

יָסְמִין – Jasmine– *Jasminium Officinale*

Pure, White Yom Kippur Surprise

This Yom Kippur eve, my dear husband surprised me with a beautiful bouquet of pure, white jasmine flowers with a note asking for forgiveness. Needless to say, the sweet jasmine scent that permeated our home, made me feel enveloped by his love. The fragrant jasmine-blossom, known for its bright, white petals and sensuous scent, promotes spiritual love. It restores optimism and confidence and promotes mental energy and vitality. Its calming properties affect the mind, strengthening marital love and opening us up to the divine splendor all around. What a beautiful way to enter Yom Kippur! The pungent aroma of jasmine flowers facilitates a relaxed, meditative state and improves clarity of vision. The word 'jasmine' comes from the Persian word 'yasmin,' meaning 'gift of G-d.' It was indeed enchanting hearing 'Kol Nidrei' accompanied by the scent of jasmine.



Romantic, Paradise Scent of Summer

Jasmine flowers are intertwined within my marital love-story and teshuva process. Their flowers consist of five petals that unfold outward like a star. This jasmine star with its heavenly scent accompanied my spiritual search in my early Yeshiva days in the Old City of Jerusalem. The very first home we lived in after our wedding, had a beautiful jasmine bush climbing up the steps to the entrance of our home. Ever since, wherever we lived, we have yearned for such a plant to grace the entrance of our home, and we finally achieved our goal. It took many tries until we found a viable jasmine that survived the harsh winter of Gush Etzion. Our current jasmine gradually grew, until it clearly made a mark on our garden spreading out on most of the outer wall of the main front of our house. We love it so much that we don't even mind it covering some of our windows. There are over two hundred different species of *Jasminium*. I believe the jasmine in front of our home is *Jasminium officinale* – a hardy a vine-like climber. This species is distinguished by the ability to cling to walls without supports, which makes it great for walled gardens. It is also called 'summer jasmine,' as it begins flowering soon after Shavuot and continues to blossom until after Sukkot. Aside from being the main jasmine species and consequently the most well-known, is also the species that best exemplifies this group. This plant will cover an area of forty feet by twenty feet and can transform a garden on a warm summer's evening into a romantic paradise.

Love Flowers

ספר בראשית פרק ל פסוק יד וילך ראובן בימי קציר חטים וימצא דודאים בשדה ויבא אתם אל לאה אמו ותאמר רחל אל לאה תני נא לי מדודאי בנה:

“Reuven went in the days of the wheat harvest, and he found dudaim in the field and brought them to Leah, his mother, then Rachel said to Leah, ‘Please give me some of your son’s dudaim’” (*Bereishit* 30:14).

רש"י על בראשית פרק ל פסוק יד דודאים - (סנהדרין צט) שיגלי עשב הוא ובלשון ישמעאל ישמין:
Dudaim are called jasmine in Arabic (Rashi, *Bereishit* 30:14).

I never understood why Rashi explains that the *דודאים*/dudaim that Leah traded with Rachel are jasmine flowers. Usually, these love-flowers are translated as 'mandrakes' – which is a completely different kind and much smaller wildflower. Mediterranean mandrakes are perennial plants with leaves growing in a rosette, a thick upright root, often branched, and beautiful, bell-shaped purple flowers followed by orange berries resembling cherry tomatoes. However, after learning about the

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aphrodisiac properties of jasmine, Rashi's comment makes perfectly sense. Although the biblical dudaim are better known for their fertility properties (Yad Rama, Beniyahu ben Yehoyada, *Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin* 99b), several Torah commentaries explain that they had aphrodisiac rather than fertility properties. "The dudaim had the ability to bring about love between husband and wife. This is why Reuven, who cared that Ya'acov should love his mother, brought Leah these dudaim. Although Ya'acov's bed was set up with Rachel, she felt lack of love as a result of not having children. This is why she requested some of the love flowers" (Be'er Mayim Chaim, *Bereishit* 30:14). Jasmine tea contains benzoic acetate, linalool, indole and jasmon, all of which enhance libido and evoke passion. *International Journal of Institutional Pharmacy and Life Sciences* 1(1): July-August 2011, <http://ijipls.com/uploaded/journal_files/110809070812.pdf>. Some say that jasmine is better than other stimulants because the aphrodisiacs compounds occur in the plant naturally. Thus, jasmine flowers have historically been used in bridal accessories and room décor of the newlywed, especially in India. It also helps cure problems such as premature ejaculation, frigidity, impotence, and other sexual disorders. The Jasmine flower is a complex and mysterious blossom. Respect the power of this compelling flower and if you are married perfume yourself with pure, essential jasmine oil Friday night for the mitzvah of *ona* (marital intimacy).

