industry. Both its leaves and berries are steam distilled to produce essential oil, valued for its cleansing, detoxifying, and emotionally clarifying properties.

Depending on where you live in the Northern Hemisphere, you likely have some species of Juniper growing nearby. *Juniperus communis* is native to many regions, though it varies widely in appearance based on its environment. In harsher climates or higher elevations, it often grows as a low, sprawling shrub, while in more temperate zones, it may appear more upright.

Other notable Juniper species include:

- *Juniperus communis* var. *montana* (Mountain Juniper twig and berry): Very similar therapeutic benefits to Juniper berry, but with an additional emphasis on soothing the nervous system with its nervine qualities.
- *Juniperus virginiana* (Eastern redcedar): A tree-like species found in eastern North America. Despite the name, it's not a true cedar and is known to host the cedar-apple rust fungus.
- *Juniperus horizontalis* (Creeping Juniper): A ground-hugging, shrubby species commonly used as ornamental ground cover.
- *Juniperus occidentalis* (Western Juniper): Native to the western United States, this species can be both shrubby or tree-like.

When working with Juniper for internal use in herbalism or aromatic medicine, it's best to stick with *Juniperus communis*, the species traditionally used in Western herbal and aromatic practices. However, for incense or emotional support through aromatherapy, other species of Juniper can be used with intention.

Native Habitat & Distribution

Juniper is a hardy, adaptable plant that thrives in dry, rocky soils across fields, pastures, forests, and mountain slopes. Native to Europe, Asia, and much of the Northern Hemisphere, it's considered a circumpolar species, naturally occurring in a broad band that encircles the Arctic and stretches down into temperate and even subtropical regions. Its native range includes the Arctic, parts of Asia, and select regions of Central America and tropical Africa, with a remarkable ability to grow at a wide range of altitudes and in diverse habitats.

Juniper grows beyond the northern limits of trees in places like western Alaska, British Columbia, Newfoundland, Greenland, and Iceland. From there, it extends south into New England, the Carolinas (particularly in higher elevations), and westward across the Midwest – Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota, and Nebraska. It also thrives throughout the mountain ranges of Washington, California, Arizona, and New Mexico. This broad distribution speaks to its resilience and versatility across climates and terrain.

Cultivation & Harvesting

Sunlight: Full sun, at least 6 hours of direct sunlight daily for optimal growth.

Water: Minimal. Watering needs vary based on the plant's age, soil, and climate, but the key is deep, infrequent watering rather than frequent, shallow watering. Young Junipers need consistent moisture to establish strong roots, but once established, they're highly drought-tolerant and typically require little to no supplemental watering.

Soil: Juniper trees prefer dry, well-drained soil and can tolerate a range of soil types.

Temperature & Humidity: Juniper trees are highly adaptable and thrive in a wide range of temperatures and conditions. Many species are cold-hardy, capable of surviving winter lows down to -40°F, while others tolerate intense summer heat over 100°F. They prefer dry to moderately dry environments and do best with low to moderate humidity. Consistently humid or wet conditions can lead to fungal issues, so good air circulation is essential.

Harvesting: Always identify the species before harvesting to ensure safe and appropriate use. While Juniper branches can be collected year-round, the ideal time for harvesting is during the summer months, June through August, when the plant is most aromatic. When harvesting berries, aim to use only the ripe, blue ones, as they contain the most beneficial compounds and are fully mature.

History & Folklore

The Latin name *Juniperus communis* carries a sense of mystery, with its exact origins unknown. Some sources trace *Juniperus* to the Latin word *juniores*, meaning “young berries,” while others suggest it may derive from the Latin word *iuniparus*, “early bearing.” The species name *communis* simply means “common,” reflecting the plant's widespread presence across the Northern Hemisphere.

The French name for the plant, *genièvre*, is thought to originate from the Celtic words *gen*, meaning “small bush,” and *prus*, “hot and bitter.” From *gen* came the name gin, the famous spirit that Juniper flavors.

Because Juniper is so widely distributed across the Northern Hemisphere, it holds a place in the traditional practices of many cultures throughout Europe, Asia, and North America. Its long-standing presence in these regions has earned it a reputation as one of

the first plants used by humans. Archaeological evidence supports this – Juniper berries have been discovered in prehistoric lakeside dwellings in Switzerland, and in Ireland, the plant is considered one of the country's oldest established natives. Its deep-rooted history reflects a timeless relationship between humans and this resilient, aromatic species.

Juniper has been revered for thousands of years across many cultures for its potent aromatic properties. Used in both ritual and therapeutic fumigation, it held a sacred role in ancient China, Greece, and even pre-dynastic Egypt, as well as Native American cultures. The resonating theme across cultures and traditions is that Juniper stands as an aromatic plant of protection and cleansing.

In the Old Testament (Psalm 120:4), the “burning coals of the broom tree” – a relative of Juniper often translated as “Juniper” itself – are described in a passage that metaphorically represents the purging of deceit and ill intent, a nod to Juniper's enduring role in warding off negative energies. Also in the Old Testament, Juniper sheltered the prophet Elijah from Queen Jezebel's pursuit. In another biblical story, during their escape to Egypt, Jesus and his family were hidden by a Juniper tree during the pursuit by King Herod's soldiers.

