

GRASAS Y ACEITES 70 (3)

July–September 2019, e317

ISSN-L: 0017-3495

<https://doi.org/10.3989/gya.0927182>

## Composition and characterization by GC-MS of the essential oil extracted from *Nicotiana glauca* Graham

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Submitted: 01 September 2018; Accepted: 10 December 2018. Published online: 7 May 2019

**SUMMARY:** Fresh leaves of *N. glauca* were collected from the northern region of Tunisia. The leaves were submitted to water distillation for 4 h, using a Clevenger-type apparatus. The obtained essential oils were dried over anhydrous sodium sulphate and after filtration, stored at 4 °C until use. The chemical composition of the isolated essential oil was analyzed by gas chromatography–mass spectrometry (GC–MS). Eighteen compounds were identified: eugenol, the major compound in the essential oil, was present at a high level (58.49%), followed by nonadecane, eugenyl acetate and tridecane, 3-methyl at 6.38; 5.57 and 5.19%, respectively. The percentage of compounds dodecane, 2, 6, 11 trimethyl, tetradecane, docosane, tricosane and 1, 2-benzene dicarboxylic, dibutyl ester varied between 1 and 2%; whereas the other compounds (including limonene, and saturated hydrocarbons) remained at low percentages, not exceeding 1%. This study could be very useful for the characterization, pharmaceutical and therapeutic applications of the essential oil from *N. glauca*.

**KEYWORDS:** Essential oil; Eugenol; GC-MS; Hydrodistillation; *N. glauca*

**RESUMEN:** Composición y caracterización mediante GC-MS de aceite esencial extraído de *Nicotiana glauca* Graham. Las hojas frescas de *N. glauca* se recolectaron en la región norte de Túnez. Las hojas se sometieron a destilación en agua durante 4 h, utilizando un aparato de destilación tipo Clevenger. Los aceites esenciales obtenidos se secaron y filtraron sobre sulfato de sodio anhidro y se almacenaron a 4 °C hasta su uso. La composición química del aceite esencial aislado se analizó mediante cromatografía de gases y espectrometría de masas (GC-MS). Se identificaron dieciocho compuestos: eugenol es el compuesto mayoritario (58,49%), seguido por nonadecano, acetato de eugenilo y tridecano, 3-metilo con 6,38%; 5,57% y 5,19% respectivamente. El porcentaje de los compuestos: dodecano, 2,6,11 trimetil, tetradecano, docosano, tricosano y 1,2-benceno dicarboxílico, dibutil éster varió entre 1 y 2%, mientras que el resto de compuestos (incluido el limoneno e hidrocarburos saturados) permanecieron en cantidades que no superan el 1%. Este estudio de caracterización podría ser de gran utilidad para aplicaciones farmacéuticas y terapéuticas del aceite esencial de *N. glauca*.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Aceite esencial; Eugenol; GC-MS; Hidrodestilación; *N. glauca*

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**Citation/Cómo citar este artículo:** Cherif A, Ammar S, Boukhchina S. 2019. Composition and characterization by GC-MS of the essential oil extracted from *Nicotiana glauca* Graham. *Grasas Aceites* 70 (3), e317. <https://doi.org/10.3989/gya.0927182>

