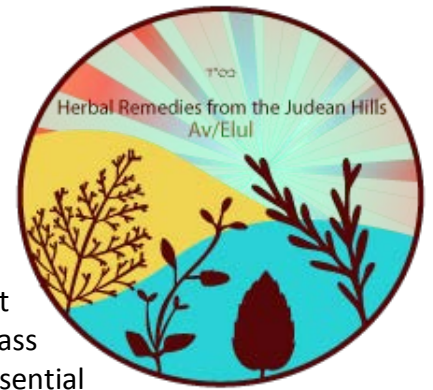


לימונית – Lemongrass – Cymbopogon Citratus

Cleansing, Energy Transforming, Mind-Clearing Herb

Lemongrass makes a rich flavored lemony herbal tea, which lends itself to a delicious ice-tea on a hot summer day. Known for its cleansing properties, lemongrass needs lots of water. My lemongrass really thrived when we had a leak in our water faucet that dripped onto its sheaths. Before I even knew that lemongrass serves as an all-purpose cleaner, I added some drops of essential lemongrass oil to my natural laundry soap. As a powerful energy cleanser, lemongrass makes a nice addition to floor wash that clears energy from a home, room or office space. It also facilitates people, who feel stuck, heavy or low, in letting go of negative energy. It helps us enter a cleansing, healing mode ready to release old, limiting beliefs, toxic energies and negativity. The scent of lemongrass encourages those of us, who hoard stuff, to let go of everything we no longer need, while clearing up any obstacles standing in our way. It allows us to move forward and helps us to commit to an emotionally, physically and spiritually healing path ready for necessary life changes. Lemongrass has a pungent, earthy aroma that heightens awareness and purifies the mind. It is good for meditation as it opens psychic channels and aids concentration. It awakens the senses and clears mental congestion and headaches. It protects our own energetic fields from electromagnetic energy (TV, computers, smartphones). I pack lemongrass in my bag when we go away to a hotel where there are lots of people bombarding us with their energies. It helps transform them into positive energies. It encourages optimism, *bitachon* (trust) and hope, once the negative energies are released. Lemongrass is a cheerful, lighthearted herb that serves as a reminder to keep things in perspective and not take them too seriously. It energizes any celebration with a gentle lift rather than a punch and is effective for increasing, clarifying, and sweetening communication between people. Lemongrass also helps us get in touch with our inner child.



Tropical, Warm, Romance Enhancer

Lemongrass is a tropical grass native to India and Southeast Asia where it has long been appreciated, not just as a spice, but also as medicine, to treat feverish conditions and to keep bugs at bay. It has ornamental, culinary, cosmetic and medicinal value. It looks like a tall clump of grass with several narrow, pale greenish stalks growing away from the bulbous base. Inside the stalk is citralan oil also found in the skin of lemons. When pruning your lemongrass you may want to wear gloves or at least use a scissor rather than your hands to cut the blades. The blades are very sharp, as with many grasses, that's why they are called blades! Lemongrass grows everywhere in Israel, except in the high mountains. It doesn't like the cold winters in Gush Etzion and struggles to survive frost and snow. Most years the tops freeze back and new shoots emerge from the root base when the soil warms up sufficiently, but not always. I have replaced my lemongrass a few times over the years. If you live in a colder region with winter frost, you may want to grow your lemongrass in a pot and protect it during the winter. In Central Africa and other parts of the world, lemongrass is used as a stimulating aphrodisiac. In the Caribbean it is the main ingredient in an aphrodisiac elixir for stimulating a dormant sensual drive in both men and women. It is still used in many places to flavor food for enhancing romance and intimate pleasure.