In Ancient Greece, Juniper was sacred to the Erinyes, the vengeful goddesses of the underworld, and was burned to honor the dead and their righteous fury, a symbolic gesture of clearing space for justice, death, and rebirth. Juniper smoke was also used in incantations to ward off underworld dragons in rites dedicated to the goddess Hecate, protector of the household, magic, and liminal spaces.

In Germanic folklore, Juniper was traditionally burned during cremation rituals to purify the spirit and protect the living. It was also hung above doorways to prevent witches from entering, based on the belief that they would be forced to count every needle before crossing the threshold, only to be thwarted by sunrise. Juniper smoke was used to expose hidden truths, ward off demons, break hexes, and even catch thieves through folk magic, such as bending a Juniper branch to the earth under a stone while calling out the culprit's name.

According to aromatherapists Carol & David Schiller in “The Aromatherapy Encyclopedia,” Juniper was commonly burned in the Middle Ages to protect people against the plague. Juniper berries were adored in ancient Rome, where they were traditionally used as an antiseptic and to help with digestion, coughs, colds, urinary tract problems, tumors, and snakebites, as well as a food flavoring agent. The abbess and physician St. Hildegarde von Bingen recommended a hot bath of the crushed berries for infections of the respiratory tract. During the 19th century, the berries were burned in French hospitals to prevent the spread of smallpox.

According to herbalist Brigitte Mars, Juniper tea was once used to disinfect surgical tools thanks to its powerful antiseptic properties. Across both European and Native American traditions, Juniper has long been regarded as a plant of protection used to ward off theft, misfortune, wild animals, illness, and even malevolent energies. It also holds a place in love magic, occasionally appearing in incense blends meant to draw affection or passion. In European folklore, it was traditionally burned during childbirth, with the belief that its smoke protected infants from being stolen by fairies and replaced with changelings, a testament to the plant's long-standing association with protection and purification.

With the advent of distillation, Juniper berries became prized for flavoring alcoholic beverages, particularly gin and sloe gin varieties like Steinhäger. In Medieval Scotland, Juniper berries were used to flavor whiskey. Beyond spirits, the berries were roasted as a coffee substitute or ground and used as a peppery spice, commonly found in hearty dishes like stews, marinades, stuffings, and wild game recipes. The berries were also added to food to help aid digestion, warm the stomach, and address various stomach ailments.

In the British Isles, Juniper held ceremonial importance during Hogmanay in Scotland, where it was burned in saining rites to cleanse and bless homes for the new year. Its presence even appears in Scottish heraldry, featured in the coats of arms of clans such as Gunn, McLeod, Murray, and Ross.

Across the Atlantic, various Indigenous nations also hold deep relationships with *Juniperus communis*. Among the Cheyenne, Juniper has been burned to soothe fear of thunder, used during childbirth for safety, and brewed to ease respiratory ailments. The Cree have used Juniper for reproductive health, as a lung tonic, and as a remedy for asthma. Inuit traditions include drinking decoctions of the leaves, twigs, and berries to prevent colds and flu, while the Navajo burn Juniper as a good-luck smoke for hunters and use it internally to address diabetes.

According to the Schillers, the bark, berries, and leaves of the Juniper tree have played a vital role in Native American food and medicine. Therapeutically, Juniper twigs have often been brewed into a tea to ease stomachaches and colds, while the berries have been consumed to aid digestion, reduce fever, purify the blood, soothe muscle and joint pain, and support the urinary system. Crushed berries are also commonly applied topically to wounds for their healing properties.

Following illness, Juniper branches have been burned to cleanse and purify the air, an act that also holds ceremonial importance for invoking good fortune and respiratory health.

This tradition continues today in spiritual practices among First Nations communities in North America and Tibetan ritual.

Juniper is the most common aromatic ingredient found in Tibetan and Nepalese incense. It is used as a base in many different incense recipes and is known for its stimulation and clearing of the mind, its cleansing and purification of the atmosphere, its calming and relaxing effects on the nerves, and its sharpening of mental awareness and alertness. For all of these virtues, it is a common meditation incense. Juniper is a sturdy, strong, and resilient tree, and its qualities are mirrored in its effects on the human mind, body, and spirit.

Seventeenth-century herbalist Nicholas Culpeper classified Juniper berries as “hot in the third degree and dry in the first,” recommending them as a counter-poison against venomous bites, a tonic that encourages menstruation and childbirth, and to relieve stomach discomfort. He praised their efficacy against bloating and colic, writing: “Indeed there is scarce a better remedy for wind in any part of the body, or the colic, than by eating ten or a dozen of the ripe berries every morning fasting.” He also noted their use in addressing coughs, aches and pains, memory issues, poor vision, gout, sciatica, hemorrhoids, strangury, and parasitic worms.

