



Growing herbal tea

A herbal tea garden attracts beneficial insects, looks beautiful, smells glorious on warm days and provides you with the freshest ingredients for delicious tea. Many tea plants are easy to grow and will taste so much better than anything you can buy.

Which teas to grow?

Lemon Balm

Lemon balm is a feel-good plant, and not just because it is bee-friendly: the tea made from lemon balm is said to relieve fatigue and headaches and make you feel happy. Lemon balm is a perennial plant to about 50cm. It will grow well in a well-drained spot in part shade to full sun. It needs to be watered in summer. Cut it back to the ground after flowering to encourage fresh, new growth. Lemon balm can be easily propagated from seed, division or cutting. Use the fresh leaves to make tea.

Lemon Verbena

Lemon Verbena leaves make an absolutely delicious tea and the flowers and foliage are beautifully scented. The plant is a deciduous shrub which grows to about 2m, and should be pruned after flowering to stop it from becoming leggy. It likes a sunny spot, either in the ground or a pot, with well-drained soil and regular watering. Lemon Verbena is killed by frost so make sure it is somewhere protected if you live in a frost-prone area. Lemon Verbena can be propagated from cuttings taken in summer.

Chamomile

There are two types of chamomile, perennial and German; the latter is most commonly used for making tea. German Chamomile is an annual and is easiest to grow from seedling the first time, but if you leave a few flowers on the plant, you will find that the seeds from those flowers will come up on their own the next year. Chamomile likes a sunny spot, and will grow well in pots if regularly watered. Cut off the flowers when they are opening and use fresh or dried to make a very soothing and yummy tea (one teaspoon per person).



Ginger

Ginger tea is great for calming an upset stomach and the plant has attractive, tropical foliage. It is a little out of its range in Melbourne, but can do well in a sheltered, warm spot if given plenty of water. Plant it in spring, then harvest the whole plant in autumn. Use slices of the rhizome (root tuber) for making tea, and save a bit to plant again in the next spring.

Peppermint

Peppermint tea is a classic herbal tea which is said to help with digestion and reduce nausea. It is very easy to grow, so much so that it might start to take over your garden - we recommend growing it in a pot. Peppermint grows well in a semi-shaded, moist location - under a tap or near a dripping gutter are often good spots. If it starts to look tatty, simply cut the stems back to the ground and new, fresh growth will soon appear. There are many different mints available, including Apple Mint, Chocolate Mint, Spearmint and a native Australian River Mint.

Other plants to try

Thyme, Lemongrass, Sage, Stevia, Dandelion (root), Fennel (seeds), Echinacea, Linden, Rose (hips) and Raspberry.

Blending tea

Use a pot or infuser to brew your homegrown loose-leaf tea. Simply pour hot water (add a dash of cold water to the kettle after it has boiled) to the tea and let it steep for 5 minutes.

You can mix herbs together to make delicious blends, using your imagination or these combinations:

Happy Tea - Lemon balm and chamomile

Cold remedy - Sage, thyme, rosemary, lemon balm and mint with a big spoonful of honey

Lemongrass refresher - Lemongrass and ginger

Sage refresher - Sage and ginger

Sweet mint - Peppermint and licorice root



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