Florida gardeners will generally find three native *Salvia* species available. Scarlet or Tropical sage (*Salvia coccinea*) is the most commonly available and occurs throughout the state (with the exception of the Keys) in areas with moist, well-drained soils. Lyreleaf sage (*Salvia lyrata*) occurs throughout Florida south to Broward and Lee counties in moist soils at woodland edges or in open areas. Creeping or Southern river sage (*Salvia misella*) occurs in moist semi-shaded woodlands from Alachua County south through Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. All are nectar sources for butterflies.

*Sage* has a long history of medicinal uses. Crush the foliage, and you'll detect a faint herbal fragrance.

**Description**

Scarlet sage is a short-lived perennial that persists in the landscape by self-seeding. It generally reaches 18 to 36 inches in height and is taller than it is wide. Blooming occurs throughout the year in South Florida, and summer through fall in Central and North Florida. The abundant blooms are 1-inch long and usually deep coral or fire-engine red, although pink and white forms occur as well. The plant's square stems are green to dark brown.

Lyreleaf sage is a perennial that, for much of the year, consists of relatively flat, variegated leaves that display a range of green, dark violet and chocolate brown. Light violet-colored flowers appear on deep-green or burgundy-colored stems in late winter or early spring. Stems reach 12 to 24 inches or taller, depending on available moisture, nutrients and light.

Creeping sage is a low-growing evergreen groundcover 6 to 8 inches high. Blooming occurs off and on throughout the year, with tiny, abundant blue flowers. The blooms are not noticeable from a distance, but the light-green foliage is very attractive. Plants creep out from a main central stem.

**Plants**

Plants are available in 4-inch to 1-gallon containers.

**Care**

For continuous blooming, cut Scarlet sage plants back after flowers are spent for continuous blooming. Lyreleaf sage can be mowed in late spring or early summer, after it seeds. Creeping sage can be clipped once or twice in the summer. Lyreleaf and Creeping sage may need water if planted in full sun or during extended drought.

**Site conditions**

Scarlet sage does best in moist, well-drained sandy soils with full sun to scattered shade. It can tolerate some salt spray.

Lyreleaf sage prefers moist ground and partial shade, but will tolerate full sun.

Creeping sage does well in bright shade and prefers moist soils. It will tolerate full sun but may become stressed in hot and cold weather.

**Hardiness zones**

*Salvia* species are best suited for zones 8A–10B.

**Seeds**

Scarlet and Lyreleaf sage are easily grown from seed. To collect your own, allow flowers to dry on stems and gently shake them into a container to remove flowers and obtain seed.

**Butterflies and bees**

*Salvia* are excellent nectar sources for butterflies and bumblebees. Hummingbirds are attracted to them, too.

**Photo by Martha Stewart**

*Salvia coccinea*

*Salvia lyrata*