William Salmon, another prominent 17th-century physician, offered an even more extensive account. He described Juniper as a warming remedy suited for cold, damp, and phlegmatic constitutions. He recommended it for “cold and moist diseases of the brain,” such as chronic headaches, vertigo, epilepsy, and lethargy, used both externally as a wash and internally as a tonic. Salmon also praised Juniper’s role in treating respiratory conditions like asthma, wheezing, hoarseness, and coughs, as well as digestive complaints such as gas and colic.

Further uses included urinary issues like gravel and sludge in the bladder, and a range of reproductive concerns, from menstrual cramps to labor support. Salmon also noted Juniper’s ability to stimulate circulation, promote diuresis, and reduce swelling in the lower limbs, solidifying its reputation as a multifaceted plant of great medicinal value.

In the eclectic and physiomedical traditions of colonial medicine, Juniper was valued for its ability to address damp stagnation and infection, particularly within the urinary and reproductive systems. The berries were used internally to help clear infections such as gonorrhea, gleet, and leukorrhea, as well as for kidney infections, nephritis, and cystitis, especially in the elderly.

Dr. William Cook, in his 1869 Physiomedical Dispensatory, writes: “Juniper berries are a mild stimulant, chiefly influencing the kidneys and the bladder. They are a pleasant and somewhat prompt diuretic. Not usable in acute inflammation of any proportion.”

This caveat is critical: because Juniper can be irritating, it is not appropriate during the acute stages of infection or inflammation. Instead, it's best used after the acute phase has passed, to help restore balance and vitality to the affected tissues.

Cook also notes Juniper's applications for uterine conditions, including congestive and painful menstruation, dysmenorrhea, pelvic stagnation, and even what is now known as endometriosis, where it was used to stimulate circulation and relieve congestion.

His recommended preparation involved crushing the berries with sugar and administering them in doses of ½ to 1 dram, three to four times daily. However, he describes an even more effective method: crush 1 ounce of berries and macerate them in a pint of warm water in a covered vessel for about an hour (essentially a strong infusion). This was then taken in 2-fluid-ounce doses every two to three hours, particularly effective when combined with more relaxing, soothing diuretics.

Cook also discusses the topical uses of Juniper oil, which by the late 1800s had gained popularity in Europe for treating various skin conditions such as eczema, herpes, and lichen – conditions marked by heat and irritation on the skin. He suggests diluting the oil in glycerin and Castile soap for topical use, or incorporating it into an alcohol-based liniment or ointment.

In each of these traditions, be it for protection, purification, or healing, Juniper has served as a powerful ally in the spaces between body and spirit, life and death, past and present.

Aromatherapy Uses

Juniper has long held a sacred role in aromatic traditions around the world. Its smoke, scent, and spirit have been used across cultures for safeguarding, cleansing, and spiritual fortification. Whether burned as incense in Himalayan temples, used in Celtic fire rituals, or carried in bundles across the Mediterranean and Middle East, Juniper has historically served as a potent ally for cleansing spaces, warding off malevolent forces, and strengthening the boundaries of the soul. Its aromatic presence invites us into deeper discernment, clarity, and courage; qualities needed when walking through the darker corridors of the psyche.

At its core, Juniper is a boundary keeper, both energetically and emotionally. It helps us reclaim our sovereignty, particularly in times of self-doubt, emotional enmeshment, or inner confusion. The crisp, clear, and slightly sharp scent of Juniper helps us distinguish what is truly nourishing from what is depleting. For clients doing deep shadow work, struggling with self-sabotage, addiction, or toxic relational patterns, Juniper becomes a guiding light. It assists in recognizing harmful tendencies, not with judgment, but with clarity and resolve, empowering the individual to move through difficult emotional terrain with integrity.

Juniper is particularly helpful in emotional and energetic detoxification. It encourages us to confront and release inner demons, the parts of ourselves that feed on resentment, obsession, fear, or avoidance. As an aromatic, it works on the level of the subtle body, dissolving the fog of illusion and self-deception. It can be a powerful companion for anyone seeking to set stronger boundaries, make aligned choices, or build self-trust.

British herbalist Elisabeth Brooke, in her book “A Woman’s Book of Herbs,” aligns Juniper with the sun in medical astrology. The sun represents the core self; the radiant identity, the center of confidence and vitality. In this light, Juniper becomes a brightening, warming aromatic, capable of dispelling the cold, damp, fearful tendencies of the phlegmatic constitution.

Brooke writes that Juniper is particularly helpful for people seeking a more spiritual life but struggling with emotional dysregulation, fear, worry, obsession, or anger. She recommends a ritual of burning 5 Juniper berries at each new and full moon for 3 months as a spiritual practice for inner transformation.

Aromatically, Juniper uplifts and refreshes. According to medical herbalist and clinical aromatherapist Peter Holmes, Juniper berry is especially useful for those experiencing lethargy, gloom, brain fog, and low self-confidence. It clears stagnation in the mental and emotional realms, helping to restore clarity, motivation, and focus.

Gabriel Mojay, an aromatherapist, writes: “Juniper oil helps to purge us of the worry and self-absorption that is rooted in fear of failure. Restoring our determination to overcome life’s obstacles, it replaces stasis and isolation with movement and openness.” The Schillers similarly describe Juniper as reviving and mood-lifting, improving mental clarity and emotional balance.

