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Lemon Grass Planting & Harvest

Lemon grass is an annual herb in zone 4-5 with a light lemon taste & scent. It is a key ingredient in Thai & Vietnamese cuisine. The essential oil of the plant is used in aromatherapy and cosmetics. A nice garden ornamental, the plant forms 2-4' tall grassy clumps of sharp-edged aromatic stalks.

Transplanting- Plant only as deep as the soil it is in. Planting too deep will cause the plant to rot. Space plants 18-36" apart. Lemon grass makes a good addition to mixed herb plantings in containers. If you want to overwinter lemon grass, you can place containers in an unheated shed

Light/Soil/Water requirements- Lemon grass prefers full sun, nitrogen-rich, well-drained soil with a pH between 5.5 and 7.5. Avoid heavy or clay soil types, otherwise add compost & sand to increase drainage. Optimum temperatures are 60-85°F with high humidity and requires 24-30" of rain per year for optimum growth.

Harvesting- the entire plant is harvested by cutting the stems off at the base of the plant. The plant will sprout new stems from the ground in similar fashion as chives, only slower. Individual stems can also be harvested as needed by cutting or pulling them from the base of the plant.

Culinary Uses- Lemon grass has long been used for teas, soups, and in many ethnic cuisines. Most of the plant can be used; whole leaves, leaf tips, and tender shoots. Add to a stir fry or to the water of steamed vegetables for an exotic flavor.