

Monarda fistulosa

Wild Bergamot

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic

This showy mint family member boasts a fragrance similar to bergamot oranges. Its aromatic leaves are used in herbal tea. Flowers attract myriad pollinators, especially native bees that also nest in their dead, hollow stems. The Virginia Native Plant Society named Wild Bergamot* Wildflower of the Year in 1993.



Perennial	Clump, Flowers with Pollinators,** Fruit
Height: 2–4 feet	
Spread: 2–3 feet	
Bloom color: Pink, lavender	
Characteristics	
Clump-forming, showy perennial with erect stems	
Opposite , aromatic, toothed, ovate , gray-green leaves	
Bilabiate (two-lipped), tubular flowers in mostly solitary, terminal verticillasters bloom June to Sept.	
Schizocarp of 4 nutlets enclosed in persistent calyx	
Spreads from creeping rhizomes and seeds	
Attributes	
Tolerates various soil types (including clay), some drought, and Black Walnut; no serious pests but powdery mildew and rust can be problems; deer seldom severely damage	
Ethnobotanic , therapeutic, herbal uses (edible flowers & leaves with Greek oregano-like flavor)	
Attracts hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees; larval host to ~12 lepidopterans incl. Orange Mint moth	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
Soil Requirements : Well-drained	<i>Hesperis matronalis</i> - Dame's Rocket
Light Requirements : Sun, Partial Shade	<i>Lythrum salicaria</i> - Purple Loosestrife
Water Requirements : Dry, Moist	
Deadhead to prolong blooms; cut back the dead, hollow stems, in which native bees nest, to 12–24 inches; divide every 2–3 years in early March	
Grow in full sun in well-aerated soil and prune for good air circulation to lessen powdery mildew	<p>*It is native in DC. It is rare in Delaware. It is present in MD mostly in the Piedmont and throughout PA. The species, which in VA includes three varieties (var. <i>fistulosa</i>, var. <i>mollis</i>, and var. <i>rubra</i>) that have not been fully sorted out, is common in the mountains, frequent in the Piedmont, and rare in the Coastal Plain. In NoVA, it has not been reported in Prince William County.</p> <p>** <i>Monarda fistulosa</i> attracts pollinators like <i>Bombus bimaculatus</i> (two-spotted bumble bee) and the monarch butterfly. Leaves (middle right) show signs of powdery mildew.</p>
Use massed in perennial border, herb, meadow, native plant, or wild garden	
Hardiness : USDA Zones 3a–9b	

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Images by Mary Free, Glencarlyn and private gardens, Arlington, VA and by Elaine Mills (monarch), Meadowlark Botanical Gardens