To work with Juniper on an emotional or energetic level, its aromatic medicine can be accessed in several ways: diffused in short sessions as an essential oil, burned as incense, or taken in subtle drop doses of tincture. These methods invite an intimate relationship with the plant’s spirit, one that is clarifying, protective, and deeply transformative.

Juniper is not a tonic herb and is best used in small amounts and for short periods, as its power lies in its precision, not in prolonged use.

Like the tree itself, which thrives in some of the harshest environments on Earth, enduring extreme heat and drought with unwavering resilience, Juniper teaches us how to stay rooted in our truth, even in times of adversity. Its aromatic medicine clears emotional clutter, sharpens perception, strengthens boundaries, and gently guides us back to the radiant core of the self.

Traditional Medicinal Uses

Juniper berries have been used for centuries across a wide range of traditional medical systems for their warming, drying, and stimulating properties. Considered energetically hot and dry, Juniper is most indicated for cold, damp stagnation, whether in the digestive tract, respiratory system, or urinary pathways. The berries are rich in vitamin C, contributing to their value in addressing infections and supporting immune health, especially in the colder months.

In Western herbal traditions, Juniper has long been used as a stimulating diuretic, particularly helpful for states of water retention, sluggish metabolism, and low vitality. Herbalist Matthew Wood, in “The Earthwise Herbal,” describes Juniper as an “irritating diuretic,” meaning it stimulates elimination through the kidneys and urinary tract, but is contraindicated in cases of acute irritation, heat, or inflammation.

He notes that Juniper is ideal for individuals with cold, damp constitutions, particularly those with waterlogged kidneys and a tendency to retain fluids, especially in the lower limbs. In such cases, a small amount of Juniper may be helpful for poor circulation, venous insufficiency, or swelling in the legs due to fluid stagnation.

The Eclectic physicians of the 19th century used Juniper essential oil as a stimulating carminative and diuretic, helping to dispel gas, ease digestion, and promote kidney function. The berries were also used to address chronic cystitis, nephritis, and conditions involving excess mucus or phlegm, particularly in the lungs or urinary tract. In Indigenous North American traditions, Juniper was similarly used to warm the body and clear cold and damp from the lungs, helping to soothe respiratory infections and cough.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), Juniper is used to dispel dampness and cold, warm the stomach, spleen, and intestines, stimulate appetite, and enhance circulation and lymphatic drainage. It is often included in formulas to clear internal toxins, boost

immune function, and support the body in resolving digestive sluggishness or fluid retention.

In Ayurveda, Juniper berries are a versatile remedy commonly used to address imbalances across multiple systems of the body. They are known to stimulate cerebral circulation, support nervous system health, and strengthen brain function. Ayurvedic practitioners also traditionally use Juniper for a wide range of issues, including digestive complaints, respiratory congestion, kidney stones, arthritis and rheumatism, and menstrual irregularities. It is particularly noted for its ability to reduce stress and anxiety, calm an overactive nervous system, and alleviate mental fog, vertigo, and fatigue.

Across medicine systems, Juniper's traditional role is remarkably consistent: a warming, clarifying, and activating herb that helps move stagnation, stimulate elimination, and restore vitality to systems burdened by dampness, cold, or toxic accumulation.

Musculoskeletal System

Juniper berry is a valuable herb in supporting chronic conditions of the musculoskeletal system, particularly those rooted in cold, damp stagnation. Its warming, stimulating, and drying nature makes it especially effective in addressing arthritic and rheumatic struggles, where inflammation and fluid retention contribute to pain and stiffness.

According to medical herbalist and clinical aromatherapist Peter Holmes, Juniper berry is indicated for chronic rheumatism, arthritis, muscle spasms, fibromyalgia, and other conditions involving chronic pain and impaired circulation. Its role as a circulatory stimulant helps increase blood flow to affected tissues, encouraging detoxification and easing stiffness.

In "Ayurveda & Aromatherapy," Dr. Light and Dr. Bryan Miller note that Juniper berry is effective for both Vata and Kapha types of arthritis and rheumatism due to its heating and mobilizing qualities. They also recommend it for dropsy, edema, sciatica, lower back pain, and swollen joints, where stagnation and fluid accumulation contribute to discomfort.

Herbalist Matthew Wood echoes these indications, listing arthritis, rheumatism, sciatica, stiff muscles, lower back pain, edema, numbness, and even trembling or shaking as key symptoms that Juniper may help relieve. In these cases, Juniper acts not only as a physical stimulant but also as an energetic mover, helping to warm the tissues, reduce swelling, and restore a greater sense of flow and vitality throughout the body.

Digestive System

Juniper berries have been used since antiquity to support digestive health, valued for their stomachic (digestive-toning) and carminative (gas-relieving) properties. Their distinctive, evergreen flavor, often compared to Rosemary with a citrusy edge, has made them a staple in both culinary and medicinal preparations. Juniper is frequently included in bitters formulas, where it enhances digestive secretions, eases bloating, and adds depth to flavor profiles.

