



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article April 30, 2018

Can't Have Too Many Salvias by Lydia Holley

The sight was amazing. Over 4,200 plants were offered for sale at the Henderson County Master Gardener Association (HCMGA) Plant Sale on Saturday, April 28. That translated into 975 sq ft of plants.

Plant Sale Chair Martha Rainwater announced last year that one "can never have too many salvias" in their gardens, so 120 sq ft were dedicated to nine different species of salvias. These plants are often referred to as sage. Why so many salvias offered to East Texas gardeners?



Photo: The tables dedicated to salvia at the HCMGA Plant Sale

First, many salvias are native to the United States, and to Texas. Gardeners are encouraged to use native plants, as pollinators prefer them. If you plant salvia in your garden, you will mostly likely notice bees, butterflies and hummingbirds paying these plants a visit. I have one type of salvia planted by my front porch, where I sit many afternoons and watch numerous pollinators fight over its nectar.

If you feel the stems on your salvias, you will notice they are square. This is an indication of their family, Lamiaceae, the mint family. Unlike regular mint, which can spread aggressively, salvias stay in a bush form, but retain their family's propensity for being easy to grow.

Drought-tolerant, salvias grow well in most soils, including rocky or poor soils, although they will grow and bloom more abundantly in good garden soil. They do need soil that drains well. Most are aromatic, and probably the reason why they are often called sage.

They are disease and pest resistant, including one of our biggest pests—deer. No deadheading is needed—just plant and enjoy. Most salvias go dormant in winter, but come back strong in spring, when you may cut them back after their foliage begins to grow. They are oblivious to our heat, and bloom abundantly all summer, when other plants may wither or retreat back into dormancy.

Since there are so many different species of salvias, you can usually find one that fits your needs. For instance, *Salvia coccinea*, or scarlet sage, blooms with bright red flowers on stems one to three feet tall, while *Salvia farinacea*, or mealy blue sage, has blue-purple flowers. Both are Texas natives.

HCMGA would like to thank everyone that came to our plant sale. We hope you found several plants to take home, maybe even a salvia or two.

For more information, call 903-675-6130, email hendersonCMGA@gmail.com or visit txmg.org/hendersonmg.

