**Salvia “Bee’s Bliss”**

**Planting Zone**: Sunset 7-9, 14-24

**Size**: 2 feet tall, 6-8 feet wide

**Bloom season**: Blue to light lavender blooms in spring.

**Exposure**: Full sun (coastal) to partial shade (hot interior climates).

**Pruning needs**: Prune tips when the plant is young to encourage bushy growth and more flowers.

**Water needs**: Low once established.

**Narrative**: As the name implies, bees love the plant’s blooms, along with hummingbirds, butterflies and other pollinators, but not deer or rabbits. This California native hybrid is a cross between California purple sage (Salvia leucophylia) and either Creeping sage (Salvia sonomensis) or Cleveland sage (Salvia clevelandii). It has gray-green foliage and lots of lavender blue blooms on foot-long stalks, resembling shish-kabob spikes. Typical of salvias, the foliage has opposite leaves and square stems that round with age. Both foliage and blossoms have a pleasant fragrance.

Perennial in warm winter areas, this edible herb is a star as a low-growing, colorful groundcover that can assist with erosion control and suppress weeds on hillsides, slopes and in California native gardens. The foliage drapes well over retaining walls. This salvia should be protected from high summer heat. West-facing slopes with bushes or trees nearby to absorb direct heat is recommended. Cold tolerance is approximately 25 degrees F. Water requirements are low once plants are established, but plants may benefit from occasional deep summer watering. Bee’s Bliss can thrive in sand or clay soils with modest drainage. It may develop powdery mildew on the leaves during cool weather, but this problem disappears as temperatures warm up. In extreme drought and heat, the plant will go dormant but usually bounces back once rain returns.

 Consider using Salvia Bee’s Bliss as a lawn alternative, filling spaces between flagstones or pavers, or as “living mulch” that suppresses weed growth and cools the ground. In a native garden, companion plants might include ceanothus, toyon, other salvias, buckwheat, and manzanitas.

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