



IASC Aloe Vera FAQ  
Version 1.0

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### **What is aloe vera?**

Aloe vera is the common name of one particular species of the genus *Aloe*. A member of the Xanthorrhoeaceae family, aloe vera is one of approximately 400 or more species of *Aloe* and the most commonly used in consumer products. The proper scientific name is *Aloe vera* (L.) Burm. f. The synonym *Aloe barbadensis* or *Aloe barbadensis* (Mill.) or (Miller) is commonly used to refer to aloe vera and can also be seen on many product labels.

### **Are there standards established defining what is and isn't aloe vera?**

The IASC, and other countries such as the European Union, China, and Korea, have established standards to define what is (and what is not) “aloe vera” in finished products. The IASC standard states that only products containing acemannan, or the beta 1-4 acetylated glucomannans, can be accurately labeled as aloe vera. Acemannan is a naturally occurring polysaccharide that is present in aloe vera and is used as an identifier of the botanical by analytical means. Products that do not contain acemannan are not considered to be true aloe vera based on this standard.

### **What parts of the plant are used in products?**

The primary component of the plant used in most products is the leaf, which can be processed in two ways to make aloe vera juice. Aloe vera juice can then also be converted to powder or concentrated. More information on this can be found under “Processing”.

The other substance found within the leaf that has been used in commerce, primarily as an OTC laxative drug, is the aloe latex. This substance is found between the rind and the inner leaf material, and is a bitter, yellow-brown to reddish substance that contains anthraquinones, including a powerful constituent called aloin which acts as a laxative. As noted in the processing section below, manufacturers remove this substance during raw material processing and the IASC standard for aloin in products for oral consumption is less than 10ppm (parts per million). For products for topical usage, the Cosmetic Ingredient Review established a limit of 50ppm of aloin, which is the accepted industry standard.

## CULTIVATION

### **Where is aloe vera grown for commercial usage?**

Aloe vera is grown worldwide in temperate climates, and can be found in commercial operations in the US, Central America, South America, China, India, Africa, the Caribbean, Australia and the Asian tropics. Recently, requests for assistance in setting up greater commercial cultivation & processing operations in countries such as Greece, Iran and other middle-eastern areas have been noted.



**I'm thinking of growing aloe vera commercially – are there any guides or publications that might help me?**

In 2009, the IASC published an electronic document on aloe vera, “*IASC Presents a Scientific Primer on Aloe*” that includes:

- Information on commonly traded aloe species primarily used in the nutrition industry, and key components;
- cultivation considerations;
- aloe vera as a market commodity, including pricing information;
- a detailed appendix on aloe species; and
- details on requirements for US organic certification

This document can be obtained at the following website:

[http://www.iasc.org/pdfs/IASC\\_Aloe\\_vera\\_A\\_Scientific\\_Primer.pdf](http://www.iasc.org/pdfs/IASC_Aloe_vera_A_Scientific_Primer.pdf)

**Is aloe vera grown for commercial use done so sustainably?**

Yes, aloe vera is cultivated commercially in a sustainable manner. More information can be found on harvesting and cultivation in the IASC publication “*IASC Presents a Scientific Primer on Aloe*”, linked above. CITES, [describe organization] lists every other species other than aloe vera.

**Is aloe vera organically grown?**

In nearly all cases, yes. Many countries have their own organic standards and seal-based programs, including the US, EU, and Canada to name a few, and each of them are somewhat different in their requirements. Aloe vera is typically grown without the use of pesticides as the botanical has so few natural predators, and, generally speaking, as long as growers adhere to the organic standards, there is no reason why the vast majority of aloe vera plants cannot be grown organically.

Buyers of raw materials should verify crops are grown per the appropriate organic standards. Links to a few of the more well-known standards are below:

USDA National Organic Program (NOP)

[http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=ORGANIC\\_CERTIFICATIO&parentnav=AGRICULTURE&navtype=RT](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=ORGANIC_CERTIFICATIO&parentnav=AGRICULTURE&navtype=RT)

European Union Organic Farming Program

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/eu-policy\\_en](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/organic/eu-policy_en)

Canada Organic Products Regulations

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/english/fssa/orgbio/orgbioe.shtml>



### **Where can I find suppliers of aloe vera raw materials?**

The IASC has a list of aloe vera suppliers among its members, which includes the most prominent suppliers in the world. Many of these suppliers also sell IASC certified aloe vera raw materials (see Finished Products Section below for more details on the IASC certification program).

