

Did You Know?



Lemon Verbena *Aloysia citriodora*

- Widely known as lemon verbena, but common names also include vervain and lemon beebrush.
- The genus *Aloysia* was given to this plant in 1819 to honor Maria Luisa, Princess of Parma.
- In the language of flowers, lemon verbena symbolizes sensitivity.
- Native to western South America, lemon verbena is often thought to have the best lemon fragrance of the lemon-scented herbs and is intensely lemon flavored.
- Lemon verbena was very popular with the ladies of the Victorian era who sewed leaves into the darts of their dresses, tucked them into hankies and nose gays and floated them in finger bowls of water.
- In the movie *Gone with the Wind*, lemon verbena is mentioned as the favorite plant of Scarlet O'Hara's mother.
- The Spanish brought the lemon verbena plant to Europe in the 17th century.
- Since the 17th century, lemon verbena has been cultivated for its oil. Today, France, Algeria and Morocco cultivate lemon verbena for its essential oil.
- Lemon verbena has sweet and savory uses including: teas, baked goods, salads and salad dressing, as well as potpourri. It can also be used to flavor meat or fish and in making compound butter, pudding, sorbet and ice cream. See Herb of the Month Recipes for more culinary tips.
- With centuries of medicinal uses, lemon verbena has been valued for its anti-inflammatory, antispasmodic, and antioxidant benefits. It has been used to treat sleep disorders, digestive ailments, asthma, arthritis, skin problems, varicose veins and even as a tension reducer and to sharpen concentration.
- Leaves are used fresh but also retain their fragrance when dried.
- The fresh scent is popular in home products such as soaps and room fresheners. Put sprigs in vacuum cleaner bags or add to potpourri.
- Thrives in gardens or containers in full sun and rich, well-drained soil. It can grow up to 6 feet tall in warm climates and is hardy in zones 8-11.
- Favorite planting locations include along paths and on patios where simply bumping against it or gently rubbing the leaves releases the lemon fragrance.
- Pinch new growth to encourage a bushy habit.
- Take cuttings of new growth to propagate lemon verbena easily.