

Home / Health / Alternative Therapies / From The Magic Tree: The Miracle of Oud Oil (Essential Oils for Healing Part 1)



## FROM THE MAGIC TREE: THE MIRACLE OF OUD OIL (ESSENTIAL OILS FOR HEALING PART 1)

Livingmsia June 7, 2017 350 Views



*Oud is the name of the oil or resin from the Agarwood tree and Oud also refers to the wood itself, the heartwood in which the resin is soaked.*



STORY BY: DR FAZEEDA MOHAMAD, DR CHENG JACK KIE,  
AND DR PUTERI FADZLINE BY MUHAMAD TAMYEZ,  
UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA PAHANG  
EDITING: HELENA HON

**YOU MIGHT HAVE HEARD OF THIS WORD: OUD** or Oudh or Agarwood or Gaharu (as it is known in Malaysia) or *chénxiāng/ Cham Heong* as it is known in Chinese.

But more than its proper name, you might have heard it described by a myriad of divine metaphors like: "Scent from Heaven", "Wood of God", "Sacred Aroma", "Scent of Nirvana" or "Ambrosial Fragrance". Whatever its moniker – from Oud comes "The Smell of Musky Luxury" as headlined in an article of the same name in [Fortune Magazine](#). Indeed, it is the bouquet of royalty, eminence, prestige and station in life. Not all can afford to wear a whiff of it. For Oud is, after all, the most expensive essential oil in the world.

### So What is Oud?

So what is it, this Oud or Oudh or Agarwood or Gaharu? And why is it so desired and invaluable?

“ Agarwood is a resinous heartwood that sometimes occurs in trees belonging to the genus *Aquilaria* (Thymelaeaceae family). *Aquilaria* is a fast-growing, archaic subtropical forest tree, with a population range stretching from South Asia's Himalayan foothills, throughout Southeast Asia, and into the rainforests of Papua New Guinea. It grows at elevations from a few metres above sea level to about 1000m, with approximately 500 meters being most ideal. At least fifteen species of *Aquilaria* are known to produce the much sought-after Agarwood. In South Asia, particularly India, *Aquilaria agallocha* is found. *Aquilaria malaccensis* is mostly known from Malaysia and Indonesia, while *Aquilaria crassna* grows primarily in Indochina.”

Excerpted from [The Rainforest Project](#).



*The heartwood is the dense, inner core of the tree trunk, and it is from the heartwood that Oud essential oil is obtained.*

## Not that Easy to Get 'The Wood of God'

But, Oud or Agarwood or Gaharu is *not* the tree per se but the dark resin-saturated wood formed in the heartwood (or the dense central core of the trunk) of the *Aquilaria* species of trees, collectively known as "Karas" in Malaysia. To the untrained eye, Agarwood trees look no different from any other ordinary tree.

And then again, not every *Aquilaria* species or Karas tree produces Agarwood as a matter of course. They've got to be attacked (by insects such as burrowing beetles, perhaps) or wounded first and become infected by a specific type of mould. The tree then produces copious amounts of resin (a viscous liquid) as a defence mechanism to heal itself against the fungal infection. In so doing, it pours its resin into its heartwood and makes Agarwood or Oud. The scented resin is sometimes called "Liquid Gold" for good reason, and is obsessively sought after for its intense and distinctive scent. It is said there is none like it.



*A young Gaharu/Agarwood/Oud-producing tree in Malaysia. Without the infection, the tree would be odourless and be worth the same as any other tree growing anywhere outside.*

## Liquid Gold in Oud Oil

So who would have thought that an essential oil derived from infected wood would create such a stir among its devotees? For sure, it commands a price far higher than gold not just due to its perfumery and medicinal value but because of its rarity and depletion in the wild. (Not every Karas tree produces Agarwood or Oud, *even when infected*, and experts say the very best Oud comes from the wild tree and the oldest ones at that, which makes them even scarcer).

Distilling a mere 20ml of essential oil requires 70kg of Agarwood. With this much of wood used, the retail price for one ounce is over USD1500. Now you see why it commands a price far higher than gold?

## Where Oud is Taken Seriously

This magic tree – the sole creator of Oud or Agarwood – is an essential tree in the Middle East. Why? Because Middle Easterners use it in many aspects of their daily lives – from burning the wood chips as incense to eating it raw for medicinal purposes. It is said that people in the Middle East use up to 1 kg of woodchips in a month! As for the scent of its essential oils, it is used for daily purposes, practical as well as spiritual as well as, as symbols of status.



## Oud Essential Oil Alternative Medicine

The magical essential oil itself revolves around almost ALL alternative medicines, be it traditional Chinese medicine, traditional Cambodian and Vietnamese medicine, Tibetan medicine, Ayurvedic medicine, Japanese medicine and of course, Middle Eastern medicine. (For a [list in Wikipedia](#), click here ). In fact, the highest consumers of Oud are the Middle East and Japan, so says [Healthy Focus](#). Now, Agarwood or Oud is used in Western culture and also in international brand names.

Oud naturally acts as aromatherapy to reduce anxiety, stress, depression and other nervous system disorders. It is a sedative, analgesic (pain relief), carminative (relieves flatulence), antiemetic (anti-vomiting) and antimicrobial. Because the scent is described as musky, deep, sensual and even "animalistic", it has also been found to be a powerful aphrodisiac. Here is the research in [Current Science](#).

At any rate, its aphrodisiac value is mentioned in at least 20 websites, maybe even more. Here are just six links:

- <https://healthyfocus.org/7-uses-for-agarwood-essential-oil/>
- <http://www.herbs-info.com/blog/top-14-aphrodisiac-essential-oils-natural-scents-of-all-time/>
- <http://spoonfedtruth.ucoz.com/index/agarwood/0-188>
- <http://floral-waters.com/tag/agarwood-oil-as-an-aphrodisiac>
- <http://www.artimondo.co.uk/magazine/agarwood-perfume-an-exotic-natural-fragrance-with-aphrodisiac-properties/>
- <http://www.cafleurebon.com/the-mysterious-oud-wood-its-ancient-heritage-m-micallef-three-oud-perfume-draw/>



*The resin-soaked wood is so dense that when placed on water, it will sink. These kinds of sinking Oud are of the highest quality, fetching the highest prices. Because Oud is also made into incense, it is referred to as "Jinko" in Japan, "Tram Houg" in Vietnamese and "Cham Heong" in Cantonese. They all mean: Sinking incense.*