

Nepeta faassenii 'Walker's Low'



'Walker's Low' catmint flowering among other perennials. garden there, not for the plant's size.

'Walker's Low' has aromatic, gray-green to silvery foliage and produces profuse soft lavender-blue flowers over a long period from early summer through fall. Bees, butterflies and hummingbirds are attracted to the flowers.



The oval leaves have scalloped edges.

The opposite leaves are 1-2" long with scalloped edges. The plant has 2-3 foot stems, but because of its arching habit the clumps are only 1½ -2 feet high if not staked. This variety does not flop as much as some catmints. It tolerates hot summer temperatures and is fairly drought resistant once established.

Landscape Uses

Nepeta faassenii 'Walker's Low' has a clean-cut look and provides a good show of color nearly all summer, making it a good choice for the front of a border. It is also useful as a tall edging and in herb gardens. It can be used as a ground cover, cascading over walls, or in containers. It is very effective planted in large masses or drifts. Catmint combines well with roses, beebalm, Shasta daisies, and ornamental grasses with blue foliage. The flowers make a nice contrast to bright orange tulips and

The Perennial Plant Association has selected *Nepeta faassenii* 'Walker's Low' as their Plant of the Year 2007. This herbaceous perennial in the mint family (Lamiaceae) is hardy in zones 3-8. The common name for the genus *Nepeta* – catmint – comes from the attractiveness to cats of the aromatic volatiles released from the broken stems of some plants in this genus, especially catnip (*N. cataria*). This species is not particularly attractive to cats, though some may be interested in it (mine ignore it, but go crazy over the real 'nip). This species is a hybrid of *N. racemosa* and *N. nepetella* and is named for Dutch nurseryman J.H. Faassen who developed the first hybrids. This cultivar was developed in England and is named for a



'Walker's Low' produces soft, blue-purple flowers.



Catmint plants begin growing up in spring to form a mound of foliage.



Catmints combine well with yellow flowers and foliage.

daylilies, and harmonize well with soft yellow flowers, such as, yellow foxglove (*Digitalis grandiflora*), Coreopsis ‘Moonbeam’ and lemon yellow daylilies such as ‘Bitsy,’ ‘Hyperion’ or many other cultivars. I have some planted in front of a Tiger Eyes™ cut-leaf sumac (*Rhus typhina* Tiger Eyes™) that has yellow foliage for most of the summer, then turns bright orange in fall, making an excellent contrast to the gray-green foliage and blue flowers.

Culture

Catmint grows well in full sun and any well-drained soil, although it will tolerate light shade. Once established it tolerates drought (but grows better when well-watered). Shear the plant back in spring for more compact habit.

Cutting back plants by half to a third after the initial flush of flowers fade will promote reblooming and a more attractive appearance later in the season.

‘Walker’s Low’ is supposedly sterile and therefore will not set seed, but I have had seedlings in my garden. The best method of propagation is by division in spring or from soft wood cuttings taken in summer (June and July). Non-flowering side shoots about 3 inches long should root in about 4 weeks.



Other cultivars of catmint grow taller than ‘Walker’s Low’.

Catmint has few pest problems and is not bothered by deer or rabbits. Maintain proper plant spacing to reduce problems with powdery mildew.

In addition to ‘Walker’s Low’, there are many other cultivars of *N. faassenii*, including:

- ‘Blue Wonder’ has lavender-blue flowers
- ‘Dawn to Dusk’ produces pink flowers
- ‘Dropmore’ - Dark blue flowers
- ‘Six Hills Giant’ - Violet-blue flowers
- ‘Snowflake’ has white flowers
- ‘White Wonder’ is another cultivar with white flowers



Some cultivars have white flowers.

– Susan Mahr, University of Wisconsin - Madison

Additional Information:

- *Nepeta faassenii* ‘Walker’s Low’ – Perry’s Pick for Perennial of the Month, January 2006 at www.uvm.edu/pss/ppp/jan06per.html
- *Nepeta x faassenii* – on the Missouri Botanic Garden’s Kemper Center for Home Gardening website at www.mobot.org/gardeninghelp/plantfinder/Plant.asp?code=E330
- Perennial Plant Association at www.perennialplant.org/