As a traditional digestive aid, Juniper helps relieve symptoms such as gas, bloating, intestinal discomfort, and indigestion. Herbalist Matthew Wood recommends it for loss of appetite, dyspepsia, flatulence, intestinal pain, and even pancreatitis, where its stimulating nature can help revitalize a sluggish or weakened digestive system.

According to Peter Holmes, Juniper berry is particularly useful in cases of low stomach acid production, chronic dysbiosis, irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), and bacterial infections, as well as gastric ulcers. Its antimicrobial and astringent qualities support the gut in clearing pathogenic overgrowth while restoring balance and tone to the digestive tract.

In “Ayurveda & Aromatherapy,” Dr. Light and Dr. Bryan Miller describe Juniper berry as beneficial for weak digestion and diabetes, especially in cases of Kapha-type digestive sluggishness where cold and damp accumulation impairs metabolism and digestive fire. Altogether, Juniper is a warming, activating herb that brings clarity, movement, and balance to the digestive system, clearing out stagnation while supporting deeper digestive function and resilience.

Genitourinary System

Juniper has a long-standing reputation across herbal and medical traditions for its strong affinity with the urinary and reproductive systems, most notably for its action as a stimulating diuretic. The Schillers describe Juniper as energetically cleansing and purifying to the tissues, a theme that echoes through its historical and modern uses. In this way, Juniper helps the body eliminate excess fluids, reduce stagnation, and support healthy kidney and bladder function.

Peter Holmes notes that Juniper berry not only stimulates kidney activity but also carries a rare tradition among aromatic plants of softening hard deposits, including urinary stones and arterial mineral buildup. Its anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, and astringent properties make it particularly useful in cases of chronic urinary tract infections, cystitis, and other persistent bladder issues.

Juniper also plays a role in supporting the uterus and reproductive system. According to “Ayurveda & Aromatherapy” by Dr. Light and Dr. Bryan Miller, Juniper berry is traditionally used to promote menstruation and is especially helpful for dysmenorrhea. Herbalist Matthew Wood expands on these uses, indicating Juniper for menstrual cramps, amenorrhea, and infertility. He suggests topical applications, such as soaking the feet in hot water infused with juniper oil, to help ease uterine cramping and stimulate pelvic circulation.

Whether supporting urinary elimination, cleansing stagnant reproductive tissues, or relieving menstrual discomfort, Juniper offers a warming, mobilizing force that helps restore flow and balance to this vital system.

Integumentary System (Skin & Hair)

Juniper has a long tradition of use in skin and hair care, particularly for conditions rooted in congestion and dampness. With its antiseptic, purifying, and mildly astringent properties, Juniper is especially well-suited for oily, congested, and acne-prone skin. Its essential oil is commonly used in massage oils and therapeutic balms, offering support for acne, eczema, psoriasis, and mild skin issues – though care should be taken, as its heating and drying nature may aggravate already irritated or sensitive skin (read more about this in the “*Safety/Contraindications*” section).

According to Peter Holmes, Juniper berry acts as a general alterative, helping to shift over-acidic interstitial fluids toward a more alkaline state; a valuable action for skin conditions related to metabolic toxicosis, such as eczema, acne, and other inflammatory irritations. He also notes its traditional use as a hair restorative, easing dandruff, soothing a dry or itchy scalp, and supporting the health of the hair follicles, potentially helping to address hair loss. The Schillers highlight Juniper’s ability to purify the skin and reduce the appearance of cellulite, making it a popular addition to body oils and detoxifying treatments.

Herbalist Matthew Wood adds that Juniper may be useful for various skin conditions involving dampness or stagnation, including moist eczema, psoriasis, herpes outbreaks, and inflamed skin. It has also been used topically to address joint inflammation and

muscle soreness, making it a versatile remedy in balms and therapeutic massage applications. With its clarifying and detoxifying actions, Juniper brings a sense of energetic and physical purification, making it a powerful botanical for cleansing and revitalizing the skin, scalp, and deeper tissues.

Respiratory System

Juniper has been used since ancient times to support the respiratory system, particularly in conditions marked by congestion, dampness, and mucus accumulation. Traditionally employed for coughs, bronchitis, asthma, chest infections, and the common cold, Juniper acts as a warming, clearing, and antimicrobial aromatic for the lungs. When burned as incense, its aromatic smoke helps to open the sinuses, clear stagnation, and combat respiratory infections, making it a powerful remedy during cold and flu season.

Herbalist Matthew Wood recommends Juniper for respiratory congestion, bronchitis, and chest colds, where its stimulating properties help mobilize phlegm and restore flow. Peter Holmes classifies *Juniperus communis* as a mucolytic expectorant, meaning it helps break down thick mucus and ease bronchial congestion, making breathing easier and more efficient.

In addition to its role in acute conditions, Juniper also supports long-term respiratory cleansing. Herbalist Brigitte Mars notes that Juniper can assist in clearing residual tar and nicotine from the lungs, making it a valuable ally for smokers in the process of quitting and those seeking to restore respiratory health. Overall, Juniper offers a clarifying presence for the lungs, clearing dampness, reducing stagnation, and helping to open the breath on both physical and energetic levels.

