

Spotted beebalm

(*Monarda punctata*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Spotted beebalm (also known as dotted horsemint) is a robust, aromatic wildflower that occurs naturally in meadows, coastal dunes, roadsides and dry disturbed areas. It typically blooms late spring through fall, attracting a huge variety of pollinating insects, including bees, wasps and butterflies. In winter, it dies back to the ground (in South Florida, to a basal rosette).

Its flowers are inconspicuous, hairy and whitish-yellow with purplish spots (punctate). Often mistaken for petals are its showy, leaflike bracts that subtend its tiny flowers. Bracts vary in color from pink to lavender or purple and often have yellowish-green tips and undersides. Flowers are born in elongated spikes and arranged in whorls. Leaves are petiolate and pubescent with toothed margins. They are oppositely arranged. Stems are pubescent, erect and square, like most members of the mint family. Seeds are born in nutlets at the base of each flower.

Spotted beebalm is high in thymol, which has antimicrobial, antifungal and antiseptic properties and was used historically to treat ringworm and hookworm infections. When crushed, the leaves emit an oregano-like scent. The leaves can be brewed into a mild tea that is said to promote relaxation. For more information on Spotted beebalm's medicinal properties, check out EatTheWeeds.com.



Photo by Stacey Matrazzo

Family: Lamiaceae (Mint family)

Native range: Nearly throughout

To see where natural populations of Spotted beebalm have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 8A–10A

Soil: Dry to slightly moist, well-drained soil

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Growth habit: 2–4' tall

Propagation: Seed, cutting

Garden tips: Spotted beebalm has a long bloom time and can be a nice addition to a home landscape. Enjoy the diversity of pollinators it attracts. If not maintained, it can quickly outcompete other wildflowers. Cut back before seed sets or allow room for reseeding.

Seeds are often available from the Florida Wildflowers Growers Cooperative at www.FloridaWildflowers.com. Plants are occasionally available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.