

Plant Wise

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

Mills County Extension
61321 315th St; P.O. Box 430
Malvern, IA 51551
712-624-8616
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/mills>

Prepared by: Shirley D Miller, Mills County Master Gardener
Coordinator and Mills County Horticulture Program Assistant

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Russian Sage

Salvia yangii, previously known as (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*), and commonly called Russian sage, is a flowering herbaceous perennial plant and subshrub. This drought-tolerant perennial dresses up the summer and fall garden with a haze of purple flowers atop grey-green leaves on silver-white stems. It's a looker from midsummer to fall frost.



Because of its ability to withstand periods of drought, Russian sage is a good choice for those flowerbeds farthest from a water source. It grows best in warm climates and tolerates clay or average soils, as long as the drainage is good, but they need full sun to produce lots of flowers and sturdy stems that won't flop over as they grow taller. It is also rabbit and deer resistant, and seldom has problems with pests or diseases. Hummingbirds, butterflies and bees are often drawn to them. Like other members of the mint family, its leaves are aromatic when crushed, and the plants have the square stems found in many of its relatives. Despite its name, it's not a type of sage.

Planting Russian Sage

There are some tricks to planting Russian sage that will help the plant establish in your garden. Start with your planting spot. Russian sage needs full sun to perform its best. When planted in partial shade, and plants tend to flop open as stems stretch for sunlight. Choose a location with hot, intense sun, even as hot as the space between sidewalk and street or a strip along a driveway. Russian sage likes sun and heat.

Choose a planting spot with well-drained average soil or alkaline, dry soil. Russian sage adapts well to either soil type. If soil is too fertile, plants tend to become loose and floppy. If this happens, insert hoop stakes or use stakes and string to prop stems. Mature plants can reach 3 to 5 feet in height with a spread of 2 to 4 feet. Since Russian sage grows as clumps, space the plants about 3 feet apart, or 3 feet away from other plants in the garden, to give them room to spread.

Look for containers of Russian sage at your favorite plant shopping spot. Although you can tackle planting Russian sage from early spring to six weeks before frost, the ideal time is in late spring. At this point, soil is warm and plants should start growing quickly. If you wind up planting Russian sage further into summer, be sure to keep soil moist as young plants establish.



Little Spire



Blue Spire

Several Russian sage varieties are available on the market. The straight species grows 3 to 5 feet tall and 2 to 4 feet wide. 'Little Spire' Russian sage is a

smaller version, reaching a tidy 18 to 24 inches tall and wide. 'Blue Spire' Russian sage tends to grow more upright than the species with stems that reach 2 to 3 feet tall and wide.

Russian sage spreads by self-sowing if conditions are right and also by rhizomes. In some situations, gardeners report this perennial flower as being invasive. It is not, however, reported or recorded as such in the National Invasive Species database. In the garden, keep an eye out for spreading stems. Pull and clip them as you spot them.



Russian Sage Care

Russian sage is drought-tolerant once established, but plants need water until root systems have had a chance to sink deeply into soil. It's a good idea to water Russian sage during its first growing season to encourage a deep, extensive root system. If the stems of your plants start to lean over, (which they're prone to do if they're not getting adequate sunlight) stake them as needed. The next spring, prune them to six to eight inches above the ground to encourage new growth.



Pollinators on Russian Sage

If you like to drying flowers, stems of dried Russian sage is pretty in indoor arrangements.

If you prefer not to cut the plants back, let the faded flowers remain, and they'll add interest and color to the winter landscape.

Transplanting established Russian sage can be tricky. Dig a large perimeter around the plant, taking as much soil and root system with you as you can. The plant will likely go into shock after transplanting and could take a few months to come out of it. The best time to move Russian sage is in early spring. Wait until soil is warm in the coldest regions. Cut stems back by two-thirds prior to moving the plant. Keep the transplant well-watered until you see new growth; then gradually decrease water.



Seeding your Lawn

The best time to seed a lawn in Iowa is between mid-August through mid/late September. However, lawns can be successfully established as late as late-September in central Iowa and early October in southern Iowa. Late summer planting is preferred to spring seeding because seeds germinate and grow rapidly in the warm soil. The warm days and cool nights are ideal for seedling growth. Another reason is that most weeds do not germinate in the fall, so there will be less competition for the grass seeds.



