PLANT FACT SHEET

Melissa officinalis L.

GENUS *Melissa* **FAMILY** Lamiaceae

COMMON NAMES Lemon balm

EDIBLE PARTS AND USES

Edible parts: Leaves, Herb, Spice, Leaves - tea

The lemon flavoured leaves are used for drinks or flavouring foods and is used either raw or cooked. They can be used in salads. The leaves can be used for tea.
It is also used to flavour liqueurs.
It is added to meat and vegetable dishes. It is used in soups and sauces.
The flowers are also eaten in salads and used as a spice and for tea drinks.

DESCRIPTION

A vigorous herb up to 0.5-1.2 m high. It spreads to 30-45 cm wide. Plants keep growing from year to year. The stems are erect, square shaped, branching and hairy. The leaves are produced opposite one another and are oval. The leaves are wrinkled and toothed at the edge. They are 7 cm long. The leaves have a lemon smell when crushed. The leaf stalk is long. The flowers are small and whitish yellow. These are produced on long loose clusters. The flowers are in the axils of leaves. The fruit is made up of 4 oval nutlets.

HABITAT

It is a temperate plant. It does best on light, well-drained soils. It needs an open sunny position but can grow in light shade. It can tolerate drought and frost. It benefits from well composted soil. It grows in Europe up to 60° north. In Hobart Botanical gardens. In the tropics it is grown in mountainous regions. It suits plant hardiness zones 5-9. Tasmania Herbarium.

PRODUCTION

Cultivation

It can be grown from seeds or division of the root. Seed are slow to start growing. It can also be grown by tip cuttings which are put into water to form roots. The flowers should be picked off. Plants can be cut back to near ground level and allowed to regrow.

Harvesting and Seed Production

It is best used fresh.

NOTES

There are about 4 Melissa species.

PICTURES



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)



Credit: Food Plants International (Bruce French)

REFERENCES

Abbet, C., et al, 2014, Ethnobotanical survey on wild alpine food plants in Lower and Central Valais (Switzerland). Journal of Ethnopharmacology 151 (2014) 624–634

Ahmad, S. A. & Askari, A. A., 2015, Ethnobotany of the Hawraman Region of Kurdistan Iraq. Harvard Papers in Botany, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2015, pp. 85–89.

Ambasta, S.P. (Ed.), 2000, The Useful Plants of India. CSIR India. p 363

Andrare, G. M. M., et al, 2023, Plantas Alimenticias Nao Convencionais (PANC) Nos Levantamentos Etnobotanicos do Brazil. Novos Cadernos NAEA v. 25 No. 2 p 211

Benitez, G., et al, 2023, Wild Edible Plants of Andalusia: Traditional Uses and Potential of Eating Wild in a Highly Diverse Region. Plants 2023, 12, 1218 p 20

Bernal, R., et al, (Eds), 2016, Catalogo de Plantas y Liquenes de Colombia, Volumen 2, Magnoliaceae a Zygophyllaceae. Universidad Nacional de Colombia. p 2530

Bianchini, F., Corbetta, F., and Pistoia, M., 1975, Fruits of the Earth. Cassell. p 204

Blamey, M and Grey-Wilson, C., 2005, Wild flowers of the Mediterranean. A & C Black London. p 397

Blanco-Salas, J., et al, 2019, Wild Plants Potentially Used in Human Food in the Protected Area "Sierra Grande de Hornachos" of Extremadura (Spain). Sustainability 2019, 11, 456 (As subsp. altissima)

Bodkin, F., 1991, Encyclopedia Botanica. Cornstalk publishing, p 694

Bonet, M. A. & Valles, J., 2002, Use of non-crop food vascular plants in Montseny biosphere reserve (Catalonia, Iberian Peninsula). International Journal of Food Sciences and Nutrition (2002) 53, 225–248

Bremness, L., 1994, Herbs. Collins Eyewitness Handbooks. Harper Collins. p 189

Brickell, C. (Ed.), 1999, The Royal Horticultural Society A-Z Encyclopedia of Garden Plants. Convent Garden Books. p 667

Burnie, G & Fenton-Smith, J., 1999, A Grower's Guide to Herbs. Murdoch Books. p 44

Cerne, M., 1992, Wild Plants from Slovenia used as Vegetables. Acta Horticulturae 318

