

Monarda didyma

Scarlet Beebalm, Oswego Tea

Tried and True
Native Plant Selections
for the Mid-Atlantic

The distinctive red flowers of this member of the Mint family attract a variety of pollinators, especially hummingbirds, and offers herbal and medicinal benefits. Native to scattered regions of eastern North America,* it grows along stream banks and in thickets and open woods.



Perennial	En Masse, Close-up,** Senesced w/ Hummer***
Height: 2–4 feet	
Spread: 2–3 feet	
Bloom Color: Red	
Characteristics	
Aromatic, clump-forming, herbaceous perennial	
Opposite , ovate , dark green leaves w/ reddish veins with minty aroma on square, slightly hairy stems ****	
Showy, bright red bilabiate flowers with tubular corollas clustered in two-inch terminal heads subtended by a whorl of reddish bracts from May to July (or September if deadheaded)	
Can colonize by rhizomes and spread by seed	
Attributes	 
Tolerates clay soil, wet soil, Black Walnut, and rabbits; intolerant of dry soil; powdery mildew can be serious problem; deer seldom severely damage	
Ethnobotanic uses; source of antiseptic thymol, ingredients for tea (dried leaves and flower heads), and salad flavoring (fresh leaves); fit for fresh and dried flower arrangements and potpourri	
Attracts hummingbirds, butterflies, and bees; larval host to ~12 lepidopterans incl. Orange Mint moth	
Growing and Maintenance Tips	Excellent Replacement for
Soil Requirements : Rich, well-drained	<i>Lychnis chalcedonica</i> - Maltese Cross
Light Requirements : Sun, Partial Shade	*In the Mid-Atlantic, it is not native to DC or DE. It occurs mostly in the MD mountains and is present throughout PA. In VA, it is infrequent in the mountains and rare (maybe introduced) in the Piedmont and Coastal Plain. In NoVA, it is not reported in Prince William County.
Water Requirements : Moist, Wet	**Discovered near the Blue Ridge Parkway, <i>M. didyma</i> ‘Jacob Cline’ is considered a natural selection of wild bee balm. In trials, ‘Jacob Cline’ “faired quite well against the dreaded powdery mildew” and was “a major hit” with hummers. [From Mt. Cuba Center Puts Nativars to the Test, 2/6/18]
Prevent powdery mildew with good air circulation; remove mildew stems at base and place in trash	***A ruby-throated hummingbird (upper left quadrant).
Divide every three years to keep within bounds	****Learn more about Garden Cleanup for Pollinators: Trim Perennial Stems in Their First Winter .
Use in herb, butterfly, native plant, and rain gardens	
Hardiness : USDA Zones 4a-9b	

developed by Master Gardeners of Northern Virginia, serving Arlington and Alexandria

Images by Elaine Mills, private garden, Arlington, VA and by Mary Free, Quarry Shade and Glencarlyn Gardens