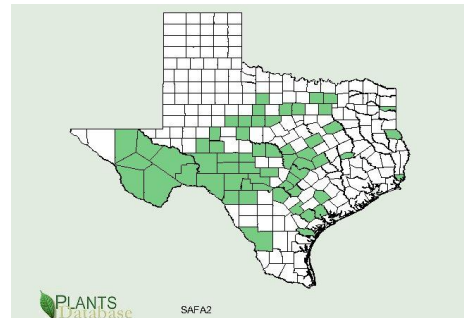


NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY OF TEXAS

Lindheimer Chapter

PLANT OF THE MONTH JANUARY, 2014

Mealy Blue Sage, *Salvia farinacea*



USDA Range Map - Texas

Mealy Blue Sage

Mealy Blue Sage is a wonderful perennial which blooms from spring to frost, suitable for flower beds, wildflower meadows and patio pots. It grows 2' to 3' tall, with a similar spread. The flowers are generally various shades of purple and blue, although a white version is also available. Its name comes from whitish hairs that cover the leaves and stems and give the plant a "mealy" appearance. This can make a nice contrast to darker green leaves of other perennials.

Mealy Blue Sage occurs naturally primarily in Texas and the surrounding states. However, because of its popularity, it is being grown all over the United States. North of Texas it is treated as an annual. When found in nature it usually occurs in thin limestone soils, in sunny to shady locations. It prefers drier, well-drained soils, and will become leggy if it gets too much moisture. In this case, it should be cut back to encourage it to develop a bushier form. In drier locations, it can tolerate less sun. The tops of the plants will die back after a heavy freeze, and it can be cut back to 6" in late winter. Cutting dead flower stalks during the blooming season encourages more bloom.

Mealy Blue Sage is not only an attractive, drought tolerant perennial for the garden, it also is a great wildlife plant. Butterflies, bees and hummingbirds enjoy the nectar, while small birds will eat the seeds. Deer generally leave the plants alone. Due to its popularity, it is widely available in nurseries, but it can also be easily grown from seeds.

Note: Mealy Blue Sage is a NPSOT NICE![™] selection for Spring 2014.

Text by John Siemssen. Photo by Sally and Andy Wasowski, Wildflower Center

Previous Plants of the Month can be found on the NPSOT Lindheimer Chapter Website:

<http://npsot.org/wp/lindheimer/plant-of-the-month/>