

# Gardener



NC STATE UNIVERSITY NORTH CAROLINA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Helping Carolinians Increase Their Knowledge of Gardening, Manage Their Landscape Investment & Protect the Environment

## JC Raulston Arboretum Plant Focus

### Swamp Cyrilla: A Striking Native Shrub

**C**yrilla racemiflora, also known as swamp cyrilla, leatherwood or titi, is a lesser known but potentially useful native shrub or tree that grows in moist but well-drained soils that are high in organic matter and acidic. Growing in hardiness zones 6 through 11, its habit ranges from deciduous to semi-evergreen to evergreen in the southern part of its U.S. territory. Reports indicate that it is deciduous or semi-evergreen in North Carolina and grows as a native primarily in the eastern part of the state.

The form of *C. racemiflora* somewhat resembles that of the wax myrtle, with twisted branches. And like the wax myrtle, it often forms multiple trunks. Taller specimens are found, but a typical height and width is 10 to 15 feet. While a single tree can be grown alone in a planted landscape, this shrub often spreads in moist-soiled natural areas, creating colonies. It has been reported to come back from the roots for some time after being cut. Its strong structure and glossy green leaves make it stand out in a landscape.

*C. racemiflora* flowers during the summer, putting out fragrant white-flowered racemes that are 3 to 6 inches long and give the appearance of downward pointed fingers. One-half inch long seed capsules form after flowering and remain on the plant into winter. Older leaves acquire fall coloration of yellow, orange and maroon. Swamp cyrilla is suited to full sun or partial shade.

This plant is not commonly found in nurseries, but it is easily propagated. Gardeners who have access to seeds can plant them directly into the ground. Cuttings taken in August and treated with the hormone IBA have rooted with great success.

The JC Raulston Arboretum has one swamp cyrilla specimen in the courtyard of the Ruby McSwain Education Center and two, including a weeping cultivar called 'Graniteville', in the beds along the fence in the northeast section. 'Graniteville', from Woodlanders Nursery in South Carolina, takes a more spreading form than wild plants and reaches only about 3 feet in height.

Mary H. Ferguson



Cyrilla racemiflora  
JC Raulston Arboretum ©

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Cyrilla racemiflora  
JC Raulston Arboretum ©



Cyrilla racemiflora  
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Cyrilla racemiflora  
JC Raulston Arboretum ©



*Salvia splendens*  
and *Petunia x hybrida*



*Salvia leucantha*



*Salvia greggii*



*Salvia splendens*

## Salvias in the Landscape

Looking for a plant that seems to bloom from spring through fall? The genus *Salvia* will end your quest. Salvias bloom from May until November, and they perform well in hot, dry landscapes. Also known as sages, they provide a variety of fragrances, bloom colors, and growth habits.

Salvias can be grown as annuals, shrubs, herbaceous perennials and herbs. There are over 700 different species of *Salvia*. They can be used as massing plants, in borders and containers, and as accents and cut flowers. *Salvia* flowers are produced in spikes, racemes, or panicles, and generally display showy colors ranging from blue to red, and sometimes white and yellow. Their colors attract hummingbirds and butterflies.

### Cultural Requirements

Salvias prefer full sun and well-drained soils, but many will survive and bloom in part shade. You can find salvias that will perform well in the mountains, the piedmont, and the coastal plain. They are quite drought-tolerant, so using salvias in a water-wise garden would be ideal! If you are planting annuals and semi-hardy annuals, such as *Salvia splendens* (bedding sage), make sure the danger of frost has passed before planting. To encourage continuous blooming, remove the bloom spikes after they have faded. This will make the plant more attractive and healthier.

Perennial salvias are easy to divide in the early spring, before new growth begins. Other methods of propagation include seeds, stem cuttings, and layering.

Salvias tend to be relatively problem-free unless

they are planted in soil that stays cool and wet, or in a greenhouse. In wet or heavy soil, salvias are susceptible to stem and root rots, powdery mildew and Botrytis blight. Greenhouse pests include aphids, spider mites and whiteflies. These pests are usually not a problem when salvias are planted in the landscape.

