

Urban Dirt

IN COOPERATION WITH THE TEXAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Herb Garden News

By Heidi Vaughan

Lemon Verbena Cake

1 2/3 cups sugar
 1 cup butter-flavored Crisco
 2 cups cake flour
 5 eggs
 1/8 teaspoon salt
 2 drops lemon extract
 1/4 cup fresh Lemon Verbena leaves,
 or 2 tablespoons of
 crushed, dried leaves

Grease and flour a bundt pan. Bake at 325° F for 1 hour and 15 minutes. *Bon appetit!*

Lemon Icing

1/2 cup butter
 2 tablespoons lemon juice
 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
 3 cups confectioners' sugar

Combine butter, lemon juice, vanilla, and confectioners' sugar. Beat until light and fluffy. Add more confectioners' sugar, or lemon juice to adjust the consistency as needed. Drizzle over cake while still warm.

Cake recipe: Jeanette Powell; Icing recipe: my Mom! Go Mom!

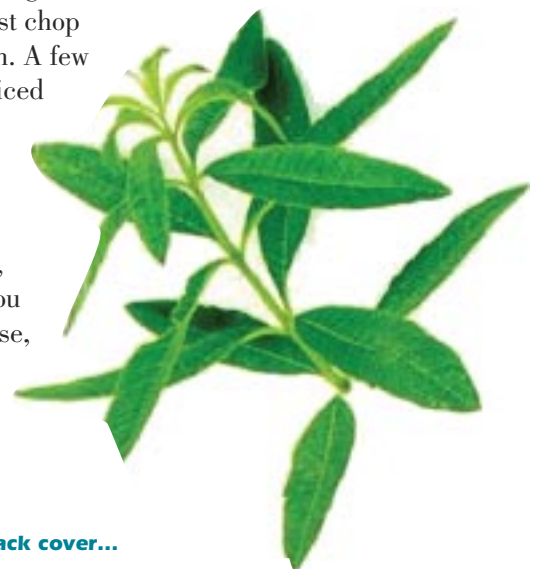
The herb garden continues to bloom profusely, you could also say sloppily, and is currently visited by many bees, hummingbirds, lizards, and we hope people, too. We are beginning to plan for the fall garden, and if you are at all interested in herbs, or learning more about them, now would be a great time to get involved. Come out to the garden any Tuesday morning, or call me at (281) 579-8995.

This month I'd like to mention one of our favorite herbs, **Lemon Verbena** (*Aloysia triphylla* syn. *Lippia citriodora*). You can find it in our **Craft and Color bed**, but it would be appropriate in the **Culinary and Medicinal beds**, as well. The plant is a lemon-scented tender shrub that can grow up to 10 feet, though ours is big enough at about four feet. It grows with leaves arranged in threes, three to four inches long, with white or violet flowers.

Medicinally, it is used as a sedative or for indigestion. The most wonderful thing about Lemon Verbena, though, is its fragrance, which has perhaps a stronger lemon scent than any other herb. It is excellent dried in potpourris, and best fresh, when used in foods. Like many other lemon-scented herbs, Lemon Verbena is used in fish, soups and poultry dishes, but mostly, it is used in flavoring drinks and desserts. I tried making a Lemon Verbena tea at home, and found it very weak and disappointing.

I can however really recommend using Lemon Verbena to enhance the flavor of fresh fruit—just chop the leaves very finely, as they are rough. A few sprigs of the whole leaf for garnishing iced teas, fruit juices and sorbets make them that much more special, too.

Jeanette Powell, who contributes so much to the Herb Garden, offers up this recipe for **Lemon Verbena cake**, from a friend of hers. Incidentally, if you don't have Lemon Verbena at your house, feel free to come gather some of ours. Also, summer is a good time to take cuttings for propagation. Help yourself. Use firm shoots.



Additional Lemon Verbena recipes on back cover...

President's Thoughts

By George Williams

Our primary objective as Master Gardeners is "to increase knowledge of horticulture to its members and the general public." There are a number of ways to achieve this objective, and I believe that our association is doing a good job in providing these services. One of the most effective ways we do this is with our Master Gardener classes. We now have 80 students enrolled in our fall class that began August 29. Eighty was our limit, and we now have a waiting list for our January, 2003 class. Lots of work has to be completed by our people in order to have these classes function properly.

We need volunteers for tours and other requests we receive because of continuing favorable publicity.

