



Botanical name: *Melissa officinalis*

Family: Lamiaceae aka the mint family

Common name: Lemon Balm

More names: Nchuanwunta, Nchuanwofia [Igbo], Jogbo [Yoruba], Melissa, Balsamita mayor, Citraria, Toronjil [Spanish], Sweet balm, Heart's delight, Honey plant, Balm, balm mint, Bee balm, Blue balm, Cure-all, Dropsy plant, English balm, Garden balm

Parts of the plant used: leaves

When to harvest: harvest their leaves when they are green + vibrant, and before they give off their white flowers

Herbal actions:

nervous system tonic & relaxant, digestive stimulant, carminative, sedative, diaphoretic, febrifuge, antidepressant, anti-viral, anti-microbial, anti-thyroid, choleric, mild analgesic, antispasmodic, antihistamine, hepatic, cardiogenic, stimulant, tonic

Active constituents:

flavonoids (luteolin-7-O-glucoside, isoquercitrin, apigenin-7-O-glucoside, and rhamnocitrin), rosmarinic acid, ferulic acid, caffeic acid, methyl carnosoate, hydroxycinnamic acid, and 2(3',4'-dihydroxyphenyl)-1,3-benzodioxole-5-aldehyde. The essential oil of Lemon Balm contains the aldehydes geranial, citronellal, beta-caryophyllene, neral, geranyl acetate

Habitat + ecology:

Melissa is a perennial plant ancestor native to Europe, West Asia and North Africa. They like to grow in temperate + tropical climates in nutrient rich soils.

Planet: Moon

Energy: Cold

Element: Water

Taste: Sweet, Slightly Bitter

Meridians/Organs affected:

bladder, liver, kidneys

Ethnobotany (People + the plant ancestor):

- Lemon balm's herbal use dates back over 2000 years as documented in ancient Greek and Roman texts (Theophrastus's *Historia Plantarum*), brought to the region by the Moors.
- *Melissa*, means "bee" in Greek
- In Persian medicine lemon balm is a remedy for toothaches, if mixed with wine, could be used to treat scorpion stings and dog bites.
- The Cherokee nation uses lemon balm for the common cold as well as to treat fevers, typhus fevers and chills.
- In the Costanoan community, a melissa infusion is prepared for infants experiencing colic and stomach aches.
- In Europe, lemon balm was used in the mundane with frequency: tossed on floors to freshen rooms, the oil used to polish furniture, and added to a floral bouquet to signify "social intercourse," "pleasant company of friends," "memories," "a cure," and "don't misuse me."

Plant magick:

- "Elixir of life"
- Raises our energy

Medicinal uses:

- Incredibly calming to the nervous system, settling anxiety, depression, stress, restlessness

- Balances dual energies
- Helps us seek joy + softness for the soul
- Enlivens child
- Brings quiet strength
- Helps maintain a steady + consistent intention
- Reminder to nurture home + relations
- Take pleasure in self-nurturance
- Connected to the feminine + Moon, keeper of intuition, wisdom + our emotional body
- Added to rituals associated with healing, health, friendship, love + success
- Used to send messages between lovers
- Associated with Goddess Diana, Orisha Yamaya/Yemoja, Coyolxauhqui, keepers of the ocean + moon
- Eases the mind
- Promotes brain function, strengthening our resistance to stress, + improving cognitive function in some folk living with Alzheimer's, dementia, or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder
- Tonifying to the heart and circulatory system
- Supportive to digestive imbalances, such as upset stomach, flatulence, spasm, nausea, irritable bowel syndrome
- Balancing to the liver, spleen
- May minimize menstrual cramps
- Offers relief to the throat, specifically during the common cold, flu + mild congestion
- Relieves headaches, migraines, nerve pain, insomnia, + Topically for
 - herpes/cold sores, other viral infections
 - gout and internally for rheumatism and neuralgias.
- Offers skin + wound healing medicine, treats boils, speeds up the healing process (juice)
- Serves as an insect repellent, especially when mixed with citronella

***Contraindications:** Use caution if you live with hypothyroidism or thyroid medications, glaucoma medications, barbiturates, drugs that affect serotonin

Form: spirit, dried leaves, incense, oils, essential oils*

Recipes + Comrades

Solar plexus building: milk thistle, ginger, turmeric, marshmallow, mint, lemon balm, fennel, slippery elm, and goldenrod, mints, evergreens

Calming: chamomile, lavender, passionflower, lemongrass, linden, oastrow, catnip, California poppy

Food Medicine

Complements: fruits, including honeydew, cantaloupe, pineapple, apples and pears
Vinaigrettes or salad mixes, lemon balm combines well with parsley or basil

Herb Garden Punch

-1/2 gallon lemonade or limeade, homemade or frozen
-1 large can pineapple juice (46 ounces)
-About 3 large handfuls of pineapple sage, lemon balm, lemon verbena, or mint leaves
-2 bottles of champagne or ginger ale
-2 lemons, sliced thin, seeds removed
-1 lime, sliced thin, seeds removed
-Fresh pineapple chunks, optional Ice or ice mold

- 1) Pineapple sage, lemon balm, lemon verbena, lemon grass, or mint leaves for garnish
- 2) Mix the lemonade + pineapple juice together, stir in the herbs
- 3) Refrigerate for at least 1 hour or up to 24.
- 4) Mix up just half the batch, or use all of the ingredients [depends on the size of bowl]
- 5) When ready to serve, squeeze the essence out of the infused herbs and remove them.
- 6) Pour the juice into a punch bowl + add the lemon/lime slices, and pineapple chunks
- 7) Add the ice + garnish, pour the champagne or ginger ale in just before serving

Awaken: Citrus + Lemon Balm Tea

-½ cup dried lemon balm leaves,
firmly packed and broken into small
pieces

-¼ cup dried orange mint leaves
firmly packed

-1 tablespoon dried lemon zest

-1 teaspoon whole allspice berries
lightly bruised

-2 tablespoons dried calendula or
chamomile flowers, firmly packed

Preparation:

food, infusion, tea, tincture, vinegar,
glycerin, honey

Photos of the plant ancestor:

