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# How to Grow Catmint: The Complete Catmint Flower Guide



Nepeta x faassenii (Blue Catmint,  
Faassen's Catmint)

Photo Credit: K. Maksim/Shutterstock

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# Planting, Growing, and Caring for Catmint

By [Andy Wilcox](#)

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Few plants are as beloved by our pollinators, or our cats, as catmint. A herbaceous perennial that needs little care, catmint will provide your garden with years of color and habitat. Learn how to plant, grow, and care for catmints.

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## About Catmint

species in the genus, and many are called catmints. Catnip, the famous feline pleaser, is *Nepeta cataria*. Thus, there is some confusion with names—all catnips are catmints, but not all catmints are catnip. Confused? It's like how all squares are rectangles, but not all rectangles are squares. For this article, we'll consider catmint to be any member of the *Nepeta* genus besides *N. cataria*.

Catmints are generally a better landscaping plant, and blooms are available in whites, pinks, lavenders, blues, and purples. They have a tidier form than catnip and are available in several sizes to suit containers, borders, or beds. One of the more popular catmints is the hybrid *Nepeta x faassenii* and its cultivars. It is sterile, so there is no need to worry about spreading.

Catmints are wonderful perennials for pollinators, even though they are not native. Their long bloom time and tubular-shaped flowers make them a favorite.

Catmints are attractive to native bees and butterflies alike. Best yet? Many garden-

won't touch their catmint (and my deer will eat anything).

## Okay, but will my cat like it?

The chemical that makes cats go bonkers is nepetalactone, a volatile oil found in the plant. Bruising or eating the leaves exposes the cat (or us) to the chemical, which acts like a pheromone to the cat—not to humans. Most catmints have a lower concentration of nepetalactone than catnip, but many cats still love it.

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Catmint Snowflake (*Nepeta racemosus*). Credit: Nahhana/SS

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## PLANTING

Most catmint varieties are hardy in USDA zones 3-8 but check the tag to be sure. They like full sun but will still do well in partial shade. Southern gardeners may find catmints enjoy afternoon shade to give them a break from the harsh sun.

Catmints are not picky about soil and thrive in drier locations and less fertile soil. Neutral to slightly alkaline pH is fine.

## When to Plant Catmint

Catmint is usually planted in spring when

rack later in the summer, grab it. You can still plant catmint all summer if needed.

Try to get catmints in the ground at least 4-6 weeks before your killing frosts to allow the root systems time to develop before the plant goes dormant for the winter.

## How to Plant Catmint

Select a location with good drainage.

Catmint enjoys drier sites and will suffer in soggy soil. If planting in a pot, use a high-quality potting mix and consider adding some perlite.

- Water your catmint while it is still in the pot. Let it absorb while you are prepping the hole. Your plant will have a nice drink before the stress of being transplanted, and it will slide out of the pot easier.
- Dig a hole 1.5-2 times as wide as the rootball and the same depth. The hole should look like a shallow bowl, not a fencepost hole.
- Test fit the plant in the hole, ensuring the crown will be level with the top of the surrounding soil once planted. Adjust the depth by digging or filling in the hole as needed.
- Remove the catmint from its pot and tease apart any pot-bound roots. Use a handheld garden tool to cut any girdling roots.
- Set your catmint in the hole and backfill with the removed soil. Be sure to firm the soil to eliminate air pockets around the roots.

- Create a shallow ring around the plant with the leftover soil to slow water from running away. Water the new plant and surrounding soil well.
- Mulch around the base, but keep the mulch from touching the stems. Mulch touching the plant stems can encourage rot and disease.

## GROWING

Watering is only needed during the first growing season or in prolonged dry spells. Catmints are drought-tolerant once established.

Fertilizer is unnecessary for in-ground catmints, as they are quite willing to scratch out a living in poor soil. Too easy of a life, and they may flower less and have floppy stems. Catmints living in containers can be fertilized annually with a general-purpose slow-release product.