Please visit the following link or contact the IASC for more information on suppliers.

[www.iasc.org/Members.html](http://www.iasc.org/Members.html)

### **PROCESSING**

As mentioned prior, the main part of the aloe vera plant used is the leaf, which can be processed in two different ways to produce aloe vera juice. The different processing procedures are described below:

#### **Aloe vera leaf juice**

Aloe vera leaf juice is made by taking entire aloe vera leaves and grinding them up via some type of maceration. Typically some enzymatic treatment is used (such as cellulase) to break down the rind and heavier-weight materials, and then the resulting slurry is filtered, usually with charcoal filtration, to remove any other unwanted materials such as the aloe latex (yellow, bitter tasting exudate that is a powerful laxative). The remainder is aloe vera leaf juice.

#### **Aloe vera inner leaf juice**

Aloe vera inner leaf juice is made by removing the rind prior to processing, either by machine or by hand, and then rinsing away the aloe latex. The remaining, gelatinous inner-leaf material is then ground/crushed into aloe vera inner leaf juice.

### **FINISHED PRODUCTS**

#### **How can I tell if a product truly contains aloe vera?**

Aloe vera is a widely recognized and popular ingredient, and many products claim to contain aloe vera on the label. As with many industries, adulteration and misbranding can occur. The IASC has managed a seal-based certification program since the mid 1980's. This program seeks to clearly identify products in the marketplace that contain aloe vera from those that do not.

The program consists of on-site inspections of manufacturing facilities and the analysis of raw materials and finished products using scientific/analytical methodologies to accurately determine the presence of aloe vera. Products displaying the seal, and listed on [the certified products list](#) of the IASC website, have demonstrated compliance with these parameters and are proven to contain aloe vera. There are also lists of products and companies that are [no longer certified](#) and those that have been found using the seal or program language without actively



participating/having their products analyzed ([the Not Certified List](#)) – which should also be consulted.

### **I want to purchase the BEST aloe vera product – which is the best?**

An excellent question! And the answer isn't a simple one. The best aloe vera product is the one that has been proven to contain aloe vera and that you enjoy. Whether it is made from organically grown aloe vera, contains 90% aloe vera juice or 85% aloe vera juice, is made of inner leaf or purified whole leaf juice, is flavored or not, are all choices you need to make based on your personal preferences and experiences.

Looking for the IASC certification seal is one way to know that you are getting a product that contains aloe vera. If a product is not displaying the seal – though it MAY contain aloe vera - there's no way for you to know it with any certainty. Some companies also use the seal illegally so you have to [check the certified products list](#) to be sure they are an active participant and their products have been analyzed and approved.

In the US, most marketers of aloe vera products manufacture and sell their products as foods or dietary supplements. As mandated by Food & Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and under the Dietary Supplement Health & Education Act (DSHEA), such products are not allowed under federal law to display claims that products can be used to cure, treat or mitigate disease (for example: “good for ulcerative colitis”). Though there have been studies that show aloe vera has the potential to be of value as a treatment for certain ailments, under the current laws such product claims are unlawful and products making such claims should be considered with caution.

### **What do all the different terms on product labels mean?**

Many different terms can be seen on product labels. The primary terms one might encounter are defined in an IASC labeling guidance and definitions document available on the IASC website, and can be found at the following link:

[http://www.iasc.org/pdfs/10\\_0405\\_IASC\\_Labeling\\_Guidance\\_Definitions.pdf](http://www.iasc.org/pdfs/10_0405_IASC_Labeling_Guidance_Definitions.pdf)

### **I have a medical condition and have been told taking aloe vera will help – should I take it?**

As with any medical condition, you should consult a licensed physician before engaging in any form of treatment, and ensure the practitioner knows of all other prescription and OTC drugs or herbal remedies you may be taking. The IASC does not have trained medical practitioners on staff, and cannot provide advice on the usage of aloe vera for specific conditions.