**MYRRH**

*Commiphora myrrha*  
[kom-MEE-for-uh]

**Names:** Guggal Gum or Resin; Karan; Mirra Balsom Odendron; Gummi myrrha, Myrrha vera, Heerabol myrrh, bal, didthin, bowl, vola heera-bol; Myrrhe, Echter Myrrehenbaum (German); myrrhe, Arbre a myrrhe (French); mirra, Albero del Mirra (Italian); Arbol de Mirra (Spanish)  
India: Bola

**Family:** Burseraceae

**Description:** This is a thorny tree with light bark which grows in East Africa from Sudan to Somalia and in southern Arabia, together with the species *C. abyssinica* and *C. schimperi*, very similar, which produces leaves only in the rainy season, remaining bare for the rest of the year.

The resin, contained in lysigenic ducts in the trunk, is obtained by making cuts in the trunk, usually near the ground, and collecting the yellowish fluid, which hardens into tears when exposed to air. The myrrh gives out a penetrating aromatic and balsamic scent. The resin can be treated with benzol to obtain the resinoid, which serves as a fixative; direct extraction with alcohol produces the very dense absolute, which remains liquid only by addition of appropriate solvents. The essence is obtained by distillation in a current of steam. This forms an ingredient in strong, floral, exotic perfumes. The slightly pungent taste of the myrrh is suitable for use in toothpastes and mouthwashes, as well as scented ointments. The gum resin and fluid extract have marked antiseptic and aromatic qualities, and as such are utilized for perfumes and liquors.

**History:** The name of the genus comes from the Greek *kommi*, gum, in the sense of a sticky material, and from *phoros*, a carrier. According to the Bible, both Kings David and Solomon sang the praises of this herb, which was also used by Moses in Jewish ceremonial rites. Myrrh was so highly regarded that it was presented to the infant Jesus by the three wise men. Myrrh was used in religious ceremonies as incense and in fumigations by the ancient Egyptians and was one of the ingredients in *kyphi* (a mixture of scent used in Egyptian rituals). It was also used in embalming.

The Greeks traced myrrh’s teardrop shape to Myrrha, daughter of the Syrian king Thesis. Myrrha refused to worship Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Angered by this blasphemy, Aphrodite tricked her into committing incest with her father. When Thesis realized what he had done, he threatened
to kill his daughter. To save her, the gods transformed her into a myrrh tree, whose teardrop resin recalls the girl’s sorrow. Symbolizes: gladness

Chinese medical texts first described it in AD600 and it has a long history of use in Ayurvedic medicine as a rejuvenative.

Constituents: The composition is very complex and only partially known. 40-60% is soluble in ethanol and comprises a very inadequately known resin and an essential oil which has been studied in some detail and found to consist almost entirely of sesquiterpenes. The main components are furanosesquiterpenes of the germacran, elemane, eudesmane, and guaiane types. In addition, there are sesquiterpene hydrocarbons and sesquiterpene alcohols; heerabolene, limonene, dipentene, pinene, eugenol, cinnamaldehyde, cuminaldehyde, cadinene.

Note: base
Distillation: resinoid (and resin absolute) by solvent extraction of the crude myrrh; essential oil by steam distillation of the crude myrrh
Dosha effect: K V-, P+
Taste: Pungent
Energy: Hot, dry, acrid bitter
Actions: alterative, analgesic, emmenagogue, rejuvenative, astringent, expectorant, antispasmodic, antiseptic, stimulant, anti-inflammatory, carminative.
Characteristics: The resinoid is a dark reddish-brown viscous mass, with a warm-spicy, showing a very peculiar sharp-balsamic, slightly medicinal topnote; the sweetness increases to a deep, warm-spicy and aromatic dryout. The essential oil is a pale yellow to amber oily liquid with a warm, sweet-balsamic, slightly spicy-medicinal odor.
Mixes well with: frankincense, benzoin, clove, galbanum, lavender, sandalwood, orange, tangerine, juniper, cypress, geranium, musk, pine, patchouli and heavy flower oils

Cosmetic Uses: Tincture of myrrh has both deodorant and disinfecting properties, and can be used as a dental rinse, gargle and mouthwash. Can be used for treatment for chapped, cracked or aged skin, eczema, bruises, infection, varicose veins and ringworm. Very useful in hot dry climates. Promotes healing in wounds and reduces inflammation. Also for athlete’s foot and ringworm.