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The genus *Nicotiana* of the family Solanaceae contains more than 40 species. *Nicotiana tabacum* L. and *Nicotiana rustica* L. are the well-known species spread throughout the world (Pandey and Chada 1998). The leaves of these species yield tobacco and are commonly cultivated as crops. However, *N. glauca*, also called wild tobacco or tree tobacco, is considered the most powerful of the *Nicotiana* species, due to its potential for exploitation in the therapeutic field. Like all *Nicotiana*, it was used for many medical treatments (Watt and Breyer-Brandwijk 1962); it is used to treat burns and inflammatory diseases in some countries (Morel *et al.*, 1998). Warmed leaves are applied to the head to relieve headache, on the throat to relieve pain and put in shoes for painful feet (Van Wyk and Gericke 2000). *N. glauca* is also known as a highly toxic and teratogenic plant (Panter *et al.*, 1999). The recorded death in humans was due to poisoning by accidental ingestion of the leaves of *N. glauca* (Sims *et al.*, 1999; Manoguerra and Freeman 1982). A considerable amount of work has been carried out on the metabolism of nicotine in *Nicotiana* species (Leete and Chedekel 1973) and other works have been conducted on the total alkaloid or nicotine content, which was determined by steam distillation and spectrophotometry. Among the alkaloids in *Nicotiana*, nicotine was the dominant alkaloid in the leaves of 33 species, nor-nicotine of 24 species, and anabasine of 2 species (*N. glauca* and *N. debneyi*); whereas in the roots of *Nicotiana*, anabasine predominated in 7 species of *Nicotiana* including *N. glauca*. According to (Skliar *et al.*, 2000), results show that *N. glauca* contains 7-dehydrocholesterol, vitamin D3 and its hydroxylated metabolites. Recently, (Tabana *et al.*, 2016) reported the anti neovascularization effect of scopoletin, an active principle extract from *N. glauca*, and its antitumorigenic activity on human tumors in xenograft models.

But, to our knowledge no information is available on the essential oil (EO) composition of *N. glauca*. Essential oils of plants and other products from secondary metabolism have been widely used in traditional medicine, food flavoring, pharmaceutical industries, perfumes and cosmetics (Bauer K, Garbe D, Surburg H. 2008; Price 1998; Satil *et al.*, 2003) and some plant secondary metabolites were implied in the protection against herbivore attack (Kaczorowski and Markman 2016). Some biological activities of essential oils have been known for long time (Digrak *et al.*, 1999; Dang *et al.*, 2001; Grassmann *et al.*, 2000). On the other hand the quantitative composition of the essential oils of many aromatic plants is greatly influenced by genotype and agronomic conditions, such as harvesting time, plant age and crop density (Marotti *et al.*, 1996).

The present study performed on *N. glauca*, which was harvested from the northern region of Tunisia, provides the content and chemical composition of the essential oil analyzed by GC-MS.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1. Plant material

Fresh leaves of *N. glauca* were submitted to hydro distillation for 4 h using a Clevenger type apparatus. Then, the extract of EO was obtained by petroleum ether extraction (Nakamura *et al.*, 1999). The solvent was evaporated; the extract of EO was dried with anhydrous sodium sulphate. The essential oils were stored in dark glass bottles at 4 °C (Marotti *et al.*, 1994) until analysis.

### 2.2. Gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) analysis

The gas chromatography-mass spectrometry analysis was carried out using a capillary column HP-5MS (30 m x 0.25i.d, film thickness: 0.25mm). The carrier gas was helium at a flow velocity of 1.2 ml/min; and the splitter used a 1:5 ratio. Oven temperature was kept at 50 °C for 3 min and programmed from 50 °C to 220 °C at a rate of 7 °C/min, then isothermal at 250 °C for 5 min. The injector temperature was 240 °C. For GC-MS detection an electron ionization system was used. Mass spectra were taken at 70 eV. The source of impact electronic ionization was set at 230 °C. The essential oil was diluted in hexane and 1µl was injected for analysis.

The identification of compounds was determined by comparison of their mass spectra with those of the database in the Wiley GC-MS Library and those in the literature (Adams 2007) where the components were listed according to their elution on the a polar column.

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To our knowledge, no investigations have been previously performed on the chemical composition of the essential oil from *N. glauca*. The essential oil isolated from the leaves of *N. glauca* by hydro distillation (yield < 1 %, on dry weight basis) was analyzed by GC and GC-MS. The content and distribution of EO in the green leaves of *N. glauca* are summarized in Table 1. A total of 18 compounds representing almost 93.33% of the essential oil were characterized. Seven compounds were detected but not identified (NI) (Figure 1).

The essential oil of *N. glauca* contains a complex mixture consisting of mainly phenol, saturated, cyclic and terpenic compounds (Table 1). It was dominated by eugenol (58.49%) followed by nonadecane,

TABLE 1. Composition of the essential oils from leaves of a Tunisian variety of *Nicotiana* (*Nicotiana glauca* Glauca).

