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How to Grow Bee Balm: The Complete Bee Balm Flower Guide



Flowering bee balm (*Monarda*) in the garden

Photo Credit: Tatyana Mut/Shutterstock

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Planting, Growing, and Caring for Bee Balm Flowers

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

Last Updated: January 31, 2025



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Bee balm is a native perennial that flowers in summertime. This plant is beloved by hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies!

Learn how to plant and grow bee balm flowers—a great addition to a pollinator garden.

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About Bee Balm

let flowers that bloom in the summertime and its fragrant foliage. In June and July, slender, tubular flowers are produced in 2–to 3-inch-wide flower heads. Flower colors include white, pink, red, lavender, and purple.

In the garden, its most frequent visitors are hummingbirds, bees, and butterflies because they have the long tongues required to reach the tubular flowers' nectar. Bumblebees and a few other insects are too big to get into some of the smaller tubular flowers of some bee balms, so the insects practice something called "nectar robbing." The insects punch a tiny hole at the base of the flower to access the nectar, bypassing the flower's pollen and "robbing" it of its nectar. Find more flowers that are great for bees.

The seed heads also attract birds in the fall and winter. Learn more about plants that attract butterflies and hummingbirds.

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Hummingbird moths love bee balm!

Given its height (2-4 feet), bee balm makes for an excellent background plant in a flower bed. Consider it as part of a pollinator garden!

Check out this video to learn more about the benefits of growing bee balm:

... Balm (Bergamot) in Your Garden



Read Next

- [20 Easy-to-Grow Perennial Flowers for Beginners](#)
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PLANTING

Bee balm performs best in full sun (at least 6 hours). It will grow in partial shade but won't flower as well and is more susceptible to powdery mildew. Provide moist, well-draining soil with a neutral pH. Amend soil with compost or aged manure, if necessary.

When to Plant Bee Balm

- Bee balm can be planted in the spring or in the fall.
- Spring is the best time to divide existing plants and transplant them.

How to Plant Bee Balm

- Give careful thought to placement.

Without good air circulation, the

appears.) Space plants 18 to 24

inches apart.

- Water thoroughly at the time of planting.

GROWING

- Keep soil evenly moist throughout the growing season, watering every 7 to 10 days during dry periods. Soak to a depth of 6 to 8 inches. Add mulch to preserve moisture and control weeds.

- Avoid fertilizer in general; apply only a sprinkling of a balanced product in spring, if desired. An excess can promote rampant leaf growth and powdery mildew.

- Deadhead faded blooms to encourage the plant to re-bloom in late summer. Deadheading the main stem allows the side shoots to develop and bloom.

These, too, can be cut when flowers reach the size you want.

- After the first frost in the fall, leave seed heads for the birds or cut stems back to about 2 inches above the soil.

(See local frost date.)

the center.)

Types

- *Monarda didyma* is bright red and grows 3 to 4 feet tall.
- *M. didyma* varieties that are resistant to powdery mildew include '**Marshall's Delight**' (bright pink), '**Jacob Cline**' (deep red), and '**Raspberry Wine**' (dark red).
- *M. fistulosa* produces lavender-pink blooms in late summer; tolerant of dry soils; commonly called "wild bergamot."
- *M. pringlei* grows 18 inches tall and is immune to powdery mildew. '**Petite Wonder**' and '**Petite Delight**' are pink varieties.



Bee balm is a lovely cut flower. The leaves are aromatic, which adds interest to an indoor arrangement. Cut the main stem flower just as it begins to open up. The plant's side shoots will continue to develop and bloom. The side shoots can be cut for indoor enjoyment, too. Its vase life is seven days.

GARDENING PRODUCTS



PESTS/DISEASES

Diseases: southern blight, fungal leaf spot, powdery mildew, rust

Pests: aphids, spider mites, stalk borers

WIT AND WISDOM

- The common name of bee balm is in reference to its former use to treat bee stings!
- Native Americans and early colonists used bee balm leaves and flowers to make a variety of medicinal salves and drinks.
- The Native American word for a river in New York became part of the name of a bee balm drink: Oswego tea.
- Bee balm is a member of the mint family (Lamiaceae). Its foliage has a strong aroma and is sometimes used in herbal teas, salads, and as garnishes. The flowers are also edible.
- Although called “wild bergamot,” bee balm is not used in “bergamot” (Earl Grey) tea, which is made with oils extracted from the rind of the bergamot orange, a citrus fruit.

