

A. Cristina Figueiredo^{1*}, Luis G. Pedro¹, José G. Barroso¹, Helena Trindade¹, João Sanches², Carlos Oliveira³, Miguel Correia³

¹Universidade de Lisboa, Faculdade de Ciências de Lisboa, DBV, IBB, Centro de Biotecnologia Vegetal, C2, Campo Grande, 1749-016 Lisboa, Portugal, ²Instituto da Conservação da Natureza e das Florestas, DCNFLT, Apartado 59 CNEMA, Quinta das Cegonhas, 2001-901 Santarém, Portugal, ³Força Aérea Portuguesa – Campo de Tiro, EN 118, 2890-403 Alcochete, Portugal. *acsf@fc.ul.pt

Abstract

Mint is the common name for most *Mentha* species. *Mentha pulegium* is, however, mostly known, as *poejo* (pennyroyal). Another related species, *M. cervina*, is also known in Portugal as *poejo-fino* (thin-pennyroyal), among other common names. Pennyroyal (*M. pulegium*) is a very aromatic, herbaceous species, frequent in moist soils and along the edges of streams in mainland Portugal and on the Azores and Madeira archipelagos. Usually, both pennyroyal and thin-pennyroyal have the same seasoning and medicinal use. Pennyroyal is traditionally used in culinary decoration, in the famous pennyroyal liquor, and as a culinary herb, primarily in the preparation of the *piso* paste, and the typical fish (*caldeirada*) and bread (*açorda* and *migas*) Portuguese dishes. The infusion and/or pennyroyal liquor is widely used as a digestive and/or to tackle colds. The essential oils isolated from the aerial parts of *M. pulegium*, harvested at vegetative stage at the Campo de Tiro, were obtained with a yield of 0.2 % (v/f.w.). Pulegone (80-86%) and menthone (5-7%) were the essential oils dominant components.

Keywords: *Mentha pulegium* L., Lamiaceae, Labiatae, essential oil