Catmints benefit from shearing after the first flush of blooms to encourage a bushy

Like many perennials, catmints benefit from being divided every few years. Division will reinvigorate the plant and give you more of a favorite to plant somewhere else or gift to a friend! See our article on [How and When to Divide Perennials](#) for more information.

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## Types

- ‘Walker’s Low’ (*N. x faassenii*) is a popular catmint with lovely blue-green foliage and deep lavender flowers. It reaches about two feet high and slightly wider.

mass plantings and containers. A “no-flop” variety that holds up well.

- ‘Six Hills Giant’ (*N. x faassenii*) lives up to its name, reaching three feet tall and wide. Perfect for adding pollinator-pleasing purple blooms to the back of any perennial bed.
- ‘Cat’s Pajamas’ (*Nepeta* hybrid) is a dwarf variety great for containers. Growing compact to about 14 inches tall and 18 inches wide, it is covered with pink and purple flowers extending the stem’s entire length.



Dwarf catnip growing in a window box on a balcony railing in summer.  
Credit: Agenturfotografin/SS

- Cut and dry the stems or use fresh.
- If drying, the leaves can be rubbed off the branches and kept in a sealed container in the freezer.
- Catmint flowers make an aromatic bouquet addition to your vase. Put them in water immediately after harvesting.

## GARDENING PRODUCTS



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## WIT AND WISDOM

- Besides making cats bonkers, many people find catmint a delicious tea.
- Catmint and catnip lose potency over time, so keep them in the freezer to preserve freshness for your feline friends.
- Catnip is harmless and non-addictive to cats, although overeating may cause nausea.

**FLOWERS**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### Andy Wilcox



Andy Wilcox is a flower farmer and master gardener with a passion for soil health, small producers, forestry, and horticulture.

[Read More from Andy Wilcox](#)



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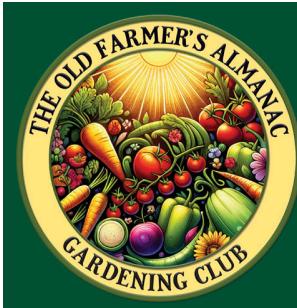
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spring~

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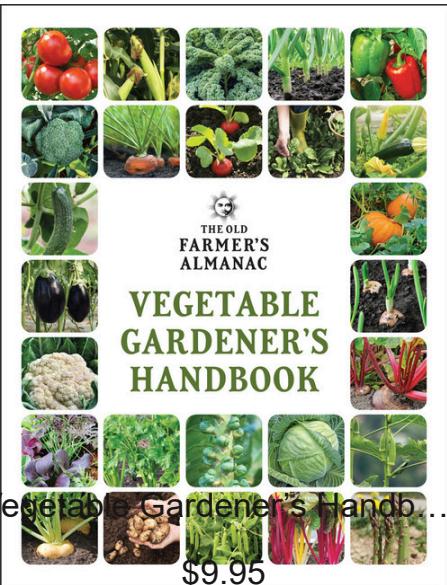
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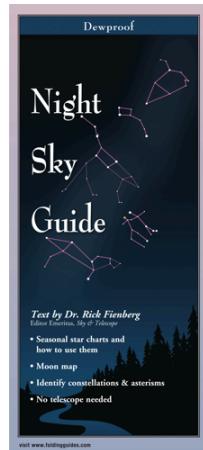
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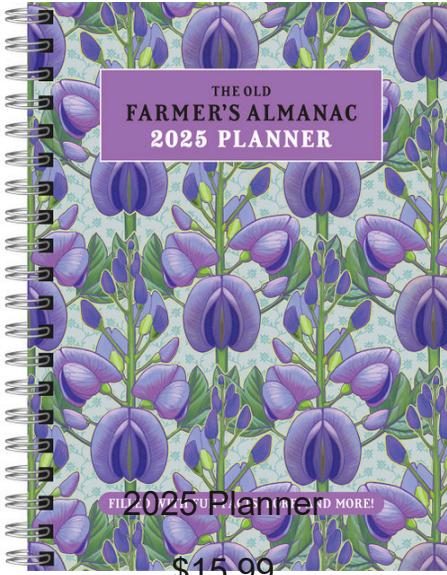
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