

## Lemon Balm (common balm, balm mint)

*Melissa officinalis*



<b>Height:</b>	Up to 70cm with a spreading habit.
<b>Suitable for:</b>	Rich moist soil with some shade.
<b>Summary:</b>	Lemon balm, as the name suggests, has bright green lemon scented foliage — rather like large mint leaves to which it is closely related. Small, white, nectar rich flowers appear in mid summer which are very attractive to bees. A great culinary herbs with many uses.

### More information:

Lemon balm grows and spreads to make an attractive green mound of lemon scented foliage, great planted with flowering herbs and perennials to provide both a useful and productive green backdrop in the border.

The flowers are inconspicuous but do provide lots of nectar for visiting honey bees. Be sure to trim away the flower heads immediately otherwise the balm will spread around the garden by self seeding.

In common with mint, lemon balm likes a rich moist soil with some shade for at least part of the day.

When planting add a little extra compost or fertiliser so that the foliage stays lush and green. It is ideal if the balm is cut back regularly, and this will give the best leaves for use in the kitchen.

Lemon balm is used as a flavouring in both sweet and savoury dishes and to brew a lemon scented herbal tea, and the essential oils are often used in aromatherapy.

The leaves don't dry well, losing their flavour and aroma.

The fresh leaves have many versatile uses:

- Use the chopped leaves in fish, chicken and vegetable dishes, adding at the end of cooking.
- Sprinkle the chopped leaves onto fruit salads, and enhance the flavour with a honey based syrup dressing.