Sandi Coyne

**Monograph**

Name: Lemon Balm; Melissa Officinalis L.

Common Name: Lemon Balm, also known as Balm, Melissa, Sweet Balm, Bee Balm and Honey Plant, due to its use of attracting honey bees for honey production.

Pharmacopoeial name: Melissae Folium (Herb Society of America, p32, 2007)

Family Mint, Lamiaceae or Labiatae

Form: Herbaceous perennial, some refer to as a weed.

Soil/Sun: Moist soil with well drained loam, full sun or partial shade depending on climate conditions.

Flowers: Pale yellow, white, pinkish, or occasionally purplish/bluish

Medicinal Preparations: “Teas/infusions, tinctures, syrups, baths/foot baths, capsules, pills, powders, poultices, salves, steams, fomentations, oil, and liquid, dried extracts” as well as tonics, creams and in herbal combinations… (Herb Society of America,p.33, 2007).

Parts Used**:** Fresh leaves, picked just before flowering; Freeze-dried leaves; Dried leaves; Essential oils, upper 3rd of the plant when flowered for essential oils.

Medicinal Uses: Internal: Hot infusions for colds, flu, inducing fevers or promoting sweat; Internal: Gastrointestinal complaints, dyspepsia (indigestion), infant colic,

nausea, flatulence..

Internal: Restorative tonic for the nervous system; improves oxidative stress in the body,

elevates mood and provides relief for hypertension, headaches, depression, anxiety,]heart

palpitations, ADHD, insomnia and a memory aid (Alzheimer’s Disease). Also promotes

menstrual cycle, alleviates menstrual cramps and aids symptoms related

to hyperthyroidism (Graves disease).

Internal and External: Antiviral properties of lemon balm fight against Herpes

simplex, HIV, Influenza virus, Newcastle disease,Strep throat as well as other viral infections.

External poultice of leaves/oil/creams/salves…used for fungal infections of skin (Candida),

sores, hives, eczema, herpes, shingles, mumps, tumors, insect bites/stings, snake bites.

External: Oil can also be used for massage, insect repellant by spray or by crushing leaves onto

skin (poultice).

Aromatherapy: Blends with lavender, geranium, floral and citrus oils; Uses Nervousness, Depression, Insomnia, Nervous headaches and more…

Household: Furniture polish for wood (essential oil & leaves), lemon

balm distillate sprayed for odor control or to the bed/pillow

for sleep aid.

Cosmetic: Bath bags (herbal combinations) Lemon balm distillate for skin care. Skin cleansers, facial steams, hair rinses, lotions, salves, lip balms, perfumes and mouthwash. Deodorant, powdered leaves with talc.

Culinary Fresh/

Dried Leaves: Very versatile can be used in almost anything, dressings,

deserts, syrups, …

Herbal Actions: Anti-inflammatory; Anti-viral; Antioxidant; Anti-bacterial; Antihistaminic: Antispasmodic; Anti-microbial, Anti-biotic

properties, Anxiolytic (anti-anxiety) Anti-parasitic; Anti-protozoal; Anti-venom, Anti-cancer;

Anti-neoplastic; Anti-depressant; Insecticide; Trophorestorative; Radioprotective; Digestive

stimulant; Mild stimulant, Carminative; Sedative; Diaphoretic, Thyroid stimulating hormone

(TSH) antagonist; Nervine; Astringent; Diaphoretic; Vasodilator; Emmenagogue;

Immunomodulator.

Volatile Oils/Constituents: “Volatile oil (up to 0.2%, comprising Citral” (neral and geranial), Citronellal, Linalool, B-caryophyllene/oxide, Eugenol acetate, Geraniol, and Monoterpenes (Mabey, p.68, 1998). Flavonoids, Phenolic acid, Tannins (Polyphenols), Rosmarinic acid, Caffeic acid, and Triterpenoids…

Mineral/Vitamins: Vitamin C, Thiamin (b vitamin) highest in fresh leaves

Tinctures: Tinctures used at smaller doses than infusions.

Infusions: Some say best with fresh leaves or freeze dried leaves because volatile oils seem to lessen or disappear in the process of drying. Leaves can also be extracted or infused in apple cider vinegar for skin lotions or witch hazel for toners and more..

Pruning/Harvesting: Harvest as needed, thin plants in summer if they have 30 stems or more. Hang thinned stems to dry. Browning around edges may

indicate too much heat, cold or too dry. To keep from spreading, prune the flowering stalk before

the plant comes to seed. Essential Oil is usually strongest in the upper 3rd of the plant, extract oil

from fresh leaves and flowers by steam distillation. For essential oil, plants are harvested at

flowering; some say it is the seed production at this time, not flowers that give the best oils.

Cultivation: April-August. Can be grown from seeds or cuttings, spring cuttings can be from flowering stems, fall cuttings from tips at the base of the crown which don’t have flowers. Container plants “15 -18 inch container accompanied by summer annuals and herbs like basil, dill, or coriander” and “may need to be divided each fall to avoid becoming root-bound (American Herb Society, p.12, 2007).” Container plants may benefit from organic liquid fertilizer 4x a year (p.12) and need 5 hours of direct

sunlight daily.

Drying/Freezing: Hang in bunches, then strip leaves off or dry on trays in a dark place with great air circulation to prevent molding. Dry within 2 days or leaves will blacken. Some freeze balm leaves in vegetable oil for fresh flavor; freeze dry or freeze leaves in water/ice cube trays.

Scent/Taste: Slightly bitter, sour, lemony smell to fresh leaves, aromatic.

Energy: Cool, dry.

Contradictions: Lemon balm is considered safe to use at medicinal doses, always identify underlying aliments and check medication combinations before using any herbal remedies in conjunction with pharmaceutical medicine.

The New Age Herbalist (1988). Mabey, R.,McIntyre, M., Michael,P., Duff,G., Stevens,J., Simon&Schuster Inc. ,New York.

Lemon Balm: An Herb Society of America Guide, (2007).Kirtland, Ohio, herbsociety.org.