

What is perilla mint?

Perilla mint [*Perilla frutescens* (L.) Britt.] is an annual plant in the mint family that is toxic to livestock. Although cattle, horses and other livestock usually will not eat perilla mint if other forages are available, the chances of consumption increase if this plant is baled in hay or harvested in green chop or other similar forages. It also becomes more dangerous in late summer and fall when other forages may be declining in availability, especially in overgrazed pastures. Most often perilla mint occurs in shaded areas of pastures and along forested edges, rather than in full sunlight. According to "Poisonous Plants of the Southeastern United States," seeds of perilla mint are often found in stomachs of deceased animals.



Weed Description: An erect herb with distinctive green or purplish-green leaves with toothed margins. These plants emit a distinctive peppery-minty odor, especially when mature or crushed. This plant is extremely toxic to all kinds of cattle, sheep, and horses.

Leaves: Arranged oppositely along the stem, green in color, most often with a distinct purple tinge. Individual leaves are oval-shaped, coming to a pointed tip, approximately 2 to 5 inches long, 1 1/2 to 4 inches wide. Leaves occur on petioles, have distinctly toothed margins and emit a peppery-minty odor when crushed.

Stems: Erect, from 1/2 to 2 feet in height, square or 4-sided, usually some degree of purple in color.

Flowers: Many flowers occur in terminal clusters giving the mature plant a 'bottle-brush' appearance. Individual flowers are small, white to whitish-purple in color, hairy, with an upper lip that is 3-toothed and a lower lip that is 2-toothed.

Identifying Characteristics: The distinctive minty odor and oval, green to purple leaves with toothed margins are all characteristics that help in the identification of perilla mint. Appears similar to some of the nettles and false nettles, but these lack the minty odor and purple coloration.

To avoid toxicity problems, avoid harvesting forages in areas contaminated with perilla mint. Mow perilla mint plants before seeds are produced to avoid livestock grazing and prevent weed population growth. Mowing has limited effectiveness because clipped plants are able to resprout and still produce seed, and mowing when seed has set can spread it to new areas.

Several of the broadleaf pasture herbicides, such as Weedmaster, Grazon P+D, 2,4-D, Banvel, Remedy, Crossbow, etc. should provide excellent control if applied timely and at the correct rate. If you are using PastureGard for control of other broadleaf weeds such as *Sericea lespedeza*, it is not effective on Perilla mint by itself, but if you add 2,4-D at 1 – 2 pints (16 - 32 oz.) per acre, you should get good control. Best time for control is April thru June before plants begin to set seed. Use lower rates April thru June before flowering, and higher rates July thru October after flowering and seed set has begun.

