

The Archibald Archive – Genus Guides

SALVIA

This is a very large genus in Labiatae. There are approaching 1000 species with a worldwide distribution, though the main concentrations of species-diversity occur in the area from Turkey up into Central Asia and from California southwards through Mexico and Central America to the northern Andes. There is another concentration in South Africa and Madagascar but these are even more tender than the Central and South American ones. There are many shrubby species and even the ones which are herbaceous are usually woody based perennials. The geographical range and diversity of the genus makes it impossible to generalize about their treatment in cultivation. In the wild, the great majority are plants of open situations in steppe, sparse scrub, meadows and along forest edges at low to middle elevations.

We have never listed more than a small fraction of the species nor are we ever likely to do so. Availability of seeds will largely depend on where we or others have been collecting material. In the past we have listed representative ranges of species from western North America, northern South America and, especially, from Turkey. Several of our collections from the last area have been established in cultivation in Europe, Australia and western North America, where they are now standard garden-plants. Quite a few, originally introduced through Denver Botanic Garden, are now well-known in Colorado gardens. At present we have seeds from only a very few species in our list.

Nomenclature: Where possible we follow the names in the standard floras for the areas concerned: 'Flora Europaea', 'Flora Iranica', 'Flora of Turkey', 'The Jepson Manual' and so on. *Salvia* is now covered in the 'Flora of China' (accessible at 'Flora Online': <http://flora.huh.harvard.edu:8080/flora>). For several years, an old friend, Ian Hedge, the world authority on this genus and author of several of these standard accounts, checked our determinations on collected material. Ian has now retired from work at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, and, more recently, James Compton has been kind enough to identify our South American collections.

Further information: 'The New Book of *Salvia*' by B. Clebsch, a recently published update of her previous work, gives an introduction to a few species in this very large genus. http://www.amazon.com/The-New-Book-Salvias-Garden/dp/0881925608#reader_0881925608 2003 ISBN-10: 0881925608 | ISBN-13: 978-0881925609

There is unlikely ever to be a comprehensive book for the specialist.