
BWSR FEATURED PLANT

MARSH HEDGE NETTLE *Stachys palustris*

Publication Date: 9-3-13



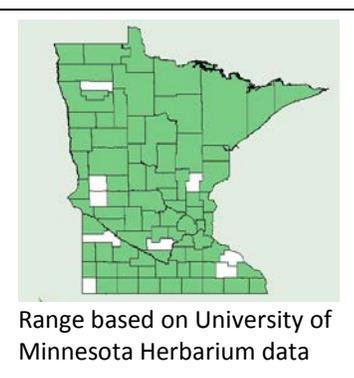
A wide variety of plants in the mint family (bugleweeds, wild mint, bergamot, giant hyssop, etc.) grow in Minnesota's moist habitats, adding structural diversity and ecological function. Marsh Hedge Nettle is a widespread species that is found in a variety of moist habitats with full sun to partial shade conditions. The species ability to establish from native seedbank, stabilize soils and provide nectar and pollen to insects makes it important for conservation projects.

Identification

The square, light green to purplish stems of Marsh Hedge Nettle grows to 40 inches tall. The stems contain many slightly downward pointing stiff hairs (not only on the edges of the stem like *S. hispida*). Leaves are opposite, hairy, lance-shaped with rounded to heart-shaped bases and serrated edges. The flowers are in a spike in whorls of 6-10 flowers with gaps between the whorls along the flower spike. The individual flowers have an upper lip covered in short hairs and a lower lip in three lobes. The flowers are tubular in shape and 3/8 to 2/3 inch long. The flowers are pink to lavender with white or dark purple spots on the lower lip. Flowers bloom in August and into September. Marsh Hedge nettle can look similar to American Germander, purple loosestrife, and blue vervain that all have pink to purple flower spikes (see species comparisons on the back page).



Hedge nettle inflorescence with gaps between whorled flower clusters.
Hedge nettle Photos by Dave Hansen



Range

Marsh hedge nettle is widespread across Minnesota and is also found in many states in northeast United States as well as parts of Canada. It is found south from Illinois to New Jersey. The species is found in a variety of moist habitats including streambanks, ditches, lakeshores, wet prairies, wet meadows and old fields. The species can spread

underground, giving it a competitive advantage in some plant communities. In addition to *Stachys palustris*, *Stachys hispida* and *Stachys tenuifolia* are also found in Minnesota (Some sources consider *S. hispida* to be the same as *S. tenuifolia*).



Square stem and opposite, hairy leaves of marsh hedge nettle

Marsh hedge nettle is found in a variety of intact and disturbed plant communities

Uses

Hedge nettle commonly establishes from seedbank in restoration projects, making it an important component of streambank and wetland restoration projects that rely on natural re-colonization for establishment. Its rhizomatous root system make the species effective at holding soil on shorelines and the species is used by a variety of native pollinators including long-tongued bees, short-tongued bees, flies, butterflies, skippers and moths.

Plants in the genus *Stachys* also have the common name woundwort, likely referring to the use of their hairy leaves as bandaging to help heal wounds and stop bleeding. The species was also used by the Chippewa Indians to treat colic (Densmore 2005).

Planting Recommendations

Marsh hedge nettle has very small seeds (16,000 seeds per ounce) that should be planted at the soil surface with only rolling or cultiacking to ensure that the seed is not buried too deep. Rhizomes of the species can also be separated or purchased and then planted within projects to allow the spread of larger masses. The species is commonly seen in RIM and WRP projects where it has established from the native seedbank without planting. This indicates that seed of marsh hedge nettle can persist in agricultural fields for many years until conditions are suitable for germination. When relying on seedbank for establishment it is important that site preparation methods will not kill establishing seedlings while also controlling unwanted species.



Hedge nettle commonly colonizes the wet meadow zones of restored wetlands.

Additional References

USDA Plants <http://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=STPA>

UWSP Freckman Herbarium

<http://wisplants.uwsp.edu/scripts/SearchResults.asp?Genus=Stachys&Species=palustris>

Minnesota Wildflowers <http://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/marsh-hedge-nettle>

Strength of the Earth, The Classic Guide to Ojibwe Uses of Native Plants, Frances Densmore, 2005



Purple Loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) flowers have 5-7 petals compared to *Stachys* flowers with two lips



American germander (*Teucrium canadense*) inflorescence; flowers have a long lower lip and are in a relatively dense spike
Photo by Dave Hansen



Blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*) has a square stem and opposite leaves but the leaves have large teeth and lack hairs.