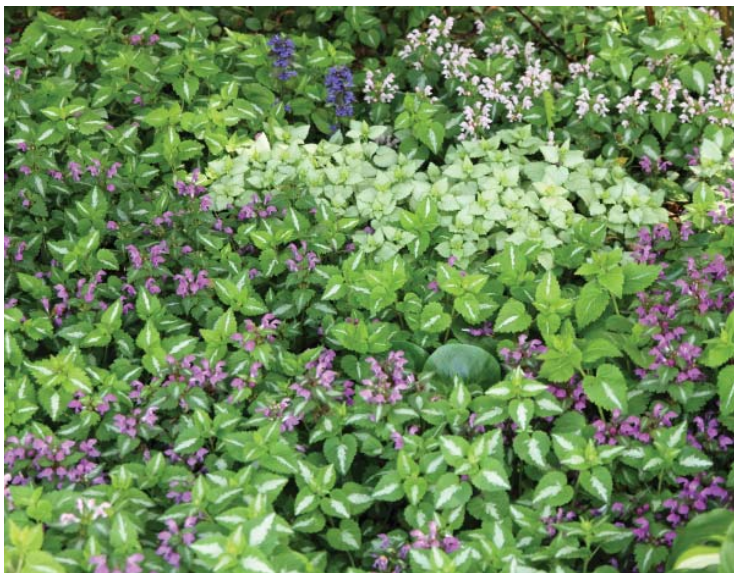


Spotted deadnettle, *Lamium maculatum*

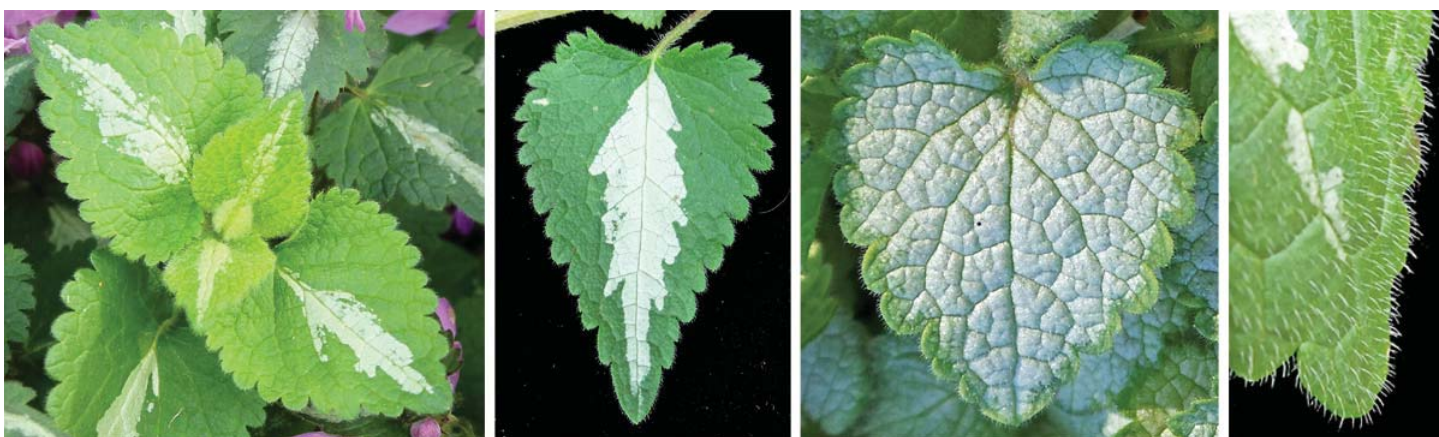


Several cultivars of spotted deadnettle in bloom.

Spotted deadnettle, *Lamium maculatum*, is one of about 50 species in the type genus for the mint family (Lamiaceae) native to Europe, temperate western Asia and North Africa. The common name of “deadnettle” refers to the resemblance of the leaves to stinging nettles, but without the sting (therefore “dead”). This prostrate, herbaceous perennial is hardy in zones 3-8.

