Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Jockey Club One Person, One Flower Scheme (2018/19)

Salvia splendens

Salvia splendens

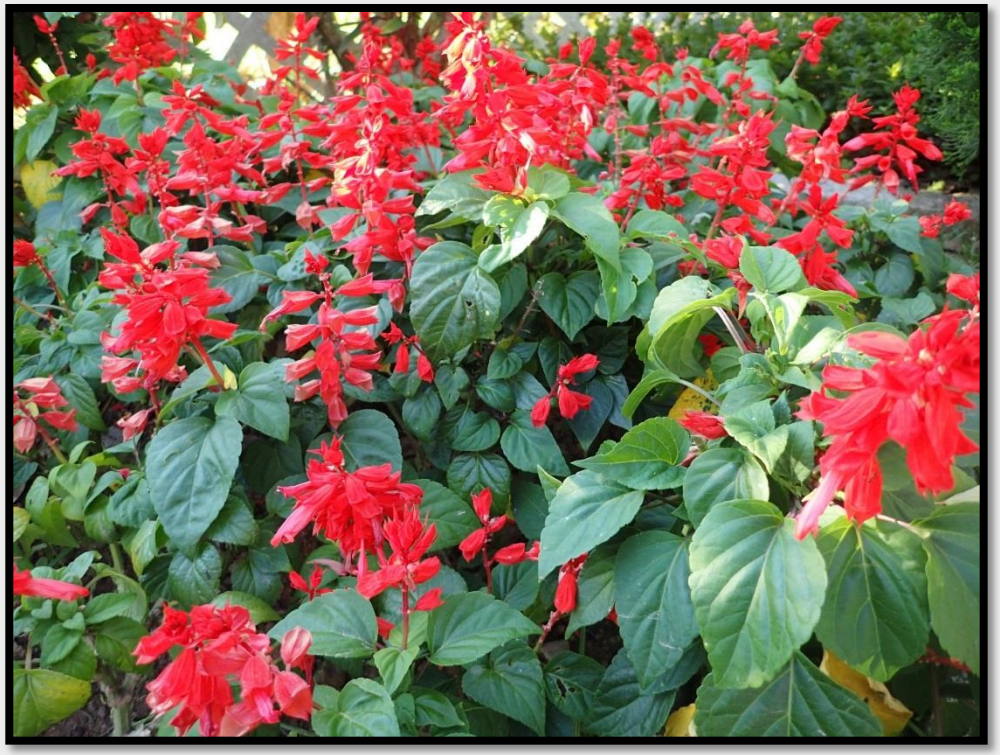
Common name: Scarlet Sage

Family: Lamiaceae (Labiatae)

Genus: *Salvia*

Native range: Brazil

Distribution: widely grown around the world



Form and Characteristics

Characteristics of the flowers:

- arranged in verticillasters, forming terminal racemes of about 20 cm long
- the bell-shaped calyx and long tubular corolla are bold red in colour, lending the flowers a resemblance to strings of firecrackers

Flower colour: Other than red, the cultivars occur in colours including purple, salmon, pink and white; there are also bi-coloured varieties with differently hued calyx and corolla.

Flowering period: can be up to 3 months long, running from late autumn to late spring the following year

Form and Characteristics

- A herbaceous perennial, though usually grown as an annual herb in cold regions
- 30 to 90 cm in height, comes in both tall and dwarf cultivars
- Stem is upright, square and smooth.
- Leaves are opposite, oval with an acuminate apex, a rounded base and serrate margins.
- Seeds are ellipsoidal nutlets that turn dark brown when mature.

Growth Habits

- It favours warm climate, full sun and good ventilation.
- It can cope with partial shade:
  - insufficient sunlight in the long run can lead to discolouration or even loss of leaves;
  - light too strong scorches the leaves and affects flower colour.
- Optimum growth temperature ranges from 15°C to 30°C:
  - temperatures lower than 5°C lead to cold damage;
  - temperatures above 25°C hinder the growth of flowers and leaves, making them weak and small.
- It is drought-intolerant and prefers a moist environment.

Plant Care

- Protect the plant from the midday sun in hot summer with adequate shading.
- It thrives in loose, rich and well-drained sandy soil.
- When potted, water only when the soil is dry.
- Pinch from time to time to promote shoot growth and keep the plant shapely.
- Deadheading encourages further displays of flowers.

Plant Care

- Fertilise moderately after pinching to induce new shoots.
- Fertilise monthly during the growth period to ensure adequate supply of nutrients.
- Apply fertiliser containing the three essential elements every 20 to 30 days during the flowering period for vigorous blooming.
- Mature fruits remain in the calyx and fall onto the soil when the plant is shaken. The seeds may develop into new plants when conditions are favourable.

Propagation – Seed Sowing

- Scarlet Sage is largely propagated by seeds. Autumn, winter and early spring are ideal times for seed sowing.
- Seeds can be scattered on the surface of loose and moist soil. The optimum temperature for germination is 18°C to 22°C.
- After sowing, water the seeds to keep the soil moist. Germination takes place in about 10 to 15 days.
- Avoid overwatering to prevent the seedlings from drooping.
- If the seedlings are too crowded, remove the weaker ones.
- The seedlings are ready for potting as soon as 3 pairs of leaves have developed.