Neal Murray is our Fall class coordinator. He is assisted by Charlie Reass, Ann Ashworth, Karla Klein, Ann O'Neil, Jeanne Wolbert, Louis Saillace, Gerald Pilcik, Barbara Lyles, Fred Weitzel, Roy Wood, Bonnie Morrow, Harry Arber, and Marge Chambers who chairs the Master Gardener Class Committee. These folks do a great job! Some of them have to get to the Extension Center around 7:00 a.m. each Thursday to set up the tables, make coffee, and be ready to start the class at 9:00 am.

Quite a few students from this class have already volunteered by working in the gardens and signing up to work at our **Fall Sale on September 28**. Please welcome these folks and let them know that we are happy to have them in our association.

On August 10, we gave a garden tour to 38 kindergarteners along with their teachers and parents. These kids really had a good time, and if you saw them, I'm sure that you noticed that they were very well mannered. Our thanks go to **Mary Ann Wagner** and **Portia Leyendecker** for serving as tour guides for this group.

As we receive more favorable publicity, we also have more requests for tours and other services from the public. We now have another tour set for the **Houston Garden Club** on October 16. Also, we have received a request from the **City of Houston** to help establish a vegetable garden for senior citizens at a community center in the Third Ward. On September 9, **Ken Dorman** and I drove to this center and found the facility to be ready for gardening. The complex was completed in February and includes a greenhouse and outside beds with a watering system completely installed. We plan to help them by working with those seniors who are interested in gardening.

These are just a few examples of the educational services we provide to our community. Obviously, lots of volunteers are required if we are to keep up with the requests received each month. I know that we talk about volunteering all of the time, but that is what we do and, hopefully, more of us will join in the fun. It really is fun, so if you haven't been to the Extension Center recently, come on out next Tuesday.



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 - Urban Dirt Layout** Tami Pipkin
 UrbanDirt@houston.rr.com

Upcoming Events

Coming up at Precinct 2

By Pat Mitrowski

Wednesday, October 2, Master Gardener **Clyde Cannon** will show us tips on growing wonderful Antique Roses at our First Wednesday Meeting. Clyde oversees the beautiful rose garden at the Bear Creek Extension so be sure to come out and benefit from his expertise on growing roses in Houston. The class is free and open to the public, reservations are required. Please call (281) 991-8437 and leave a message. We are located at 1202 Genoa Red Bluff. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m., the lecture at 10:00 a.m.

Special Event: Master Gardener Plant and Garden Craft Sale

Saturday, October 5th, we will be holding our annual **Fall Sale** featuring heirloom plants, garden crafts and a limited selection of low chill hour fruit trees for fall planting. Come and see how unique your garden can be! 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. in front of Kroger's at 24090 Bay Area Blvd. on the corner of Bay Area Blvd. and Space Center Blvd.

Just in time for the upcoming season **Lana Sims** will share "Herbal Ideas for the Holidays" at our **November 6th** meeting. Come and learn something new to brighten your spirit! 1202 Genoa Red Bluff.

Registration begins at 9:30 a.m., the lecture at 10:00 a.m. Call (281) 991-8437.

Thanks as always for helping us get the word out. Call (281) 481-0794 or email me if you have any questions.

Precinct 2 programs are held at HCMGA office at 1202 Genoa Red Bluff. Please call to reserve a spot (281) 991-8437. Stay and enjoy lunch with us for \$3.00.



Bear Creek

October 1 – Hamburger Tuesday

8:00 am Work up an appetite
Noonish Home cooked burgers, then John Teas, Teas Nursery on *Trees & Berries of Texas*

October 9 – Field Trip

A car-pooling event to Mercer Arboretum and Botanical Gardens. Information available at regular meetings and in the MG office.

October 15 – General Meeting

6:30 pm Coffee
7:00 pm Barney Lipscomb on *Murderous Plants*

November 5 – Hamburger Tuesday

8:00 am Work up an appetite
Noonish Home cooked burgers, then Evelyn Robinson on *Orchids*

November 19 – General Meeting

6:30 pm Coffee
7:00 pm Suzanne Chapman on *Indoor Potted Plants*

Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens

Garden Workshop: Daylily Dig

Saturday October 5, from 8 a.m. to noon, join Mercer staff and volunteers for a "Daylily Dig" in the Daylily garden. Learn how to dig, divide and replant day-lilies for beautiful blooms next summer. Plan on getting down and dirty in this hands-on workday. Master Gardeners can earn four hours of field credit.

