

Catnip

Nepeta cataria

Family: Labiatae (Mint Family) includes mint, basil, coltsfoot, salvia, thyme, marjoram.

Native: Eurasia

Hardiness: Hardy perennial USDA zone 3

Plant Dimensions: 1' - 3' tall 1' - 2' wide

Flower Size & Color: 1/4" - 1/2" white or lavender tubular flowers massed in spikes.

Bloom Season and Duration: Blooms heavily in early to midsummer with scattered blooming through early fall.

Exposure: Full sun. Does well in hot spots.

Soil Requirements: Will tolerate almost any soil - not fussy. If grown indoors, use sterilized indoor house plant soil.

Water Requirements: Benefits from occasional deep watering, but is quite drought and heat tolerant.

Special Care: Cut back stems and blooms after first flush of flowers; this will encourage additional fall flowers.

When to Plant: **Outside:** Early spring, 3 to 4 weeks before last frost, is best. Plant as late as 2 months before first fall frost. **Inside:** 6 weeks before last frost.

Special Germination Instructions: Catnip seed requires light to germinate; either don't cover the seeds at all and mist them regularly to keep them moist OR cover them VERY lightly so seeds can still receive light. Seed germinates best in cool conditions; follow

directions and plant outside 2-4 weeks before last spring frost. **Important note:** If you don't want your cats or the neighbor cats to roll over or eat your plants, start with seed. Cats seem to go after transplants quickly and don't seem to notice seeded plants as quickly.

Special Uses: Very informal perennial bed (can become invasive), dried for cat toys or tea, grown as indoor plant (sunny south window) for your cats enjoyment. Cut flower.

To make tea: Pour 1 cup boiling water over dried catnip and let steep. Use a little more catnip than you would regular tea leaves.

To dry leaves: 1) During late summer in early morning after dew has dried, cut stems 3' - 4' from ground. 2) Find a warm location out of the sun. 3) Tie branches in small bunches with rubber bands and hang upside down in brown paper bag. In 3 to 4 days, leaves will be dry and can be stripped from stems. Store leaves in airtight container.

Other Comments: Smelling catnip, not eating it, is what gets to cats. They eat the catnip to crush foliage which releases aromatic compounds. An ancient remedy for a lot of ailments, these plants went wherever Europeans tried to settle. Though colonies of people did not always root, catnip did.

Starting Seed Indoors

Several critical factors to remember when starting seed indoors:

LIGHT: A window or normal household light is not adequate light for starting seedlings indoors. Fluorescent tubes work the best. Use at least a double tube setup with one tube being a cool-white and one tube being a warm-white. Tubes should be no more than 3" away from the seedlings. Seedlings should receive 16 hours of light (a dark period is important, so don't leave lights on for 24 hours...use an automatic timer).

MOISTURE: Seedlings must be kept moist (not soggy) at all times.

TEMPERATURE: Normal household temperature (70 - 80 degrees) is ideal for germination; 60 - 70 degrees will work just fine. A 10 degree drop in temperature at night is also preferable.

SOIL: Your local independent garden center will carry special sterilized soils for seed starting.

HARDENING OFF: When your plants are ready to go outside, start slowly! Put them outside for a few hours everyday; slowly increase the time outdoors daily. In a week to ten days, they will be ready for outdoors.

Quality You Can Grow With!

Botanical Interest's seed is of top quality and is fully guaranteed. If you have a problem with your seed, please write us! Botanical Interests, Inc. PO Box 11324. Boulder, CO. 80501.

Seedling



Date Seed
Planted:

(Write in date)

Artist: Victoria Etelund of Denver, Colorado loves the whole outdoors and does her best to share that glory in her paintings. She divides her time between raising her family, gardening, and painting.

Your last day of frost.

The last day of frost (32 degrees or less) is defined as "the first day in spring on which there is less than a 50% chance a frost will occur." This information is crucial when planting a garden. To find out your last day of frost, call your local independent garden center or your **county** Cooperative Agricultural Extension Service. Also inquire about the average date of the first fall frost.