Aromatic & Herbal Preparations

Essential Oil

Peter Holmes writes: “The best quality Juniper berry oil is a steam distillation of the fresh or dried ripe berries in September and October. Most Juniper berry oil, however, is a byproduct of large-scale distillations producing gin-type drinks, where the berries are crushed, soaked in warm water, fermented with alcohol, and then finally distilled.” This is why it’s important to source from reputable companies.

According to Holmes, it takes roughly 100-300 kg of dried ripe Juniper berries to produce 1 kg of oil, which is a moderate yield. Much of the Juniper berry oil comes from Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, Albania, Turkey, France, and England, but it's believed the best quality oil comes from Italy and Hungary.

Aromatherapist Chrissie Wildwood writes: "The oil captured from the needles and wood is not recommended for aromatherapy, nor is that extracted from fermented berries. The highest grade Juniper berry oil is virtually colorless. The aroma is fresh and woody with a pleasant peppery overtone. Its odor effect is uplifting to the spirits and yet also warming and calming, a reputed aphrodisiac." Wildwood reports that the main constituents of the essential oil are pinene, myrcene, borneol, camphene, thugene, and terpenic alcohol.

Our favorite trusted source for essential oils, Aromatics International, offers both Juniper leaf and berry essential oils. Experiment with the two different types and see which one you prefer (maybe it's both!):

- [Juniper Berry \(*Juniperus communis*\) Essential Oil](#)
- [Juniper Leaf \(*Juniperus osteosperma*\) Essential Oil](#)

How to Use Juniper Essential Oil:

Juniper essential oil can be used in a variety of ways to support the physical, emotional, and energetic realms. Due to its potent nature, it's best used in small amounts and for short periods. It can be diffused briefly to cleanse a space, uplift the mood, and clear mental fog, or burned as incense to support respiratory health, spiritual guarding, and emotional clarity.

Topically, it can be diluted into massage oils or balms for joint pain, muscle tension, poor circulation, and skin conditions like oily or congested skin (caution: it may be too drying or irritating for sensitive skin). Energetically, it's a powerful ally for shadow work, boundary setting, and emotional detox, helping to strengthen the self and release internal stagnation.

Blending:

Aromatherapist Valerie Ann Worwood shares that Juniper blends well with Basil, Bay Laurel, Bergamot, Caraway Seed, Cardamom, Carrot Seed, Cedarwood, Chamomile, Cistus, Citronella, Clary Sage, Cypress, Fennel, Frankincense, Geranium, Grapefruit, Lavender, Lemon, Mandarin, Orange, Oregano, Peppermint, Pine, Rose, Rosemary, Sandalwood, Tarragon, Thyme, Turmeric, Violet Leaf, and Yarrow.

For more information on properly diluting essential oils, refer to your “Essential Guide to Essential Oils” in the Bonus PDF Guides section of AMG. *Always dilute an essential oil before topical use. Essential oils are only to be used topically, never internally.*

Hydrosol

Juniper hydrosol, the aromatic water produced during the steam distillation of Juniper berries or leaves, carries a gentler expression of the plant’s therapeutic and energetic qualities. With a crisp, fresh, and slightly resinous scent, Juniper hydrosol offers a subtle yet lovely way to work with Juniper’s cleansing, clarifying, and protective properties. If you can get your hands on some, I highly recommend it! Unlike the essential oil, it’s generally suitable for more frequent application and can be especially useful for those with sensitive systems who may not tolerate stronger preparations.

Juniper hydrosol makes a wonderful aura or space-clearing mist, ideal for emotional release, energy protection, and ritual use, especially during times of transition, grief, or energetic overwhelm. A few spritzes over the heart or around the body can help restore clarity and personal boundaries. Added to compresses or foot soaks, Juniper hydrosol brings a sense of grounding, purification, and renewal to the entire system.

Incense

Juniper has a long-standing history as a sacred incense plant, used for cleansing, sanctuary, and spiritual clarity. Both the berries and dried leaves can be burned on their own or blended with other botanicals in traditional incense formulations. The berries may be crushed and placed on charcoal, while the leaves can be burned loose, wrapped into herb bundles, or powdered and added to loose incense blends. When burned, Juniper releases a sharp, purifying smoke that helps to clear stagnant energy, support emotional release, and strengthen boundaries. Juniper’s aromatic smoke is not only therapeutic, it’s deeply ceremonial, helping to restore balance to both the inner and outer landscape.

For those interested in crafting their own incense, the Northwest School of Aromatic Medicine's [Traditional Incense Crafting Course](#) is a great place to deepen your practice and learn time-honored techniques.

Oil Infusion

An oil infusion is a time-honored way to extract the aromatic and therapeutic qualities of plants into a nourishing carrier oil. With Juniper, you can create separate infusions using the dried berries and the leaves, each offering distinct properties, then blend them together later if you wish to explore how they interact. Always use fully dried plant material when infusing oils to prevent mold, spoilage, or rancidity caused by excess moisture.