Potting Mix (Seed Sowing)

Peat : Vermiculite : Perlite (1 : 1 : 1)

Subsoil : Peat : River sand (1 : 1 : 1)

River sand

Perlite

Peat

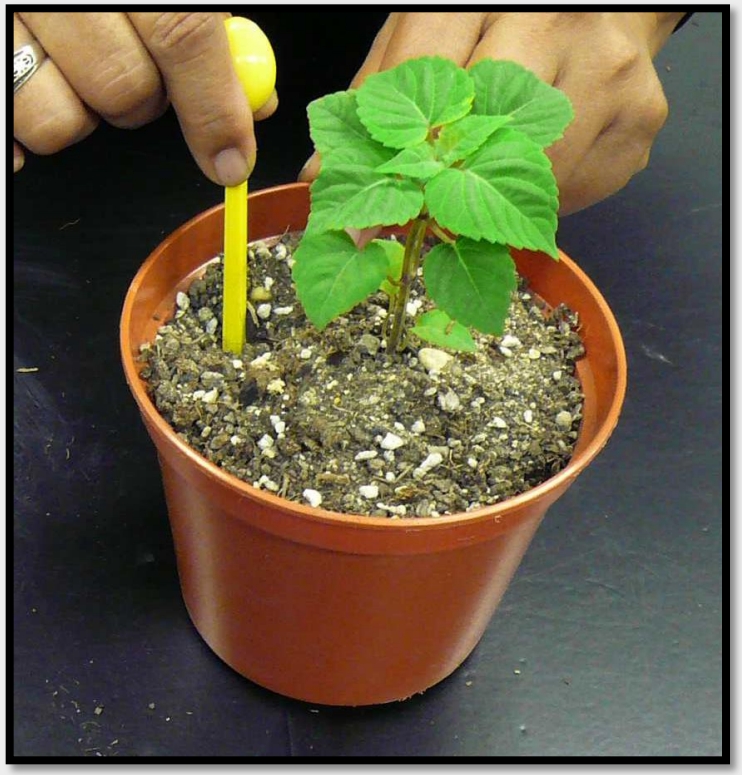
Vermiculite

Propagation – Soft Tip Cutting

- Cutting can be carried out in spring or autumn.
- The rooting medium should preferably be well-aerated, properly drained and clean sandy soil.
- Select healthy and sturdy soft tips without flower buds as cuttings.
- Each soft tip should be 6 to 8 cm long with at least 3 to 4 nodes and ideally short internodes. Strip all but the top 3 to 4 leaves.

Propagation – Soft Tip Cutting

- Insert the bottom 1/3 to 1/2 of the cuttings into the medium.
- Water the mixture thoroughly. Leave the cuttings in a partially shaded place at a temperature above 15°C.
- Around one week later, move the cuttings to a brighter area under subdued light. Keep the medium moist throughout the period.
- Roots will develop in about 3 weeks. Cuttings with vigorous root development can then be transplanted for establishment.



Potting Mix (Soft Tip Cutting)

Peat : Vermiculite : Perlite (1 : 1 : 1)

Subsoil : Peat : River sand (1 : 1 : 1)

River sand

Perlite

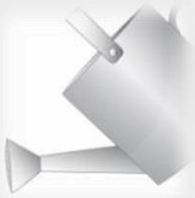
Peat

Vermiculite

Transplanting seedlings

Potting up

- The seedlings are ready for potting as soon as 3 pairs of leaves have developed.
- Fill pot with potting mix up to 1/2 an inch from the top rim.
- Remove the seedlings from the germination tray with a small shovel. Do not damage the roots of the seedlings.
- Dig a hole in the centre of the pot with a small shovel. Place the seedling in the hole and fill it with potting mix. Flatten the potting mix gently until it comes into contact with the root ball.



- Water the plant immediately after transplanting.
- Place the transplanted seedlings in a semi-shaded area for 2 to 3 days and away from direct sunlight.

Transplanting seedlings

Potting up

- After establishment, sufficient sunlight should be maintained.
- Fertiliser containing tiny amounts of the essential elements of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium should be applied every 10 to 15 days during the growth period.
- Pinch the growing tips when the seedlings are about 10 to 12 cm tall. As the seedlings grow, repeat the pinching process to promote branching and flower bud formation.
- Scarlet Sage flowers in approximately 90 days from seed sowing.

Potting Mix (Potting Up)

Black topsoil : Peat : Subsoil (2 : 1 : 1)

Sphagnum peat moss : Perlite : Vermiculite (1 : 1 : 1)

Subsoil : Peat : Perlite (2 : 1 : 1)

Subsoil : Peat : Vermiculite (2 : 1 : 1)

River sand

Perlite

Peat

Vermiculite

Prevention and Treatment of Pests and Diseases

- Scarlet Sage is prone to pests and diseases in hot and humid conditions.
- It is common for the plant to be attacked by diseases like damping off or powdery mildew.
- Pests that plague the plant include aphids and thrips.
- If pests or diseases are found, remove the infected parts immediately and apply appropriate insecticide or fungicide.
- The best prevention is to place the plant in an environment with abundant sunlight, good ventilation and proper drainage. Water and fertilise moderately to encourage healthy plant growth.

Horticultural Application

- Scarlet Sage has brilliant red blooms and a long flowering period.
- An excellent ornamental plant for the garden and balcony
- A popular choice for edging plants
- Well suited for landscape and floral bedding displays