

LYRE-LEAF SAGE
Salvia lyrata L.

Description: A perennial herb with quadrangular flowering stems extending upright from a basal rosette of leaves. The basal leaves are elongated, elliptic, dark green to slightly purplish, and are often lobed or dissected. The light blue to violet flowers are clustered at the top of the stem. Flowering occurs from April to May or June. The seeds are round, dark brown, and held loosely in a cup-like structure.

Uses: This plant is used mainly for landscape beautification. It has potential for use in cultivated, garden situations, in naturalized prairie or meadow plantings, and along roadsides.

Site adaptation: Lyre-leaf sage can grow in full sun and light to medium shade. Native stands are found on roadsides, and in fields and open woodlands. It will grow on many types of soil.

Cultural Specifications

Method of establishment: Seed

Planting time: Lyre-leaf sage can be planted almost any time during the growing season, but late summer planting (August-September) often produces the largest stands.

Seedbed preparation: A firm seedbed is required. Seed may be planted into a closely mowed, chemically-killed, or burned sod area with a light disking or harrowing that scratches the soil surface. When seed is sown on a clean-tilled site, cultipacking the soil before planting is recommended. A thick layer of plant residue on the soil surface can interfere with seed germination.

Planting rate and method: Broadcast or shallowly drill 4-6 grams of seed per 100 square feet (4-6 lb/acre). Planting depth should range from at the soil surface to one-eighth inch deep. Cultipacking after planting is recommended. Seed germination should occur by fall, and the plants will remain as a small, low-growing rosette throughout the winter. Often it takes two or three years for lyre-leaf sage to produce a dense stand on the planting site.

Fertilizer requirement: Apply according to soil test recommendations. If not available, a rate of 3.5-5.5 oz per 100 square feet (100-150 lb/acre) of 13-13-13 should be applied after the seedlings are established and annually thereafter.

Companion plants: Lyre-leaf sage grows well with most perennial lawn grasses and it is highly suited for roadside plantings. Some suggested companion wildflowers are lance-leaf coreopsis, black-eyed susan, blue-eyed grass, toadflax, ox-eye daisy, purple coneflower, bachelor's button, and butterfly milkweed.

Management

Mowing: Because of its low-growing nature, mowing to limit competition from other plants is crucial to maintain a stand of lyre-leaf sage. The initial mowing should be delayed until mid to late May (after seed matures). Plants can tolerate regular close mowing during the summer and fall. If allowed to regrow after the initial mowing, plants often produce additional seed during the summer, but showy flowers will not be produced. However, on sites where competing vegetation provides dense cover, stands should be

mowed regularly, because the small amount of additional seed produced during the summer will not justify the detrimental effects on the lyre-leaf sage stand. Fall mowing is always recommended.

Seed production: Seed will begin to mature about a month after flowering. The seed are clearly visible in the surrounding cup-like structure, and are mature when the color changes from green to dark brown. When mature, they fall easily when the stalk is shaken or rubbed. Seed can be collected by hand or large areas can be harvested with a conventional combine.

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