This near-evergreen plant (at least in mild climates) is generally a low (6-9 inches tall), spreading plant, but sometimes becomes mounded. The plants branch only at the base with the square, hollow trailing stems rooting as they spread to form a dense mat. The opposite leaves are toothed, pointed oval to triangular to heart-shaped, and can grow to over 3” long on

petioles up to 1½ inches long. The downy to softly hairy leaves, which are unpleasantly scented when bruised, are green with a white or silver stripe down the midvein, or other markings or variegation in various cultivars. Leaf size, shape, variegation and hairiness is quite variable.



The opposite leaves (L) vary in shape, size and markings (LC and RC) and the amount of hairs on the leaves (R).



Spotted deadnettle blooms prolifically in late spring to early summer.

Spotted deadnettle blooms prolifically from late spring to early summer and continues sporadically into fall, attracting bees, especially bumblebees. The flowers occur in leafy heads (verticillasters) formed at nodes on the upper half to upper third of the stems and terminals, but not on all stems. Each inflorescence has 2-8 widely spaced pink to



A bumblebee pushes into a spotted deadnettle flower.

purple, or sometimes white, two-lipped flowers, up to ¾” long. The upper lips of the flowers are hood or helmet-shaped, like a roof over the stamens with their orange pollen, while the bisected lower lips are often whitish with purple dots (but vary by cultivar).



Whorls (L) of buds (LC) open along the stems (C), with individual flowers typical of the mint family with an upper “hood” and bisected lower lip (RC) with the hood covering the stamens (viewed from below, R).

Flowers are followed by small, inconspicuous fruits hidden by the leafy parts of the inflorescence that start out green and change to brown as they mature. Each fruit is comprised of four nutlets, or one-seeded sections.



The leafy whorls of inflorescences hide the inconspicuous dry fruits (L) which change from green (LC) to brown (RC). The individual nutlets or seeds (R).



Spotted deadnettle can cover large areas quickly as a groundcover.

This plant is typically used as a groundcover in shady areas, and can cover large areas quickly. Since it is adaptable to a variety of light regimes, it is an ideal plant to use in transition areas between shade and sun. It fills in nicely between other, larger or more upright perennials such as ostrich fern, bleeding heart, hellebore, goatsbeard (*Aruncus dioicus*),

Brunnera macrophylla, Japanese forest grass (*Hakonechloa macra*), or medium to large hostas, but is often too vigorous to site near shorter perennials which it tends to overrun



L. maculatum combines well with hostas.



Stems of this vigorous plant may need to be removed to prevent it from overrunning smaller perennials.

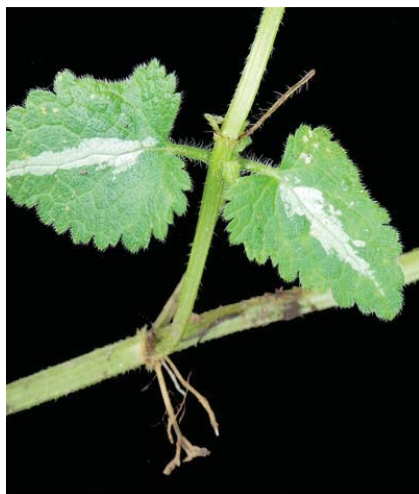
(although it is easy to cut back or pull off wayward stems throughout the growing season to prevent this from happening, if desired). It works well to cover dying bulb foliage and smothers many weeds. Try growing several varieties with different leaf colors together or in combination with sweet woodruff, *Galium odoratum*, as a tapestry for an interesting underplanting beneath small trees or around roses. Since it has a relatively fine texture, combine it with plants with large leaves for textural contrast, and dark-leaved plants such as coral bells (*Heuchera*, various cultivars) or black snakeroot (*Cimicifuga racemosa* 'Hillside Black Beauty') for color contrast. It can also be used as an edger, but will have to be cut back regularly to keep it in bounds. It can be used as a "spiller" in hanging baskets or containers.

Lamium maculatum grows best in part shade (especially for silver types which often need more light to maintain their color) or shade in moist, humus-rich, well-drained soil, but in our climate will even grow in full sun. Although it does best in moist conditions it is drought tolerant and will grow in dry shade, but does not thrive in compacted or poorly drained soils, and many varieties suffer winter injury in wet soils. In hot and humid climates the foliage may decline in midsummer; plants may be cut back or sheared to stimulate new growth. It has few pest problems and is not favored by deer or rabbits. Crown or stem rot can occur when the soil remains too wet.



Spotted deadnettle grows best in part shade — especially the silver types.

