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How to Grow Salvias: The Complete Salvia Flower Guide



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How to Plant, Grow, and Care for Salvia Flowers

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

Last Updated: April 10, 2025



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Perennial salvias (aka sage) are heat-loving, deer-resistant plants that thrive from midsummer through fall. The bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds can't resist them! Learn how to grow, cut back, and care for salvia flowers.

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About Salvia

flowers with tubular blossoms
atop square stems and velvety leaves.
Their flowers come in a range of colors,
including purple, blue, red, pink,
and white.

“Salvia” and “sage” are often used interchangeably; we tend to use “salvia” for the ornamental plant and “sage” for the culinary herb. However, [garden sage](#) has a few attractive ornamental varieties itself.

[Hummingbirds](#) and butterflies love salvias’ tubular flowers, and they’re adored by bees, too, so plant them if you wish to attract these pretty pollinators!

Fortunately, salvia does not tend to attract deer or rabbits. Salvia leaves' distinctive, pungent odor acts as a repellent to garden pests. [Find more deer-resistant plants.](#)

Salvias are heat- and drought-tolerant, making them survivors in the summer garden. They grow 18 inches to 5 feet tall, depending on the variety. Salvias of all types can be grown in containers, too.

Take care when choosing salvias because not all plants are hardy in all regions; some are best treated as annuals, but many perennial varieties are also available.

Read Next

- [20 Easy-to-Grow Perennial Flowers for Beginners](#)
- [How to Grow Columbines: The Complete Columbine Flower Guide](#)
- [How to Grow Astilbes: The Complete Astilbe Flower Guide](#)

PLANTING

All salvias do best in full sun (6–8 hours of sunlight per day) and well-draining soil.

Many varieties (typically those with light-colored flowers) will also do well in part-shade, but flowering will be reduced.

When to Plant Salvia

- Direct-sow salvia seed outdoors after all danger of frost has passed in the spring. [See local frost dates.](#)

How to Plant Salvia

- Loosen the soil to a depth of 12 inches, removing any large stones or roots. Mix in a 3-inch layer of [compost](#) to provide nutrients.
- If planting in a container, add some grit to the compost to improve drainage and nutrition absorption in spring. Plants grown in garden soil don't need feeding.
- Dig a hole twice the diameter of the container the plant is in.
- Remove the plant from its container and place it in the hole so the top of the root ball is level with the

- Space plants 1 to 3 feet apart, depending on the variety.
- Carefully fill in around the plant and firm the soil gently.
- Water thoroughly.



GROWING

- Add a 2-inch layer of mulch around the plant to retain moisture and control weeds.
- Water plants during the summer if rainfall is less than 1 inch per week. Salvia does not like excessive summer irrigation.
- Feed container plants in the spring. Plants grown in a garden bed really don't need feeding during the season.
- To encourage continuous blooms

- At the end of the season, leave flowers on plants to encourage reseeding (and to feed the birds).
- Some develop woody lower stems with age; feel free to prune this.
- After the first killing frost, cut stems back to 1 or 2 inches above the soil line.
- Divide perennial salvias every few years. The best time to divide is in early spring before new growth begins. Just lift, divide into clumps, and replant.
- Every spring, apply a new thick layer of compost and mulch again.



Propagating Salvia

For the adventurous gardener, salvia cut-

Some salvias often self-propagate, so you might find seedlings you can use in other parts of your landscape!

Before flower buds have developed, take cuttings (remove stems) from vegetative (non-flowering) branches that are about 3 to 5 inches long. Remove the lower leaves and trim each cutting just below a node (a node is where a leaf emerges from a stem).

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Insert the cuttings into a pot of pre-watered compost. Cover the pot with a clear plastic bag, trying to position the bag so

Place cuttings in a spot with indirect light. After three weeks, cuttings should be ready to pot on.

Types

Part of the mint family (*Lamiaceae*), the genus *Salvia* includes about 960 species; many of the tender perennials are grown as annuals in cold regions. Depending on the variety, plants can be 18 inches to 5 feet tall, but many are suitable for containers, too.

These common salvias are usually grown as annuals; they may be grown as perennials in warmer regions:

- **Pineapple sage** (*Salvia elegans*): Mexico/Guatemala native; bright red, edible flowers in late summer; leaves emit a fruity fragrance when crushed; up to 4 feet tall; hardy in Zones 8 and up
- **Scarlet or Texas sage** (*S. coccinea*): bright red flowers; hardy in Zones 9 and higher; 1 to 3 feet tall

purple, orange, lavender, yellow, or white; heart-shaped leaves; up to 2 feet tall

These salvias are usually grown as perennials:

- **Autumn sage** (*S. greggii*): blooms from spring to frost in a rainbow of colors; disease-free and drought-tolerant; 2- to 3-foot-tall mounding form
- **Hybrid sage** (*S. x superba*): ideal for cold areas; rosy purple blooms in late spring to early summer; rebloom to fall if faded flowers are cut back; 1 to 2 feet tall; 'Rose Queen' bears pink flowers
- **Pitcher sage** (*S. azurea* var. *grandiflora*), aka blue sage: aromatic foliage; large, sky-blue flowers in late fall; 3- to 5-foot clumping form
- **Peruvian sage** (*S. discolor*): native to Peru; leaves are gray-green on the top, with white undersides; dark purple flowers; spreading, floppy form; 1 to 3 feet tall

CARDENING PRODUCTS



PESTS/DISEASES

Pests and diseases are rarely an issue for salvia growers. Here are possible issues:

- [Powdery mildew](#)
- [Aphids](#)
- [Spider mites](#)
- [Whiteflies](#)
- Root rot
- [Botrytis blight](#)

WIT AND WISDOM

also used it to clean their teeth.

