

Botanic name : *Nepeta cataria* L. -- Sp. Pl. 2: 570. 1753 [1 May 1753] (IK)

Common name : Catnip

Family : Lamiaceae (Labiatae)

Habitat : Terrestrial

Distribution : Temperate Asia and Europe including Indian Himalayas, up to an altitude of 1200 m, msl. Naturalized in New Zealand and North America. Conservation is beneficial for its remarkable use in modern medicine and diverse effects on animal system

Description : A perennial pungent aromatic herb, erect and branching; stems finely pubescent, 4-angled; leaves heart-shaped, toothed at margin, hairy at the bottom, with serrated edge, grey-green; flowers white to light blue-violet, arranged in dense spikes; corolla tubular, 2-lipped; stamens epipetalous, didynamous; fruit-four ovoid achenes, brown in color with a smooth surface, enclosed in the persistent calyx.

Phytochemicals: Nepetalactone (terpene), tannins, glycosides, flavonoids, coumarins, steroids, terpenoids

Medicinal/Economic uses : Astringent, anti-catarrhal, antitussive, antibacterial, antiviral, carminative, diaphoretic, slightly emmenagogue, refrigerant, sedative, stress reliever, antispasmodic, slightly stimulant, stomachic, tonic and even favoring the elimination of intestinal gas. Used to improve digestive functions, headache and fever and favoring calming and sleep. The essential oil, however, is rich in carvacrol and thymol and is used to treat bronchitis, boasting antiseptic powers. A strong infusion may be used to repel fleas from carpets or the fur of animals. Young sprouts can be used in cuisine to flavor the dishes of salad or meat. Often used as a decorative plant in gardens. As a perfuming, detergent and disinfectant action on the skin, the herb has great use for foot baths. Also used as garden ornamental and insect repellent. Nepetalactone has astonishing effects on feline population which is inherited by an autosomal dominant gene.