

Key to Dead nettles and Yellow-archangels in Ireland when in flower

By Paul Green

1. Flowers yellow.....2
Flowers reddish-purple.....3
Flowers white.....*Lamium album* (White Dead-nettle)
2. Leaves surface completely green
.....*Lamiastrum galeobdolon* subsp. *montanum* (Yellow Archangel)
Leaves with large conspicuous white blotches
.....*Lamiastrum galeobdolon* subsp. *argentatum* (Garden Yellow-archangel)
3. Leaves with white blotches.....*Lamium maculatum* (Spotted Dead-nettle)
Leaves without white blotches.....4

This is where the key now gets difficult

4. Stem leaves with stalks; leaves around flowers without stalks, looking as though they completely encircle the stem as one, but are two
.....*Lamium amplexicaule* (Henbit Dead-nettle).
Almost all leaves with stalks (stalks can be very short, look carefully), those around flowers not looking as though they completely encircle the stem as one, may look as though they don't have stalks, only leaves above level with no flowers without stalks.....5
5. Calyx tube as long as or longer than teeth; tube of flower as long as calyx, or a little longer6
.....Calyx tube shorter than its teeth; tube of flower distinctly longer than calyx*Lamium confertum* (Northern Dead-nettle)
6. Tube of flower exceeding the calyx teeth; teeth (lobes) around margin of leaf blunt, majority less than 2mm in length.....*Lamium purpureum* (Red Dead-nettle)
Tube of flower not exceeding the calyx teeth; teeth around margin of leaf slightly pointed, majority more than 2mm in length.....*Lamium hybridum* (Cut-leaved Dead-nettle)



Leaves showing teeth

Lamium hybridum (Cut-leaved Dead-nettle)

Upper surface of *L. hybridum* has a scattering of hairs.



Upper surface of *L. purpureum* is covered in hairs

Lamium purpureum (Red Dead-nettle)



1

2

3

Life size flowers

- 1 = *Lamium hybridum* (Cut-leaved Dead-nettle)
- 2 = *Lamium purpureum* (Red Dead-nettle)
- 3 = *Lamium confertum* (Northern Dead-nettle)

Notes

Until you get familiar with the ‘jizz’ of the 4 dead nettles with red flowers they can be surprisingly difficult to tell apart from each other.

Leaves / bracts – in this account I have called all leaves. Some books refer to those amongst the flowers as bracts.

Lamium amplexicaule – on the young fresh greener leaves the hairs on the upper surface have an obvious dark red base. Other dead nettles, if hair has a red base it is not obvious and is a pale pinkish-red.

Lamium hybridum and *L. purpureum* often grow together.

Main veins on underside of leaves of *Lamium hybridum* & *L. purpureum*

Lamium hybridum – veins mostly straight

Lamium purpureum – veins often slightly curved

Hairs in tube of flower of *Lamium hybridum* & *L. purpureum*

Many books mention *L. purpureum* has a ring of hairs near the base of the tube, and *L. hybridum* is without or with a faint ring of hairs. Because of the size of the flowers I find it hard in the field to see the hairs.

Plants of *Lamium hybridum* & *L. purpureum* that don't read the books

Occasionally I find plants that have leaves with teeth over 2mm long, better matching *L. hybridum*, but have flowers with a tube clearly exceeding the calyx as in *L. purpureum*. These plants are best placed under ***Lamium purpureum* var. *incisum***. See Sell & Murrell (2009). *Flora of Great Britain & Ireland*, Cambridge University Press.

Lamium confertum – length of stalk of leaves amongst flowers

All books seem to imply that the leaves are stalk-less (sessile), only the leaves above level of flowers would seem truly stalk-less.