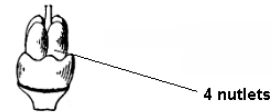
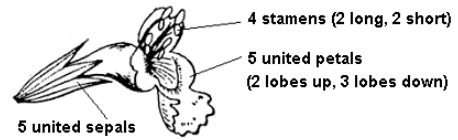


Lamiaceae (Mint Family)

The Mint family includes about 6700 species of annuals, perennials and small shrubs widely distributed in both the western and eastern hemispheres, with a center in central Asia and the Mediterranean region. Many are of economic interest, the most important being, of course, catnip (*Nepeta cataria*). It is just one of many aromatic herbs familiar to all, including lavender, basil, oregano, marjoram, sage, rosemary and thyme. Some mints are common in the nursery trade.



Members of the mint family are easy to recognize in having stems that are square (4-sided) in cross-section; opposite (or whorled) leaves with a minty or lemony fragrance; and flowers that for the most part are bilaterally symmetrical. The flowers have 5 united sepals and 5 united petals, although in most cases the flowers are 2-lipped (bilabiate) in a way that disguises the number of petals. The upper lip usually has 2 lobes and the lower 3, but recognizing them is a stretch. In a few genera, e.g., *Lycopus*, the corolla is nearly regular, and the 4-5 lobes are readily apparent. Stamens are 2 or 4; when 4, they are often of two different lengths. There is a single style surrounded by a 4-lobed ovary. The fruit consists of 4 separate but equal nutlets.

Drawings from Montana Plant Life
(<http://montana.plant-life.org/fam.html>)



Cedar sage (*Salvia roemeriana*), with a two-lipped (bilabiate) corolla typical of the family.



Bluecurls (*Trichostema brachiata*), a mint with a barely two-lipped corolla; 5 lobes are obvious and nearly equal.



Spotted beebalm (*Monarda punctata*), an annual with flowers in whorls above whitened bracts; the corolla is yellow with purple spots and strongly two-lipped.



Mint (*Mentha* sp.), an exotic species found mostly at springheads and along streambanks; its flowers are among the smallest of local Lamiaceae.