



Beefsteak Plant

Perilla frutescens (L.) Britt

Common Names: perilla, beefsteak plant, Chinese basil, purple mint

Native Origin: Asia. It is a traditional crop of China, India, Japan, Korea, Thailand, and other Asian countries.

Description: Beefsteak plants are small, freely branching annual herbs in the mint family (Lamiaceae) that reach a height

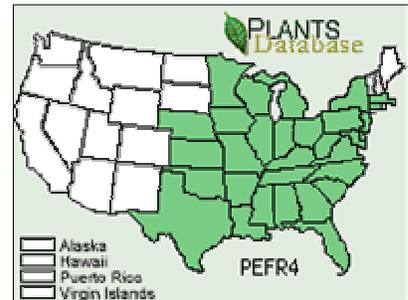
between 18 and 30 inches. Small ovate leaves are generally purple or green and are arranged in an opposite formation along the four-sided stem. Small bell-shaped flowers are white and purple with a distinctive ring of fine hairs along the bottom. They may be arranged in a terminal cluster or within the leaf axils and appear between July and October. Stems and leaves have a very strong characteristic odor. It superficially resembles basil and coleus.



Habitat: Beefsteak plants are prominent along roadsides, railroad right-of-ways, streams, spring branches, pastures, fields, woodlands and gravel bars. It can grow in rich soils, alluvial soils or dry soils.

Distribution: This species is reported from states shaded on Plants Database map. It is reported invasive in DC, IL, MD, MO, PA, TN, VA, and WV.

Ecological Impacts: Often planted as showy ornamentals, beefsteak plants may readily escape cultivation, spreading to disturbed areas where they disrupt native ecosystems. The species has toxic characteristics and very few predators. It is ordinarily avoided by cattle and has been implicated in cattle poisoning. Plants are most toxic if cut and dried for hay late in the summer, during seed production. One reason for beefsteak plants' survival in pastures is that cattle avoid it. Sold as a salad plant for its dark purple foliage, this member of the mint family is extremely invasive by wind-borne seeds.



Control and Management:

- **Manual-** Pull seedlings and small or shallow-rooted plants when soil is moist. Dig out larger plants, including the root systems. To prevent spread of seeds, cut off spent flowers ("deadhead") or cut off seeds or fruits before they ripen. Bag, and burn or send to the landfill.
- **Chemical-** It can be effectively controlled using any of several readily available general use herbicides such as Glyphosate. Follow label and state requirements.

References: <http://plants.usda.gov>, <http://oncampus.richmond.edu/academics/biology/plants>, www.mdflora.org/publications/invasives.htm, www.missouriplants.com/Pinkopp/Perilla_frutescens_page.html