

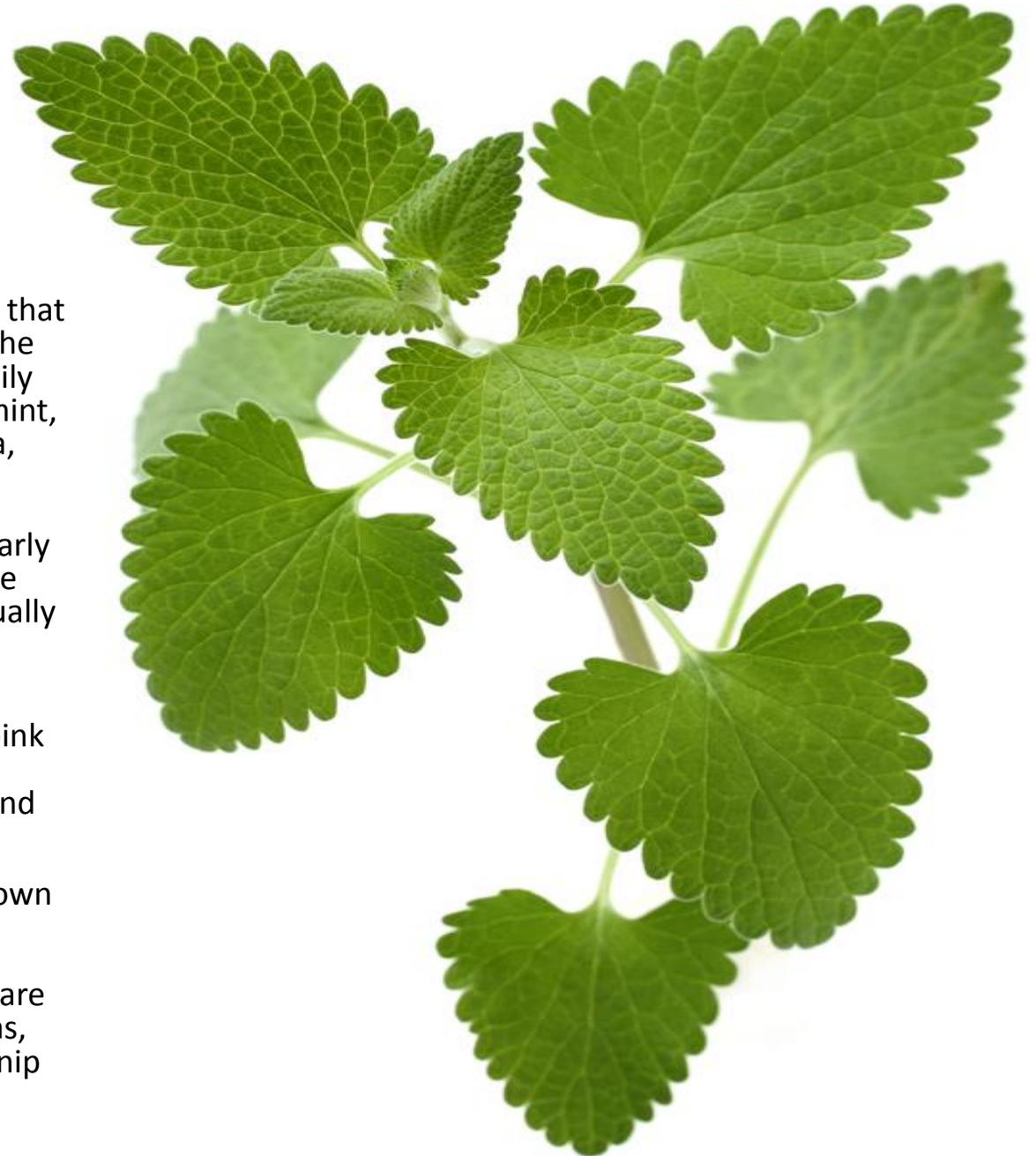


Catnip Class



Catnip

- *Nepeta cataria*, or more commonly known as catnip, is a perennial herb that resembles members of the mint family. It is most commonly known as the “herb of choice” for cats and is part of the genus *Nepeta* within the family Lamiaceae. Catnip has many other names as well such as catswort, catmint, field balm, menta de gato, and cataire. This herb is native to central Asia, China, Europe, and the Middle East. Catnip has been used for herbal medicine and herbal uses since at least the 15th century and was documented in 1735 in the General Irish Herbal. Did you know that in early American folklore it is suggested that ingesting catnip will make even the kindest person in the world mean? Because of this belief, hangmen actually consumed it to get themselves “in the mood.”
- A catnip plant can grow anywhere from 1 to 3 ½ feet tall. It has a hairy, square shaped stalk and small white flowers that have tiny purple and pink spots on them. The leaves of the plant have scalloped edges and are a greenish-gray color. They generally grow in a heart shape. The flowers end up growing in spikes on the plant that can grow up to half an inch long.
- Catnip can be used in many different products and industries. While known mainly as being the “herb of choice” for cats, it can also be used for its medicinal purposes, bath and body products, soap making, foods and beverages, hair care, and skin care. Common products it can be used in are lotions, ointments, creams, soaps, shampoos and conditioners, bath teas, scrubs, face masks, and natural insect repellants. Did you know that catnip has even been as an ingredient for love potions?





Growing Conditions

- Catnip is a perennial herb that, like any other plant, has its own specific conditions needed in which to grow. It can tolerate basically any soil conditions, and is even drought tolerant. It grows best when planted in rich, well-drained soil and grows anywhere with partial to full sun exposure. You just need to be careful when it is planted in areas with high amounts of rain fall and high winds because it can be bowled over. This happens because the leaves and flowers can cause the plant to become top-heavy, making it topple during winds and rain. Its aroma has been described as a cross of peppermint with skunk, but the aroma can be intensified if the herb is planted in sandy soil.
