



# Newsletter

## October 2017

“The love of gardening is a seed once sown that never dies.”

### SAGE ADVICE

for the dry garden

Sages are in the genus *Salvia*. The name *Salvia* comes from Latin. It means to feel healthy and well. *Salvia* has the same root as the word salvation. For gardeners dreading the dry summer months, the sages indeed offer salvation.

*Salvia* is in the family Lamiaceae. Local cousins include *Plectranthus* and *Leonotis*. Culinary sage is *Salvia officinalis*. Herbs such as mint, basil, lavender, rosemary and thyme are also in this family.

There are around 900 different species of *Salvia*. The genus occurs worldwide in temperate and tropical regions. Sages can be annual or perennial herbs, or small woody shrubs. They are common in dry habitats and offer a wide range of options for drought tolerant planting.

*Salvia* flowers always have two lips. The upper lip is erect and hooded. The lower lip is spreading and forms a landing stage for pollinators.

*Salvia* flowers are male when they first open. Pollen forms in male organs called stamens. When pollinators visit male flowers, they push against a lever to reach nectar. This causes the top of the stamen to swing down and brush pollen onto the pollinator.

Older flowers are female. They have a stigma that bends down to receive pollen. Pollinators deposit the pollen when they probe the flowers for nectar.

*Salvia* flowers cannot pollinate themselves. Insects and birds must carry pollen between different flowers. The special flower design of sages sets them apart from other plants.





Photo of *Salvia chamaedryoides* by Scott Zona

## *Salvia chamaedryoides*

### Size

↑ 50 cm

↔ 60 cm

### Soil

Sandy loam

Requires good drainage

### Exposure

Full sun

### Season

Flowers autumn to spring

### Drought resistance

5 months per year

The germander sage comes from the arid Chihuahua plateau.



## *Salvia greggii*

### Size

↑ 45 cm

↔ 45 cm

### Soil

Sandy loam

Requires good drainage

### Exposure

Full sun or light shade

### Season

Flowers autumn to spring

### Drought resistance

4 months per year

Autumn sage is available in white, red and pinks.





*Salvia canariensis*

### Size

↑ 1.5 m

↔ 1 m

### Soil

Loam or sandy loam

Requires good drainage

### Exposure

Full sun

### Season

Flowers summer

### Drought resistance

3 months per year

Canary Island sage has a sparse, open growth habit.



*Salvia clevelandii*

### Size

↑ 70 cm

↔ 70 cm

### Soil

Sandy loam

Requires good drainage

### Exposure

Full sun

### Season

Flowers spring and autumn

### Drought resistance

5 months per year

Jim sage is from southern California.





## *Salvia darcyi*

### Size

↑ 30 cm

↔ 90 cm

### Soil

Sandy loam

Requires good drainage

### Exposure

Full sun

### Season

Flowers summer and autumn

### Drought resistance

4 months per year

Darcy's sage is deciduous. Cut back hard in winter.

Photo of *Salvia microphylla* by William Avery



## *Salvia microphylla* 'Kew Red'

### Size

↑ 90 cm

↔ 90 cm

### Soil

Loam or sandy loam

Requires good drainage

### Exposure

Full sun or light shade

### Season

Flowers spring and autumn

### Drought resistance

3 months per year

Graham's sage grows wild in the mountains of Mexico.

## Growing perennial sages

- *Salvia* is a cosmopolitan genus and members have diverse requirements. The recommendations below apply to sages for the dry garden. Sages from other habitats may need very different conditions.
- Sages demand sharp drainage. Too much soil moisture will reduce their lifespan. Heavy soils will kill plants over winter.
- Sages prefer full sun. Shade may cause the plants to grow leggy and reduce flowering.
- During establishment, apply 20 to 30 liters of water every two to three weeks into the planting basin. Thereafter, reduce watering. Depending on your microclimate, the plants may not need any supplemental water.
- Most of the featured sages are evergreen, but may lose some leaves under very dry conditions. Summer dormancy is normal for plants from dry habitats. They will resume active growth in autumn.
- Evergreen shrubby sages resent hard pruning. Remove old flowering stems and cut out any dead wood to keep the plant tidy. If desired, shape by trimming new growth.
- Deciduous sages can be cut back to the ground at the end of winter.
- Sages are not prone to pests and diseases.



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**We look forward to  
seeing you**  
at the  
**Rare Plant Fair**  
Saturday 14 October 2017  
Tokara Estate

[www.rareplanffair.co.za](http://www.rareplanffair.co.za)



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