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Terpene Guide

The 12 most common terpenes: how they smell, where they occur in nature and how to handle them

Terpenes are aromatic compounds that make up the scent of many plants: citrus fruit, conifers, lavender, hops and cannabis. In this overview you will find the 12 most common terpenes and guidelines on how to use and store concentrated terpenes.

Terpene overview

Terpene	Aroma	Where it occurs in nature
Myrcene	earthy, musky, fruity	hops, mango, thyme, lemongrass
Limonene	fresh citrus	orange, lemon and grapefruit peel
Linalool	floral, lavender-like	lavender, coriander, basil
α-Pinene	piney, resinous	pine, rosemary, dill
β-Caryophyllene	spicy, peppery	black pepper, clove, cinnamon
Humulene	woody, earthy, hoppy	hops, sage, ginger
Terpinolene	fresh, herbal, with hints of citrus and pine	tea tree, lilac, nutmeg
Ocimene	sweet, herbal, floral	basil, mint, parsley
α-Bisabolol	delicate, floral	chamomile
Geraniol	rose-like	rose, geranium, lemongrass
Eucalyptol (1,8-cineole)	fresh, camphoraceous	eucalyptus, rosemary, cardamom
Nerolidol	woody, floral	jasmine, ginger, orange blossom

How to use terpenes

- Concentrated terpenes are much stronger than essential oils. Use them only as instructed by the manufacturer and always diluted.
- You can best appreciate the scent on a paper smelling strip: one drop is enough, do not sniff directly from the bottle.
- For a diffuser, 1–2 drops of a terpene blend per 100 ml of water are enough.
- Terpenes do not dissolve in water. For dilution, use a carrier oil or the medium specified by the manufacturer.

Do not apply undiluted terpenes to the skin, do not swallow them and protect your eyes. Keep out of the reach of children and animals. Terpenes are flammable: do not use them near an open flame and keep them away from heat sources. Follow the safety instructions on the label.

Storage

- Terpenes are volatile and sensitive to light, heat and air. Store them in a dark glass bottle, tightly closed, in a cool place (ideally in the fridge in a closed container).
- Once opened, use them within 6–12 months. Oxidised terpenes change their scent and may irritate the skin.
- Close the bottle immediately after each use, otherwise terpenes evaporate quickly.

> The same terpene can be found in different plants. Limonene gives its scent to orange peel as well as to some cannabis varieties, and pinene is what you smell in a pine forest and in rosemary. A terpene profile is therefore a good way to describe the aroma of a product.

This overview describes the aroma and occurrence of terpenes. It does not describe their effects on health and contains no health claims.
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