

## SMELLING PLANTS AGAINST LEISHMANIASIS

The month of April arrived and tiny insects, which are a very big enemies of our dogs, surround us. I am talking about Leishmaniosis, an illness caused by the bite of the female of the flebótomo, popularly known as the sand fly, which caused illness and death among our filas. There are areas where the flies are found in higher quantities than in other ones, it all depends on heat and height.

A very important item is the protection of our animals against this terrible illness with all the weapons which we have available. Unfortunately we still do not have a preventive vaccination in Europe, due to it we may only protect the fila with a collar that makes the flies go away like Scalibor, an effective spray and yellow lamps in the kennel which scare off the insects.

But, there is also something else; we have plants, which work as insect repellent, scaring them off because of their strong smell.



*citronella plants as a decoration and protection near the terrace*

In many kennels in Brazil I have seen a very decorative plant that is very efficient against flies, named CITRONELLA (*Cymbopogon nardus*). This plant is a tropical grass from Asia, especially cultivated in Sri Lanka and Java, the plant can reach a height as well as a diameter of one and a half meter, the smell makes insects go away and from the leaves is distilled a lemon oil, which is used in insect repellents. Olegário and Vânia were so kind to make us some pictures of these plants, which we find in abundance in their garden. Close to the terrace where the guarding filas like to stay at night they serve as protection and decoration at the same time. In the kennel area they form a kind of good smelling fence.

In Spain I was looking for this plants in many nursery-gardens but could not find it until now. Some years ago my husband, Pedro, brought some young plants from Brazil and in spite of his “green hands” they did not prosper very well. When our members in Spain might find this plant, please let me know. In the book “Leishmaniasis Canina” of Christina de Lima Neto (Ed. Tikal) I found that citronella, or “lemon grass” does not prosper in the areas, which are far from the Mediterranean. It is a plant that needs sun and heat.

In the web page of Citrosafe, a Brazilian company specialized in natural products from the citronella plant, one can find interesting information in Portuguese, Spanish and English: [www.citronella.com.br](http://www.citronella.com.br)



*abundance of citronella protecting the filas*



*a good smelling fence in the kennel area*

During my trips to Brazil I use to buy “Mosquito Stop” atomizers, which is an insect repellent on citronella base and it gets largely used in the world of equestrian sport. Another brand is called “Citrospray” and both are sold in bottles of half a litre. It is possible to wash and spray the dogs with this no toxic spray and it does not spoil the dog’s coat because it is a completely natural product. In Brazil one can buy this product rather cheap. Friends told me about the same product in Spanish shops which are specialized in horse products, however for a much higher price.

It is a pity that we have to do without the Citronella plants in Spain, however there are more smelling plants and herbs that have the same feature of scaring off insects because of their pleasant smell. I like the lavender very much because it is strong and decorative, planted in the ground as well as in pots, it protects our dogs. One advice: never leave the plants in the plastic pots in which they are sold at the garden centres, the dogs love them, transport the plants to their favourite spot and destroy everything while having a good time.

In springtime, when we start gardening again, we have to think about the protection of our filas. Ask advice in the garden centre and look out for plants, which could be poisonous for the dogs.

Other important allies are the insect eating birds. Do you know how many insects one bird can eat during a year? Believe me it is worth creating an environment in which they feel welcome to build their nest in the trees, under the loose tiles of the roof or under the porch as the swallows like to do.



*puppies from Ondara de Sao José da Lapa love to play at hide-and-peek under the citronella plants and come out well perfumed*

When you have any advice, experience or trick you want to share with the members of our club, please do not hesitate telling us!

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