

BEE BALM **Monarda didyma**

Aka Oswego Tea, Scarlet Monarda, Red Bergamont



Description: Bee balm is a spreading, clump-forming herbaceous perennial with the square stems and opposite leaves characteristic of herbs in the mint family. Each flowering stem bears one or (rarely) two whorled clusters of showy scarlet red flowers.

Natural Habitat: It occurs along wooded stream banks and in moist hardwood forests.

Conservation Status: Michigan - Probably Extirpated. New York - Exploitably Vulnerable

Size: 24 – 48 inches

Growth Rate: Slow, Moderate or Fast.

Light: Full sun to partial shade

Planting and Care: Bee balm dies to the ground in winter and comes back in the spring. Bee balm is not drought tolerant. It does best in soil that never completely dries out. Water during dry spells. Most bee balm plantings can be expected to spread, so plant where this will not be a problem. Bee balm is very susceptible to powdery mildew. Overcrowding and stress from too little watering can bring on the disease. Deadhead to prolong the blooming season.

Ornamental Value: Valued for its bright flowers and minty aroma.

Landscape Usage: Bee balm is a must-have in butterfly and naturalistic gardens. In mixed perennial borders bee balm may require thinning every couple years to control its spread.

Commercial/Traditional Uses: Its young leaves used to form a common beverage in many parts of the United States.

Wildlife Benefits: Attractive to hummingbirds, butterflies and bees.