This plant is easy to propagate at any time during the growing season from cuttings of basal stems (not flowering stems) or by division. It roots where the stems touch the ground and once established these can be cut from the original plant and easily moved. It will also self-seed, although the cultivars will not come true from seed, and if volunteers are not removed (which can be challenging for the silver-striped varieties which can initially look very similar to the original plants) they may



Spotted deadnettle roots at nodes (L) so is easy to divide and also self-seeds (R).

overtake the parents. Plants will spread indefinitely to fill a large area, so spacing is not that important, unless quick coverage is desired.

Some common cultivars include:

- 'Album' – has dark green leaves with a slight amount of silver in the center and white flowers. It was highly ranked in a Chicago Botanical Garden field trial of deadnettles.
- 'Anne Greenaway' – has tricolored leaves, dark green edged in chartreuse and a silver stripe down the center, and light purple-pink flowers.
- 'Aureum' – has light centered, yellow-green leaves and pale pink flowers.
- 'Beacon Silver' – has silvery gray leaves with thin green edges and dark lavender flowers. It was introduced by Beth Chatto in 1976 who received it from a customer.
- 'Beedham's White' – has bright yellow foliage with a white stripe and white flowers, but is less florific than many other varieties and can be susceptible to winter dieout in moist soils.
- 'Chequers' – is a vigorous variety with green leaves that each have a prominent silver stripe down the center and dark pink flowers.
- 'Cosmopolitan' – is a miniature sport of 'Shell Pink' introduced by Walters Gardens with very small, nearly all-silver leaves. Its compact habit makes it particularly useful in combination containers where it won't overrun all the other plants in the container.
- 'Orchid Frost' (Plant Patent #11,122) – has blue-green leaves with a silver midvein and orchid-pink flowers. It is supposedly more vigorous and resistant to foliar diseases than other varieties.
- 'Pink Nancy' – has silver leaves with thin green margins and pale pink flowers.
- 'Pink Pewter' – has small, ruffled silver-gray leaves with narrow green margins and deep salmon-pink flowers.
- Purple Chablis™ and Pink Chablis® – have silvery gray leaves edged with dark green and lavender-purple or light pink flowers.
- 'Purple Dragon' – has larger pink-purple flowers than most other cultivars and small silver leaves with a wide green edge.
- 'Red Nancy' – has silver leaves with thin green margins, red-tinged stems (although color intensity varies throughout the growing season), and deep purple-pink flowers held well above the foliage. It was the best performer in the group of cultivars with predominantly silver foliage in a Chicago Botanical Garden field trial of deadnettles.
- 'Roseum' – has dark green leaves with a central silver stripe and rosy-pink flowers.



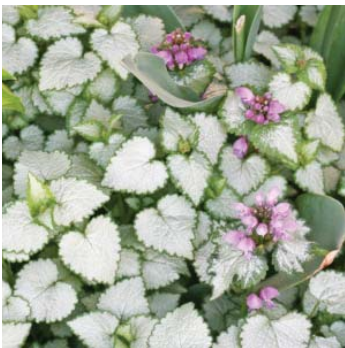
L. maculatum 'Beedham's White'



L. maculatum 'Chequers'



L. maculatum 'Pink Pewter'



L. maculatum 'Pink Nancy'



L. maculatum 'Red Nancy'



L. maculatum 'Shell Pink'



L. maculatum 'White Nancy'

- 'Shell Pink' – has clear pink blossoms. It was the best performer of the group of four cultivars with green leaves with a silver stripe in the midrib evaluated by the Chicago Botanic Garden, and the only plant in the dead nettle trial to receive a five-star excellent rating.
- 'White Nancy' – has silvery-white leaves with thin greenish margins and white flowers. Some report it is not as vigorous as other cultivars, and the foliage can be scorched if grown in full sun.

– Susan Mahr, University of Wisconsin – Madison

Additional Information:

- *Lamium maculatum* 'White Nancy' – on the Missouri Botanic Garden's Kemper Center for Home Gardening website at <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?kempercode=d720>
- A Comparative Study of Ground cover *Lamium* – Chicago Botanic Garden Plant Evaluation Notes Issue 23, 2004 at https://www.chicagobotanic.org/downloads/planteval_notes/no23_lamiums.pdf