MOUTH WASH: Place 1 oz each of honey, gum myrrh and red sanders wood (or cedarwood) in a large glass jar and cover with 2 pints of spirits of wine. Leave for 14 days to macerate, then stain into bottles and use a few drops in warm water as a mouth wash. It will also improve the whiteness of the teeth.

Medicinal Uses: Germany’s Commission E has endorsed powdered myrrh for the treatment of mild inflammations of the mouth and throat because it contains high amounts of tannins. Myrrh improves digestion, diarrhea and immunity. It treats coughs, gum disease, wounds, candida, overactive thyroid and scanty menstruation. Used for: amenorrhea, dysmenorrhea, menopause, cough, asthma, bronchitis, arthritis, rheumatism, traumatic injuries, ulcerated surfaces, anemia, pyorrhea. Used to kill yeast (10 capsules daily).

Myrrh is used internally for stomach complaints, tonsillitis, pharyngitis and gingivitis, and externally for ulcers, boils and wounds. Acts directly and rapidly on peptic glands to increase activity, in this way increasing digestion. Promotes absorption and assimilation of nutrients. Good for obesity and diabetes. For inner ear infections, combine equal parts of echinacea and mullein with one-part myrrh to make a tea.

Increases circulation, stimulates flow of blood to capillaries. Clears out mucus-clogged passages throughout the body. Antiseptic to mucus membranes, regulates secretions of these tissues. Good for glandular fever, fever symptoms like cold skin, weak pulse.

Research suggests that it can lower blood cholesterol levels. In China, it is taken to move blood and relieve painful swellings. For an infusion that might help prevent heart disease, use 1 teaspoon of powdered herb per cup of boiling water. Steep 10 minutes. Drink up to 2 cups a day. Myrrh tastes bitter and
unpleasant. Add sugar, honey and lemon or mix it into an herbal beverage blend to improve flavor.

**Combinations:**
Infections, mouthwash for ulcers: Echinacea
External use: distilled with hazel

**REMEDIES:**
As a tincture use for infectious, feverish conditions, from head colds to glandular fever. It is ideal for upper respiratory problems and can be added to expectorant mixtures. Take up to 5 ml a day in 1-2 ml doses, well diluted with water. Use capsules as a more palatable alternative to the tincture. Take one 200 mg capsule up to 5 times a day. Use 1-2 ml tincture in half a cup of water as a gargle for sore throats and mouth ulcers. Use the diluted tincture as a douche for thrush. In China, myrrh is used as an analgesic, powdered with safflowers for abdominal pain associated with blood stagnation as in menstrual pain.

Use the oil diluted 10 drops in 25 ml water, shake well and use externally on wounds and chronic ulcers or in lotions for hemorrhoids. Use 1 ml oil in 15 ml almond or sunflower oil as a chest rub for bronchitis and colds with thick phlegm.

**CAUTION:** Avoid in pregnancy, because it is a uterine stimulant.

**Ritual:** Gender: Hot. Planet: Sun. Element: Water. Associated Deities: Isis, Adonis, Ra, Marian. Part Used: Resin. Basic Powers: Protection, Purification. Myrrh enhances contemplation and meditation, fortifies and revitalizes the spirit. The resultant expanded awareness calms fears and uncertainties about the future. It heightens the magical awareness of any spiritual experience. Amplifies strength and courage. Useful for treating states of agitation, restlessness and emotional overreaction. Cools heated emotions. Burn it to bring peace, healing and blessings to any situation. An oil made from myrrh is used to dress a candle. The smoke is used to consecrate, purify and bless objects such as rings, amulets, talismans, ritual tools. Often used in charm bags, especially with frankincense. Myrrh should be used to consecrate peals and may be used in Tarot to study the threes and the queens. Ruled by Jupiter and the Sun. Associated deities: Isis, Adonis, Ra, Marian. Gender: Hot.

**Aromatherapy Blends:**
Respiratory: 6 drops myrrh, 4 drops eucalyptus, 2 drops thyme
Skin: 5 drops myrrh, 3 drops frankincense, 2 drops lavender
Emotion: 5 drops myrrh, 4 drops rose; 3 drops lemon
Wrinkles: 5 drops clary sage, 5 drops frankincense, 5 crops myrrh, 5 drops patchouli, 10 drops rose, 20 drops rosemary, 30 drops rosewood, 20 drops geranium

**References:**