Sandalwood is one of the most popular incenses in the world. Its uniquely sweet and sharp aroma makes it a favorable choice in Oriental, Middle Eastern, and many other incenses and artisan perfumes. The strong, calming, and nurturing powers of Sandalwood make it one of my personal favorite incense materials, in addition to its exotic fragrance. It is traditionally an ideal Vata plant, used to ground and clear the mind and energy; which I use for this purpose often. Sandalwood has been used for meditation all over the world, promoting inner stillness and helping one to go deeper inward into the Great Mystery.

Sandalwood is a small tropical tree indigenous to India, parts of Asia, Middle Eastern regions, Australia, North Africa, and Polynesia. The trees grow between 12 and 28 feet tall and can live up to 100 years. The trees are harvested for their heartwood, which is most commonly powdered for use in incense or distilled for its precious essential oil. Sandalwood is one of the most widely used incense materials in the world today. Its over-harvesting has led to its protection by many different government agencies. Many poaching rings continue to devastate the tree’s shrinking population. It is very important to know where your Sandalwood is sourced in order to not further promote the illegal harvesting and ecological destruction of its natural habitat and population. You can do your part by purchasing Sandalwood that has been grown on a plantation.
Histories and Virtues of Sandalwood

Sandalwood has been used as medicine, perfume, and incense for over 4,000 years. It is perhaps one of the most commonly used ingredients in Hindu, Buddhist, Japanese, and many other Asian incense cultures. It is often used as a filler, or base, for thousands of incense recipes. Sandalwood is a sacred tree used in many different religious practices. It is used by yogis to strengthen focus during meditation and to aid connection to the Divine. It is often found burning in many Hindu, Taoist, and Buddhist temples. Traditional Buddhist and Taoist practitioners use Sandalwood more than any other incense to maintain sharper awareness and alertness during meditation and religious study.

Sandalwood is an important medicine in Ayurveda, Tibetan, and Traditional Chinese medicine. Used for its ability to clear the mind and senses, Sandalwood is also used to align the mind, body, and spirit. It is known in the East to help achieve higher states of consciousness and connect worshipers to higher realms of spirit, wisdom, and inner unity.

This precious wood was also often used in the construction of temples, furniture, and the carving of sacred icons, idols, and altar tools. Sandalwood is one of the most holy plants in Hindu and Vedic culture. It is often applied to the skin before beginning daily prayers to help one become closer to the Divine. The powder is mixed with water to make a paste which is then mixed with saffron to make what is called chandan. Other herbs and ingredients are mixed into this base mix to create javadhu, kalabham, or other sacred traditional Indian fragrances used on the body or to anoint sacred idols.

Sandalwood is also considered an herb to honor the dead. It is burned at funerals or applied to graves in a paste form. In Sufi tradition, this is done to mark the graves of disciples and devotees. It was also used by ancient Egyptians in embalming formulas. In the Chinese and Japanese incense traditions, Sandalwood is as commonly used and revered as much as Agarwood by traditional incense crafters.

As an incense, Sandalwood is used to calm the mind and enhance mental clarity as it has a toning, calming, and cooling effect on the nervous system. In incense and aromatherapy, Sandalwood is used to balance emotions, reduce stress, anxiety, and nervous tension, as well as help to relieve depression. It has also been used to treat headache, insomnia, and a variety of other nervous disorders. Sandalwood’s soothing properties help to relieve respiratory problems such as those deriving from inflammation, excess heat, excess mucus, or dryness.

Sandalwood’s strong, cooling and calming effects are also used to treat fevers, burns, excess sweating, anger, frustration, and other physical and emotional disorders resulting from an excess of the Fire Element. Sandalwood is a well-known aphrodisiac that has been used for centuries to boost libido in both men and women, and to promote reproductive health. In general, Sandalwood is applied in cases of excess heat and tension in different aspects: mind, body, and spirit. In general, this potent wood is used to relax the mind, emotions, and nervous system, cool and calm respiratory and digestive issues, and moisten and cool the skin.

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Magical and Metaphysical Uses

Sandalwood is a very sacred herb in many cultures. It is said to open the Third Eye chakra center and increase one’s devotion to their spiritual path. Meditating and practicing yoga while burning Sandalwood, or incorporating it into other spiritual practices, can open one to higher levels of wisdom and Spirit.

Latin Name: *Santalum album, S. paniculatum, S. opicatum*
Other Names: Indian Sandalwood, Australian Sandalwood, White Sandalwood, Hawaiian Sandalwood
Family: Santalaceae
Planet: Moon
Element: Water, Earth
Chakra: Third Eye
Parts Used: heartwood
Aroma: woody, sweet, balsamic, slightly musky

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