Lunch Bunch: Simple Taxonomy

Wednesday, October 9, from noon to 1 p.m., enjoy this lunchtime program by **Greg Harmison**, Mercer's program manager. Learn some basics of plant taxonomy (the study of plant names) and why common names don't always mean what they say. Bring a sack lunch to enjoy during the program.

Mercer Garden Tour

Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens staff lead a guided tour of the gardens **Saturday, October 12**, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Program: Butterfly Gardening

Saturday, October 19, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m., join **Nancy Greig** of the Cockrell Butterfly Center as she discusses butterfly gardening in Houston. Learn the plants you can use to attract these fluttering jewels to your yard.

Mercer Arboretum & Botanic Gardens is a Harris County Precinct 4 facility located at 22306 Aldine Westfield Road, one mile north of FM 1960. Harris County Precinct 4 programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, sex, religion, national origin, or physical ability. Anyone requiring special assistance to participate in any program, or for more information, please contact Mercer at (281) 443-8731 or mercercarboretum@cp4.hctx.net. On the web at <http://www.cp4.hctx.net/mercercarboretum>.

Michael's Corner

By Michael Morrison, CEA Horticulture

It all seems like a blur and things have been so busy here. Fall is upon us and the leaves will be turning soon to those beautiful colors and making a blanket of yellow, orange, and brown on the landscape. Moving back to Texas, I will certainly enjoy the collage of color that vividly covers the ground like an artist with a paintbrush.

Sometimes we don't stop in the busy world that we live in enough to "stop and smell the roses," as

Clyde Cannon would appropriately say. Often in the urban setting we rush around without stopping and noticing the beauty and wonder around us. I stopped working in my office the other day and walked out into the garden and sat on one of the benches and soaked up the wonder in our Master Gardener's demonstration gardens with all the color abounding and butterflies and all the other critters (as Texans would say). It made me smile and reflect that we

do need to take time to notice the beauty in our lives and the many wonders before us to enjoy.

I recently went and had my eyes examined, and had a new pair of glasses made for me. So if you see me wandering around without my glasses on remember that I am not sure I want to wear them now that I have seen the garden.

**"My face in the mirror
Isn't wrinkled or drawn.
My house isn't dirty
The cobwebs are gone.
My garden looks lovely,
And so does my lawn.
I think I might never
Put my glasses back on."**



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MG 2 MG

Sharing plants, ideas, and more...

By Ginger Geist

September and October are packed full of tempting plant sales resulting in new acquisitions waiting for a place in your garden. That situation leads directly to MG2MG where you can pass along your extra plants to a new home. If you didn't find the 'wish-I-had-a' plant at one of the sales, try MG2MG with your request.

Fall is the best time to plan for transplanting larger plants – the ones that need serious digging. Scout them out now. Note the size of the future root ball and whether you will ball & bag or use a large pot for transportation. Envision this plant in your yard while everything still has leaves. Then in winter, return prepared to dig. As to who has large plants? We do. We have several redbuds, cherry laurels, etc. that you can dig; we are looking for diversity and will dig native shrubs and understory trees such as wax myrtles, hawthorns and hollies.

Thanks to all who responded to my request for red worms. I received lots of suggestions. **Imogene Harding** forwarded Linda Crum's links to web sites and recommendations for the book *Worms Eat My Garbage*.

One **FBMG Jerry King** offered to bring me some red worms from her vermicomposting friend. Well, the current status is that "our worms" are still in her kitchen. She is fascinated with feeding them food scraps, probably spoiling them rotten. We are looking forward to this experience.

More on worm composting when I have hands-on experience and have finished reading the book.

Web Surfin' Tech news for Master Gardeners

By Tom H. Robb, Jr.

I was surfen' the net the other day and I came across an advertisement for vacation in Hawaii. It had a beautiful photo of a "frangipani" tree in full bloom and I said to myself – "That looks like a plumeria." Of course, we all know that a frangipani is a plumeria. Anyway one picture called for more and I ran a Google search (<http://www.google.com>) and came up with, what I think, are some nice plumeria sites.

To begin, there is a local site – John Murray's **The Plumeria Place**. This site doesn't contain much in the way of photos but it does contain, and link to, a wealth of know-how. Find it at <http://www.io.com/~jrm/plumeria.html>

Plumeria 101, Everything You Need To Know About Growing Plumerias is a tremendous plumeria site. Not only does it have beautiful pictures, it is full of all types of information about growing "frangipani" – and it's fully illustrated. Find it at <http://www.plumeria101.com>. And was I surprised to note that it is located in Longview, Texas.

