

A photograph of a Frankincense tree in a rocky, arid landscape. The tree is the central focus, with its gnarled trunk and green foliage. The background shows a steep, rocky mountain under a clear sky. The overall tone is warm and natural.

dōTERRA

# *Frankincense*

A CO-IMPACT SOURCING STORY





Resin harvesting in Oman

### An Ancient Tradition—A Living Partnership

High in the sunbaked mountains of southern Oman, where wind carves through stone and the horizon shimmers with heat, a rare transformation happens during harvest. As *Boswellia* trees are carefully scored, the air fills with the sweet, resinous scent of frankincense—a sacred perfume woven into the desert itself.

Sweet, woody, and warm, its aroma has filled temples and homes for centuries—and still today, it marks this land as sacred.



OMAN

SAUDI ARABIA

SUDAN

YEMEN

ETHIOPIA

SOMALIA

KENYA

TANZANIA

Dhofar  
Region

*Boswellia sacra*

Tigray Region

*Boswellia papyrifera*

Amhara Region

*Boswellia papyrifera*

Benishangul Region

*Boswellia papyrifera*

Sanaag Region

*Boswellia carterii*

*Boswellia frereana*

## Multiple Frankincense Species

Frankincense has captivated civilizations for thousands of years—from the temples of ancient Egypt to the trade routes of Assyria and beyond. It's often referred to as the world's oldest global supply chain and its precious resin has been treasured for its spiritual, wellness, and aromatic properties.

dōTERRA honors this rich legacy by sourcing multiple species of frankincense — *Boswellia carterii*, *sacra*, *papyrifera*, and *frereana*. The result is a distinctive essential oil blend, overflowing with tradition.

### Ethiopia: *Boswellia papyrifera*

One of the remarkable species in dōTERRA Frankincense is *Boswellia papyrifera*. These hardy trees prosper in arid, rocky terrain, so dōTERRA focuses its sourcing efforts on the Tigray, Benishangul, and Amhara regions where the land is ideal.

The *papyrifera* trees tend to grow taller with a smooth, upright trunk, and bark that flakes in large sheets. The flowers are very yellow in hue and contain a different scent profile than the other species of frankincense found in the blend.

**“There are natural challenges with the changing climate, human challenges with overgrazing, and technical challenges. We work with companies like dōTERRA to use our propagation techniques [which] help aid the regeneration of *Boswellia* trees. dōTERRA takes these practices and applies them at the local levels, directly with the harvesters.”**

**— Niguse Hagazi (Doctoral Candidate at ICRAF in Ethiopia)**

### Oman: *Boswellia sacra*

In the sun-drenched mountains of southern Oman, the *Boswellia sacra* tree flourishes in one of the world's most dramatic and demanding landscapes. Like its Ethiopian cousin, *Boswellia papyrifera*, it thrives in rugged, arid terrain where few other plants can survive.

The tree has a jagged, twisted form with pale, papery bark that peels away to reveal a greenish layer beneath. Its leaves are soft and feathery when young, clustered at the tips of gnarled branches.

Like *Boswellia papyrifera*, *Boswellia sacra* contains distinct-smelling yellow flowers, but its flowers are paler, and the rich scent is one of blended honey and wood.

### Harvesting the Resin

Harvesting frankincense resin is no easy task, but it's a time-honored tradition that's carried out with care and precision, both in Ethiopia and Oman. Each species of tree is found in a mountainous region, and to harvest them requires an arduous climb.



Cultivation and planting training in Ethiopia



New *Boswellia* trees to be planted in Oman





## Boswellia Resin

Once these skilled harvesters reach the trees, they make deliberate incisions in the bark of the trees, prompting them to release milky sap. Over several days, this sap crystallizes into golden, tear-shaped droplets—each a quiet tribute to the tree's strength and the harvesters' dedication.

The essential oil comes from the resin. One *Boswellia* tree can produce 1–3 kgs of resin in one five-month season in Ethiopia, and 3–5 kgs in Oman per year from the ongoing harvest. It takes 12–20 years for a *Boswellia* tree to mature for harvesting.

Though separated by geography and culture, both harvests reflect a shared reverence for the land, a deep respect for tradition, and a commitment to honoring the ancient legacy of frankincense.

### *Ethiopia*

Here, the *Boswellia papyrifera* resin is gathered by local and semi-nomadic harvesters. They spend weeks in remote, mountainous areas during the peak dry seasons on a rotational basis. Dry season is best because the intense heat helps the sap harden efficiently into high-quality resin.

### *Oman*

The story of *Boswellia sacra* unfolds differently. Not only has dōTERRA's sourcing partner

established its own plantation there, but there are also vast wild frankincense forests. So, this species of frankincense is both cultivated and wild-harvested.

### Production Process

Frankincense essential oil is hydro-distilled because steam distillation doesn't effectively penetrate the hard frankincense resin. Hydro-distillation (also referred to as water distillation) involves placing the resin into boiling water, rather than above it. It's constantly stirred to avoid burning, and to keep the resin from settling on the bottom or foaming.

After that, hydro-distillation follows the same process as steam distillation, with the steam carrying the essential oil up into the condenser.

### Building a Positive Work Culture

dōTERRA's partner in Oman seeks to build a positive work culture, in which full-time salaried employees are extended opportunities to work toward personal goals. They offer multiple employee benefits such as covering medical expenses, paying for travel, and providing long-term loans to help employees purchase land and build homes in their native lands.





Cultivation and planting in Ethiopia

## Promoting Environmental Sustainability

dōTERRA is proud to support sustainable resin harvesting and invest in efforts to increase the population of both species. Nearly half the world's frankincense forests are in decline due to overharvesting, land conversion, and environmental degradation.

In response, dōTERRA has developed a strategy focused on two key areas: sustainable harvesting and land management, and large-scale propagation.

We've worked with experts such as Niguse Hagazi, a PhD student and researcher for the International Center for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF) in Ethiopia, and Professor Emiru Birhane, from the University of Mekele, to educate and empower locals, apply new technologies to address deforestation, and engage in development, management, and production of frankincense trees.

### *Addressing Forest Decline in Ethiopia*

In Ethiopia, frankincense forests are rapidly declining. To help, dōTERRA has co-funded a papyrifera propagation initiative strategy, which includes a nursery in the Sherkole area of the Benishangul region.

To help restore tree populations and support local communities, our strategy includes:

- Establishing nurseries and testing propagation techniques for survival rates.
- Distributing thousands of seedlings and cuttings annually.
- Supporting reforestation and plantation development to reduce pressure on wild trees.
- Setting propagation targets aligned with forest decline rates to ensure long-term regeneration.

### *Maintaining Stability in Oman*

Thanks to strong cultural reverence and government support, Oman's frankincense forests are relatively stable. However, with dōTERRA's support, local partners have launched a large-scale propagation nursery to bolster forest health. Our sourcing partner is so committed to this cause that he has allowed for a significant number of trees to be planted on his own farm.

### *Hubs for Learning*

In both countries, these nurseries can act as hubs for learning, training, and demonstration to inspire future propagation efforts. As global demand for frankincense grows, dōTERRA's responsible sourcing model is more important than ever.

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pursue what's **pure**