Medicinal Properties of Jasmine Flowers

The health benefits of jasmine essential oil can be attributed to its properties as an aphrodisiac, antispasmodic, analgesic, antidepressant, anti-inflammatory, antiseptic, aphrodisiac, sedative, expectorant, cicatrizant, (forming scar tissue), galactagogue, emmenagogue, and uterine. It is beneficial for the skin, reduces muscle spasms, sprains, laryngitis, irregular menstruation, labor pain, frigidity, depression, nervous exhaustion. It also induces relaxation (Singh Babita, *Aromatherapy: The best way to relax using essential oils, Agric Watch*, 2001, 1 (4), 50-62).

Relieves Depression The aroma of jasmine essential oil has a pleasing and uplifting effect on the mind and it actively fights depression. The aromatic effect of jasmine oil stimulates the release of certain hormones in the body, including serotonin, which results in the boost of energy and the uplifted mood.

Prevents Infections Jasmine is antiseptic and disinfectant when applied to wounds. Its constituents like benzaldehyde, benzoic acid, and benzyl benzoate have very effective germicidal, bactericidal, fungicidal, and antiviral properties. When inhaled, it reduces infections in the respiratory system and can relieve colds and coughs.

Fades Scar Marks Since jasmine essential oil is a cicatrizant that helps fade scar marks and after spots. It can also help eliminate the fat cracks of pregnant women.

Reduces Cough & Treats Spasms The expectorant property of jasmine provides relief from a cough by helping clear out the accumulation of phlegm in the respiratory tracts. Jasmine essential oil is very good for treating and relaxing spasms. It provides quick relief from spasmodic coughs, cramps, congestion and asthma.

Treats Insomnia The an expectorant, sedative, and antispasmodic properties of jasmine essential oil combine to help induce a peaceful good night's sleep.

Calming Effect Jasmine essential oil calms down the body, mind and soul while bringing forth positive and constructive emotions. It gives relief from anxiety, stress, annoyance, anger, and depression.

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Regulates Menstruation The emmenagogue property of jasmine oil regulates period cycles, and makes the periods clear and less painful, while also helping to push back menopause. It furthermore provides relief from other problems associated with menses such as fatigue, annoyance, nausea, and mood swings.

Protects the Uterus Jasmine tones the uterus and by restricting the flow of estrogen jasmine protects the uterus from tumors, particularly after menopause.

Promotes & Eases Childbirth Jasmine reduces labor pains while strengthening contractions and thus shortens the time it takes to deliver a baby. It also shortens the recovery process and makes it less painful. Due to its antidepressant and uplifting qualities Jasmine furthermore prevents post-partum depression.

Facilitates Lactation Jasmine essential oil increases milk secretion of lactating mothers.

Treats Skin Problems Jasmine oil has long been associated with skin care, particularly in terms of treating eczema, dermatitis, dry, brittle, irritated or dehydrated skin. Lotions made from jasmine flowers also treat sunburns and rashes. The juices of the flower are said to restore the skin's moisture and elasticity, reducing the appearance of wrinkles and giving the skin a healthier look and feel.

Other Benefits

It can also be used to free people from narcotics and other addictions.

Caution: Pregnant women should avoid using jasmine essential oil until the end of term, since it is an emmenagogue, which could cause abortion.

Blending: Essential oil of jasmine blends well with the essential oils of bergamot, sandalwood, rose, and citrus fruits.

Hands On

When your jasmine produces flowers in the spring and summer, you can make your very own jasmine tea from the flower buds. Use a sharp pair of pruners to cut branches loaded with flowers and leaves. Place the stems in water right away to preserve their freshness.

Jasmine Tea and Coconut Popsicles

These pops are almost as creamy as real ice cream but are dairy free, refined sugar free and can be made vegan by using maple syrup in place of the raw honey.

- 1/3 Cup boiling water
- ½ Cup fresh (¼ cup dried) jasmine flowers
- 1½ Cup full fat, unsweetened coconut milk
- 1 Tablespoon raw honey or maple syrup

1. Pour the boiling water on the jasmine flowers
2. Let steep ten minutes.
3. Add all other ingredients and whisk vigorously for about 30 seconds.
4. Pour into popsicle molds.
5. Freeze about 6 hours.