Preparing the Area

Preparing the seedbed is the most labor intensive and time consuming step in establishing a lawn, but it is also very important. A well-prepared seedbed is essential for rapid, successful establishment of a lawn.

Using a rototiller or other cultivation equipment, work the soil to a depth of 4 to 6 inches, incorporating the fertilizer or other soil amendments recommended from soil test results. Do not till the area when the soil is wet. The soil is too wet when a handful of soil formed into a ball retains its shape when pressed with the thumb. The soil is ready to till when the soil ball crumbles. Be sure not to over till the soil, which will destroy soil structure and is undesirable. Rake the area to finish-grade just prior

to seeding. Light rolling will indicate any low spots or irregularities in the seedbed.



There are many different types of grasses to choose from. Do your research first. Pick the type of grass that best suits your needs for the area you are planting. Then plant the grass seed according to the instructions, but be sure to water daily until established. In northern Iowa, the first half of the month is an ideal time to plant grass seed and lay sod. In southern Iowa, the second half of the month is an ideal time.

Grass seedlings are very susceptible to desiccation (removal or loss of moisture) and the surface of a newly seeded lawn should not be allowed to dry. Water should be applied only in amounts necessary to keep the soil surface moist. Avoid overwatering and runoff. Two light applications of water per day will usually be sufficient unless it is hot and windy. In more extreme conditions, up to four light watering's per day may be necessary.



Mulching

When irrigation is not available, mulching the lawn with clean (weed free) straw will help conserve moisture and prevent erosion. 1 to 1.5 bales of straw per 1,000 square feet will give a light mulch covering that will not have to be removed after germination.



It's time to return your attention to cool-weather crops.

Despite the sun lowering itself slightly in the sky, the soil is still warm and toasty so there is still time to sow select edibles. Plants to grow now: winter greens (chard, mustard and collards), Radishes, turnips, lettuce. Radishes tend to be much sweeter when fall planted.



There is nothing better than the fresh garden salad that come straight from your garden. If the weather is right, you will have fresh produce right up to frost. Cool crops you already have growing like beets and carrots get tastier due to the upcoming cold winter temperatures concentrating the sugars.



Fall Harvest Vegetables

Brussels sprouts are one of many vegetables that are harvested in the fall.



This is not the easiest vegetable to grow! They require a fairly long growing season (80–100 days to harvest) and are a cool-season crop, meaning that they produce best when grown for a fall or early winter harvest. Generally, this means sowing Brussels sprout seeds about 4 months before your first fall frost date.

Sprouts mature from the bottom of the stalk upwards. Harvest sprouts from the bottom when they reach about 1 inch in diameter. The sprouts improve in flavor after a light frost or two. If desired, after a moderate frost, pull up the entire stalk, roots and all. (Remove leaves first.) Then hang stalk upside down in a cool, dry basement or garage or barn. Store stalks (no roots) for about 1 month in a root cellar or basement.

Do not wash the sprouts before storing them, only wash them right before use.

Keep fresh-picked brussel sprouts in a plastic bag for up to 5 days in the refrigerator.

Kohlrabi is a cool-season vegetable, often overlooked because of its strange, almost alien appearance. But this edible's fast growth and great taste make kohlrabi something every gardener should try.



Kohlrabi, which can be either purple or green, is a member of the Brassica family (alongside broccoli, cabbage, brussels sprouts, and many others). It's a biennial; in the first year, the bulb-shaped stem grows. In the second year, the plant will flower and produce seeds.

When eating, the outer tough layer needs to be removed with a vegetable peeler. The interior white flesh is sweet and tender with a crisp texture and peppery flavor. In terms of taste, think of kohlrabi as a milder turnip. It can be eaten raw, sprinkled with salt and lime or lemon juice. Or, slice thin and add to salads. You can cook kohlrabi but only lightly, added last in a stir-fry. You can also slice and boil lightly until tender, like a potato. Kohlrabi is not only enjoyed for its taste but its nutritional value. It offers vitamins C, A and K; minerals like calcium, potassium and iron; and phytochemicals that protect against certain cancers. Kohlrabi greens are also nutritious, containing carotenes, vitamins and minerals. Like other Brassicas, both the stem and greens are rich in dietary fiber that aids digestive health.