Yoonki's Tropical Garden – Plumeria (Frangipani, Temple Tree) is a small page but contains a number of beautiful pictures, which can be enlarged by clicking on them. It's

located at <http://www.vassl.com/tropicalgarden/Plumeria.htm>.

One of the largest collections of plumerias is found in the **Dean Conklin Plumeria Grove at Koko Crater Botanical Gardens** on Oahu, Hawaii. Hundreds of trees are clustered at the entrance and along the road leading into the crater. There are several plumeria sites related to this collection. The page **Plumeria at the Dean Conklin Plumeria Grove by K.W. Bridges** contains beautiful large thumbnail photos which can be enlarged to tremendous size by clicking on them is at <http://www.botany.hawaii.edu/faculty/bridges/plumeria/plumeria.htm>.

Additional information and photos by K.W. Bridges are located at <http://www.botany.hawaii.edu/faculty/bridges/plumeria/plumeria2.htm> Another site, **Plumeria Photos from the Dean Conklin Plumeria Garden at Koko Crater, Honolulu Botanical Gardens** also contains a number of thumbnails which can be enlarged to 400k each. Find this one at <http://www.botany.hawaii.edu/faculty/bridges/sonytest/plumeria/plumeria.htm>.

From Down-Under in Australia is **Plumeria Growing in Queensland** which contains some beautiful photos of plumeria in Australia. It's a little slow in coming up because the photos are all large. Also the advertising label is a bother when you open the page but it goes away in just a little while. The

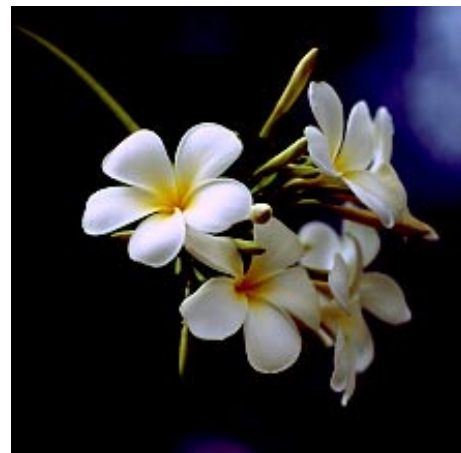


Photo courtesy Yoonki's Tropical Garden

pictures are worth the bother. Look it up at <http://www.geocities.com/dazzoc/plumeria.html>.

From Italy comes **Botanical Department – University of Catania**. There are not that many pictures of plumeria but it contains a large number of wonderful photos of other species. It's located at <http://www.dipbot.unict.it/orto/0970-1.html>.

And last, to change the subject, this month's issue of HAL-PC journal, M. L. Giggleman, in her column *Back to School*, tells of a neat utility **Return Path**. When a person changes an e-mail address there's always the problem of letting your friends know the new address without letting the word out to all the "spam artists." Return Path permits you to allow your e-mail contacts to find you after a change of address, but only after you say that its all right to let them have your new address. Go to <http://www.returnpath.net/home/> and check it out.

If you're not getting your email or want to start receiving eDirt—the electronic version Urban Dirt—be sure to let me know at trobb@hal-pc.org

Happy surfen'



Photo courtesy Yoonki's Tropical Garden

Garden Gifts News from our Outreach Gardens

By Kenneth Dorman

Thanks to **Ann Robinson** and **Nancy Kuykendall** what had been a garden without bees is now covered up in them. These two nice ladies brought me some monarda plants for the CCSC garden that I planted around the stump of a mulberry tree and lo and behold, in a few weeks they bloomed and here came the bees. All kinds of bees, bumble, honey and several I don't recognize. There are hundreds where there were none and they really like the cream peas; I hope they like the squash flowers just as well so we don't have to hand pollinate them.

In case you don't know about bees, *A Gardener's Dictionary* describes them thusly, "Bee – Generic name for any of a number of stinging insects, most commonly the honeybee. Contrary to popular belief, bees almost never sting, unless they are mating, feeding, resting, swarming, leaving the hive, or returning to the hive."

I am constantly amazed at the fertility of this garden. Cottonseed meal and compost, the magic combination. I wish all of you would come see the plants; even in the hottest part of summer they were beautiful. We used homemade compost this time instead of buying it and discovered we have a lot of weed seeds, but for the cost of compost we can do some weeding and the beds are raised enough so the stooping is not too bad.