Medicinal Properties of Lemongrass

Lemongrass is a good source of vitamins A and C, folate, folic acid, magnesium, zinc, copper, iron, potassium, phosphorus, calcium, and manganese. It also contains traces of B vitamins. Lemongrass is traditionally used in various parts of the world as a natural antiseptic and insect repellent. As a tea, lemongrass can help relieve aches, pains and may even aid indigestion due to its carminative properties. The antibacterial, diaphoretic, detoxifying, expectorant, pectoral (relating to the breast or chest), preventative (cold), and sudorific (sweat-inducing) properties of lemongrass oil are useful in treating various infections of the upper respiratory tract, lungs, and stomach such as consumption, common cold, cough, pneumonia, fever and flu. [A decoction prepared from the stalk can effectively fight intestinal parasites such as *Entamoeba histolytica*, which cause dysentery.](#) Malaria is a parasitic disease, caused by the genus *Plasmodium*, characterized by recurrent high fever, headache, vomiting, and fatigue and is commonly transmitted by mosquitos. [The essential oils of lemongrass were found to produce 86.6 percent suppression in the growth of *Plasmodium* when compared with the popularly used drug chloroquine.](#) Lemongrass is also an effective herbal anti-fungal medicine. Being an antispasmodic, it treats hypertension, rheumatism, headaches, sprains and muscle cramps. Its essential oil is often mixed with coconut oil and rubbed on arthritic joints and sore muscles. A bath with the essential oil of lemongrass added can ease sore muscles. If you don't have the essential oil handy, a strong lemongrass tea added to a bath will achieve similar results. The tea can also be used as a compress for bruises and soreness. It is not only psychologically refreshing, but also serves as a tonic for tightening weak connective tissue. With its emmenagogue properties, essential oil of lemongrass strengthens blood vessels and helps prevent varicose veins. Being a dentifrice it treats toothache and is beneficial in mouthwashes, mouth sores, gum disease and inflammation (gingivitis). In Puerto Rico people use the fibrous stalks as a natural toothbrush! Clean and tingling fresh! (Try it!)

Israel's Cancer Killer Discoveries

There is evidence that lemongrass can be used in cancer treatments. A study by Israeli researchers, led by Dr. Rivka Ofir and Prof. Yakov Weinstein at Ben Gurion University, found that a drink with as little as one gram of lemongrass contains enough of its active ingredient, citral, to prompt cancer cells to commit suicide in the test tube without harming any of the normal cells. The success of their research led them to the conclusion that herbs containing citral, the key component that gives the lemony aroma and taste in several herbal plants, may be consumed as a preventative measure against certain cancerous cells. Cancer patients from around the country swamped Benny Zabidov's farm in Kfar Yedidya in the Sharon region, asking for fresh lemongrass. They were told to drink eight glasses of hot water with fresh lemongrass steeped in it on the days that they went for their radiation and chemotherapy treatments.

Lemongrass – The #1 Insect Repellent

Lemongrass is best known for its efficiency to repel insects such as mosquitoes and fleas. Yet, it is hard to tell which is worse, the mosquitoes or the commercial repellents. Mosquitoes can be horrific – they can be highly aggressive, and without protection, it can be impossible to bear. [“In the history of the world, more people have died from diseases transmitted by mosquitoes than from all the fighting in all the wars.”](#) Nevertheless, the commercial repellent sprays mostly use diethyl-meta-toluamide (DEET), a nasty chemical that can cause rashes, swelling, eye irritation, and worse problems that I won't even mention. The incense coils, which fill the air with smoke containing insecticides, may keep the mosquitoes away. This is very wise of them, for who wants to inhale the fumes of these coils? Baruch Hashem, “G-d prepares the cure before the wound”

Herbal Remedies from the Judean Hills - Months of Av/Elul

(*Babylonian Talmud, Megillah 12b*), in the form of lemongrass. Its essential oil, citral, like citronella, has shown to be an effective insect repellent, especially against mosquitos. It is a safe and natural insect repellent that's just as effective as the commercial chemical products, especially when it's fresh. In fact, lemongrass contains more than just citronella oil and is more effective than true citronella. [One study conducted in 2013](#) with lemongrass essential oils proved that it also repels ants. While applying lemongrass extract to the skin and clothes is most effective, growing the plants in the garden and in pots around a patio or deck where people are hanging out, can help keep mosquitoes away. It is good to brush its stalks occasionally in order to release more of the lemongrass scent into the air.

Cosmetics and Skincare

Lemongrass is one of the 10 most produced essential oils worldwide. It is used in many scents, soaps, lotions and other skin and hair preparations. It is very refreshing as a footbath for tired feet and treats excessive perspiration. In aromatherapy skin care, it can be used to tone and tighten the skin, especially where open pores call for an astringent. Use with caution; as people with sensitive skin may experience skin reactions.

Culinary Uses:

Lemongrass is commonly used in Asian and Thai cuisine, imparting a gentle citrus flavor to spiced and scented dishes, while being refreshingly tart with its hint of a citrus like peppery flavor. Lemongrass combines well with chicken, curries, fish, marinades, noodles, soups, spring rolls, stir-fry's and Vietnamese salads. It is popular in vegetarian coconut recipes and as an unusual ingredient to flavor syrups for poaching peaches or pears. Delectable dishes from Southeast Asia often use lemongrass. Various chicken and seafood preparations are flavored with its lemony flavor. Mainly, the firm lower part of the stem is used. The whole stem is cut at the soil line, the leafy parts are trimmed off and the rest is used to flavor food. The stem is crushed or pounded and added in large pieces during the cooking process. Then, the pieces are removed so they are not eaten. A 4-8 cm (2- 4 inch) piece of lemongrass will impart a very lemony flavor to a stir-fry. Placing a crushed piece of lemongrass stem in a pot of rice and cooking it as usual will produce a lovely, lemony rice. Add some lemongrass to a chicken soup for an Asian twist on an old favorite. Just don't forget to remove the thick pieces of the stem before serving!

