



White Sage

Scientific Name: *Salvia apiana*

Salvia apiana stands alone but is known to hybridize often naturally between different *Salvia* species, especially when they are closely related and share similar needs for sun, soil, and water.

Common Pest(s):

Plants will mildew if there is excessive humidity or too much shade. Aphids can be a problem for younger plants, particularly in the spring. As the plants grow older, they are fairly resistant to herbivores.

Plants.usda.gov

Flowers by the Sea

Growing Information

Native Habitat

White sage, bee sage, or sacred sage, is a cornerstone species of the coastal sage scrub habitat of Southern California and Baja California. White sage is fragrant, with silver-white leaves, and clusters of white flowers with lavender streaks. Young leaves start off green and turn white as they get older.

Ideal Planting Window

Fall is the best time to transplant white sage from containers. For seeds, in Spring simply sprinkle the white sage seeds on the surface of the soil, then wet them down. This plant does best in full sun.

Growing Guidance

White sage is tailor-made for California gardens in an age of drought. Over watering can actually kill it, especially if your soil has slow drainage.

Kcet.org

Calscape.org



Interesting Facts

The White sage occurs on dry slopes in coastal sage scrub, [chaparral](#), and yellow-pine forests of Southern California to Baja California at less than 1,500 metres (4,900 ft) elevation.

Leaves are thickly covered in hairs that trigger oil glands; when rubbed oils and resins are released, producing a strong aroma. Flowers are white to pale lavender.

The [terpenoids](#) and essential oils found in white sage likely deter being eaten by [herbivores](#) such as deer.

Salvia apiana is widely used by indigenous peoples on the Pacific coast of the United States.

The plant has been used medicinally as an astringent and for its antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. White sage has been used for many years in spiritual ceremonies by indigenous cultures and the seeds are an ingredient in pinole, a type of flour. The leaves and stems can be consumed or used to brew teas. Give white sage room to spread out in your garden and you will enjoy the fragrance released by the leaves every time you brush against it.

Ucanr.edu

Kids.kiddle

Native Habitat Description

White sage is also an important food source for bees, butterflies, birds, and other wildlife. Larger bees, notably carpenter bees and bumble bees, are the predominant pollinators of white sage. Wild white sage populations are currently under intense threat by development, smudge stick poaching, climate change, drought, and wildfire.

Calscape.org

Historical Uses



Salvia apiana was used extensively by indigenous people in southern California.

The Luiseno people build ceremonial hunting fires from white sage foliage, to bless an upcoming hunt. They also ate the peeled, young tops of the white sage stems.

The Cahuilla collected seeds from white sage and mixed them with wheat flour and sugar to make gruel and biscuits.

Both the Cahuilla and Kumeyaay used white sage to address a fever, leaves were eaten or smoked in a sweat-house. An infusion of leaves was also drunk to serve as cough medicine. Additionally, the leaves were burned on top of hot coals so as to fumigate a home that had been occupied by someone with measles.

White sage was also used to enhance hygiene. The Cahuilla mixed crushed sage leaf with water then used the concoction as a shampoo and conditioner. This mix of crushed leaves was also placed under their armpits to hide bad body odor. This was an advantage when trying to hide human scent from game animals during a hunt.

[Ethnoherbalist](#)

Photo: Lucid Moon

Contact Information



RIVERSIDE COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

EMAIL: anrmgriverside@ucanr.edu

WEBSITE: <https://ucanr.edu/sites/RiversideMG/>