I bought seeds for the fall and winter gardens from the excellent selection at Urban Harvest and was pleasantly surprised at how economical they were. This is a great organization that does an immense amount of good in the community and, they gave us six beautiful tomato cages that we will use to hold up our eggplants. Thanks, guys.

While I am thanking people and organizations I would like to thank

Cornelius Nurseries and the manager of their Voss store, **L.P. Kojis**, for the wonderful selection of plants he gave me for the Bonita Street House of Hope gardens and **Mary Lynn Randall** and the greenhouse gang who also donated two flats of flowers. Bonita Street had an open house in late September, hoping to raise funds for a new facility, and these beautiful plants in full bloom certainly added much to the landscaping. On top of being a good guy, L.P. is a pretty good fisherman. I think he may have even beaten me on one trip. The flowers look

good in between the garden beds where broccoli, collards, field peas, okra, mustard greens and sweet potatoes are growing.

Well, a couple of weeks after the opening paragraph and now we know the bees did not find the squash, aphids did but they brought a virus that wiped out their food supply. I put what was left of the squash plants in the dumpster and planted them had some collards where they had been. The coriander and arugula I planted in late August did not come up in a timely manner and weeds took over their bed so we have removed the weeds and replanted. We have a lot of doves and we are blaming the nonappearance of plants on them eating the seed, not on bad planting or bad timing. This time we are going to put some row cover over the seedbed.

Boy, good help is hard to find nowadays. **Mike** went back to Costa Rica and **Walter** went back to Colorado and then to Europe. Fortunately the work has slowed a bit and **George** and **Sharon** and I are able to keep up with everything but the weeding. We are saving the weeding for our traveling friends' homecoming gift.

Actually both gardens are kind of slow right now. I planted cabbage, collards and broccoli seed at BHOP and **Jinx Hammer** and I planted a multitude of seed at the greenhouse for CCSC, BSHOP and a new garden George found over in the 3rd ward. It is at a community center and they have a wonderful setup with some raised beds they want to develop with a group of seniors. I hope they are not much senior to me or they will not be as much help as I am wishing for. The center is one of eleven in the city and is really beautiful and functional. It is good to see what appears to be money well spent.

Try not to get too lethal killing mosquitoes or we will tude of end up with a multi- because other insect pests predators. instead we killed all the something by using with DEET in it. It kind of like spraying ourselves with Malathion.

Love yourself and be as kind to others as possible.



Bee – Generic name for any of a number of stinging insects, most commonly the honeybee. Contrary to popular belief, bees almost never sting, unless they are mating, feeding, resting, swarming, leaving the hive, or returning to the hive.

Volunteer Opportunities

By Scott Hume

This month's Trivia Quiz involves one of our own... What do Chicago's Navy Pier and Tool Man, Brian Koehl have in common?

Bulb Mart coming up

Once again, the Garden Club of Houston is putting on its annual **Bulb and Plant Mart** at the Westminster United Methodist Church on San Felipe from Thursday, **October 3** through Saturday, **October 5**. As has become our custom we are manning a booth there to present Master Gardening and the HCMGA to patrons of the show. We hope to always have two Master Gardeners at the table to pass out flyers and other information about our "Mission in Life." I still have 7 spots open for 2 to 3 hour stints at the booth – which also gets you into the show for free! OK, OK... so everyone gets in free!! Picky, Picky! However we are informed that there are free refreshments and lunch for all booth workers.

New Class making its mark

The members of the current Master Gardening class are rapidly coming to the attention of the rest of the HCMGA membership. They have been showing up to volunteer on Tuesdays (and other days as well!!) in record numbers. Some credit this great participation to the rumor that I have been giving free drinks and green stamps to those who show up. Those who recognize what I give out as green stamps are both showing their age (who remembers S&H Green Stamps?) and that they need a vision check-up! The enthusiasm of this new class is quite infectious and perhaps a little tiring to behold. This reminds us that we must be careful to nurture their interest and not chase them away like so many noisy little children getting underfoot! As Michael

suggests, we old-timers should say "Hi," introduce ourselves, and offer to show them around or as your mama might say, "Be nice!"

I need feedback

If I am to continue to "earn those big bucks" I need your help. I need to get feedback from you about several things.

The first is that I need your ideas on what I can do to improve my job of coordinating the volunteer opportunities. Ideas such as the one from Katherine Peterson to put a big calendar with the next three months' activities highlighted right over the sign-in computer in the office. This should help to remind you to set aside time for future events like the Christmas tree decoration day (in December) or an upcoming field trip (in January.) So keep them coming.

