

# LitSara®

*An Essential Oil from Sarawak*

**A**midst the hilly forests of Sarawak grows the Sarawak Litsea, a plant long utilised by the indigenous communities as a source for flavour and healing.



*Traditional harvesting of the Sarawak Litsea fruits and leaves in Kampung Kiding is carried out in a safe and sustainable manner*

Thriving along ascending clearings of up to 2,300 metres above sea level, this small tree bears fruits and leaves that emit a crisp and invigorating scent.

Its fruits, small, delicate and often mistaken as peppercorn, are a popular culinary condiment and to treat stomachache among the communities of the highlands – the Kelabit in Bario, Lun Bawang in the Long Semadoh area of Lawas and the Bidayuh in Kiding, a village nestled in the Padawan range near Kuching.



*The fruits of the Sarawak Litsea*

Its leaves too are used as a traditional relief for backaches. It is from these very fruits and leaves that LitSara®, an essential oil is obtained by steam distillation. LitSara® exemplifies the powerful realm of useful essential oils. It has shown, through laboratory



*Distillation of the LitSara® oil for research and development is also carried out by the communities involved in the project*

testing, both anti-microbial and repellency properties, besides having a pleasantly revitalising scent.

Above all, it is traditionally used, thus making LitSara® a suitable ingredient for personal care products such as natural handmade soaps, scented multipurpose spray and even in wet wipes for the adventurous explorers of the rainforests to repel insects.

Because the tree, also known as *Litsea cubeba*, produces a unique oil composition which differs from the same species found in other countries and locations, the Sarawak Litsea is registered as a Geographical Indicator, while the essential oil LitSara® is trademarked.

The Sarawak Biodiversity Centre (SBC) works closely with the indigenous communities of Sarawak, whose traditional knowledge on the plant led its team of researchers to the discovery of the essential oil. The communities are actively involved with the Centre in the collection and extraction of LitSara® for research and development.

*Examples of personal care products that incorporate the LitSara® essential oil*



Their effort in documenting the uses of the tree, sustainable harvesting of the fruits and leaves while conserving the trees, and extraction of the oil does not go unrecognised.

To acknowledge the importance of traditional knowledge of indigenous communities in providing leads to discoveries and new applications from the biodiversity that they utilise, the Sarawak government has incorporated provisions for Access and Benefit Sharing in the Sarawak Biodiversity Centre Ordinance.

This is to ensure that the indigenous communities play a pivotal role in adding value to their traditional knowledge and local biodiversity, and are also duly acknowledged through recognition and equitable sharing of benefits arising from product commercialisation.



*A member of the community in Bario funnels out LitSara® oil to be sent to SBC*

Interested in using personal care products containing LitSara®, in SBC's work with the indigenous communities and its R&D programmes?



Surf for more information on SBC's website, [www.sbc.org.my](http://www.sbc.org.my) or call the Centre's

corporate communications team at **+6082 610610** (ask for Asha or Constance) or feel free to leave a message via Facebook on [www.facebook.com/sarawak.biodiversity.centre](https://www.facebook.com/sarawak.biodiversity.centre)