



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Salvia leucantha*¹

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Introduction

The Mexican Salvia is an herbaceous perennial which sends up tufts of gray-green foliage (Fig. 1). The upright stems are woolly 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.

General Information

Scientific name: *Salvia leucantha*

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

Common name(s): Mexican Sage, Mexican Salvia

Family: *Labiatae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 11 (Fig. 2)

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

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

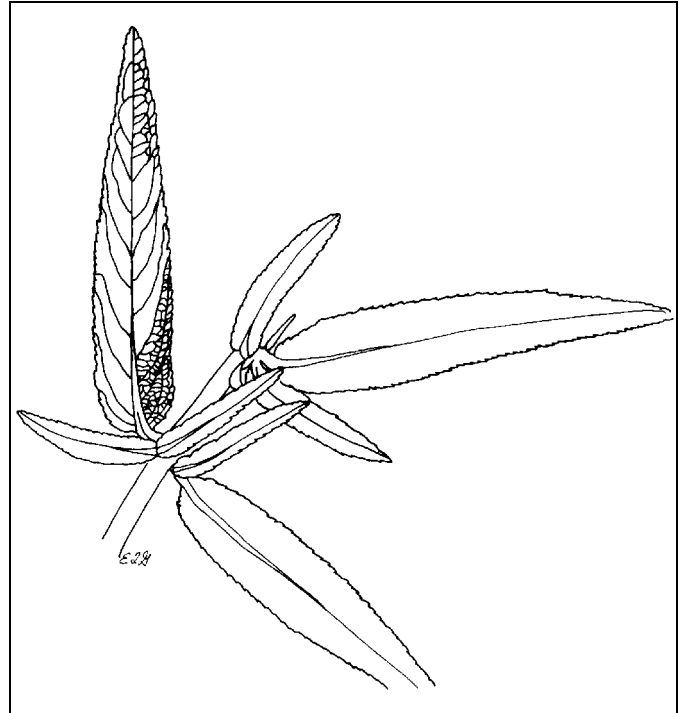


Figure 1. Mexican Sage.

Description

Height: 1 to 2 feet

Spread: 2 to 3 feet

Plant habit: spreading

Plant density: open

Growth rate: moderate

Texture: fine

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

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

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

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 Salvia 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 Salvia can be propagated by cuttings and division.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern. Leafspot may be an occasional problem.