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Submit articles
electronically in
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Mountain Mint (*Pycnanthemum*)
2016 Notable Native of The Herb Society of America

Kathleen Szabo, MGV '93

Mountain mint is the common name used for 20 native species of the genus *Pycnanthemum*, which means "many clustered flowers". They were named by Andre Michaux, a French botanist and friend of Thomas Jefferson who discovered it growing in Pennsylvania around 1790. Since they don't grow in mountainous regions, the common name is a mystery. The *Pycnanthemums* belong to the Lamiaceae family that includes mints, but are more closely related to the *Monardas* than to true mints. They are the only mints native to only North America. Most are strongly scented and attractive to beneficial insects. The bushy plants generally range in height and spread from 1-3 feet and bloom from mid to late summer. The flowers are white, pink or lavender. In the wild they are often seen growing along the edges of woodlands.

The following are some of the more commonly grown varieties in our region.



Most have pronounced silver bracts. *P. incanum* (hoary mountain mint), *P. pilosum*, *P. tenuifloium* (little-leaved mountain mint) that has narrow, almost needle-like leaves, and *P. loomisii*.

P. muticum (short-toothed mountain mint) has pink flowers.

P. virginianum (Virginia mountain mint) often has purple dots on its white flowers



Culture

These plants will tolerate partial shade, but will flower best in full sun. They like moist to average conditions and are not picky about soil texture. Keep the soil lightly moist during the first half of the season until plants are established. Afterwards, they are very tolerant of drought, although may lose some bottom leaves. They are not as invasive as true mints but



will form nice colonies. Keep them in check by root pruning in the spring. Beneficial insects are attracted to the nectar only and chewing insects and mammals are repelled by the strong scent. The only disease problem may be rust. Propagate by seed division, or cuttings.

Garden uses

These are very attractive plants, especially in groups or masses when the silvery bracts will appear to shimmer like snow. They can be allowed to naturalize in native plant gardens, cottage gardens or meadows. A natural for the herb garden, they are also great in butterfly gardens or mixed borders.

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Other uses

Many Pycnanthemums contain pugelone. This is a very poisonous compound. The short-toothed mountain mint, *P. muticum* contains high levels. It is toxic when ingested, but makes a good insect repellent when rubbed onto clothing or stuck in a pocket. To retain the best aroma when drying, harvest the mountain mint tops and leaves when it is in bloom. Mountain mints can be used in pot-pourris, and in fresh or dried arrangements. The seed heads are also attractive in bouquets. Since we should all be working to attract more pollinators to our gardens, this would be a great plant to include. It is not only beneficial, but beautiful and easy to grow.

Photo credits: P.Muticum, Upstate Gardeners' Journal P.Virginianum, Illinois Wildflowers.info Seed heads, Pinterest



Recycle Plastic Plant Containers and Trays at Lowe's

Adapted from an article by Matthew Hrubey

Spring has begun in Northeast Ohio! That means gardening season is just around the corner. Whether you are sprucing up your beds or redoing your landscaping, you will likely amass your fair share of plastic pots and trays.

How do you dispose of these items? If you are like me, you pile them in your garage awaiting an opportunity to recycle them. Unfortunately, the curbside recycling program offered in Fairview Park does not accept this type of plastic container.

Now there is an alternative—take your plastic gardening pots and flats to any Loew's store and they will recycle them. Problem solved.



thegardeningcook.com



alibaba.com

Many thanks to Katherine Geraldts for submitting this article.

Hrubey, M. (2014, April). Recycle Plastic Plant Containers at Lowe's. *Cleveland Plain Dealer*.