

Chrysopogon zizanioides

[Synonyms : *Agrostis verticillata*, *Anatherum muricatum*, *Anatherum zizanioides*, *Andropogon festucoides*, *Andropogon muricatum*, *Andropogon muricatus*, *Andropogon squarrosus*, *Andropogon zizanioides*, *Holcus zizanioides*, *Phalaris zizanioides*, *Sorghum zizanioides*, *Vetiveria arundinacea*, *Vetiveria muricata*, *Vetiveria odorata*, *Vetiveria odoratissima*, *Vetiveria zizanioides*]

VETIVER (English, German, Italian) is a grass. Native to sub-tropical Asia (particularly India) it has reddish-brown spikelets.

It is also known as Botha grass, Cus cus grass, *Janur* (Sundanese), *Khas-khas* (Bengali), *Khas* (Hindi), *Khus-khus*, *Kostus* (German), *Larasetu* (Javanese), *Móras* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Narawastu* (Malay), *Raiz de móras* (Spanish), *Saivendra* (Singhalese), Sweet grass, *Ushira* (Sanskrit), *Valo-sughandhi* (Gujarati), *Vattiveru* (Telugu), *Vétiver* (French), *Vetiveriagräs* (Swedish), *Vetiveriaheinä* (Finnish), *Vetivern* (Tamil), Vetiver grass, and *Vettiver* (Malayalam, Tamil).

A heavy, viscous essence known as Vetiver Oil or Vetivert Oil, is extracted by steam distillation.

Zizanioides is derived from the genus name *Zizania* and Greek *-oides* (like) components meaning ‘like plants in that (wild rice) genus’.

Apart from its use in perfumery (which began in Europe in the second half of the 19th Century) the plant is able to bind the soil and is often grown on steep banks to halt or prevent erosion. In fact at the turn of the 20th and 21st Centuries authorities note its active use in 106 countries (not least Thailand) as a major agent in battles against soil erosion.

The grass produced by Java (now part of Indonesia) is sought after by the perfumery industry today for preparations with an oriental and musky, woody scent, reminiscent of violets) eg. Mousseline. It is also an ingredient in cosmetics and toiletry products such as soap. The oil exported by the French island of La Réunion is known as Bourbon vetiver and generally exceeds an annual 35 tons. While Haiti has recently become an additional major producer.

The dried roots are used to make sachets, fancy mats, fans (known in the past in the USA as Sandal-root fans) and awnings (including those over palanquins). It is the custom in India to pour water on these awnings (known as Khas-khas tatti), then blow air through them to spread the fragrance. Mustique and some of the other West Indian islands use the roots as a moth repellent for clothing.

In Haiti the grass is used for thatching homes, while in the Philippines the flower stalks (after preparation) have been woven into hats. Vetiver has also been used to make brooms and a poor quality paper.

The young leaves have been grazed by cattle.

Medicinally, the roots of the Indian variety are used to make a tonic. In eastern India vetiver is a remedy for fever and rheumatism. It is also used to treat period problems, kill parasites and improve digestion.