

Azure blue sage

(*Salvia azurea*)

For definitions of botanical terms, visit en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glossary_of_botanical_terms.

Azure blue sage is a deciduous perennial wildflower that occurs naturally in flatwoods and sandhills. Its striking cerulean flowers bloom August through November, attracting a variety of bees, butterflies and even hummingbirds.

As the name suggests, Azure blue sage blooms are a bright sky-blue in color. Flowers are two-lipped and borne in whorls on terminal spikes. The lower lip may bear two white stripes, or in rare cases, may be white with a bright blue edge (see photo below). Calyces are tubular and pubescent. Leaves are petiolate, narrowly lanceolate with entire to serrated margins. Leaf surfaces may be smooth or pubescent. Azure blue sage is unlike other *Salvias* in that it produces only stem leaves — no basal leaves. It does, however, have the telltale square stem that *Salvias* and other members of the mint family have.

Family: Lamiaceae (Mint family)

Native range: Panhandle, north and central peninsula, Lee and Broward counties

To see where natural populations of Azure blue sage have been vouchered, visit www.florida.plantatlas.usf.edu.

Hardiness: Zones 8–9a

Soil: Very dry well-drained soils

Exposure: Full sun

Growth habit: 2–4'+ tall

Propagation: Seeds, cuttings

Garden tips: Azure blue sage is suitable for mixed wildflower and naturalistic plantings, particularly if planted with tall native grasses such as bluestem (*Andropogon* spp.) that can help support the tall, sometimes spindly-looking stems.

Azure blue sage plants are occasionally available at nurseries that specialize in native plants. Visit PlantRealFlorida.org to find a native nursery on your area.



Photo by Eleanor Dietrich



Azure blue sage flowers can vary in color from a bright cerulean blue to a very pale whitish-blue.

Photo by Eleanor Dietrich