### Using Salvias as Herbs

Salvias belong to the mint family, Lamiaceae, making their foliage very useful in the kitchen. Like many other members of the mint family, salvias have medicinal and culinary uses. Cultures in the Mediterranean and Asia Minor made the herbal use of *salvia* very popular. All of these salvias prefer full sun and well-drained soil:

*Salvia elegans* is a perennial that grows to 48 inches high and 24 inches wide. Pineapple sage can be propagated by stem cuttings and has brilliant red flower spikes. It is used in teas, cream cheese, jams and jellies, and in potpourri because of its aromatic properties.

*Salvia officinalis* is a perennial that grows to 18 inches high and 12 inches wide. Culinary sage is propagated from stem cuttings, division, and layering because it takes a long time to reach maturity from seed. It is most recognized by its gray-green foliage, which is used for seasoning meat, vegetable and egg dishes, and in stuffings.

*Salvia sclarea* is a biennial that grows to 5 feet high and 24 inches wide. The best propagation method is seed. The flowers grow in spikes and range from purple to white. Clary sage leaves are used in omelets, fritters, and stews, and to flavor beer, wines and oils. [Shauna Haslem](#)

## Edible Perennials

Running short on ideas for tasty meals? If you have a taste for adventure, consider perennial flowers and leaves. Flowers? Leaves? From my perennial garden? Yes! Be bold, but be careful. Sample these treats a little at a time to evaluate how they might affect your digestion. To avoid contact with pesticide residues, newly purchased perennials and herbs should not be consumed for 60 days after purchase. And edible flowers should be approached with care because of potential allergy problems. With that in mind, consider these to add zip to recipes.

Anise hyssop, *Agastache foeniculum*, is a self-seeding perennial with edible flowers. The leaves can be used to flavor teas, and the seeds are used in cookies, cakes, and muffins. Bee balm, *Monarda didyma*, has a minty, sweet-hot flavor. It's nice in teas, jellies, soups, stews, and fruit. Roman chamomile, *Chamaemelum nobile*, has a sweet apple flavor. The dried flowers are used for teas and potpourris. This one is in the

see [Edible Perennials on page 3](#) ▶

## Q&amp;A

## How Do I Deal with Storm-Damaged Trees?

Giving trees “first aid” after a storm can make the difference between helping them survive and losing them. Here are a few simple rules:

**Don't do it all yourself.** If large limbs are broken or hanging, or if high climbing or overhead chainsaw work is needed, it's a job for a professional arborist.

**Take safety precautions.** Be alert for power lines and hanging branches that look like they're ready to fall.

**Remove any broken branches attached to the tree.** Small branches should be pruned where they join large ones. Large broken branches should be cut back to the trunk or a main limb. Make clean cuts just outside the branch collar to quicken recovery. Flush cuts are not recommended. Large branches can tear loose during pruning, stripping the bark.

That won't happen if you take these steps:

- Make a partial cut from beneath several inches away from the trunk.
- Make a second cut from above, several inches out from the first cut, to allow the limb to fall safely.
- Complete the job with a final cut just outside the branch collar, the raised area that surrounds the branch where it joins the trunk.

**Repair torn bark.** Use a sharp knife to smooth the ragged edges of wounds.

**Resist the urge to over-prune.** Missing branches may cause trees to look unbalanced or naked. Trees will fast grow new foliage and return to their natural beauty.

**Don't top trees!** Topping (cutting main branches back to stubs) is one of the worst things you can do to trees.

*Carl Matyac*

ENVIRO-  
TIP

## Buffers for Waterfronts

Runoff into our waterways can carry pollutants that wreak havoc in sensitive estuaries and marshes. Dislodged particles of soil and water-soluble materials – whether nutrients or other chemicals – can move across even gentle slopes and flow into ditches or canals, ultimately ending up in our waterways. Buffer strips help to filter out most pollutants and can trap sediment and other particles from entering our streams.

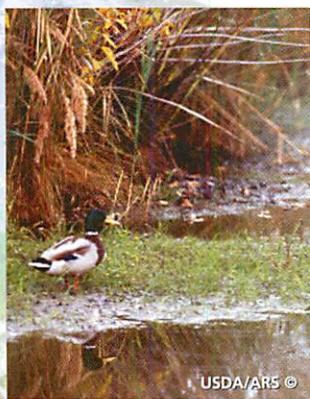
Living plants along the shoreline protect property from erosion and provide cover and habitat for fish, birds and other wildlife. Undisturbed natural shorelines also protect water quality by trapping excess nutrients and sediment. Home construction often involves stripping away vegetation and cutting the land to a final grade. Water crossing bare ground carries sediment and other materials to our streams. But a 50-foot border

of groundcover will halt most of the pollutants from entering the water system, according to scientists.

