



Cooperative Extension Service
Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

Salvia farinacea 'Rhea'¹

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Introduction

Blue Salvia, native to southwestern United States, adds a soft blue color to any sunny landscape (Fig. 1). Plants grow to about 2 feet tall and will spread with a loose, open head to about two feet. Flower spikes are held well above the dense, grey/green foliage, displaying the striking bluish-purple color nicely. Many cultivars have been selected for flower color and plant height. Most cultivars are bear flowers in shades of purple and blue. There is also a white selection.

General Information

Scientific name: *Salvia farinacea* 'Rhea'

Pronunciation: SAL-vee-uh fair-rin-NAY-see-uh

Common name(s): 'Rhea' Mealy-Cup Sage, 'Rhea' Blue Salvia

Family: *Labiatae*

Plant type: perennial; herbaceous

USDA hardiness zones: 9 through 11 (Fig. 2)

Planting month for zone 9: Mar; Sep; Nov; Dec

Planting month for zone 10 and 11: Feb; Mar; Oct; Nov

Origin: native to North America

Uses: border; cut flowers; attracts butterflies; attracts hummingbirds

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the plant

Description

Height: 2 to 3 feet

Spread: 1 to 3 feet



Figure 1. 'Rhea' Mealy-Cup Sage.

Plant habit: upright

Plant density: moderate

Growth rate: fast

Texture: medium

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: whorled

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Figure 2. Shaded area represents potential planting range.

Leaf type: simple
Leaf margin: serrate
Leaf shape: ovate
Leaf venation: not applicable
Leaf type and persistence: semi-evergreen
Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches
Leaf color: green
Fall color: not applicable
Fall characteristic: not applicable

Flower

Flower color: bluish-purple
Flower characteristic: summer flowering; fall flowering

Fruit

Fruit shape: no fruit
Fruit length: no fruit
Fruit cover: no fruit
Fruit color: not applicable
Fruit characteristic: inconspicuous and not showy

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: not applicable
Current year stem/twig color: green
Current year stem/twig thickness: thin

Culture

Light requirement: plant grows in full sun
Soil tolerances: acidic; sand; loam; clay;
Drought tolerance: moderate
Soil salt tolerances: unknown
Plant spacing: 6 to 12 inches

Other

Roots: not applicable
Winter interest: not applicable
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

Space plants about 12 inches apart to quickly form a solid mass of color. Set a mass planting of Blue Salvia in front of a dark green background of foliage from a dense shrub for maximum effect. Blue Salvia also looks nice planted in a perennial border mixed with other perennials and grasses.

Plants often fade out in mid-summer in central and south Florida, but they can be replanted in the fall.

'Argent White' flowers about one week later than the blue selections. The 'Victoria' series perform well in Florida and provide uniform plants in the landscape.

Salvia may be grown from seed or cuttings. Three to four-inch-long softwood cuttings, taken from young shoots, root readily. The seed germinates in 12 to 15 days at 70-degrees F.

Pests and Diseases

Aphids suck plant juices and may coat the leaves with sticky honeydew.

Sweetpotato whitefly can cause moderate to heavy infestation.

Powdery mildew may coat the leaves with a white powdery growth.

Fusarium wilt may cause plant death.