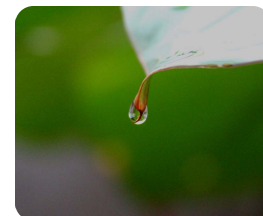


# Essential Oils

## Then & Now Newsletter

- By Joanna Barrett, RN, CNHP



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### WINTERGREEN- topical aspirin

Native Americans used wintergreen as a tea or poultice for joint and muscle pain, toothaches, headaches, fevers, sore throats, swellings, rashes, wounds, paralysis and kidney and stomach problems. Chewing the leaves increased the respiratory capacity the Indians needed for running long distances and for difficult work. They ate the berries, cooked or raw, and dried them for future use. Deer, partridge, grouse and mouse also ate the berries and deer ate the leaves as well. The colonists learned the effectiveness of wintergreen for arthritic pain and inflammation and found the oil easily distilled. Children chewed the leaves for several weeks in the spring to prevent tooth decay. During the Revolutionary War, wintergreen was the substitute for black tea. Later the leaves, and the oil of wintergreen stocked apothecaries' shops.

"Panacea of Swaim" or "Swaim's Panacea" has quite a colorful history. It contained sarsaparilla, wintergreen oil for pleasant taste, and the "secret ingredient," mercury. Doctors used sarsaparilla for many ailments including syphilis, rheumatism, liver disease, skin disorders, and as a tonic for men. The Panacea was praised by several reputable doctors of the time who saw healing in patients with syphilis and with "frightful" ulcers. The medical field at that time was not disturbed about the undisclosed third ingredient. They were upset with this ex-bookbinder's advertising. Despite the creation of the Committee on Quack Remedies in 1827 by Medical Society of the City of New York, William Swaim made a fortune. Decades later, the Panacea's squat octagonal bottles continue to enjoy a brisk sale

The active ingredient in wintergreen oil is methyl salicylate, which gives it its cortisone-like effect. This oil is primarily made synthetically now and a form of it is used in aspirin, and as a flavoring agent in beverages, ice cream, candy, baked goods, chewing gum, and syrups. It is exempt from federal regulations when used as a pesticide in or on foods, packing for foods and in animal feed. Compared with synthetic methyl salicylate, only a small amount of true wintergreen oil is produced. Most companies producing "essential oils " give warnings that wintergreen oil is toxic and internal use can be fatal. Were the Indians and early settlers of this country of stronger stock? Could synthetic blends be the cause of sensitivities and Reye's syndrome?

Oils are concentrated and any oil I use needs only small amounts. Wintergreen stimulates the stomach, heart and respiration. It has a penetrating effect on every cell and acts on the cause of pain. In a tea or hot compress it's beneficial for headaches, sciatica, and joint and muscle pain. Also beneficial for tendonitis, hypertension, skin disorders, edema, gall and kidney stones, kidney and urinary problems, draining and cleansing the lymphatic system, ulcers, hepatitis and fatty liver. It has a blood thinning effect. Not for use for people with epilepsy. Avoid during pregnancy.

Praising and loving the living Lord this Easter,

*Joanna*