Juniper-infused oil can be used in a variety of ways. Topically, it's ideal for massage oils and balms to support circulation, relieve muscle tension, reduce swelling, and soothe stiff joints or arthritic discomfort. Energetically and ceremonially, it's a beautiful anointing oil for cleansing rituals, energetic protection, or grounding before meditation. You can also incorporate it into skincare formulas for oily or congested skin, or use it as a base in salves and body oils to bring the warming, stimulating essence of Juniper into your routine.

The following instructions follow the folk method of oil infusion; for more guidance, visit the *Oil Infusions* lesson in your AMG library.

How to Make Juniper Oil Infusion:

Tools & Ingredients:

Dried Juniper berries or leaves
Carrier oil
Stove pot or crockpot
Trivet
Clean glass mason jar with lid
Fine mesh stainless steel strainer and/or cheesecloth or muslin cloth
Label & pen
Knife & cutting board (optional)

Instructions:

- First, chop up your Juniper leaves or gently crush your Juniper berries to amplify the extraction potential. Make sure all plant material is completely dry before proceeding to the next step.
- Place Juniper in a clean glass mason jar, leaving at least 2 inches of space between the herbs and the top.
- Slowly pour your carrier oil over the plant material until it's fully submerged.

- Seal the jar tightly with a lid.
- Next, place a small washcloth or trivet at the bottom of a pot or crock pot and fill it halfway with water. Set the jar of oil and herbs on the washcloth, ensuring the water level is even with the jar's contents for adequate extraction.
- Turn the heat on low, warming the oil for 4-6 hours. Stir every 30 minutes or so to help extract the aromatic and medicinal compounds from the herbs. A longer infusion time yields a more potent and fragrant oil.
- After 4-6 hours, turn off the heat and let the oil cool to room temperature. Then, strain the oil through a cheesecloth and fine mesh strainer into a clean jar, squeezing out any remaining oil using your hands.
- Label your infusion and store it in a cool, dark place.

Alcohol Herbal Extract (Tincture)

A tincture, also known as an alcohol extract, is a potent herbal preparation made by using alcohol to extract and preserve the active compounds of a plant. Juniper, with its intense nature and strong aromatic spirit, is best used as a supporting note in tincture blends, typically comprising just 5–10% of the final formula. This allows its energetics to shine without overpowering the body or the blend.

Juniper is especially powerful when used in drop doses – just a single intentional drop – to work gently yet profoundly on the emotional and energetic planes. This subtle form of internal medicine can support the urinary system, encourage detoxification on both physical and spiritual levels, and help reinforce personal boundaries. Drop dosing invites a deeper internal relationship with Juniper, where its clarifying and protective nature works from the inside out, bridging the realms of aromatic medicine, energy work, and emotional support.

For detailed guidance, refer to your *Liquid Extracts* lesson in the AMG library. The instructions below follow the folk method, using a 1:5 ratio with 75% alcohol, as recommended by herbalist Michael Moore.

How to Make a Juniper Tincture:

Tools & Ingredients:

Fresh or dried Juniper leaves or berries

75% alcohol

Knife & cutting board or blender

Clean glass mason jar with lid

Fine mesh stainless steel strainer and/or cheesecloth or muslin cloth

Label & pen

Instructions:

- Chop up your Juniper leaves using a knife and cutting board, or crush your Juniper berries, to maximize the extraction potential and fit the plant material in the jar. (Optional: If you want the plant material more finely chopped, you can mix it in a blender with the alcohol. Just make sure the plant material isn't too fine to strain later!)
- Place your plant material in a glass mason jar. For fresh herbs, fill the jar about $\frac{1}{2}$ full with plant material. For dried herbs, fill the jar $\frac{1}{3}$ full. Then, completely cover the plant material with alcohol.
- Screw the lid on the jar. Be sure to label the jar with the ingredients, date made, and strain by date.
- Set it in a cool, dark place and return every day to gently shake the mixture and check on alcohol levels. If the herbs are no longer completely covered, you may add more alcohol to top it off. You always want the herbs to remain covered with alcohol to avoid spoilage!
- Allow your tincture to infuse for 2-4 weeks, then strain out the herbs using a fine mesh strainer and/or cheesecloth or a muslin cloth. I like to use both to finely strain the tincture.
- Make sure to label the tincture with its name, ingredients, and date.
- Store your tincture in a dark amber glass jar in a cool, dark place away from direct light and heat, and it should have a shelf life of up to 5 years.

Vegetable Glycerine Extract (Glycerite)

Juniper glycerite is a sweet, alcohol-free extract that provides a gentle and nourishing way to work with Juniper's aromatic medicine. Its naturally sweet flavor makes it especially enjoyable in drop doses, offering not only subtle energetic and emotional support, but also a bright, uplifting taste that enhances the ritual experience. It's a beautiful option for those seeking a more delicate preparation, and perfect for anyone who prefers to avoid alcohol while still connecting deeply with the plant's essence.

