

Did You Know?



Lemon Balm *Melissa officinalis*

- *Melissa officinalis* is also known as lemon balm, sweet balm, melissa balm, melissa, heart's delight, English balm, bush balm and honey plant, among other common names.
- This lemon-scented herb is in the Lamiaceae or mint family. It is native to Europe and Central Asia and cultivated throughout most of the temperate and subtropical regions around the world.
- Lemon balm contains both vitamin C and thiamin (a B vitamin), is high in flavonoids and has anti-viral, antibacterial, antifungal, and mood-elevating properties.
- The lemony flavor and fragrance are due to citral and citronellal in the essential oil. But rose-scented geraniol and lavender-scented linalool are also present and contribute to the aroma as well.
- Lemon balm is a vigorous grower, thriving in sun to part shade. It will do well in containers for a season before needing to be divided. It is easily propagated by division, cuttings, and seed.
- Stems can be cut back for use as needed, up to 50% at a time. Pruning or harvesting prior to seed set will help control the spread of the plant.
- The history of medicinal and culinary herbal uses dates back over 2000 years. It was used to encourage bees to return to the hives in first century Rome. And early herbalists used lemon balm for its medicinal and uplifting qualities. Europeans also used it as a strewing herb. It has been used to polish furniture.
- In the Victorian Language of Flowers, lemon balm was used to signify pleasant company of friends, memories, a cure, and don't misuse me.
- Early immigrants brought lemon balm with them to North America. They used it to make potpourri and as a substitute for lemons in jams and jellies. There is record of lemon balm being grown on Thomas Jefferson's farm.
- Culinary uses for this plant are many, both sweet and savory. It can be added to teas and other beverages, salads, soups, butters, cheeses, fish, egg dishes, vegetables, fruit salads, jams, jellies, sauces, dressings, herb vinegar, and many desserts.

Did You Know?



- Liqueurs such as Benedictine and Chartreuse include lemon balm in their flavoring. Commercially, lemon balm extract is used to flavor candy, baked goods, pudding and frozen dairy desserts.
- The fragrance and antimicrobial properties of lemon balm make it ideal to use in homemade cosmetics, skin cleansers, bath bags, hair products, lotions, body fragrances and lip balms.

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