

## A New Look at an Old Friend

Each of us has a different vision of what a garden must have. When I invited Master Gardeners to share their perspective with the readers, Beverly Runton-Moorhouse sent the following article: I am delighted to pass it along.



I have nominated my favorite plant from my 2010 garden! It is a Pineapple Sage. I had never noticed Pineapple Sage before, but last year I decided to plant more herbs than usual in my garden and was cruising the garden centers for new varieties. It was my humble attempt at companion planting.

I bought the Pineapple Sage on a whim at a big discount store. It cost \$1.19 and was about 4" tall. I really didn't expect it to behave any differently than my other herb purchases, but boy - was I surprised!

Throughout the summer it grew into a beautiful, scrumptious smelling mound of green slowly growing larger and larger all summer...then, when everything else had stopped blooming, out popped beautiful red flowers. I don't know if it normally blooms so late in the year or if it was just because it was planted in part shade but for me the blooms arrived at the perfect time.

Although I didn't taste it, I have been told that all parts of the plant are edible and the flowers are particularly sweet. Truth be told, I couldn't bear to cut into that beautiful mound of green to harvest any of the herb, however, a friend of mine did pinch off a few green tips and was successful in rooting them in water.

Pineapple Sage, *salvia elegans*, is a perennial in Zones 8-11, but it is an annual in our zone 7 and not expected to last through the winter. I have been anxiously contemplating their arrival in the garden centers so I could stock up and plant them everywhere in my yard!

The recent warm weather motivated me to clean up my scraggly garden to ready it for fresh, new spring plants. I raked the leaves that had piled up on the remaining brown sticks of my Pineapple Sage, wondering if I dare put a fresh Pineapple Sage in that area or plant something new in that spot. I started pulling out the old sticks and surprisingly they were still pretty well attached to the soil, then I saw it... I pulled on a brown stick and it popped out of the ground, tiny light green sprouts coming up near the bottom. Darn! In a panic that I might have just killed the poor thing, I quickly dug into the soil and reburied the rooted stick with the sprouts just barely peeking through the soil.

Pineapple Sage is a Hummingbird magnet and is attractive to bees and butterflies due to its sweet flowers. It does smell like pineapple and a quick query on the internet brings up many ways to use this herb, from syrup to candied garnishes.

I guess the moral to this story is; try new things, you may be pleasantly surprised.

When you purchase a new plant, read what you can about the plant so you will know what to expect and pay attention to the plants requirements regarding soil, sun and water but understand that Mother Nature isn't always predictable and if you are lucky...

Pineapple sage, *Salvia rutilans*, syn. *elegans*, earned its name. If you rub the foliage it leaves pineapple fragrance on your fingers. The *salvia* genus has about 900 species of annuals, biennials, herbaceous and evergreen perennials and shrubs – something for every preference Most of them have square stems and opposite leavaes with two-lipped flowers in reds, whites, and blues. Beverly reminds me how much I enjoyed that scarlet sage while it was still 'perennial'.

**Bad news beetles**

Within the last ten years, billions of tiny mountain pine beetles have munched their way through Canada's boreal forest. While alive, these 400-year-old trees are a carbon sink, absorbing 55 million or more tons of CO<sub>2</sub> annually. Whether by beetles, wildfires, or logging, when the trees are destroyed, they become part of the problem emitting up to 245 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> each year according to the Canadian Forest Service.