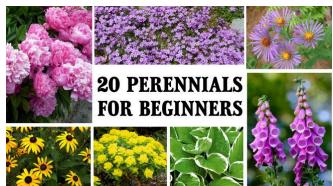
FLOWERS

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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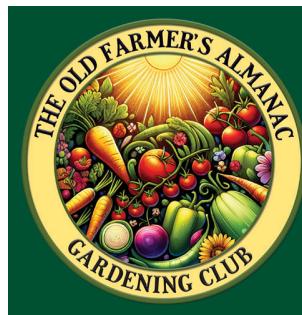
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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Dennis and Dan... (not verified) 8 months 2

weeks ago

Mv bee balm is so leggy! The stems are about 3

[REPLY](#)

ANN HODGES (not verified) 10 months ago

WILL THE BBEN BLAMS COME UP EVERY
YEAR? WHAT IF YOU BRING IN THE POTTED
PLANT IN THE WINTER. WILL IT SURRIVE?
LOVE THIS
PANTS. IT'S SUCH A HOT SPOT IN THE
GARDEN

[REPLY](#)**Heather Hedrick (not verified)** 9

months 3 weeks ago

Bee balm is a perennial plant. It will
come back year after year

[REPLY](#)

Patricia Hunger (not verified) 10 months 1
week ago

Thanks for the great info I live in Allegheny for-
est and I've been looking for that flower it's a

[REPLY](#)

nassim rad (not verified) 10 months 2 weeks

ago

Excellent, thank you for your efforts.

[REPLY](#)

Linda Horton (not verified) 12 months ago

I just bought a gallon size of bee balm. Is it best to just put the clump of it right into the ground or should I take it apart and plant individual plants. It is only about 3 inches high so far.

[REPLY](#)

The Editors 11 months 4 weeks ago

Hi Linda, you could plant it either way. However, I would personally recommend breaking it into a few smaller chunks so that the plants do not crowd each other as they grow.

REPLY

olinda (not verified) 1 year ago

This looks nothing like what I have known as bee balm in Texas all my life. Bee Balm to me is a wildflower which is purple and shaped differently for what is picture. It is either an annual or dies down and come back the next year...not sure which. I would like to know if there is any relationship between what you show and what I'm familiar with. I would appreciate a response.

REPLY

Mary Colwell (not verified) 1 year ago

The wild bee balm (*M. fistulosa*) is a favorite flower for the federally endangered rusty-patched bumble bee.

REPLY

bee balm gets mildew no matter what you do. I have a few plants that get tall and they are very pretty but oh the mildew.

[REPLY](#)
[MORE COMMENTS](#)

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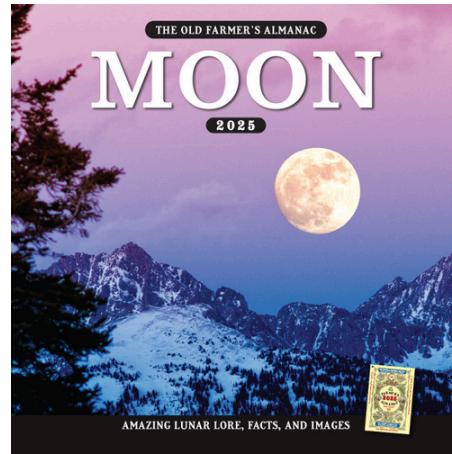
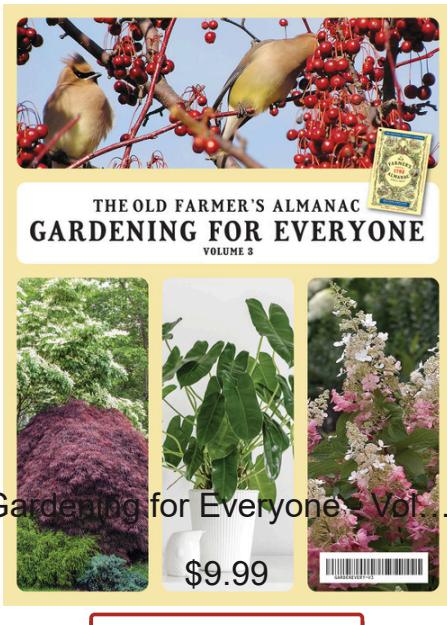
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