To harvest, cut the kohlrabi root off at ground level when the bulbous stems are between 2 and 4 inches in diameter. The stem should be succulent, tender, and sweet at this size. If allowed to become too large, it can become tough and bitter.

How to Store Kohlrabi

Harvested stems can be stored with other root crops in a cool, humid place or in the refrigerator for up to 4 weeks. Remove the leaf stems and wash the stem thoroughly before storing.



How does your Pumpkin Grow?

Toward the end of the season, remove any leaves that shade ripening pumpkins. Harvest pumpkins before frost. Fruit is ripe when the outside is fully coloured, skin is hard, and the stem begins to shrivel and dry. Pumpkin vines are often prickly, so wear gloves and long sleeves when harvesting to keep from itching. To harvest, cut stems with a sharp knife, leaving at least an inch of stem on fruits (more stem is better). Lift pumpkins by slipping your hand under the bottom of the fruit. Never lift a pumpkin by its stem; if the stem breaks, the pumpkin won't store well.



Before storing, cure pumpkins by setting them in the sun for 10 to 14 days to harden the skin, seal the stem, and improve taste. Dry, warm weather is best; protect curing pumpkins from frosty nights with old blankets or by moving them into a shed or garage. Store cured pumpkins in a cool place, arranging them so they don't touch. The ideal storage space has a temperature of 50 degrees with about 60 percent humidity, a basement, or other frost-free storage. Your cured pumpkins should store for 2 to 3 months.



Gourds may be one of the oldest cultivated plants, originally grown to make storage containers and utensils. Although some varieties are edible when the fruit is young, most people grow them for their decorative qualities. Gourds are members of the Cucurbit family, which includes cucumbers, squash and melons.





Honey Mustard Sheet-Pan Chicken with Brussels Sprouts

YIELD: Serves 4 PREP TIME: 15 mins.
Oven: 425°F TOTAL TIME: 50 mins.

INGREDIENTS:

Nonstick cooking spray
¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, divided
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
1 tablespoon whole-grain mustard
1 tablespoon honey
3 garlic cloves, minced
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 pounds bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (4 medium thighs)
1½ pounds Brussels sprouts, halved
¼ large red onion, sliced

DIRECTIONS:

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Spray a large baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray, set aside. In a medium bowl, whisk together ¼ cup of the olive oil, 1 tablespoon of the lemon juice, Dijon mustard, whole-grain mustard, honey and garlic. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Using tongs, dip the chicken thighs into the sauce, coating both sides. Place the thighs on the prepared baking sheet and discard any remaining sauce. In a medium bowl, combine the Brussels sprouts and red onion. Drizzle with the remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil and lemon juice; toss until well coated. Arrange the sprouts and onion around the chicken on the baking sheet, making sure they aren't overlapping. Season with salt and pepper. Roast until the chicken is golden brown and has an internal temperature of 165°F and the Brussels sprouts are crispy, 30 to 35 minutes.

Do You Remember When?

Summer was over, as far as running free outside, playing games in the summer breeze with my brother and all the neighborhood kids. No more ridding our bicycles to each other's house. Instead we rode the bus home with our friends, playing card games during the 1 hour ride home to our house. We lived close to town, but were next to last on in the morning and were the last ones off in the afternoon.

It was a simpler time, the bus driver knew each child by name along with knowing each parent. The bus route turned 1/4 mile from our house. Our parents had given permission so the driver could drop us off when the weather was nice and we would walk home from the corner. Mom usually had some gardening chores that I could help her with. Tomatoes were winding down. Muskmelons were ripening and we ate them just about as fast as they were picked! Mom set them in the basement to stay cool so they would last longer. Also in the basement was our "Fruit Room" where the shelves were nearly full of freshly canned green beans, corn, tomato juice, stewing tomatoes, three types of pickles, canned cherries, peaches, pears, apple sauce, Jams and Jellies! Not to mention the freezer was full of frozen sweet corn, peas, pre-made peach and apple pies, frozen strawberries, raspberries, currants and gooseberries. I got to help my mother with all of these things. It is how I learned to garden and preserve. It was how my mother learned from my grandmother. These traditions were passed down from generation to generation. Those secret ingredients and methods that were not written in a recipe book, just spoken from one to another.

