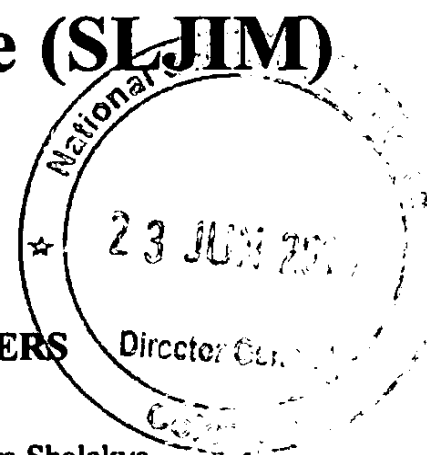


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Cover story

Citrus limon (L.) Burm. f. (Family: Rutaceae)

Sinhala: Kaha dehi; **Sanskrit:** Jambhira/ Nimbu;

English: Lemon; **Hindi:** Nimbu; **Tamil:** Elumichi

Citrus limon is an evergreen shrub growing to 3.0 m by 1.0 m at medium rate. It is native to Asia. Usually it has sharp thorns on the twigs. The alternate leaves, reddish when young, become dark-green above, light-green below; are oblong, elliptic or long-ovate, finely toothed, with slender wings on the petioles. The mildly fragrant flowers may be solitary or there may be two or more clustered in the leaf axils. Buds are reddish; the opened flowers have four or five petals, white on the upper surface (inside), purplish beneath (outside), and 20-30 more or less united stamens with yellow anthers. The fruit is ovoid to globose in shape with a nipple-like protuberance at the apex. The peel is usually light-yellow. Some fruits are seedless, but most have a few seeds.

Fruits contain sugars, polysaccharides, organic acids, lipids, carotenoids (pigment), vitamins and minerals. Other constituents of lemon include volatile oil (2.5% of the peel), limonene, alpha-terpinene, alpha-pinene, citral, coumarins, mucilage, pectins, and bioflavonoids (mostly from pith and peel) [1]. Flavonoids eriocitrin and hesperidin have been evaluated.

Lemon is an excellent preventive medicine and has a wide range of uses in the traditional medicine. The fruit is rich in vitamin C which helps the body to fight off infections and also to prevent or treat scurvy. Applied locally, the juice is a good astringent and is used as a gargle for sore throats. Lemon juice is also a very effective bactericide. Further, it is a good antiperiodic and has been used as a substitute for quinine in treating malaria and other fevers. Although the fruit is very acidic, once eaten it gives an alkalizing effect upon the body. It is useful in the treatment of rheumatic conditions. The essential oil from the skin of the fruit is strongly rubefacient and when taken internally in small doses has stimulating and carminative properties. The stem bark is bitter, stomachic and tonic. An essential oil from the fruit rind is used in aromatherapy. In an experiment coumarins extracted from lemon fruit, has been demonstrated induce apoptosis in acute myelomonocytic leukemia cells. A meta-analysis of epidemiological studies associates the consumption of citrus fruit with a larger protective effect against oral cancer than with overall fruit consumption [2].

The original paper on page 209 describe the findings of scientific studies of fruits of *Citrus limon* (L.) Burm. f.

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