

# Did You Know?

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## Lemon Basil, *Ocimum ×africanum*

- Lemon basil, with a delightful lemon fragrance and flavor, is the natural hybrid between *Ocimum ×africanum* (the hybrid between *Ocimum basilicum* and *Ocimum americanum*). There are some lemon basil varieties on the market that claim to be *O. basilicum*.
- Lemon basil is thought to be native to Africa and India. It was introduced to the United States around 1940.
- The lemony scent and flavor makes lemon basil popular in cuisines all around the world today.
- According to an article from the National Institute of Health, chemical, pharmaceutical, and food industry uses are prompting increased economic interest and cultivation.
- Popular cultivars include 'Sweet Dani' with a compact habit and nice lemon aroma. 'Mrs. Burns' is known as a tall heirloom variety from New Mexico, with a strong, sweet lemon aroma and flavor. And newly introduced, 'Everleaf Lemon Basil' said to have a sweet, bright, and complex lemon flavor as well as a tidy upright growth habit and bolting resistance.
- Use lemon basil in hot or iced herbal teas, smoothies, salad dressings, marinades, pasta dishes, pesto, and desserts.
- Like other basil varieties, the flowers are edible and flavorful as well.
- Grow lemon basil like other basil types, in full sun and well-drained soil, allowing it to dry slightly between waterings.
- Pinch basil seedlings as they get tall to encourage branching. Harvest regularly, up to 1/3 of the plant at a time, to encourage a long season of growth by preventing flowering.

**Tell us your favorite lemon basil and why!**  
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