

# SALVIAS: BEAUTIFUL ADDITIONS TO GARDEN LANDSCAPES

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One of my favorite groups of perennials is salvia, sometimes called garden sage. A favorite of bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds, salvias shine in the garden throughout the warmer months, but especially in the fall. There are over 900 species worldwide; and they are diverse in fragrance, bloom, growth habit, color, and cold hardiness. They grow well in full sun to part shade in well-drained, moist soils that are enriched with organic matter. Salvias are also deer resistant; therefore, they are excellent additions to a garden landscape that is prone to deer damage.

One good rule of thumb is not to prune back the dead stems of salvia that are killed back by the first hard frost. Wait to prune until fear of frost has passed in the spring, and you see new foliage emerging from the base of the plant. If salvias are cut back in the winter, then this leaves a “straw” for rain water to drip down into the stem, and depending on the temperature, this can either freeze or rot the roots. In my own garden, I usually leave the dead stems alone until April. It’s not very attractive, but this delay will protect the plants.

Here are a few of my favorites:

- ‘Black and Blue’ (*Salvia guaranitica* ‘Black and Blue’) has anise scented foliage with dark blue flowers. It blooms continuously from summer to frost.
- Forsythia Sage (*Salvia mandrensis*) is a bright yellow, late fall bloomer with square stems and heart-shaped leaves.
- ‘Armistad’ (*Salvia* ‘Armistad’) is a tender, hybrid salvia that starts blooming in the early summer and continues through the fall. The beautiful purple flowers are contrasted with black calyxes.
- ‘Hot Lips’ (*Salvia microphylla* ‘Hot Lips’) brightens up the garden with spikes of white flowers with bright red lips. It blooms strongly in the spring and fall, and sporadically during the hot summer months.
- Pineapple Sage (*Salvia elegans*) has beautiful red flowers in the late fall. When crushed, the leaves have a fresh, fruity scent. Depending on the cultivar, the foliage colors can either be green or a golden-chartreuse color. It is a tender perennial, so it may not survive severe cold.
- Mexican Sage (*Salvia leucantha*) is another tender salvia that is a beautiful addition to any garden. The flowers are either white and purple or solid purple. The fuzzy, soft gray foliage adds a nice contrast.

For more information on growing perennials, please see [HGIC 1153, \*Growing Perennials\*](#).



'Black and Blue' Salvia is an excellent plant to add blue color to the garden.

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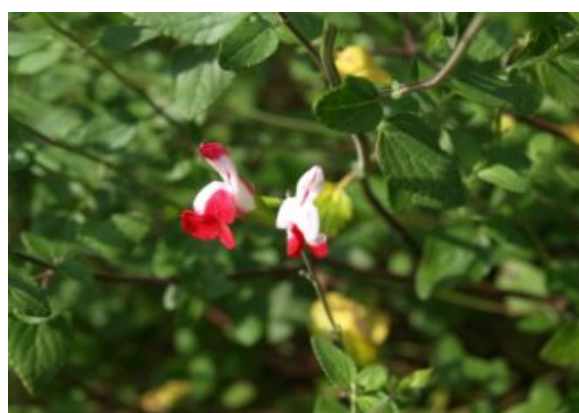
Forsythia Salvia is one of the latest blooming species, but it is well worth the wait.

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'Armistad' Salvia is a favorite of hummingbirds and butterflies.

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'Hot Lips' Salvia blooms prolifically in the spring and fall.

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Pineapple Sage has beautiful red flowers in the late fall.

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Mexican Sage has gray, fuzzy foliage that contrasts well with the solid purple or purple and white flowers.

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