Salvia coccinea

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Introduction

The Native Salvia is an herbaceous perennial that is native to the southeastern United States including the state of Florida (Fig. 1). It may attain a height of 3 to 4 feet with a vase shaped or upright habit. It bears striking, rich red flowers (occasionally white or pink) in the late spring, summer, and fall seasons.

General Information

Scientific name: Salvia coccinea
Pronunciation: SAL-vee-uh kock-SIN-nee-uh
Common name(s): Scarlet Salvia, Scarlet Sage
Family: Labiatae
Plant type: perennial; herbaceous
USDA hardiness zones: 7 through 11 (Fig. 2)
Planting month for zone 7: Jun; Jul
Planting month for zone 8: May; Jun; Jul
Planting month for zone 9: Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug
Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Feb; Mar; Apr; May; Jun; Jul; Aug; Sep; Oct; Nov; Dec
Origin: native to Florida
Uses: cut flowers; border; edging; mass planting; attracts butterflies; attracts hummingbirds
Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 2 to 4 feet
Spread: 1 to 2 feet
Plant habit: upright

Figure 1. Scarlet Salvia.

Plant density: moderate
Growth rate: moderate
Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: opposite/subopposite
Leaf type: simple
**Leaf margin:** serrate  
**Leaf shape:** ovate  
**Leaf venation:** reticulate  
**Leaf type and persistence:** semi-evergreen  
**Leaf blade length:** less than 2 inches  
**Leaf color:** green  
**Fall color:** not applicable  
**Fall characteristic:** not applicable  

**Flower**  
**Flower color:** red; white; pink  
**Flower characteristic:** spring flowering; summer flowering; fall flowering; flower season is longer in zones 9-11  

**Fruit**  
**Fruit shape:** unknown  
**Fruit length:** unknown  
**Fruit cover:** unknown  
**Fruit color:** unknown  
**Fruit characteristic:** inconspicuous and not showy  

**Trunk and Branches**  
**Trunk/bark/branches:** typically multi-trunked or clumping stems  
**Current year stem/twig color:** reddish  
**Current year stem/twig thickness:** thin  

**Culture**  
**Light requirement:** plant grows in part shade/part sun  
**Soil tolerances:** acidic; alkaline; sand; loam; clay; occasionally wet  
**Drought tolerance:** moderate  
**Soil salt tolerances:** unknown  
**Plant spacing:** 24 to 36 inches  

**Other**  
**Roots:** not applicable  
**Winter interest:** no special winter interest  
**Outstanding plant:** plant has outstanding ornamental features and could be planted more  
**Invasive potential:** native plant that often reproduces into nearby landscapes
Pest resistance: no serious pests are normally seen on the plant

Use and Management

This charming plant may be massed together as a tall ground cover. It also makes a nice red display in the perennial border in the full sun. Plant it among other herbaceous perennials for a nice display of soft, red flowers borne terminally on erect stems.

Salvia will perform well in full sun, partial shade, or full shade; however, flowering is reduced in the partial shade. It prefers a moist, well-drained soil and, unlike many flowering bedding plants, is very drought tolerant. Native Salvia is at its best during the hottest summer months when other flowering plants may suffer from the heat. To maintain a neat-looking landscape, cut it back at the end of the year after it finishes flowering and foliage begins to die. Although this is not necessary for good growth or survival of the plant, it keeps the garden looking neater.

‘Lady in Red’ is a popular cultivar with deep red flowers. Rain often helps snap off the flower spikes, but new ones are usually not far behind.

One may propagate the Native Salvia by seed or cuttings.

Pests and Diseases

No pests or diseases are of major concern.