So if you have some traditional ways of making family favorite foods, share them, write them down. Take time to tell the story of how you learned from your mother. Keep the tradition going!



Enjoy sharing your Memories and Traditions ☺



September UP COMMING EVENTS



- **September 5, 2022** – Labor Day
- **September 7, 2022** – Glenwood Farmers Market, 4pm to 6:30pm
- **September 11, 2022** – Patriot Day
- **September 10-18, 2022** – Clay County Fair, Spencer, IA
- **September 14, 2022** – Glenwood Farmers Market 4pm to 6:30pm
- **September 21, 2022** – Glenwood Farmers Market, 4pm to 6:30pm
- **September 28, 2022** – Glenwood Farmers Market, 4pm to 6:30pm
- **Mills County Master Gardener Facebook Page**
<https://www.facebook.com/MillsCountyMasterGardeners>
- **Iowa Master Gardeners Facebook Page**
<https://www.facebook.com/iamastergardeners/>
- **The Plant Sleuths Facebook Page** – Check this page for any insect or plant problem. Download clear pictures and the group will help with answers.
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/291895194628196>

September GARDENING TO DO LIST



- **Fall lawn seeding** – Fall is the good time to seed lawns. Water until established
- **Newly Planted** Trees and shrubs. Continue to keep a good watering regiment for the first full year, helping them become established.
- **Hummingbirds** – Feeders should be cleaned and filled with new juice every couple of days. When it is very hot, you may have to do it daily. Use smaller amounts to avoid wasting. Put ant guards on your feeding stations.
- **Baltimore Oriels return** – Continue to feed the Oriels. They are preparing for migration, and bringing their fledglings to the feeders. Clean feeders every couple days.
- **Onions** – Your onions should have been harvested by now. Clean off the bulbs by removing the loose dry skins, shake off the dirt and trim the roots. Store in a cool dry place.
- **Potatoes** – Potatoes should be harvested. After curing in a cool dry place so the skin can cure, gently brush the dirt off with your hand, then store in cool dry place until used.
- **Garlic** – Should be harvested. After letting the garlic cure, clean by shaking dirt from roots, then trim roots to 1/4 inch. **Do Not** break open until ready to use, or the cloves will dry up.

- **Plant Garlic** – The last 2 weeks of September is the usual time to plant garlic. Cloves should always be planted with the pointed side up and the root-end down. Dig parallel furrows 2 inches deep and 1 foot apart. Space garlic cloves in the furrows 4 inches apart. Cover and water in, then mulch with straw.
- **Plant Spring Blooming Bulbs** – Such as tulips and daffodils in the last part of September and the first part of October. Asiatic and other true lilies can also be planted now.
- **Divide Perennials** – Now is the best time to divide plant perennials and shrubs. Among them are Peony's, Daylily, Astilbe, Bleeding Heart, Breaded Iris, Japanese Iris, Siberian Iris, Lily-of-the-Valley, Veronica.



Resources for Horticulture information Iowa State University Publication

HORT 3087	Cole Crops
PM 1894	Garlic
PM 1892	Melons
PM 731	Harvesting and Storing Vegetables
RG 501	Pruning Raspberries
PM 534	Planting and harvesting times for Garden vegetables
HORT 3086	Potatoes
HORT 3085	Onions
PM 1072	Establishing a Lawn from Seed

Horticulture Publications on-line

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/ListCategories>

ISU Hotline Links and Numbers

Hotlines available for all

Iowa Concern 800-447-1985 Financial questions, legal education, stress counseling, crisis/disaster resources and referral (24 hrs - all days)

Beginning Farmer Center 877-BFC-1999 Program to match beginning and retiring farmers (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Teen Line 800-443-8336 Personal and health-related information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

Iowa 2-1-1 211 Resource referral for housing, health, food, family, transportation, employment, education, and legal assistance (24 hrs - all days)

Hot lines available for Iowa Residents Only

AnswerLine Toll-free: 800-262-3804 Local: 515-296-5883 Questions relating to home and family (9 am-noon & 1-4 pm)

Iowa Healthy Families 800-369-2229 Health information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

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