

# The East London Garden Society

## Plant Facts

### Lemons



Lemons originated in India and are part of the citrus family. They were most likely introduced to the United States by Catholic Missionaries when they planted them in California and Arizona. However, lemons may have been introduced by Columbus at St. Augustine, Florida before then.

#### **Growing Lemons**

There are two main varieties of lemons, acid and sweet. The acid lemons include Lisbon and Eureka. The sweet lemons include Meyer and Ponderosa. Commercially grown lemon trees can reach heights of up to twenty feet. Lemons are very sensitive to the cold and must be grown in areas that are not prone to frost. They also require full sunlight.

Lemons are not particular about the type of soil that they are grown in. Many lemon trees are actually built on the sour orange root stock to make them hardier. Typically, a lemon tree is not grown from seed in the home garden but instead will be bought as a tree from a nursery and they may be grown in

containers as well as in the ground. Lemon trees do not require pruning except when damaged by cold weather.

### **Health Benefits of Lemons**

Lemons are very high in Vitamin C with a half a cup of juice containing 100% of the RDA. The Vitamin C in lemons is in the form of citric acid which has been shown to help improve the absorption of calcium by the digestive system. They also contain unique flavonoids and are high in antioxidants which can fight free radicals and cancer cells. The antioxidants in lemons also help with providing vascular protection and boost the immune system as well as helping in the treatment of urinary tract infections and many digestive problems. Lemon can also be used as a natural antiseptic on cuts.

### **Tips for Getting the Most Out of Lemons**

When choosing a lemon, it is important to look for fruits which are firm and bright in colour. Lemons that have a fine texture and feel heavy for their size, typically produce the most juice.

A medium sized lemon produces approximately three tablespoons of juice and three tablespoons of grated zest, both of which can be frozen for future use. In order to get the most juice from your lemons microwave them for about fifteen seconds or roll it against a hard surface before juicing.

A fresh lemon should last about two weeks at room temperature. However, when stored in a plastic bag in the crisper of the refrigerator a lemon can last up to six weeks.

Lemons have a multitude of purposes and are a great flavouring agent. They are beautiful to use as an edible garnish and they also are useful as natural cleaning purposes.