Pic number	Rt <sup>a</sup> (min)	Compound	Chemical formula	Content %
1	9.35	Heptane,2,2,4,6,6-Pentamethyl	C <sub>12</sub> H <sub>26</sub>	0.50
2	10.28	Limonene	C <sub>10</sub> H <sub>16</sub>	0.33
3	10.86	NI <sup>b</sup>		1.84
4	11.85	NI		0.44
5	15.61	Heptadecane,8-methyl	C <sub>18</sub> H <sub>38</sub>	4.19
6	16.51	Dodecane,2,6,11 trimethyl	C <sub>15</sub> H <sub>32</sub>	1.08
7	17.34	Eugenol	C <sub>12</sub> H <sub>12</sub> O <sub>2</sub>	58.49
8	17.91	Tetradecane	C <sub>14</sub> H <sub>30</sub>	1.20
9	19.67	Nonadecane	C <sub>19</sub> H <sub>40</sub>	6.38
10	19.83	Heneicosane	C <sub>21</sub> H <sub>44</sub>	0.62
11	20.31	Eugenyl acetate	C <sub>12</sub> H <sub>14</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	5.57
12	20.61	NI		0.34
13	21.43	Hexadecane	C <sub>16</sub> H <sub>34</sub>	0.47
14	23.37	NI		0.33
15	23.91	Docosane	C <sub>22</sub> H <sub>46</sub>	1.40
16	26.44	Tridecane,3-methyl	C <sub>14</sub> H <sub>30</sub>	5.19
17	27.03	Tricosane	C <sub>23</sub> H <sub>48</sub>	1.33
18	27.09	1,2-Benzene dicarboxilic, dibutyl ester	C <sub>16</sub> H <sub>22</sub> O <sub>4</sub>	1.00
19	29.33	NI		3.17
20	29.43	NI		0.33
21	29.86	NI		0.76
22	32.12	Triacontane	C <sub>30</sub> H <sub>62</sub>	2.62
23	32.74	Hexacosane	C <sub>26</sub> H <sub>54</sub>	0.78
24	32.82	Eicosane	C <sub>20</sub> H <sub>42</sub>	0.70
25	34.59	Pentacosane	C <sub>25</sub> H <sub>52</sub>	0.95

a: Retention Time, b: Non Identified

eugenyl acetate and tridecane,3-methyl at 6.38%; 5.57% and 5.19%, respectively. These compounds were considered as major in the EO; while the percentages of dodecane,2,6,11 trimethyl, tetradecane, docosane, tricosane and 1,2-benzene dicarboxilic, dibutyl ester varied between 1 and 2%. The remaining compounds (included limonene and saturated hydrocarbons (SH)) were only present in small percentage (< 1%), with the exception of triacontane, which was found at 2.62%.

Compared to our results, the same number of compounds was found in the essential oils of *N. rustica*; whereas twenty-seven EO were detected in *N. forgetiana* (Schlotzhauer *et al.*, 1995). According to Popova *et al.*, (2017) nineteen compounds in the essential oil of the leaves of *N. alata* were characterized, but different compounds in each species were detected by GC-MS. Our results showed the presence of 10 n-alkanes (saturated hydrocarbons). However, compared to the above authors, only two saturated hydrocarbons (tricosane and pentacosane) were identified in *N. rustica* and five SH were identified in *N. forgetiana*. The percentage

of the EO composition was very different in the same genus. In fact, the percentages of tricosane in our study on *N. glauca* and in others on *N. rustica* and *N. forgetiana* were 1.33, 0.38, and 8.16%, respectively. In our research, the major compound was eugenol (58.49%). In contrast, phytol (38.82-48.53%) was the dominant compound in *N. alata*; nicotine (25.92%) and pentacosane (8.35%) were the major compounds in *N. rustica* and *N. forgetiana*, respectively.

