

JULY 2023 PLANT OF THE MONTH

SALVIA FARINACEA
GENUS: SALVIA
KNOWN AS: MEALY BLUE
SAGE, MEALY CUP SAGE, AND
MEALY SAGE

BY CINDY STEELE



ZOOM...there goes a hummingbird making a B-line for that plant with the purply-blue spires! What is he so excited about? He knows that this plant, the mealy blue sage, was just voted the **2023 Unofficial Pollinator Plant of the Year!** The Central Texas Butterfly Ranch partnered with the San Antonio Native Plant Society to sponsor this contest and the mealy blue

sage won with 67% of the vote! So, the insect world is abuzz with excitement about this pollinator-popular plant!

This drought-tolerant perennial repels insects, is non-invasive, requires little to no fertilizer, attracts bees and butterflies, and is deer resistant. These traits make it one of the best pollinator-friendly native plants to add to your pollinator garden in Texas. It's often called a "super plant of our region".





This hardy upright to sprawling perennial is native to Texas, and easily grown throughout the southern portion of the United States. They grow well in sandy or gravelly soil in full sun. Mealy blue sages are very drought tolerant wildflowers that bloom all summer. They grow to be 1-2 feet in height with a long blooming period from March to November. Coupled with the fact that their water demand is low to medium, they make a great plant.

You get lots of bang for your buck when investing in a mealy blue sage. Your resident pollinators will thank you with lots of busy buzzing activity immediately after blooming. They're especially loved by bees, hummingbirds and are great nectar plants for those hungry butterflies!



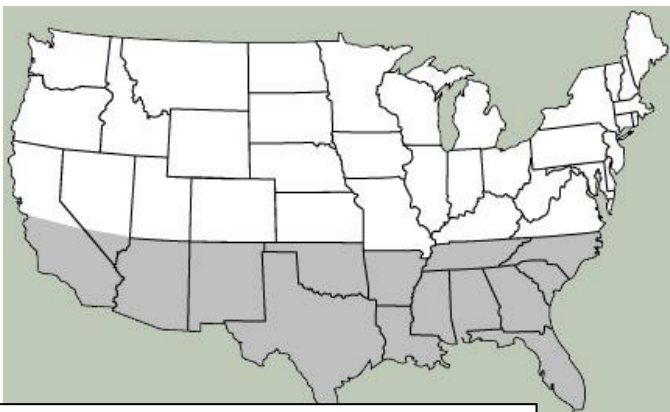
**A Bee Making That B-Line Directly
For the Mealy Blue Sage**

This sprawling perennial usually forms a mound as wide as the plant is tall. Mealy Sage is named for the mealy-white (sometimes purple) appearance of the sepals, which are covered with felted hairs. The blue flowers are 5-lobed and 2-lipped, 2/3-3/4 inch long, with 2 stamens and 1 pistil. They have the usual sage fragrance. The long,



narrow leaves grow in clusters, out of which grow the flower stems. The leaves may or may not have teeth. Dark blue to white, tubular flowers are densely congested in whorls along the

upper stems, creating a 3-9 in. spike. Gray-green, lance-shaped leaves are numerous, especially in the lower portion of the plant.



The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service states that the mealy blue sage grows well throughout the southern portion of the United States, especially Texas.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Map

Look for these beautiful vibrant plants where you least expect them. This photo was taken near Salado, Texas off of Interstate 35.



You can find mealy blue sage plants for your pollinator friendly garden at your local native plant store, and you can buy the seeds online. Once your new plant starts to bloom, it won't be long until those pollinators hear the buzz, and the bees start a flurry of waggle dancing to tell their hive-mates where to go to find that delicious plant! Keep your eyes and ears peeled for that buzzing swarm of bees headed your way!

