Bergamot Pink (Oswego Tea or Bee Balm)

Monarda didyma



Height: 50 cm to 1 m

Suitable for: Rich moist soil in full sun.

Summary: Pink bergamot is a tall upright perennial which makes a great addition to any border. The aroma of the leaves resembles the bergamot orange, hence its name. Whorls of rose pink flowers last from July to September, and attract plenty of pollinators to the garden.

More information:

Bergamot is a completely hardy perennial herb which loves a sunny position in rich moist soil. It looks great planted in drifts in the middle of the border, alongside the red variety, and makes a taller backdrop for smaller flowering plants such as hardy geraniums. The clumps spread slowly with running stems on or just below the soil surface.

Do not plant too close together as the clump sizes will gradually increase, and overcrowding can make them prone to mildew later in the summer if it is very dry. A mulch of organic matter in spring, once the plants have started growing, can help to combat this.

This is a flowering herb which comes into its own later in the summer when many other plants have finished flowering. The stiff upright stems need no extra support and have lots of whorls of pretty rose pink flowers surrounded by pink tinged bracts. They are highly attractive to bees and can be planted alongside oreganos and marjorams which flower at the same time to make a 'bee friendly' colony.

The aromatic dark green foliage has a spicy scent when crushed and has many uses — culinary, cosmetic and medicinal. For lots of ideas for using this herb see our red bergamot info for recipes and tips.