

FRANKINCENSE

SAVING A TREE A SYMBOL & A WAY OF LIFE

For more than 5,000 years, *Boswellia sacra* trees in Oman's Dhofar region have been tapped for a rare aromatic resin traded across Arabia, Africa and Europe, mostly known as **frankincense** (or *olibanum*). This much sought-after resin has been used for centuries in cultural ceremonies, but also as a cosmetic agent, and as traditional medicine to treat a variety of ailments.

Frankincense is deeply meshed into the Omani identity, and its production persists to this day. But its future is unclear, with incorrect tapping practices and overgrazing – among other threats – placing frankincense trees at risk.

A VALUABLE TREE UNDER THREAT



Intense or Incorrect Tapping Practices



Gravel Mining



Overgrazing



Insects

A PROJECT TO DETERMINE HOW TO SUSTAINABLY HARVEST FRANKINCENSE

Sustainable harvesting must be applied to conserve frankincense trees and the livelihoods they support. Over the course of 4 years, the **Environment Society of Oman** studied the effects of tapping methodologies on yield

production and the wellbeing of trees. The project was led by Dr Mohsin Al-Amri and field assistant Badar Al-Shanfary, and is the first significant research of this kind in Oman.

4 YEARS
STUDY
(2010-2014)

4 LOCATIONS
WITH **45 TREES**
EACH

180 NATURALLY
GROWN
TREES MONITORED

3 METEOROLOGICAL
STATIONS
TO DETERMINE THE IMPACT
OF WEATHER ON YIELD

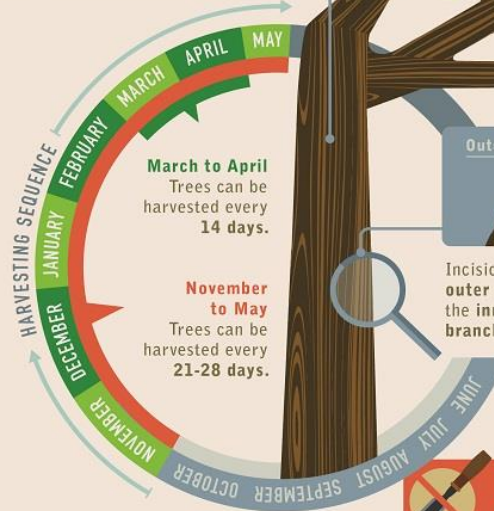


HOW TO SUSTAINABLY HARVEST FRANKINCENSE TREES

The study has demonstrated how specific harvesting techniques can reduce the mortality of frankincense trees and increase their yield.

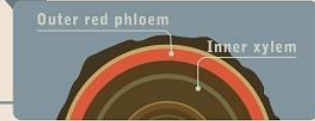


12 cm² cut size, barely shaving the external layer. Cuts about **30 cm** distant from each other.



March to April
Trees can be harvested every **14 days**.

November to May
Trees can be harvested every **21-28 days**.



Incisions should be limited to the **outer red phloem**, should not reach the **inner xylem** and should **avoid branch nodes**.



Tapping should stop **2-3 weeks** before the rainy season.



Harvesting can be continual for **3 years**, followed by a **1-2 year rest period** to allow scars to heal.

MAXIMUM YIELD

A tree reaches its maximum yield productivity in the 3rd or 4th harvesting sequence, and in the 3rd harvesting year. The lower part of the tree trunk produces more resin compared to the upper parts of the trunk.

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