

Myrtus communis L.

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Abstract

Myrtus communis L. (Myrtaceae), commonly known as myrtle, is abundant in the central and southern mainland of Portugal. Less frequent in the north myrtle also occurs in Madeira and in five islands of the Azores archipelago (Faial, Pico, S. Jorge, S. Maria e S. Miguel). This evergreen densely leafy shrub shows beautiful fragrant and delicate white flowers and leaves shed a sweet resinous fragrance when rubbed. The fruit is a small fleshy berry. This is a melliferous plant, and quite appreciated, in Portugal, as an ornamental plant. In addition, different myrtle plant parts are used in regional cuisine, in the preparation of liqueurs and other alcoholic beverages, and in folk medicine. The essential oils isolated from myrtle flowering aerial parts, collected at Campo de Tiro (Portugal), were obtained with a yield of 0.3% (v/f.w.) α -pinene (53%), 1,8-cineole (25%) and limonene (10%) being the dominant components of this essential oil.