

# Did You Know?

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## Lemongrass, *Cymbopogon citratus*

- Lemongrass is a very fragrant member of the grass family, Poaceae which generally grows to about 3' but can grow up to 6' tall.
- *C. citratus* is the most often used for culinary purposes of the more than 50 species in the genus. The related species, *C. flexuosus* is used as a fragrance in cosmetics and soaps. *C. nardus* and *C. winterianus* are used to produce citronella oil for aromatherapy and the insect repellent used in insect repellent sprays and candles.
- Grow lemongrass in a large pot, raised bed or in the ground, preferably in full sun, well-drained soil. It is only hardy in zones 8 and warmer.
- This aromatic grass is used in Asian and Thai cooking. It can also be steeped in water to make a flavorful hot or iced tea.
- The paler green bulbous base of the stem is the most flavorful part of the plant. The leaves are also good for infusing lemon flavor into teas, soups, marinades, and sauces.
- Harvest as needed when stems are at least ½" thick by cutting the stalks at ground level. The leafy portion can be washed in cool water, bundled and hung to dry or used fresh. Reserve the base section to use fresh or freeze.
- The leaves are a bit tough to chew, so treat them like bay leaves and remove before serving or mince finely.
- To use the bulbous stem base, smash with the flat side of a knife and peel the outer fibrous layer of the base. The inner portion is soft and slices easily.
- Commercially, lemongrass is grown for its essential oil.
- Since lemongrass essential oil resembles the bee attraction pheromone, bee keepers can use the oil to lure bees who have swarmed away from the hive.
- Firm, 3-4" pieces of lemongrass stem will root when the base is placed in a pot of moist potting mix and covered with a plastic bag. Set the pot in bright light but not direct sun. After roots appear, gradually remove the bag.

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- Medicinal uses for lemongrass have included treating digestive issues and stomach pain, coughs, colds and sore throats, headaches and muscle pain.

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