Next I need to know who is responding and how you are responding to the volunteer opportunities we publicize. I do not know if the help we ask for is being met. When you get together with one of the community organizations asking for help I need to know what happened. Not only that you responded (so I can "take the notice down") but also what you found when you got there. Was it really a need for our type of expertise or was it an attempt to find an inexpensive labor force? Did they really understand what we can provide as Master Gardeners?



Did they understand and correctly communicate to me what they really needed? In short, tell me what happened!!

Finally, about Brian. He and the Navy Pier are both "big" on Radio Flyer red wagons!! He and his crew have added to our fleet of red wagons by assembling 20 new ones. They also "gussied-up" the old ones and stenciled names and numbers on them all in preparation for our Fall Plant sale. What a tremendous job. I would bet Brian's Boys are glad they didn't have to put one together that was as big as the one at the Navy Pier!!

Thanks again guys!!

Volunteer Hours

See below for instructions.

Name _____

Phone Number _____

Email address _____

Period covered – from _____ to _____

Date	Facility or Garden Name	# Contacts	Hours
Total hours this worksheet			

Submitting your volunteer hours Please drop off completed forms in the inbox on **Scott Hume's** desk. Scott can be reached at (281) 855-5600 or oshume@taexgw.tamu.edu.

Want to fill out this form on your computer? The volunteer hours form included here is for printing out and filling in by hand. But we've posted a spiffy version on the MG website, which you can fill out on the computer in Acrobat Reader before printing to save you all that tedious handwriting. The downloadable version even prints the current date and totals your hours for you. Get it at <http://harris-cnty.tamu.edu/hcmga/urban.htm>.

October 2002

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eDirt End Notes

Quick survey: How do you read eDirt?

By this I mean, **do you read eDirt on-screen** or **do you print it out** before reading it?

Most HCMGA members now receive Urban Dirt by email, and I'm trying to figure out if I need to change our design from multi-column to single-column in order to enhance on-screen viewing.

The current layout of Urban Dirt is based on being read from a printed copy, and as such it seems to be working pretty well. But reading a newsletter on-screen calls for a different type of design. For example, multiple columns of text is easier on the eyes in a printed newsletter, but can be a hassle when you're reading the same article on-screen.

So before I go getting wacky, let's figure out how Urban Dirt is being read. If you've got an opinion on the layout you want to express, shoot an email over to the Dirt desk at UrbanDirt@houston.rr.com. If you just want to answer the survey question, click on one of the icons below to send the appropriate email. —Tami

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eDIRT OCTOBER 2002

Lemon Verbena Sorbet

Nothing but vibrant and refreshing – it's lemon heaven!

- 1 cup (gently packed) fresh lemon verbena leaves
- 1 cup superfine sugar
- ¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 3 cups cold water

Grind the lemon verbena leaves and sugar together in a food processor until the mixture turns into a bright green paste, about 30 seconds; stop to scrape down the sides as necessary. Add the lemon juice and process for 15 seconds longer, then add the water. Strain the resulting liquid through a fine sieve to remove any bits of leaf. Freeze in an ice cream maker according to the manufacturer's directions. Makes 1 quart, 8 servings.

Variation: Scented Geranium Sorbet

Substitute 16 medium-size scented geranium leaves, such as old-fashioned rose or Mabel Gray lemon geranium, for the lemon verbena.

Herb Additions

The pure lemon flavor of the verbena blends well with other herbs. For a compound herb flavor, grind any of the following with the lemon verbena leaves and sugar:

1 cup sweet cicely leaves, 6 rose geranium leaves, ¼ cup French or Mexican tarragon leaves, or ¼ cup mint leaves.

Adapted from *The Herbfarm Cookbook*, by Jerry Traunfeld.

http://www.splendidtable.org/recipes/dessert_lemonverbenasorbet.html

Lemon Verbena Sachet

- 1 cup Lemon Verbena, dried and crushed fine
- 1 cup lemon balm, dried and crushed fine
- 1 cup rosemary, dried and crushed fine
- 1 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 4 drops essential oil of sweet orange

In a glass container, mix all the ingredients, allow to age for two weeks. Fill ingredients into small or medium sized cloth bags.

Makes 3 cups. Discard after fragrance is gone.

Recipe: <http://www.hair-news.com/lemon-verbena-sachet.html>