

277. *PISTACIA LENTISCUS* L. (ANACARDIACEAE) — Mastic

Cultivated primarily for the resin, used as a masticatory and a medicine. Also, used to harden gums and alleviate toothache. Chewed by oriental women as a breath freshener. Used for filling dental caries.² Gum used in surgical varnishes and plasters. Used in the manufacture of confectionery, liqueurs, and varnishes. The Greek liqueur mastiche is made from grape skins flavored with mastic.³⁸ The varnish is used for coating metals and paintings, for lithography, and for retouching negatives. Egyptians used mastic as an embalming agent. Sometimes used in incense; oil of mastic used in cosmetics.⁶ Arabs use the seed oil for food and illumination. The wood and leaves burn green. Twigs are used in basketry.³⁸

Frequently cited in the cancer folklore, the resin or juice from mastic is used for indurations or tumors of the anus, breast, liver, parotid, spleen, stomach, testicles, throat, and uterus. Regarded as analgesic, antitussive, aperitive, aphrodisiac, astringent, carminative, diuretic, expectorant, hemostatic, stimulant to the mucous membranes, stomachic, and sudorific. It is said to be used for apostemes, boils, cankers, carbuncles, cardiodynia, caries, catarrh, cholecystosis, cirrhosis, condylomata, debility, diarrhea, excrescences, gingivitis, gonorrhea, halitosis, hepatitis, leucorrhea, mastitis, phymata, sclerosis, stomach ailments, and tumors.^{32,38} The leaves are used for blennorrhoea and dysentery.

The plant contains a little volatile oil, 9% resin (soluble in alcohol and ether) and 10% resin insoluble in alcohol.² Mastic contains 90% resin, masticin, masticic acid, and a bitter principle.⁸ *Hager's Handbook* lists masticodienonic acid, isomasticodienoic acid, oleanolic acid, and tirucallol. Young leaves and/or twigs contain myricetin ($C_{15}H_{10}O_8$), quercetin, kaempferol, shikimic acid, lupeol, cycloartenol, beta-sitosterol, pinene, camphene, and terpene.³³ Seeds contain aucubin (rhinanthin), choline, and organic acids, and 0 to 0.022% plantease (a crystalline trisaccharide), much starch, and up to 22.08% of an edible oil.⁴²

Toxicity — Classified by the FDA as an Herb of Undefined Safety: "Scarcely ever given internally except in certain cathartic pills."⁶² Mastic can cause dermatitis.⁶