

Hoosier Botanicals™

LEMON BALM (*Melissa officinalis*)

In the Kitchen...

Lemon Balm is described as having a light lemon character with a hint of mint. The leaves are best used fresh but leaves and stems can be dried for tea. Whole or chopped fresh leaves can be added to green salads, fruit salads, marinated vegetables, chicken salad, poultry stuffing, fish marinades and punch. Works well with corn, broccoli, asparagus, lamb, shellfish, freshly ground black pepper, olives and beans. Substitute for lemon thyme or lemon verbena, but in larger quantities than verbena because of its milder taste.

Try adding 2 tbsp dried or ¼ cup fresh lemon balm to your favorite pound cake, poppy seed cake or muffin recipe.

Lemon Balm Sauce In a small saucepan boil ¾ cup sugar in 4 tbsp water and the juice of one lemon several minutes until syrupy. Add 1 tbsp fresh lemon balm or lemon verbena leaves and cook 5 minutes. Remove leaves. Add 2 tbsp butter and a dash of salt. Continue cooking over low heat, stirring constantly, until sauce is desired thickness.

Seasoning Mix Combine in equal parts to oregano and thyme to make a savory seafood or poultry seasoning.



Part used: Leaves and stems

Condition: Fresh or dried

Ethnic span: Southern European, Arabic

Methods: Chopped

Storage: Dry

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In the Garden...

Lemon balm is easily propagated by seed, layering, division in spring or cuttings taken during spring or summer. It needs well-drained soil and grows best in full sun but survives in shade. Plants are usually scrawny the first year. The second year should provide an ample harvest, as many as three cuttings a season. It is susceptible to powdery mildew so harvest regularly to allow for good airflow. Harvest before flowering for optimum fragrance by cutting entire plant down to 2" above the ground. Dry carefully within two days of harvest. Dry on trays or screens in the shade at 90° to 110°F. Works well in partial shade gardens, salad gardens, potpourri gardens, tea gardens, Shakespeare gardens, bee gardens, pond gardens, fragrance gardens, containers or high edgings.

Beekeepers Tip Rub lemon balm inside a hive to encourage a new swarm to stay.

Medicinal Potential Research indicates that lemon balm has both mild sedative effects and anti-bacterial properties.

www.hort.purdue.edu/newcrop/6pac



Mint family—Labiatae

Native to southern Europe and northern Africa

Perennial

Full sun to shade

Average, well-drained soil with pH 7.0

Grows to 2'

Space 12–18" apart

Flowers mid-summer

White or yellowish blossoms

Propagate by seed, layering, division or cuttings