

# Elemi Essential oil Philippines

*Canarium luzonicum* Miq.



**Spicy**  
Peppery



Botanical family : Burseraceae  
Method of culture : Wildcrafted controlled  
Part harvested : Gum

CAS TSCA : 8023-89-0  
INCI : Canarium luzonicum gum oil

## Specifications

Method for obtaining : Hydrodistillation  
:  
Appearance : Colourless to pale yellow liquid  
Constituents : Limonene, alpha-phellandrene, elemol

## Harvest period

J F M A M J J A S O N D



Elemi is the gum resin secreted by the majestic *Canarium luzonicum* tree, a member of the same botanical family as frankincense and myrrh. This tree is found mainly in tropical forests in the Philippines, where it grows wild. It is also known as Manila elemi. The tree naturally exudes the gum when it is attacked by a parasite. Gum production is also triggered by Filipinos performing the “tapping” technique, during which they make an incision in the bark between January and June, when the leaves are budding. A white, malleable gum then flows from the incisions, turning brown upon contact with the air. It is at this time that the harvest takes place. A mature tree can produce up to five kilograms of elemi a year. The gum is then shipped to warehouses using large palm fronds, placed in large wooden crates for export to Europe. The essential oil is obtained through steam distillation of the cleaned gum. The substance’s very fresh, spicy scent is reminiscent of pepper, fennel, and lemon.

It was Magellan’s discovery of the Philippines in 1521 that led to Manila elemi – known for its medicinal properties and fragrance – being introduced to Europe and the Middle East. The product’s name dates from this period, from the Arabic El-lemi. Its use in “Chinese incense” for religious ceremonies was already being mentioned in China in the 7th century. Further, it was used as a fumigant to perfume homes. Small bags of elemi were also worn around the neck in that era. Starting in the 18th century, the West began regularly using elemi for its therapeutic properties, and it is mentioned in many texts, including as “the inventory of simple drugs that must always be kept on hand in the King’s hospital pharmacies.”

Advised uses : Aromatherapy, Perfumery, Cosmetic, Alimentary



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