

# Lemongrass

## Harvesting

The time of harvesting affects the yield and quality of the oil.

The first harvest is generally obtained after 4 to 6 months of transplanting. Subsequent harvests take place at intervals of 50-60 days depending upon the fertility of the soil and seasonal factors. Under normal conditions, 2-3 harvests are possible during the first year, and 3-4 in subsequent years, depending on the management practices followed. Harvesting is done with the help of sickles, the plants being cut close to their bases about 10 cm above ground-level.

### Yield

Depending upon soil and climatic conditions, plantation lasts on an average, for six years. The yield of oil is less during the first year. It increases in the second year and reaches a maximum in the third and fourth years, after which it declines. For economy, the plantation is maintained only for six years.

On an average, 25 to 30 tonnes of fresh herbage are harvested per hectare per annum from 4 to 5 cuttings, which yields about 80 kg of oil. Under irrigated conditions an oil yield up to 150 kg/ha has been recorded. The percentage yield based on fresh weight varies between 0.2 to 0.4

### Uses

In India, oil of lemongrass is primarily used for the isolation of citral for manufacturing Vitamin-A. Citral is the starting material for the manufacture of ionones and is also used in flowers, cosmetics and perfumes. A small amount of oil is used, as such in soaps, detergents and other preparations.

The spent lemongrass is suitable for making paper. It is also used as fuel for the distillation of the grass. It is an excellent source of manure. It is applied either after composting or in the form of ash by burning. It may be used for mulching coffee.

It is a good crop for checking soil erosion.