- After planting, the plant does spread quickly to take up all available space. So it should be planted in areas that give it enough room to grow, at least 12 to 15 inches away from other plants. Catnip can be planted in early spring or late fall, but a denser crop is achieved when planted in the fall. The actual seeds should begin to grow 7 to 10 days after being planted. The plant themselves should be fully grown within 3 to 5 weeks. The leaves of the plant can begin to be harvested once the plant reaches about 8 inches tall. In order to keep more leaves growing, the flowers should be cut off or pinched back, as they tend to hinder the growth of the leaves. It is best to harvest the leaves after the morning dew has gone.
- There are some pests and diseases that can affect the catnip plant. Catnip can have many problems caused by spider mites and whitefly. It is also susceptible to mildew if the plant is not properly pruned with the center kept open. The open center helps the plant to circulate air more freely, thus defeating the possibility of mildew growth.

Catnip Uses in Industries

Food and Beverages

- One of the least known uses for catnip is in actual food products and beverages. Before Chinese tea was available in England, catnip tea was the tea of choice. To this day, it is still made into an herbal tea which has a mint flavor, and is used to help with sleep. The tea is also drunk to help with upset stomachs. Catnip can also be added for its aroma to salads and other dishes and it has been used as a meat tenderizer. It is used as a flavoring agent in foods like soups, stews, and sauces.

Bath and Body Products

- Catnip can be used in many different industries and products. It can be used for foods and beverages, skin care, bath and body products, soaps, hair care, and for its medicinal purposes. When used for soap making, catnip works as a relaxer and also helps to treat skin problems like acne.
- Common products that can include catnip are face masks, scrubs, shampoos and conditioners, creams, ointments, lotions, natural insect repellants and bath teas.
- When used for hair care, catnip helps to treat dandruff, condition and moisturize the hair, and it also helps to make the hair smooth and soft. If dandruff is caused from an irritated scalp, the catnip can be used as a “leave-on serum” to treat the irritation.
- There are also many skin care benefits to using catnip. It helps to treat acne and delay premature aging. It also helps to speed up the repairing and healing process for wounds. Catnip also works as a disinfectant and antiseptic on the skin. It is also a natural astringent and helps to tighten loose skin and muscles.