Removal of shoreline vegetation can cause shallow water temperatures to rise. This can adversely affect fish. The loss of trees and shrubs, wetlands, beaches, banks, and underwater grass impacts habitat and water quality.

Be sure to plan ahead during any construction activity along waterways. Use temporary silt fences until groundcovers can take over. Plant mixed vegetation that includes trees, shrubs, groundcovers and vines. Mixed plantings are better for wildlife than grass alone, and they can be arranged to create an aesthetically pleasing landscape. Be sure to plant adaptive species for your climate. Check with local Extension centers for the best waterfront plants to use in your area.

*David Barkley*



USDA/ARS ©

## Edible Perennials

*continued from page 2*

aster (daisy) family, so ragweed sufferers beware. For a sweet clove flavor, try dianthus, but be sure to remove the petals' bitter base. Pineapple sage, *Salvia elegans*, is great in cream cheese, jams and jellies.

This is only the tip of the iceberg. For more ideas, visit <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8513.html>.

*Charlie M. Wilder*



*Monarda didyma*  
JC Raulston Arboretum ©

## Gardentalk

*“Plant hunting, then, may be a wonderful life, but it certainly is not the life most men picture it to be. It is a life's work, and like all work worthy of the name, it involves responsibility and toil.”*

F. Kingdon Ward  
*Plant Hunting on the Edge of the World (1930)*



## Gardening in August

### Lawns

- Evaluate cool-season lawns for over-seeding or reestablishment in late summer (mountains) to early fall (piedmont).
- Fertilize warm- and cool-season lawns around Labor Day.
- Treat for grubs when there is adequate soil moisture as they are younger, closer to the surface and easier to kill.
- Work planned for fall should include soil sample results to guide lime and fertilizer applications.
- If Bermudagrass and other perennials have been major problems, treat them with a nonselective herbicide while they are actively growing.

### Ornamentals

- Remove bagworms from cedars and wax myrtles.
- Woody weeds are more susceptible to systemic herbicides in late summer through early fall.
- Divide and replant daylilies, irises and peonies as foliage loses its green color.
  - Continue regular fungicide applications for disease management on sensitive plants, including roses.
    - Water deeply but infrequently on young or shallow-rooted plants. Maintain a good layer of mulch.
    - Check for scale on evergreens and lace bugs on azaleas, rhododendrons and pyracantha.
      - Begin to build up organic matter in compacted soil for fall planting. Till in lime as needed.
- **Edibles**
  - Fertilize strawberries to replenish and help to store food reserves for next year's crop.
  - Remove diseased branches and fruit in the orchard.
  - Prune dead and declining canes from brambles after fruiting.
  - Apply borer spray to the trunk and lower part of the scaffold branches of stone fruits (peach, plum, cherry, and nectarine) late in August.
  - Begin planting fall vegetables.
  - Prune excess low branches of muscadines for better air circulation.
- Remove excess basal sprouts from fruit trees.

*Don Breedlove*

### Reynolda Gardens of Wake Forest University

Formal gardens, an award-winning restoration of the early 20th century garden, exotic plants, All-America Rose winners and a garden boutique make up Reynolda Gardens. Rediscover the wondrous gardens created through the vision of the Reynolds family over 100 years ago. Carved from the original 1,067-acre farmland, the nearly 4 acres of gardens were designed by landscape architect Thomas W. Sears.

The 1913 greenhouse-conservatory was designed to serve the needs of the family and Reynolda Farms. Today it houses a display of tropical and succulent plants, featuring an extensive orchid collection. One wing is now the educational center for a Tuesday Gardening series, plant sales, summer programs and more.

Come visit the garden during the daylight hours year-round at 100 Reynolda Village in Winston-Salem. For information, call 336-758-5593, or go to [www.reynoldagardens.org](http://www.reynoldagardens.org).

*J. Stephen Greer*

WFU Ken Bennett ©

Garden Spot

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