

Citrus aurantiifolia

[Synonyms : *Citrus acida*, *Citrus aurantifolia*, *Citrus aurantium* var. *aurantiifolia*, *Citrus excelsa*, *Citrus hystrix* subsp. *acida*, *Citrus javanica*, *Citrus lima*, *Citrus limetta*, *Citrus limetta* var. *aromatica*, *Citrus limonellus*, *Citrus medica* var. *acida*, *Citrus medica* var. *limau nipis*, *Citrus notissima*, *Citrus spinosissima*, *Limon spinosum*, *Limonia acidissima*, *Limonia aurantiifolia*]

LIME (Danish, English, German, Swedish) is an evergreen shrub or tree. Possibly a hybrid from south and south-eastern Asia, it has small fragrant, white flowers.

It is also known as Acid lime, Bartender's lime, Bastard lemon, *Chanh* (Vietnamese), *Chanh ta* (Vietnamese), *Citron* (French), *Citronnier gallet* (French), *Citron vert* (French), Common lime, *Dayalap* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Dayap* (Filipino/Tagalog), *Dehi* (Sinhalese), *Dhaisikai* (Tamil), Egyptian lime, *Elumiccai* (Tamil), *Elumichai* (Tamil), *Erumichinarakam* (Malayalam), *Floridan limetti* (Finnish), *Gallet de la Réunion* (French), Indian lime, *Jambhiir* (Sanskrit), *Jambhiirii* (Hindi), *Jeruk neepis* (Malay), *Jeruk nipis* (Indonesian, Malay), *Kaghzi nimbu* (Bengali, Hindi), *Kagzi lime*, *Kagzi nimboo* (Hindi), *Kagzi nimbu* (Hindi), *Kagzi nimbuu* (Hindi), Key lime, *Kyselý lajm* (Czech), *Laim* (Russian), *Lai meng* (Chinese), *Laim nastoiashchii kislyi* (Russian), Large lime, *Lemmetje* (Dutch), *Lemuu* (Hindi), *Liimuu* (Hindi), *Lima* (Italian, Spanish), *Lima acida* (Italian), *Lima ácida* (Portuguese, Spanish), *Lima chica* (Spanish), *Lima gallega* (Spanish), *Limãu-ácida* (Portuguese), *Limau asam* (Malay), *Limãu-galêgo* (Portuguese), *Limah* (Arabic), *Limau asam* (Malay), *Limau neepis* (Malay), *Limau nipis* (Malay), *Limeira* (Portuguese), *Lime mexicaine* (French), *Limero* (Spanish), *Limetta mexicana* (Italian), *Limette acide* (French), *Limettenbaum* (German), *Limettenzitron* (German), *Limettier* (French), *Limettier des Antilles* (French), *Limettier du Mexique* (French), *Limoo* (Arabic), *Limbu* (Gujarati), *Limeo* (Esperanto), *Limette* (German), *Limetti* (Finnish), *Limoen* (Flemish), *Limón agrio* (Spanish), *Limón ceutí* (Spanish), *Limón chiquito* (Spanish), *Limón comúri* (Spanish), *Limón corriente* (Spanish), *Limón criollo* (Spanish), *Limón de pica* (Spanish), *Limón mejicana* (Spanish), *Limón mexicano* (Spanish), *Limón peruano* (Spanish), *Limón sutil* (Spanish), *Manao* (Thai), Mexican lime, *Mutimo* (Kikuyu), *Ndimu* (Kikuyu), *Neebuu* (Hindi), *Nimbuu* (Hindi), *Nimma* (Telugu), *Nümi basrah* (Arabic), *Raimu* (Japanese), *Saure Limette* (German), *Sitwon* (Creole), *Som-mal-nao* (Thai), Sour lime, *Suan ning meng* (Chinese), *Suwa* (Visayan), Sweet lime, and West Indian lime.

The fruit are more fragrant than lemon (*Citrus limon*).

Oil is extracted from the rind and the seeds of unripe fruit.

Warning – lime can cause allergies in some people. It can also cause photodermatitis – skin that has been touched by the juice will turn dark brown if exposed to sunlight.

Aurantiifolia is derived from the species name *aurantium* (of bitter orange, *Citrus aurantium*) and Latin *-folia* (leaved) components meaning 'with orange-tree like leaves'.

In Malaysia the fruit are primarily used as a flavouring for food and drink. They are also salted or preserved in vinegar for pickles.

Lime juice has assumed a role in Malaysian marriage ritual in the bridegroom's ceremonial bathing.

The lime also seems to have been closely associated with elephants in the Malaysian psyche. Not only has the juice been rubbed over the skins of decoy female elephants in order to lure a solitary male, been given as a drink to elephants to make them wise and used to treat their eyes when sore, but it has also been respected as an antidote for human possession. In the latter case those poor devils who were possessed by 'elephant spirits' had to consume ripe fallen limes. In addition there was also a general belief among many Malaysians that evil spirits would be kept at bay if lime leaves were chewed and those who chewed them then breathed over the sleeping susceptible body.

The Arabs are credited with introducing the lime to Europe during the 13th Century. From there three centuries later the Spaniards are said to have carried the fruit to the Americas. Lime was one of the citrus fruits cultivated in the 'orangeries' in northern Europe's wealthy establishments from the 17th Century.

The fresh green fruit (which are lemon-like, *Citrus limon*, but smaller) can be, and are, used to a large extent as an alternative to lemons. For a relatively short period in the mid-1800s the British Admiralty decreed that British seamen, after a period at sea, should drink lime juice (instead of lemon juice) daily as a scurvy preventative. This led to British sailors being christened 'limeys' by their North American peers.

Lime was familiar to a few North American Indian tribes and records show that the fruit provided food for the Seminole Indians in the Florida area.

In the Middle East ripe fruit are left on the tree to dehydrate. The resultant dried black fruit are picked for various dishes in Arab countries, where they are known as *Loomi besra*, *Noomi* or *Limu omani* and are particularly prized in the Gulf States. The fresh leaves feature in Asian cookery especially when they are known as *Daun limau perut*.

Today in the West lime is used in commercial processing by the food and drinks industries. The rind and seed oil is employed by both the toiletry and perfumery industries, the former for soap and the latter in producing perfume.

Medicinally, in south-eastern Asia the juice has been used to treat coughs, and the roots were used in treatments for dysentery. In the West Indies an infusion of the leaves has been used in treatments for colds, fevers and stomach upsets, and the root was once used to treat venereal diseases.