

ANOTHER HERB HERBERT FAVOURITE HERBS

FACT SHEET

Catnip *Nepeta cataria*

There are about 250 species of perennials in this genus. The name nepeta is supposedly a derivative of the name Nepeti, a Roman town where nepeta's were widely cultivated.

The catnip, *Nepeta cataria*, is a medicinal herb with little merit as a garden plant. It owes its name to its stimulant effect on cats, which eat and roll in the plant with obvious pleasure. The leaves contain a chemical known as neptalactone which gives the plant its 'narcotic' effect on cats.

DESCRIPTION

Nepeta cataria is a tall, pungent, hairy perennial with erect, branched stems and grey-green, heart shaped leaves. White, purple-spotted, tubular flowers are borne in whorls from summer to mid-autumn.

PARTS USED

Whole plant, leaves

PROPERTIES

A bitter, astringent, cooling herb with a pennyroyal-thyme aroma. It lowers fever, relaxes spasms, increases perspiration, and has a sedative effect.

USES OF THE HERB

Culinary

Leaves are infused for a mint-like tea and may be added to sauces and stews.

Medicinal

Internally for feverish illnesses, colds and influenza, stomach upsets.

Economic

Dried catnip is used to stuff cat toys.

CULTIVATION

Moist, well-drained soil in sun. Cut back hard for a second harvest. Powdery mildew may damage leaves. Pests: Aphid, beetles.

Height 30cm-1m/1-3ft
Spread 23-60cm/9-24in

HARVEST

Plants are cut when in bud and dried for use in infusions. Pick leaves when young for culinary purposes and use fresh or dried.



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