

Lemon grass

CYMBOPOGON CITRATUS

Growing

It's a perennial clumping grass that typically grows up to 1.2 to 1.5 m tall and 60 cm wide. The long thin tapered leaves release a lemon scent when bruised, but it's the thick more bulbous base just above the roots that is richest in essential oil (mostly citral with some other constituents).

Thrives in full sun and well drained, dry soil. Avoid excessive watering. Hence good to plant with Mediterranean herbs that like similar conditions.

Cut back tatty leaves as required.

Propagating

Propagate by root division of clumps, and replanting with the leaves cut back to about 30cm. Divide every two to three years.

Harvesting

Cut leaves when required, and bruise to release scent and flavour.

Trim harvested stalks, rinse all dirt and grit from the surface and pat dry. Can be stored in the produce drawer of your fridge for one to two weeks

Culinary uses

Lemon grass is popular in Sri Lankan and Thai cooking. Bruise leaves and add to chicken, curry or pork casseroles or fish dishes; or steam with vegetables. Remove leaf before eating.

Can also use to flavour rice, custards, milk puddings and ice cream.

Infuse leaves as a calmativ herb tea, in combination with mint or other fragrant herbs.

Lemongrass tea: Heat water till nearly boiling. Chop lemongrass into pieces about 2 ½ cm long. Pour the hot water over the leaves in a pot and let steep for five to ten minutes (as per your preferred strength). Remove the stalks with a slotted spoon or pour the liquid through a strainer to remove all plant material before serving.

<https://thegrowers-exchange.com/blogs/news/the-wonder-of-lemongrass-plants>

Here is how to use the lower, fleshier part, with suggested chicken and vegetarian recipes to try:

1. Lemongrass - to prepare, peel the tough outer layers off to reveal the softer white part on the bottom ~1/3 of the lemongrass. Bruise using the back of the knife (see video). Don't slice too finely or finely chop, you want the pieces large enough so you can just brush them off (lemongrass is kind of tough, it has to be very finely chopped / cooked for a long time to eat).

You could sub with 1 tbsp lemongrass paste.

Vietnamese lemon grass marinated chicken recipe <https://www.recipetineats.com/vietnamese-chicken-noodle-bowl/>:

Vietnamese vegetarian lemongrass soup recipe here: <https://thegrowers-exchange.com/blogs/news/the-wonder-of-lemongrass-plants>



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Cosmetic uses

Home make an infused oil, which can be as a cleanser for oily skin and as a relaxant in the bath.

Other health uses

There are diverse traditional medicinal uses, especially in south and central America countries and in Chinese medicine. Consult a qualified herbalist for specific advice or a good book on simple uses.

Other home uses

Fly, flea and mosquito repellent; in potpourri.

Drying lemongrass stalks and leaves

Separate the leaves from the stalks, and lay them on paper towels or on a screen in a dry area out of direct sun. When completely dry, store in a jar in a cool, dark place. Dried lemongrass can be used for up to a year

(<https://www.hobbyfarms.com/how-to-harvest-lemongrass/#:~:text=Drying%20Lemongrass%20Stalks%20and%20Leaves&text=Separate%20the%20leaves%20from%20the,for%20up%20to%20a%20year.>)

Lemon grass paste (<https://www.food.com/recipe/lemongrass-paste-460478>)

- 2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 large shallots, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon freshly grated ginger
- 4 -5 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 stalk lemongrass, pounded, cut in 1/2-inch pieces (1 tablespoon dried)

OPTIONAL ADDITIONS

- fresh galangal root (half galangal half ginger)
- turmeric (pinch)
- chili pepper (Thai, jalapeno, etc.)
- kaffir lime leaf (about 4 finely sliced with hard ribs removed)
- palm sugar, white sugar, brown sugar (pinch to taste and enhances entire mix well)

Blend all of the ingredients in a blender or food processor until very smooth and finely textured, 2 to 3 minutes. Can, also, be pounded with mortar and pestle. Keep refrigerated.

Note 1: If you are using the pestle and mortar, start off with the hard to grind ingredients like the lemongrass, the kaffir lime leaves and the galangal.

Note 2: If you are using a food processor, put the easiest-to-grind ingredients in first. The liquid that forms will help to process the other harder-to-blend ingredients.

Note 3: The addition of a couple teaspoons water may encourage easier mixing and will not affect the final product.

Storage: 2 days in fridge

For longer-term storage, freeze your lemongrass harvest to preserve as follows:

Take the rinsed, dried prepared stalks and use a sharp knife to cut the stalk into slices 1/4 to 1/2 inch thick. Collect these round slices into a freezer bag and freeze. Your lemongrass will remain fresh tasting for up to a year.

You can also make and freeze lemongrass paste by puréeing trimmed, sliced lemongrass in a blender with just a bit of water, pouring into ice cube trays and freezing until solid. Transfer your lemongrass cubes to a freezer-proof zip-top bag for long-term storage.