



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

*Eranthemum pulchellum*¹

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Introduction

This spreading shrub is exceptional for its rich blue flowers which occur in terminal spikes during the early winter season (Fig. 1). The 3- to 6-inch-long flower spikes are borne above the large, rounded and prominently veined leaves. The plant even looks great in foliage without flowers. Blue Sage will attain a height of 4 to 6 feet and has a 1 to 3 foot spread.

General Information

Scientific name: *Eranthemum pulchellum*

Pronunciation: eer-RANTH-ee-mum pul-KEL-um

Common name(s): Blue Sage

Family: *Acanthaceae*

Plant type: shrub

USDA hardiness zones: 10B through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: year round

Origin: not native to North America

Uses: specimen; border

Availability: grown in small quantities by a small number of nurseries

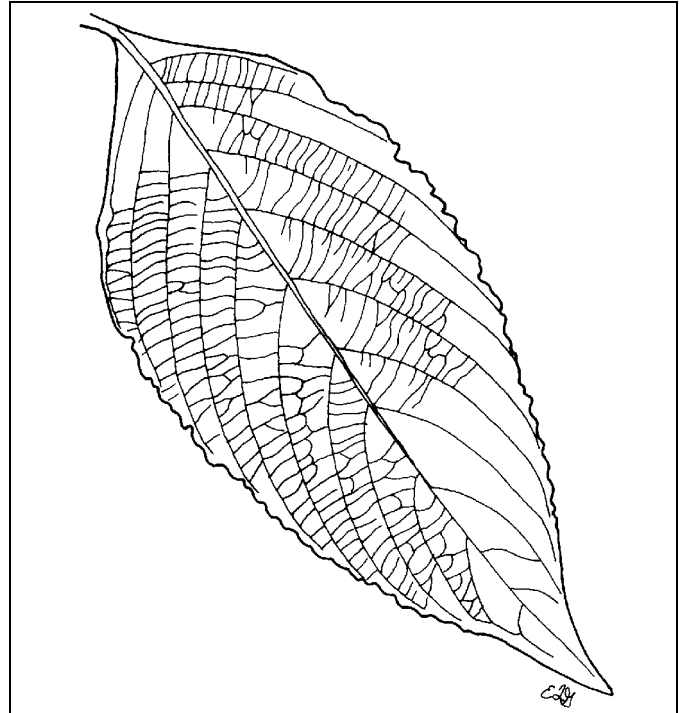


Figure 1. Blue Sage.

Description

Height: 4 to 6 feet

Spread: 1 to 3 feet

Plant habit: spreading; upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite

Leaf type: simple

Leaf margin: serrate

Leaf shape: elliptic (oval)

Leaf venation: pinnate

Leaf type and persistence: evergreen

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no fall color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: blue

Flower characteristic: winter flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: oval

Fruit length: less than .5 inch

Fruit cover: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not particularly showy; typically multi-trunked or clumping stems

Current year stem/twig color: brown

Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in the shade

Soil tolerances: acidic; sand; loam; clay

Drought tolerance:

Soil salt tolerances: poor

Plant spacing: 24 to 36 inches

Other

Roots: usually not a problem

Winter interest: plant has winter interest due to unusual form, nice persistent fruits, showy winter trunk, or winter flowers

Outstanding plant: not particularly outstanding

Invasive potential: not known to be invasive

Pest resistance: long-term health usually not affected by pests

Use and Management

This plant may be used in mass color plantings and herbaceous borders. It is also striking as a specimen or container plant on a patio or deck.

Blue Sage prefers rich, acid, well-drained soils. It will perform well in a site which receives partial to full shade, but the plant has a poor salt tolerance. *Eranthemum pulchellum* will produce more blooms and remain compact if the plant is severely cut back after flowering. Cut the plant to the ground after frost; new shoots will appear when the weather gets warm.

Take softwood cuttings to propagate Blue Sage.

Pests and Diseases

Nematodes, mites, and cottony cushion scale may be seen on Blue Sage. Blue Sage is not susceptible to any notable diseases.