

Salvia leucantha Mexican Sage Mexican Salvia¹

Edward F. Gilman, David Marshall, Ryan W. Klein, and Gail Hansen²

Introduction

The Mexican sage is an herbaceous perennial which sends up tufts of gray-green foliage. The upright stems are wooly and support the lanceolate, pubescent leaves. Leaves are soft to the touch. The inflorescence consists of numerous flowers arranged in whorls at each node. Flower color ranges from rose-purple studded with white to a uniform rose-purple. These beautiful flowers appear summer to fall and are very attractive to hummingbirds.



Figure 1. Full Form - *Salvia leucantha*: Mexican Sage, Mexican Salvia
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Figure 2. Leaf - *Salvia leucantha*: Mexican Sage, Mexican Salvia
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Figure 3. Flower - *Salvia leucantha*: Mexican Sage, Mexican Salvia
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2. Edward F. Gilman, professor emeritus; David Marshall, agricultural Extension agent and program leader, UF/IFAS Extension Leon County; Ryan W. Klein, assistant professor, arboriculture; and Gail Hansen, professor, sustainable landscape design, Department of Environmental Horticulture, UF/IFAS Extension, Gainesville, FL 32611.

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General Information

Scientific name: *Salvia leucantha*

Pronunciation: SAL-vee-uh loo-KANTH-uh

Common name(s): Mexican sage, Mexican salvia, Mexican bush sage

Family: *Lamiaceae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 11 (Figure 4)

Planting month for zone 7: Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 8: May; Jun; Jul

Planting month for zone 9: Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Feb; Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep; Oct; Nov; Dec

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Uses: cut flowers; border; edging; mass planting; attracts butterflies; attracts hummingbirds; hanging basket; cascading down a wall

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant



Figure 4. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Description

Height: 1 to 2 feet

Spread: 2 to 3 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: open

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: whorled

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: lanceolate

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: semi-evergreen

Leaf blade length: 4 to 8 inches

Leaf color: silver/gray

Fall color: not applicable

Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: rose-purple

Flower characteristic: fall flowering; flower season is longer in zones 9–11

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit cover: unknown

Fruit color: unknown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: gray/silver

Current year stem/twig thickness: medium

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun

Soil tolerances: acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay

Drought tolerance: moderate

Soil salt tolerances: unknown

Plant spacing: 18 to 24 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable

Winter interest: no special winter interest

Outstanding plant: plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more

Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

This perennial is charming when used in the landscape as a specimen in a container or massed together in a landscape bed. The flowers are quite lovely when used in flower arrangements. They last several days as cut flowers.

Mexican sage prefers a bright position in the landscape and a rich, sandy, well-drained soil. It grows best and stays thick with regular watering but will tolerate periods of drought. Cut the plant back and irrigate during the summer if it becomes too leggy. The plant is killed to the ground by freezing temperatures in the northern part of its range.

The Mexican sage can be propagated by cuttings and division.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.

Leafspot may be an occasional problem.