- *Salvia* comes from the Latin *salvere*, meaning “to heal.” *Salvia* has been used for its herbal and medicinal qualities since ancient times.
- The common kitchen herb sage—*Salvia officinalis*—is a relative of the many ornamental species and has a few attractive ornamental varieties.

FLOWERS

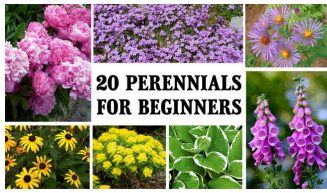
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Michael (not verified) 4 months 2 weeks ago

I have purple salvia in the yard in Charleston SC. The blooms are gone, so should I trim it or just leave it alone?

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REPLY

The Editors 4 months 1 week ago

Hi Michael,

In your area, it is best to just leave the stems alone until early spring—when the chance of frost has passed—and new growth begins. At that time you can prune away the old stems. This will help to avoid any freeze damage that could take place during any cold stretches this winter.

Hope this helps!

REPLY

reese (not verified) 6 months 4 weeks ago

What is the name of the deep blue salvia at the top of your new almanac, Oct 3, 2024

It is exactly what I want.

Thank you

REPLY

Jeanne Viola-Balding (not verified) 5 months 2 weeks ago

Mine has a "Black & Blue" label on it.

how to prep it for fall. It's beautiful, &
the hummingbirds & bees love it!
Good luck finding it - I searched for 2
years!

REPLY

Donna (not verified) 1 week 4 days
ago

I planted black and blue salvia years
ago and it spreads by underground
runners. You'd better really love it be-
cause it's hard to get rid of and will
take over your garden. The hum-
mingbirds do love it but I no longer
do. Just a warning so you know what
you're getting into. I'm in zone 8 in
NC.

REPLY

Lorena Renteria (not verified) 9 months 3
weeks ago

I planted Salvia seeds in the spring. They've

tral California where we're getting triple digit temps and the plants have full sun most of the day.

REPLY

Laura Carpenter (not verified)9 months 1 week ago

Probably stunted by the heat. I'm up in Washington and my whole garden is like that. Very frustrating...

REPLY

Dale Moore (not verified)10 months 3 weeks ago

what types of Salvia are best for my growing zone?

REPLY

Michael Peacock (not verified)10 months 1 week ago

What is Zone 41? I am in zone 105 and I

REPLY

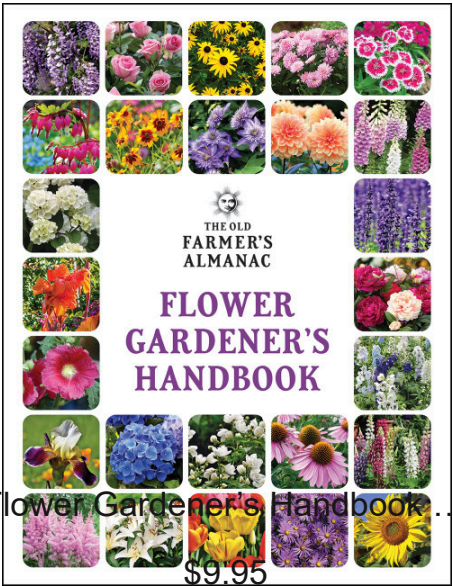
mary mauritz (not verified) 10 months 3 weeks ago

how do i deadhead salvia

REPLY

MORE COMMENTS

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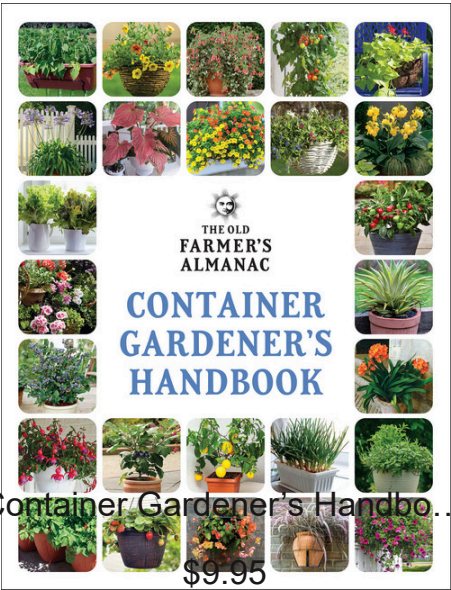


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