



ANR-1094

ALABAMA A&M AND AUBURN UNIVERSITIES

## *Horticulture Notes*

# Perennial Salvias Can Brighten Your Landscape

Many salvia species and cultivars are available, both annual and perennial, that will suit almost any need you may have for color in the landscape. More cultivars are being developed each year. In fact, *Salvia nemorosa* 'May Night' was named the 1997 Perennial Plant of the Year by the Perennial Plant Association.

Two perennial salvias to consider adding to a mixed landscape border are *Salvia nemorosa* 'May Night', and *Salvia leucantha*, Mexican Bush Sage.

*Salvia* 'May Night' has the distinctive upright spike-like inflorescence characteristic of salvias. Plant this salvia in the middle to front of the flower border. When mature, *Salvia* 'May Night' reaches about 18 to 24 inches tall with about a 1-foot spread. The 1-foot spikes of deep indigo blue flowers make this a strikingly attractive plant.

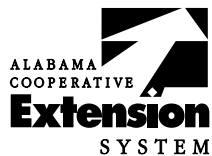
For best flowering, salvias generally prefer full sun. *Salvia* 'May Night' is recommended for zones 4 to 8, but would benefit from some filtered shade in most areas of Alabama. It will bloom from early May through June. Plant it in combination with other perennials such as *Achillea* 'Coronation Gold,' *Coreopsis* 'Moon Beam', and *Stachys byzantina*, Lamb's Ear.

Another perennial salvia to try is *Salvia leucantha*, Mexican Bush Sage.

Native to Mexico, this salvia is recommended for zones 7 to 10. It is tolerant of heat and drought and is better suited to our hot humid climate than *Salvia* 'May Night'.

Plant Mexican Bush Sage toward the back of the flower border or as an accent plant. It reaches a mature height of 4 to 5 feet and flowers in late summer and fall. This plant makes a good companion plant to Swamp Sunflower (*Helenium autumnale*) and Mexican Sunflower (*Tithonia rotundifolia*). As an added benefit, these flowers attract hummingbirds and butterflies. Mexican Bush Sage dries well as a dried flower and holds its rich purple and white flower color.

Salvias prefer well-drained, moderately rich soil. They do best when incorporated into a bed planting. Fertilize according to soil test recommendations or 2 to 3 pounds of 10-10-10 per 100-square-foot area. Broadcast in early spring. You can split the fertilizer application and apply 1 to 1.5 pounds in early spring and another application of 1 to 1.5 pounds in mid-summer. These perennial salvias require a minimal amount of dead heading or removing of spent blooms.



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**For more information**, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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