

Catnip - aka Catmint
Nepeta Cataria
Family: Lamiaceae, same as mint

Description

This hairy perennial has erect, branched stems and grey-green, heart shaped, leaves similar to a nettle. It grows up to 1m high and produces a pale purple group of lipped flowers at the top of the stem.

Growing Tips

Catnip is frost resistant but drought tender and likes well-drained soil with plenty of water. It grows in full sun or semi-shade and for best results plant 30cm apart.

Parts Used

Flowers and leaves.

Uses

Catnip produces several volatile oils one of which is nepetalactone that has a mood-altering effect on cats. This effect is achieved by cats rubbing against the live plant and nibbling on its leaves.

For humans a tea made with catnip is calming and clearing to the digestive tract, helps sleep; eases menstruation pains and expels worms. Fresh leaves applied to wounds aids healing. The plants can deter rats and mice and the essential oil keeps mosquitoes, flies and cockroaches away. Alternatively it can added fresh to salads and stews.

Origin & History

Native to Europe, Africa and Asia, it was naturalized in America and Canada where it was adopted by native Indians as a favoured herb.

It's one of the main herbs used by medieval herbalists and its tea was a common drink before the introduction of black tea from Asia.