Uses in Industries Cont.

Medicinal

- There are many medicinal benefits to using catnip. It helps to treat the flu, swine flu, rheumatism, anxiety, hives, fever, colic, indigestion, worms, insomnia, hyperactivity, diarrhea, measles, upset stomachs, and flatulence. Catnip has many sedative, anesthetic, antispasmodic, antiseptic, antibiotic, astringent, disinfectant, antimicrobial, antibacterial, and anti-fungal properties.
- When applied directly to the skin, catnip helps to treat hemorrhoids, arthritis, and it can also be used in a compress to reduce any swelling of the body.
- For women, catnip helps to relieve cramping and the pain from menstrual cramps. It also helps to start the menstruation process for girls that have delayed periods and helps to increase urination. However, it is not recommended for pregnant women because it can induce uterine contractions.
- For dental care, catnip can be used to relieve toothaches, aching gums, and if used long enough, it can also help to prevent tooth loss.
- Catnip is a good herb to help with weight loss. It induces sweating which helps toxins leave the body faster. When the toxin level in your body is lower, your metabolic rate will be higher. With a higher metabolic rate, the fat burning process is enhanced.
- This herb also helps to treat nervous disorders such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease, and vertigo. It empowers the nerves and helps to activate functioning, which helps to soothe and bring relief from these conditions.
- Strong catnip tea can also be used as an eyewash. It helps to relieve swelling and inflammation caused by colds, the flu, many airborne allergies, and excessive alcohol intake.

Catnip for Cats

- The most known “use” for catnip is that it is the “herb of choice” for cats. It is said that it drives them crazy. As far back as the 18th century, it has been noticed that cats are very attracted to catnip. There is actually a chemical within catnip called nepetalactone which scientists believe is what causes cats to love catnip. This chemical and its isomers actually make up about 70-99% of catnips’ essential oil. Another name for catnip is actually catmint, and the smell of the plant has been described as a cross between peppermint and a skunk. When exposed to this smell, cats can have four main different responses: first, sniffing the plant. Second, rubbing their cheeks or chin over the plant. Third, chewing on, licking, or shaking their head in the plant. And fourth, rolling their head or whole body in the plant. While these are the main responses, cats can also experience euphoria, leaping, stretching, and sexual stimulation.
- The actual observed responses in cats is quite similar to their response to natural sexual pheromones. This is because when the nepetalactone enters the cats’ nose, it binds to certain receptors. These receptors actually trigger certain sensory neurons that eventually trigger specific regions of the brain: the “olfactory bulb,” amygdala, and the hypothalamus. The olfactory bulb is responsible for processing smells. The hypothalamus is responsible for behavioral responses to stimuli, and the amygdala is responsible for the emotional responses to stimuli. When all of these are triggered, that is what causes the response in cats to catnip. However, the effects only last for about ten minutes. Afterwards, the cat will not be affected again for at least an hour.
- Did you know that catnip does not affect all cats? Their sensitivity to it is actually inherited through their genetics. Only around 70-80% of cats will have the dominant gene that causes this sensitivity. Also, kittens are not affected by catnip. Their sensitivity to the herb will not begin to show until they have reached around 6-8 weeks old, or they have reached sexual maturity. Did you know that catnip can also have effects on leopards, tigers, and lions?





Other Uses

- Catnip actually works as a natural repellent from insects, rats, mice, and mosquitos.
- Catnip can even be used in toys for cats. Some people have used it on scratching posts or new beds as a way to entice the cat into using them. It has also been used as way to get inactive house cats to exercise.
- Nature's Garden sells [catnip leaf](#) for external use only. We do not sell it as a food item. The information above talks about how great catnip is for many industries, however we only sell it for external use. We provide this data for educational purposes only. Nothing in this article is to be construed as medical advice. Please consult your doctor before using this product or any of this information for treatment purposes.
- Are you ready for an amazing way to use this product? Here at Nature's Garden we actually offer many free recipes and classes, and our [Kittens Mittens Toy Recipe](#) is actually made with our catnip leaves! This is a recipe that your own kitties are sure to love!

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