

Monarda punctata

[Synonyms : *Monarda punctata* var. *lasiodonta*]

AMERICAN HORSEMINT is a perennial. Native to central and eastern North America it has lightly purple-spotted, pale yellow flowers framed from beneath by lavender or white, petal-like leaves (bracts).

It is also known as American origanum, Dotted horsemint, Dotted mint, Dotted monarda, Gravelwort, Horsemint, Lemon mint, Origanum, Rignum, Spotted bee balm, Spotted horsemint, Spotted monarda, and Spotted wild-bergamot.

Punctata is derived from Latin *punctati*- (spotted).

The plant provides nectar for bees and this in turn produces a clear, amber honey.

As a source of medicine American horsemint was valued by several North American Indian tribes. It provided a medicinal stimulant for the Meskwaki tribe, and they and some of the Chippewa also used it for some stomach complaints. Nanticoke and Meskwaki Indians took the plant to treat colds, the Meskwaki included it as an ingredient in a snuff for catarrh, and some of the Navajo tribe chose it as a remedy for coughs. It was turned to by the Mohican and Delaware Indians (as well as some of the Navajo tribe) for easing fever – and both the latter and the Meskwaki prescribed it for colds.

American horsemint was introduced to Britain in 1714.

Medicinally, although herbalists have recommended the plant for internal use to treat fluid retention, wind, vomiting and nausea, they chose it most often for external application in the treatment of rheumatism and other ailments. It was also resorted to during epidemics of cholera and typhus. Today American horsemint is a commercial ingredient used by the pharmaceutical industry.