

ESSENTIAL OILS OF *MENTHA SP.* FROM SOUTH-EAST OF ALGERIA

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ABSTRACT:

Mentha is the most important genus in the Labiatae (Lamiaceae) family because it contains a number of taxa the essential oils of which have achieved high economic value. These oils are cornmint (the source of natural menthol), peppermint, Scotch spearmint, and native spearmint. The Mentha genus is complex as more than 3000 epithets of Mentha have been published, although a redefinition of the genus has revealed that it contains 18 species and 11 hybrids.

In Algeria, the genus of Mentha is one of the most widely consumed single ingredient herbal teas, or tisanes. It is commonly known under the name of Nânâ.

The chemical composition of oil samples of *Mentha sp.* isolated by hydrodistillation from leaves collected in El Oued location in South–Eastern Algeria was investigated by GC/MS. The average of yield is $8.5 \pm 0.2\%$. (w/w). The chemical composition of the essential oils was largely dominated by monoterpenones: menthone (18.9), pulegone (17.2%) and isomenthone (9.6%). In all the samples we detected 1, 8-cineole (20.7%). This chemical composition shows that *Mentha sp* from El Oued station is the result of hybridization between *Mentha pulegium* and another unknown species. Hybridization of species of section Mentha is common, but identification may be difficult.

KEY-WORDS: Mentha, genus, chemical, hydrodistillation, pulegium, hybridization.