How to Make a Juniper Glycerite:

Glycerites are traditionally made by combining vegetable glycerin with water to create the menstruum, the liquid used to extract the herb's beneficial compounds. For best results, use filtered or distilled water rather than tap water, which may contain chlorine or other impurities that can affect the final product. For shelf stability, be sure your final menstruum contains **at least 50% glycerin**.

- When using **dried Juniper**, a standard menstruum ratio is **60% glycerin to 40% water**. Example: For 500 mL total menstruum, use 300 mL glycerin and 200 mL water.
- When using **fresh Juniper**, use a **70% glycerin to 30% water** ratio. Example: For 500 mL total menstruum, use 350 mL glycerin and 150 mL water.

Fresh Juniper brings a vibrant, living quality to the extract, which I find especially lovely in glycerites. The method below outlines the standard cold-extraction process. For additional techniques and details, including heat-assisted methods, check out the *Liquid Extracts* lesson in your AMG library.

Tools & Ingredients:

Fresh or dried Juniper leaves or berries

Vegetable glycerin

Filtered or distilled water

Spoon

Liquid measuring cup

Clean glass mason jar with lid

Fine mesh stainless steel strainer and/or cheesecloth or muslin cloth

Label & pen

Instructions:

- First, determine the amount of glycerite you want to create so you will know how much menstruum to prepare. Then, choose your menstruum ratio (60% glycerin and 40% water OR 70% glycerin and 30% water). Using a liquid measuring cup, measure out the calculated amount of glycerin and distilled water. Using a spoon, mix the menstruum until the solvent solution turns from cloudy to clear.
- Place your plant material in a glass mason jar. For fresh herbs, fill the jar about ½ full with plant material. For dried herbs, fill the jar ⅓ full.
- Pour in your menstruum and make sure the herbs are completely covered. Gently stir the mixture and make sure there are no air pockets. Let the mixture sit for a few minutes to ensure all the plant material is fully submerged in the menstruum.
- Screw the lid tightly on the jar.
- Allow it to infuse for about 4 weeks, then strain out the herbs using a fine mesh strainer and/or cheesecloth or a muslin cloth. I like to use both to finely strain the tincture. Using your hands, wring out the cloth to get all of the liquid extract out of the plant material.
- Make sure to label your glycerite container with its name, ingredients, and date.
- Store in a glass container away from direct heat or light in a cool, dark place and it should have a shelf life of 1-2 years.

Herbal Infusion (Tea)

In herbal tea blends, Juniper offers profound support for the lungs, urinary tract, and emotional resilience. Its aromatic intensity and natural heat mean that a little goes a long way – typically no more than 10% Juniper leaves or berries is recommended in any formula. You can also sip Juniper tea on its own as an aromatic tea meditation, tuning into how the plant interacts with your unique constitution and inner landscape.

Beyond drinking, Juniper tea can be added to a warm bath or foot soak for a deeply purifying and relaxing experience. Due to its potency, herbalist Matthew Wood recommends a 1:16 ratio – for example, 1 ounce of Juniper berries to 16 ounces (1 pint) of boiling water.

How to Make Juniper Herbal Tea (Standard Infusion):

- To make a standard infusion of Juniper tea, add 1 ounce of Juniper berries or leaves to 16 ounces (1 pint) of boiling water.
- Pour hot water over the herbs into a teapot or mug and allow it to steep for 20 minutes. Be sure to keep it covered with a lid to prevent the precious volatile oils from evaporating.
- When ready, strain, inhale the aroma, drink the tea, and enjoy its clarifying and cleansing effects!

Safety/Contraindications

- **Pregnancy:** Juniper berry is contraindicated for any use during pregnancy due to its uterine stimulant actions, as noted by clinical herbalist Peter Holmes.
- **Kidneys:** Juniper oil is strongly cautioned for use in anyone with chronic kidney disease, as there is a possibility that its terpineol and terpinen-4-ol content, both of which are involved in its diuretic action, may irritate and overstimulate the kidneys (research is still inconclusive on this). According to Herbalist Matthew Wood, avoid using Juniper when there is acute inflammation, blood in the urine, or any kidney issues.
- **Topical Use:** When the essential oil ages and oxidizes, it can cause skin reactions or irritation. Be sure to follow the listed essential oil expiration date, and to prolong the shelf life, you can keep it in the refrigerator. While some sources state that Juniper can be irritating to the skin, aromatherapist Chrissie Wildwood notes that this is likely since the market is flooded with adulterated “Juniper” oils labeled as “pure.” The lower-grade oils extracted from the wood or berries are often adulterated with turpentine.
- **Sensitive Individuals:** Juniper in any form is not recommended for use around or in children under the age of 18, pets, the elderly, those who are nursing infants, those with epilepsy, or sensitive individuals.
- **Dosing:** When using Juniper tincture or tea, note that large doses can be irritating to the kidneys and digestive system. It's generally recommended to be used internally in small doses for acute purposes and under the guidance of a health professional.

**The statements above have not been evaluated by the FDA, and are for educational purposes only. This document is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. This document should not be taken as medical advice. Please consult your physician before you use this information for health purposes.*