

Plant Name: Salvia

Advanced Master Gardener: Mary L. James

Flower Common Name & Scientific Name: The family of Salvia is Lamiaceae (lay-mee-AY-see-ee). Salvia is the Genus name and the Species is coccinea (Kok-Sin-ee-uh). Lady in Red (also called scarlet or Texas Sage) is the cultivar name.

Best Varieties: There are over 900 species of salvias. Lady in Red has flower spikes that are longer and less cluttered with blooms, which give the plants an airy grace and more of a shrub-like appearance.

History or Lore: Salvia coccinea is a South American tender perennial treated as an annual. Salvias have been growing in popularity because they flower for a long period; do well in hot dry conditions, and they provide an incredible variety of fragrance, bloom, habit, and color. Salvias include some of our best summer-blooming annuals and perennials.

How to Propagate: Propagation is done by sowing seed on the surface and just covering with vermiculite. Sowing time is February-March. Germination takes 7-29 days. Plant outside after danger of frost.

Exposure: Lady in Red does best in full sun to part shade. It is hard in Zone 9 and may over winter near the coast.

Soil Type: Grows in any well-drained soil.

Culture: Plants respond to fertility and watering by growing larger and producing more blooms. Pinching off the bloom spikes will keep the plant in bloom from late spring until early frost.

Disease or insect problem: Salvias are relatively problem free. They can be subject to damping-off of seedlings, stem and root rot, powdery mildew, Botrytis blight, aphids, spider mites, and whiteflies. Diseases are most common in greenhouses or in cool, wet weather conditions. Insects are mainly problems in greenhouses.

Plant Interest: Lady in Red has bright red flowers in whorls on 10 inch spikes. Bloom time is mid summer to mid fall until frost. It performs well in containers and small space gardens. The red flowers are irresistible to humming birds, butterflies, and bees. It blooms prolifically and reseeds very reliably if seed heads are allowed to dry on plants.