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Lemon Verbena, *Aloysia citrodora*

This year we have introduced to the garden a number of plants used mainly as herbal tea: chamomile, lemon verbena and lemon balm, which are grouped in the same square of herbs. Mint and other herbs present in the garden also make excellent infusions.



Botanical description

Lemon verbena or verbena from Peru (country where it is known as *cedrón*), is a woody plant of the Verbenaceae family, cultivated for its very fragrant leaves (lemon taste) to flavour certain culinary preparations and to prepare infusions and liqueurs. It is a plant native to the Andes of South America (Peru, Bolivia, Chile, Uruguay and Argentina) where it grows between 0 m and 3,000 m altitude; it is also cultivated on the coast of Peru. It is not hardy in temperate climates.

The lemon verbena should not be confused with: the officinal verbena (*Verbena officinalis*), a spontaneous herbaceous plant in Europe, belonging to the same family, used as a medicinal plant; lemon thyme, also called lemongrass; lemon balm, also

called lemongrass; lemongrass used to prepare herbal teas with a taste very similar to that of *Aloysia citrodora*. Confusion is very frequent in the herbal tea trade.

How to cultivate

This plant does not support strong frosts and likes a sunny to semi-shaded place during the summer. Cultivated out of pot, it must be put at the shelter of the frost, but in a fresh room, in winter. After having pruned its main shoots to about 30 cm and covered it with straw, the plant should be able to withstand moderate frost in well-drained soil, also in the open ground, if its roots are deep enough. In cold regions, the plant may not bud until late spring or early summer, so it is best not to discard plants until summer. Lemon verbena can be grown in the same pot for several years without any problems. The occasional addition of finely cut banana peels as a fertilizer (nitrogen) can do wonders. Lemon verbena multiplies by herbaceous cuttings during the summer months.

Medicinal uses of lemongrass verbena

The leaves can be picked at any time and used fresh or dried against all kinds of ailments. The leaves give a sweet and fragrant infusion that helps fight against colds accompanied by bronchial symptoms and fever. Thanks to its high content of essential oils, it also relieves cramps in case of digestive disorders, bloating, stomach cramps and nausea. It should be noted, however, that prolonged use of large quantities of lemon verbena leaves could also cause stomach upset. For a beneficial massage, lemon verbena leaves are soaked

in almond oil. You can also make candles with a pleasant lemon scent by soaking finely cut verbena leaves for 45 minutes in melted wax at 80°C.



Cosmetic uses

It is this plant that provides the "verbena" sold in pharmacy and herbalist's shop. An essential oil used in perfumery and toiletries is extracted from it. The leaves of *Aloysia citrodora* contain 0.90% essential oil called "Spanish Verbena Essence", composed of citral, limonene, geraniol and sesquiterpenes. It is febrifuge, antispasmodic, antifungal, slightly sedative and eupeptic. It also has mosquito repellent properties.

Culinary uses

The leaves of fragrant verbena, fresh or dried, can be used to flavour certain culinary preparations (sauces, marinades, cakes, ice cream...). Its lemony aroma is particularly suitable for cakes, desserts and creams. They are also used in infusions (soothing and digestive), and can be used to make delicious liqueurs.

How to make a good verbena tea



In a cup pour boiling water on a tablespoon of dried or fresh verbena leaves, knowing that verbena leaves are better when fresh, because they keep a large amount of their essential oil. Leave to infuse for about ten minutes.
Filter.

Lemon-rosemary-verbena popsicle

- 1 cup of yogurt
- 2 squeezed yellow lemons
- 1 squeezed lime
- 10g of liquid honey
- 1 sprig of dried rosemary
- 10 leaves dried lemon verbena



- Squeeze the yellow lemons and the lime.
- Mix the ingredients in a blender or food processor.
- Pour into a mould.
- Add the wooden sticks.
- Freeze

History and popularity of lemon verbena

The lemon verbena would have been noticed in South America by the European botanist Philibert Commerson in the 18th century. According to other sources, it would have arrived in France in the seventeenth century and would have known a frank success for its lemony taste and its medicinal properties.

Lemon verbena is used in Peru in the composition of the national soft drink, called Inca Kola. Created in 1935 by a British family from Lima, Inca Kola is the Peruvian soft drink par excellence. It is the most sold soft drink in the country, ahead of Coca-Cola and Pepsi Cola. It is therefore a national pride for Peruvians.



Information contained in this sheet is in part taken and adapted from the web pages:

<https://nanopdf.com/download/verveine-citronnelle-aloyisia-triphylla.pdf> and <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Verbena>