The leafy parts of the lemongrass stalk can be used to make a delicious and refreshing tea. You can use the leaves fresh or dried. If fresh, use about 2 teaspoons chopped leaf per cup of tea. If dried, use about 1 teaspoon per cup, then steep for 10 minutes in boiling water. Lemongrass blends well with green tea, chamomile, mint, rose hips, hibiscus and holy basil. I find a blend of lemongrass and mint to be a most refreshing iced tea on a hot afternoon. Experiment with blends from your own herb garden. Lemongrass leaves can also enhance traditional lemonade.

Hands On

To bring out the aroma of lemongrass, remove the two outer layers and gently bruise the stalk with a mortar or rolling pin before using. Use the lower 4-6 inches of the stalk and save the more fibrous upper leaves for tea. If you are using the whole lemongrass in cooking, take it out before serving. Lemongrass may be dried and cut up into smaller chunks for use in herbal mixes, baths or anointing oils. It is possible to freeze lemongrass. Although it may lose a little bit of flavor, freezing will soften the stalks.

Herbal Remedies from the Judean Hills - Months of Av/Elul

Homemade Organic Mosquito Repellent (HOMeR)

Lemongrass Mosquito repellent is sustainable, made entirely from locally available renewable resources. It is processed entirely by the end-user as needed. It is eco-friendly and won't boil the planet or blow a hole in the sky.

Fresh Mosquito Repellent Stalks

This procedure is pleasant on the skin and 98% effective. The effect lasts for about 4-5 hours.

Rubbing the long, grassy leaves on the skin works well, but the stalk is even more effective.

1. Take one stalk of fresh lemongrass (grip it near the ground and give it a sharp sideways tug to break it off from the clump), peel off the outer leaves, snap off the grass blades behind the swollen stem at the base.
2. Bend the stem between your fingers, loosening it, then rub it vigorously between your palms so that it fractures into a kind of fibrous juicy mass, and rub this mess over all exposed skin, covering thoroughly at least once.

Mosquito Repellent Tincture

This spray works just as well as using the stalks directly on the skin. It will last about a week before it loses its effectiveness.

1. Chop up the cores of five or six stalks of lemongrass and put them in a blender
2. Add a cup of alcohol and blend thoroughly.
3. Tincture can be further diluted by adding up to half as much water.
4. Strain it into a sprayer.

Lemongrass and Tofu Stir-fry

2 Lemongrass stalks, cleaned and chopped (discard the dryer outer layers because they will have flavor but will be hard to eat. You can save those for making a flavorful broth.)

500 Gram (1 lb.) tofu, drained, patted dry and sliced into strips or cubes.

2 Tablespoons Tamari soy sauce (depends on how salty you like it, you can add more if needed).

½ Teaspoon dried red chili flakes or 2 teaspoons fresh chili (if possible use Thai bird chilies).

1 Teaspoon ground turmeric

2 Tablespoons sesame or olive oil

½ onion, thinly sliced + 2 shallots, thinly sliced,

Or 1 medium sized onion, thinly sliced, or 1 bunch of green onion, diced.

3 Cloves garlic, minced

4 Tablespoons chopped roasted sunflower or sesame seeds

2/3 cup loosely packed basil leaves

1. Combine the lemongrass, soy sauce, chilies and turmeric in a bowl. Add the tofu and turn to coat them evenly. Marinate for 30 minutes.
2. Heat half of the oil in a 12-inch skillet over moderately high heat. Add the onion(s), and garlic and stir until fragrant, about 1 minute. Reduce the heat to low and cook until the onions are soft, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a plate and keep warm.
3. Heat the remaining oil over moderate heat. Add the tofu mixture and using a wooden spoon, turn so it cooks evenly, about 4 to 5 minutes (until the lemongrass looks 'melted.')
4. Add the onion mixture and cook, uncovered, for another 2 to 3 minutes. Add half the seeds and the basil leaves.
5. Remove from the heat and transfer to a serving plate. Garnish with the remaining seeds and serve with steamed rice, rice noodles, or even in rice wraps!