Monarda punctata Bee Balm, Horsemint

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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
Plant density: dense
Growth rate: fast
Texture: medium

Figure 1. Bee balm

Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.
**Foliage**
- Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
- Leaf type: simple
- 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

**Flower**
- Flower color: pink
- Flower characteristic: summer flowering

**Fruit**
- Fruit shape: unknown
- Fruit length: unknown
- Fruit cover: unknown
- Fruit color: unknown
- Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

**Trunk and Branches**
- Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable
- 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

**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.