

Salvia - Growing Guide

Introduction To Salvia

Sage

Salvias come in many shapes and sizes and have varying degrees of hardiness. Some are shrubs, others are smaller growing subshrubs, and many are herbaceous perennials. The varieties which Burncoose offers are not annual or biennial varieties and all are capable of being grown outdoors in milder areas of the country. Elsewhere, and to preserve the plants, softwood cuttings should be grown and overwintered in the greenhouse in case a cold winter wipes out the more tender outdoor sages.

Most sages have aromatic foliage, and some have culinary uses. We have split the sages which we offer into different categories to make it easier for you to make a choice of the many different varieties in line with what you want or need in your own garden.

Hardy Subshrub Herbs

S. officinalis, or common sage, is a popular culinary herb which grows to about 2-2½ft in height with a similar spread. These are evergreen plants which can take a bit of a battering in a cold winter but will readily survive. They come in a range of leaf colours and are therefore suitable as edging plants in a border or herb garden.

S. officinalis 'Albiflora' has pure white flowers.

S. officinalis 'Icterina', golden sage, has attractive variegated yellow and green leaves.

S. officinalis 'Purpurascens', purple sage, has red-purple leaves and young growth.



S. officinalis
'Purpurescens'

Smaller Growing Semi-hardy Shrubs

These plants will need light pruning to keep them in shape

S. convertiflora, red velvet sage, is on the tender side, but grows to around 3-4ft in height with long spikes of orange-red flowers in summer.

S. x jamensis 'Hot Lips' is a bushy shrub growing 2-3ft with a similar spread. It makes a wonderful shrub in a patio container here with its two-tone white and red flowers long into autumn.



Salvia 'Hot Lips'

S. 'Royal Bumble' has bright red flowers on deep purple stems. This one has been fully hardy with us and is now 3ft tall with a wider spread. The flowers last long into autumn.

We then come to three newer varieties which were first shown at Chelsea a few years ago and have captured the public's imagination. They are more shrubby than herbaceous plants, but we have found that overwintering them can be problematic some years.

S. 'Dysons Joy' is a bicoloured variety with white-tinged pink flowers before a pinkish-red calyx.

S. 'Ember Wish' is coppery-yellow in bud opening as an intense red.

S. 'Love and Wishes' has purple-pink flowers and is increasingly popular in summer bedding designs.

Perennial Herbaceous Border Sages

These sages are perfectly hardy if cut back in winter and treated as 'normal perennials'

S. *argentea* is a rosette forming perennial (although it can be a short-lived biennial) producing many branched terminal panicles of white or pinkish white flowers with long grey calyces. Grows to 3ft.

S. *bulleyana* is a clump forming perennial growing 1½-3ft in height with a 2ft spread. In summer it produces terminal racemes of paired yellow flowers with purple-brown lower lips.

S. *nemorosa* varieties are many branched perennials growing to about 3ft.

S. *nemorosa* 'Ostfriesland' has deep blue-violet terminal racemes of flowers.

S. *nemorosa* 'Pink Beauty' has strongly aromatic leaves and rose-pink flowers from reddish-purple calyces.

S. *sylvestris* 'Mainacht' grows 2-2½ft in height overall with gorgeous indigo blue flowers. This is perhaps the most popular and bestselling of all our sages.

S. sylvestris 'Schneehugel' has spikes of white flowers with green bracts.

S. turkestanica can be a short lived biennial but, with us, they have survived perfectly well for a number of years. The flower spikes grow to 3ft or so with pinkish stems bearing spikes of pink-flecked white flowers. A spectacular and unusual display.

S. uliginosa is another hardy and reliable species which can grow 4-6ft in moist soil and full sun. It flowers profusely from midsummer, and long on into autumn, with short terminal racemes of clear blue flowers.

Greenhouse Sages

S. africana-lutea (*S. aurea*), the beach or golden salvia, has grown into a 4-5ft rounded evergreen shrub with peculiar scalloped and wrinkled leaves at Ventnor Botanic Garden in the Isle of Wight. Very few other places in the UK could grow this attractive and peculiar species outside. From summer to autumn, it has terminal racemes of golden brown to red-brown or mauveish flowers fronting bell-shaped purple tinted calyxes. It grows in the wild in sandy places in the South African capes.

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