Monarda punctata

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Introduction

Horsemint, is a 12 to 18-inch-tall, upright, herbaceous perennial that has long been used by native Americans to make a “sweating tea” (Fig. 1). The branched stems of this plant bear opposite, lanceolate to oblong leaves that are 3 inches in length. These light green leaves have serrate to nearly entire margins. Horsemint produces fragrant, beautiful pink flowers which are held above the foliage in the summer and fall. It is native to moist, coastal upland sites in Florida.

General Information

Scientific name: Monarda punctata  
Pronunciation: moe-NAR-duh punk-TAY-tuh  
Common name(s): Bee Balm, Horsemint, Monarda  
Family: Labiatae  
Plant type: perennial; herbaceous  
USDA hardiness zones: 4 through 9 (Fig. 2)  
Planting month for zone 7: year round  
Planting month for zone 8: year round  
Planting month for zone 9: year round  
Origin: native to Florida  
Uses: ground cover; edging  
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 1 to 3 feet  
Spread: 2 to 4 feet  
Plant habit: spreading

Figure 1. Bee Balm.

Plant density: dense  
Growth rate: fast  
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite  
Leaf type: simple
Monarda punctata -- Bee Balm

Leaf margin: entire
Leaf shape: lanceolate; ovate
Leaf venation: pinnate
Leaf type and persistence: deciduous
Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: no fall color change
Fall characteristic: not showy

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Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in part shade/part sun
Soil tolerances: acidic; slightly alkaline; sand; loam; clay;
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: no special winter interest
Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding
Invasive potential: not known to be invasive
Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
Use and Management

This herbaceous perennial may be used in the landscape as a summer ground cover in a small garden. It also presents a nice massed display in a perennial border.

Horsemint should be grown in full sun on a well-drained sandy soil with some moisture retentive capability. Provide occasional irrigation in drought if soil drains excessively. It is tolerant to some drought and is generally unscathed by freezing temperatures in Florida. Monarda didyma is sometimes grown in Florida but does not tolerate hot/humid conditions well. There are many other Bee balms native to north and central America.

Propagate Monarda punctata by division or from seed.

Pests and Diseases

The plant is tolerant of pests and diseases.