

NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS

Lindheimer Chapter

PLANT OF THE MONTH AUGUST, 2010

GIANT BLUE SAGE, *SALVIA AZUREA*



Detail of Flower

Giant Blue Sage is a widespread perennial grassland plant that is native to much of the southeastern US from North Carolina to Florida, west to Texas and New Mexico and north into Minnesota. In fact, it was the Kansas Native Plant Society's 2006 Wildflower of the Year. It has a loose open habit, growing from 3' – 6' tall, and prefers dry locations in sun to part shade. The blooms, which appear from August through the fall, are a unique delicate sky blue color. It has deep roots (reportedly as deep as 8') in order to compete with native grasses in its natural habitat. As a grassland plant it's used to having its roots shaded and will grow well mixed among other plants.

Giant Blue Sage may need additional water to get started, but once established, it is quite drought tolerant. In fact, it may not survive a wet winter if the drainage is not good. Like all sages, this is a good nectar plant for hummingbirds and bees, and is relatively deer resistant. Another common name for *Salvia azurea* is Pitcher Sage after Dr. Zina Pitcher, a 19th century U.S. Army surgeon and botanist. It may be difficult to find in nurseries, but can easily be started from seed. One source is Native American Seed (www.seedsource.com).