The same major compounds in the EO can be found in different plants. Eugenol, the major component of the oil of *N. glauca*, was likewise present in a higher quantity (72-90%) in the EO fraction of *Syzygium aromaticum* (Bao *et al.*, 2012). This component varied between 3.1 and 21.1% in the essential oil of *Ocimum basilicum* cultivated in Turkey, and in the same species the percentage of methyl eugenol was detected at a high level (> 34%) (Telci *et al.*, 2006). However, the chemical composition of essential oils was specific to each species, regardless of its origin. In fact, the results showed that the EO of *N. glauca* (Tunisia) has a specific chemical

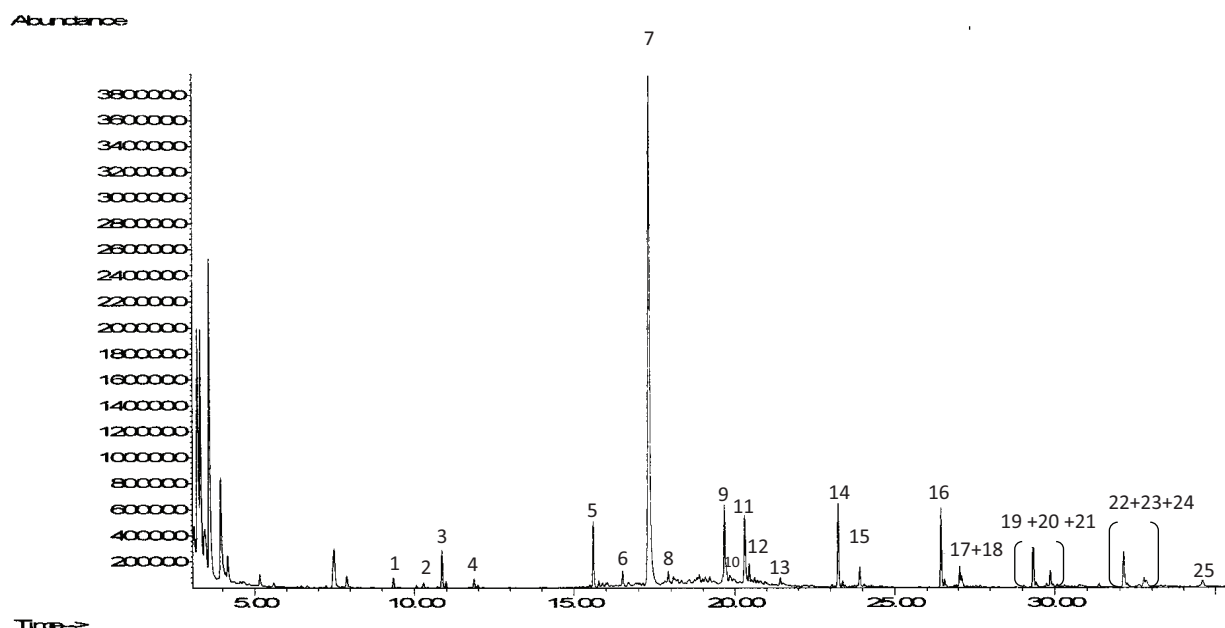


FIGURE 1. Total ion chromatogram of essential oil from *Nicotiana glauca* Graham. (For compound names see Table 1).

composition compared to *N. rustica*, *N. forgetiana* (Oxford) and *N. alata* (Bulgaria). This information could be used as a fingerprint for this species.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The content and distribution of EO in the green leaves of *N. glauca* are provided in this work. Eugenol was the dominant EO followed by nonadecane, eugenyl acetate and tridecane,3-methyl. In general, the *N. glauca* oil was characterized by a high percentage of the saturated hydrocarbons; while heneicosane, limonene and hexadecane were the minor constituents (< 0.5% for each compound) in the EO. This plant is therefore considered a potential source of eugenol (58.49%) and due to this high eugenol content, it can be exploited for medicinal purposes and other applications.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank the Arid Regions Institute (IRA) personnel (Medenine, Tunisia) for the availability of the GC-MS used to carry out this research.

#### DECLARATION OF FUNDING SOURCE AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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