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Lemon Balm, *Melissa officinalis* L.



One of the garden squares is devoted to herbs used mainly in herbal teas. There are verbena, chamomile and lemon balm. This newsletter will introduce you to lemon balm and its benefits. It resembles mint since it belongs to the same family. You will recognise it by its lemony scent.

Botanical description

Lemon balm is a perennial, so it will grow back in the spring. It is an herbaceous plant with rowing stems that look like a clump. Its stems are square like mint. Its leaves are a beautiful green, dentate and embossed. Small

white flowers develop in the axils of the leaves. The plant has a fresh lemon scent, which is why some people confuse it with lemongrass. Its lemony taste is highly appreciated in cooking and in herbal teas.

How to grow

Lemon balm grows in the sun or half-shade in well-drained, not too rich and fresh soil. It should be watered in dry weather and protected with light mulch for the winter. These plants are productive for three to four years. They can be cut to grow roots in water or propagated by root division. They are an excellent honey plant that attracts pollinating insects.



Which part to use

The leaves are used in cooking and the flowering tops are used for medicinal purposes.

Cosmetic uses

Lemon balm is known as a calming plant and can be used in a soothing bath.

Soothing bath

- 15 ml of lemon balm
- 5 ml of orange, rose or lavender flowers
- 15 ml fresh pansy leaves and flowers from the garden
- 60 ml oat flakes

Place all ingredients in a muslin or cotton bag and hang up on the tap while filling the bath.

Then float the bag in the bath. Lemon balm and orange blossoms will soothe the nervous system and skin. Pansy cleans and softens the skin. Oatmeal is cleansing and contains many proteins, vitamins and minerals.

Domestic uses

Lemon balm fits well in an ornamental flowerbed. It can decorate balconies or patios and its scent will keep insects away. You can also put a few sachets of dried leaves in the linen cabinet to keep moths away and to perfume fabrics. It also has its place in potpourri. It can also be found in pillows made of soothing herbs such as hops, chamomile, and lavender.

Medicinal uses

Lemon balm is a calming plant for both the nervous and digestive systems. It calms tension and anxiety, prepares for sleep while raising the spirit, supports memory and helps concentration. It calms the stomachaches of nervous and troubled children. Lemon balm is carminative and relieves gas. It gently stimulates the liver and gallbladder.

Recipe for Lemon balm moon tea

- 14 g Lemon balm
 - 1 l water
- Mix the water and lemon balm in a transparent glass bottle. Place the bottle on the ground, exposed to moonlight for a period of two to eight hours.

Culinary uses

Fresh lemon balm leaves can be added to salads, soups and marinades. It gives good taste and helps digestion. It is used to make liqueurs: Chartreuse, Eau des Carmes... You can macerate 60 g of fresh lemon balm in a litre of white wine for 48 hours and then filter it. Take a glass with meals. Lemon balm, like many herbs, does not like cooking. Add it at the end of cooking.

Cream of leek with lemon balm

- 1 onion
- 2 leeks
- A big handful of lemon balm
- 1.2 l chicken stock
- 1 large potato cut into pieces
- Salt and pepper
- A drizzle of lemon juice



- In a saucepan, slowly cook the sliced onions and leeks until soft.
- Lower the heat and add half of the chopped lemon balm.
- Cover and simmer over low heat for a few minutes.
- Add broth and potatoes and simmer until

potatoes are cooked.

- Blend in a blender and season with salt and pepper.

- Add lemon juice and remaining chopped lemon balm and serve.

Goat cheesecake with lemon balm

- 200 g goat cheese
 - 150 g fresh cream
 - 100 g caster sugar
 - 75 g butter
 - 3 eggs
 - Lemon zest
 - 1 bunch of lemon balm
- Preheat the oven to 160°C and butter a glass dish.
 - Grate the lemon zest and chop the lemon balm.
 - Separate the egg whites and yolks and beat the whites until stiff.
 - Whisk the egg yolks and sugar in a bowl until they whiten.
 - Add the fresh goat's cheese, cream and lemon zest and mix.
 - Melt the butter over very low heat and add to the mixture.
 - Gently fold the egg whites and chopped lemon balm into the mixture.
 - Pour the mixture into the buttered dish and cook for 50 minutes.

Legends and popularity of lemon balm

In 1611, a doctor created a comforting medicine based on 14 plants and 9 spices. Lemon balm, one of the components, gave the drink its name. This doctor entrusted the recipe to Father Damien of the Carmelite Brotherhood of Paris. The monks decided to take over its production. It became one of the favourite remedies of Cardinal de Richelieu who used it to relieve his migraines, difficult digestion and stomach aches.



In the time of Louis XIV, it was the panacea of the ladies of the court, who took it for lethargy, vapours, indigestion, migraines and to regain vitality.

The French have long consumed dried lemon balm or its alcohol. There was hardly a family pharmacy that did not have a bottle of lemon balm to relieve the most diverse disorders.

The information contained in these sheets are partly taken and adapted from the Herb Art notebooks published by the Herbothèque herbotheque.com

