

2021 Perennial Plant of the Year: Lesser Calamint



Lesser calamint (*Calamintha nepeta* subsp. *nepeta*) is 2021's Perennial Plant of the Year, an award bestowed by the Perennial Plant Association. **Common name:** Lesser calamint **Botanical name:** *Calamintha nepeta* subsp. *Nepeta*. This adaptable, long-blooming plant is hailed as a compact alternative to catmint (*Nepeta*). It is friendly to bees, butterflies and hummingbirds, all of which feed on its summer-long flowers.

USDA Zones 5–9. Exposure: Full sun, with some afternoon shade in hot areas.

Flowers: The individual white flowers are tiny, but they line the stems in such

profusion they create a cloud-like effect. They resemble baby's breath. The bloom period begins in early summer and continues to the first frost. **Foliage:** Small, light green and mint scented. **Habit:** Lesser calamint is an herbaceous perennial that grows between 12 and 16 inches tall and wide, with dense, upright stems contributing a shrubby appearance. Its low height and full shape recommend it for planting en masse as an edging plant.

Among the most outstanding plants for the late-summer and fall garden is *Calamintha nepeta nepeta*. Its 18" stems present a cloud of dainty, lavender-and-white flowers that start blooming in August and continue without pause until frost, sometimes past. The leaves are a soft mid-green that always looks fresh. When crushed, they give off a rush of tart, minty fragrance that works like smelling salts on a hot day. For that reason alone, *Calamintha* is a fine choice for the front of borders, where a pinch is always at hand.



This amazing plant thrives in any well-drained, sunny location and shrugs off heat and drought in USDA zones 5-9. Lesser calamint needs full sun, but benefits from a little afternoon shade in the warmest regions of its growing range. It is said to be resistant to

deer, and it is an excellent plant for pollinating insects and hummingbirds. If the plant looks a bit bedraggled toward late summer, cut it back by half for a flush of fresh growth. Leave the old stems standing over the winter and cut them down to the ground in early spring.

