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The Perennial Plant of the Year is ...

Ellen C. Wells



The Perennial Plant Association (PPA) recently held its National Symposium, after which they announced the Perennial Plant of the

Year for 2025, and it's one I actually have in my garden! *Pycnanthemum muticum*, also called Mountainmint, Blunt Mountainmint or Short-toothed Mountainmint. No, it's not a true *Mentha* species, but I can attest that its leaves, when I get a little too close with my lawn mower, do indeed smell like mint.

Mountainmint is a native to meadows and open woodlands in the eastern U.S. and west toward Texas. PPA's press release calls it "a must-have" for pollinator gardens—and, again, I can say mine is currently swarming with multiple varieties of winged creatures. You wouldn't think its inconspicuous flowers—so indistinguishable from its silvery bracts—could lure so many butterflies, wasps and bees, but it does. Another thing about the silvery bracts is that they give the plant the appearance of having a persistent dewy coating, or frost, in cooler months.

PPA calls it "a tough and adaptable perennial native with no serious diseases issues." Yes, true.

Also, "due to its aromatic foliage, it's unpalatable to deer and rabbits." Again, true! It grows into a dense, weed-suppressing clump about 2- to 3-ft. tall and spreads through underground rhizomes. PPA says in moist conditions it can be "aggressive," although not invasive. It does best in USDA Zones 4-8.

It's not a showstopper type of plant like a swath of rudbeckia, but would play well planted with the more bodacious native perennials. For me, it's been a stand of plants that I don't have to worry about watering, weeding, trimming and protecting from pests. **GP**