Cheifetz, A., (ed), 1999, 500 popular vegetables, herbs, fruits and nuts for Australian Gardeners. Random House p 134

Ciftcioglu, C. G., 2015, Sustainable wild-collection of medicinal and edible plants in Lefke region of North Cyprus. Agroforest Syst. Springer

Crawford, M., 2012, How to grow Perennial Vegetables. Green Books. p 123

Cundall, P., (ed.), 2004, Gardening Australia: flora: the gardener's bible. ABC Books. p 888

Curtis, W.M., 1993, The Student's Flora of Tasmania. Part 3 St David's Park Publishing, Tasmania, p 546

Dashorst, G.R.M., and Jessop, J.P., 1998, Plants of the Adelaide Plains & Hills. Botanic Gardens of Adelaide and State Herbarium. p 126

Denes, A., et al, 2012, Wild plants used for food by Hungarian ethnic groups living in the Carpathian Basin. Acta Societatis Botanicorum Poloniae 81 (4): 381-396

Dolina, K. & Luczaj, L., 2014, Wild food plants used on the Dubrovnik coast (south-eastern Croatia) Acta Soc Bot Pol 83(3):175–181

Ertug, F., 2004, Wild Edible Plants of the Bodrum Area. (Mugla, Turkey). Turk. J. Bot. 28 (2004): 161-174

Ertug, F, Yenen Bitkiler. Resimli Türkiye Florası -I- Flora of Turkey - Ethnobotany supplement

Esperanca, M. J., 1988. Surviving in the wild. A glance at the wild plants and their uses. Vol. 2. p 52

Facciola, S., 1998, Cornucopia 2: a Source Book of Edible Plants. Kampong Publications, p 127

Flora of Pakistan. www.eFloras.org

French, B.R., 1986, Food Plants of Papua New Guinea, A Compendium. Asia Pacific Science Foundation p 364

Gabrielian, E. & Zohary, D.: Wild relatives of food crops native to Armenia and Nakhichevan. – Fl. Medit. 14: 5-80. 2004. – ISSN 1120-4052

Hancer, C. K., et al, 2020, Traditional Knowledge of Wild Edible Plants of Biga (Çanakkale), Turkey. Acta Societatis Botanicorum Poloniae / 2020 / Volume 89 / Issue 1 / Article 8914

Hedrick, U.P., 1919, (Ed.), Sturtevant's edible plants of the world. p 409

Hemphill, I, 2002, Spice Notes. Macmillan. p 55

Hibbert, M., 2002, The Aussie Plant Finder 2002, Florilegium. p 196

http://www.botanic-gardens-ljubljana.com/en/plants

Kayabasi, N. P., et al, 2018, Wild edible plants and their traditional use in the human nutrition in Manyas (Turkey). Indian Journal of Traditional Knowledge. Vol. 17(2), April 2018, pp 299-306

Kiple, K.F. & Ornelas, K.C., (eds), 2000, The Cambridge World History of Food. CUP p 432, 1730, 1800,

Kizilarslan, C. & Ozhatay, N., 2012, An ethnobotanical study of the useful and edible plants of İzmit. Marmara Pharmaceutical Journal 16: 134-140, 2012.

Kocak, S. & Ozhatay, N., 2013, Wild Edible Plants in Karaman (Southern Turkey), J. Fac. Pharm. Istanbul. 43(1) s 21-32

Kybal, J., 1980, Herbs and Spices, A Hamlyn Colour Guide, Hamlyn Sydney p 128

Lawton, B.P., 2002, Mints. A Family of Herbs and Ornamentals. Timber Press, Portland, Oregon. p 148

Lazarides, M. & Hince, B., 1993, Handbook of Economic Plants of Australia, CSIRO. p 162

Li Hai-wen, Hedge, I.C., Lamiaceae. Flora of China. p 298

Luczaj et al, 2013, Wild vegetable mixes sold in the markets of Dalmatia (southern Croatia). Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine. 8:2

Full reference list (31 more) at https://www.echocommunity.org/en/resources/b28dce06-fa61-406e-a090-8f5f326814cf

PROVIDED BY **Food Plants International**

French, B.R. & Maynard, A.R. Food Plants International Database. Food Plants International

LICENCE CC BY-NC-SA 3.0

ONLINE FACT SHEET https://www.echocommunity.org/en/resources/b28dce06-fa61-406e-a090-8f5f326814cf