

# School-to-Nature

## Mountain Mint



Mountain Mint is a native perennial plant growing up to 3 feet tall. The plant blooms in the middle of summer and flowering lasts about a month. Each small flower produces 4 tiny black seeds. These seeds are distributed by the wind. The root system produces rhizomes, (an underground stem) which spread a short distance from the mother plant forming a small colony of plants. Mountain mint prefers full or partial sun, and moist to average conditions. This plant is not fussy about soil texture.

Many insects are strongly attracted to the flowers, including various bees, wasps, flies, butterflies, and beetles seeking nectar. When the plant is not flowering, insects find the mint smell too strong and avoid the plant.

The Caledonia Conservancy's School-to-Nature students love to rub the leaves together to release a very strong mint smell. Add a few sprigs to iced tea or hot tea for a wonderful mint flavor. Stuff some mountain mint into your dog's bedding to keep it smelling fresh. Crush the leaves and stems and rub the juice on work clothes to repel mosquitoes.

Historically, Native Americans used the mint plant as bait in traps to catch mink, whose skins were sewn together to make warm clothes for the winter. Tea was made from leaves and sometimes roots were brewed as a medicine for tiredness, to aid digestion and for chills and fever. Early settlers used mashed mint plants to put on dog bites and other animal bites to prevent rabies. Today the leaves are used to flavor foods and make herbal tea.

On Caledonia Conservancy lands, Mountain Mint is found at Trout Ponds Prairie.

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