

## Eucalyptus: No Longer Just for Koalas

The Eucalyptus globulus is a native Australian and Tasmanian tree. There are around 300 species in the genus, making it one of the most distinguishing genera of the Australian flora. And it has several properties you should know about.

### The Tree

Eucalyptus has leaves that are leathery to the touch hanging obliquely or vertically from its stem. These leaves have various glands that secrete fragrant volatile oil which can be used for various medicinal purposes.

The eucalyptus has blossoms, which when in bud are covered with a cup-like membrane, hence the name which means "well-covered." When the flower expands and blooms fully, the bud membranes are thrown off as a lid. The eucalyptus fruit is encompassed by a woody, cup-shaped receptacle, containing numerous tiny seeds.

Eucalyptus trees grow rapidly. Many of its species grow to a height of 480 feet, surpassing even that of the California giant sequoia. Eucalyptus trees render timber but they are all the more valuable for the oil they produce. The oils derived from eucalyptus leaves are roughly divided into three classes of commercial significance: the medicinal oils, the industrial oils, and the aromatic oils.

### Therapeutic Oil

Oil is removed from eucalyptus leaves by aqueous distillation. It is a colorless or straw-colored liquid material with a characteristic odor and taste and soluble in its own weight of alcohol. Likely the most powerful antiseptic of its class, eucalyptus oil has decided disinfectant action. It is most potent when it's aged and it can destroy the lower forms of life.

The most important component of eucalyptus oil is eucalyptol. E. globulus species contains up to 70 percent eucalyptol, making it a capable disinfectant.

Internally, eucalyptus oil acts like a typical volatile oil to a remarkable degree. It is a stimulant and can be employed as an antiseptic gargle. If locally applied, eucalyptus oil can diminish sensibility and increase cardiac action. With its antiseptic properties, the oil from this plant may have some response against malaria but it's not as powerful as the more traditional anti-malarial remedy, cinchona.

Two of the significant effects of eucalyptus are its role in balancing and stimulation. Its middle note aroma, suggestive of camphorous or woody scents make it an important ingredient in aroma therapy and as a nasal inhalant. Eucalyptus has several medicinal properties, including analgesic, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, antiviral, and stimulant.

Eucalyptus can be put to use as an air disinfectant and a decongestant. It is used to treat asthma, bronchitis, treat burns, cuts, influenza, and headaches. The powerful aroma of eucalyptus acts as an effective insect repellent. It may also treat muscle aches, rheumatism, sinusitis, skin ulcers, urinary infections, and wounds.

### Eucalyptus Steam Inhalations

Steam inhalation permits hot, moist air to enter the respiratory tract. Eucalyptus is widely regarded for its decongestant properties. By using the oil as a steam inhalation, your nasal passages and sinuses can be unblocked.

To make a eucalyptus steam inhalation, you need the following materials: kettle with boiling water, oil (E. globulus), sheet or large towel, and sizable bowl or container.

Once you have all the necessary materials, carefully pour about four to six cups of boiling water from the kettle into the large bowl. Then, mix in three drops of oil. Place your head over the bowl, eyes looking down on it. Next, shield your face with the sheet or towel. Close your eyes and inhale slowly and deeply. Continue breathing deeply for about 15 minutes until your nasal passages are cleared.