

BENZOIN

Synonyms

Gum Benjamin; Benzoinum; Benzoin; Luban (Hindi).

Biological Source

Sumatra Benzoin is obtained from the incised stem of *Styrax benzoin* Dryander and *Styrax parallelo-neurus* Perkins., belonging to family Styraceae. It contains about 25% of total balsamic acids, calculated as cinnamic acid.

Chemical Constituents

Sumatra Benzoin consists of free balsamic acid (cinnamic and benzoic acids) (25%) and their esters. The amount of cinnamic acid is usually double that of benzoic acid. It also contains triterpenic acids like siaresinolic acid (19-hydroxy-oleanolic acid) and sumaresinolic acid (6-hydroxy-oleanolic acid); traces of vanillin, phenylpropyl cinnamate, cinnamyl cinnamate, and phenylethylene.

Uses

Sumatra Benzoin possesses expectorant, antiseptic, carminative, stimulant, and diuretic properties. It is used in cosmetic lotions, perfumery and to prepare Compound Benzoin. It forms an ingredient of inhalations in the treatment of catarrh of upper respiratory tract in the form of Compound Benzoin Tincture. Benzoin is used as an external antiseptic and protective, and is one of the main ingredients of Friar's Balsam. It is also used to fix the odour of incenses, skin-soaps, perfumes and other cosmetics and for fixing the taste of certain pharmaceutical preparations. Benzoin retards rancification of fats and is used for this purpose in the official benzoinated lard, also used in food, drinks and in incense.