

Catnip

Also called catmint

(Nepeta cataria)

Beware, if you grow catnip in your garden, for cats will flatten the plant as they blissfully loll about in it, rubbing its leaves in ecstasy. In addition to luring cats, the herb historically has been used as a remedy for leprosy and barrenness. Today catnip is grown largely to supply the cat toy industry.

Culinary uses

Catnip is not popular in recipes today, but in centuries past it was used to flavor a wide variety of dishes. In more recent times, herbalists have suggested using candied catnip leaves as an after-dinner mint.

Other uses

The lavender and white flowers of the catnip plant make this plant an attractive choice for border gardens. Plant it near your vegetables to repel insects.

Cultivation

The best way to start catnip is with a bedding plant, although plants grown from seed are less likely to be damaged by cats. Catnip will thrive and quickly spread as long as the soil is well drained. Catnip will grow in partial shade, but the plant will be more aromatic if grown in full sunlight.