

# Love those Sages



## Texas Rangers

It is hard to imagine a xeriscape without Texas Rangers. These tough desert-adapted shrubs provide the backbone for many desert gardens. Mostly evergreen, clean, and hard to kill, they are indispensable to anyone designing a colorful, low-maintenance landscape. These plants absolutely thrive in the hot, muggy monsoon season, when the rest of us are wilting.

In fact, they are sometimes called barometer plants, since their spectacular flower displays coincide with periods of high humidity. You might also hear them referred to as "Texas Sage," although they are not a true sage. Texas Rangers are actually related to penstemons and snap-dragons, and are native to Texas and Mexico. Plant Texas Rangers in full sun and reflected heat locations. The hotter it gets, the better they like it!

These adaptable beauties are also very cold tolerant, down to 10 degrees Fahrenheit. They prefer well-drained soils, and will rot out if overwatered. Too much shade, water, or fertilizer can cause plants to become leggy. If you plant them in full sun, and allow ample room for growth, very little pruning should be required. If you must prune them, do so in the spring, since the summer heat will produce a flush of new growth. Avoid pruning them into gumdrops or tabletops! Not only does this destroy their lovely natural form, it removes all of the flower buds.

Just let them do their thing, and you'll be rewarded with masses of fragrant flowers. Fifteen years ago, there was only one lonely selection of Texas Ranger (*Leucophyllum frutescens*) available in the nursery trade. Today, thanks to the research efforts of Benny Simpson of Texas A&M University, as well as other horticulturists, we have a host of clones to choose from. Read on to select the best ones for your garden!

## Silver and Grey-Leafed Selections



**Leucophyllum candidum Silver Cloud™** A trademark of Texas A&M, this selection has tiny silver leaves and deep violet flowers. It grows to 4½ feet tall and wide. This selection is almost identical in appearance to Thunder Cloud™, but is larger, and does not bloom as profusely. The *L. candidum* varieties are especially susceptible to over-watering, so plant in a well-drained soil!

**Leucophyllum candidum Thunder Cloud™** Proof that good things come in small packages, Thunder Cloud™ is one of the most popular Texas Rangers. It has a tight, compact form with stiff branches, growing slowly to only 3 feet tall and wide. Its silver-white foliage provides a stunning backdrop for the deep purple flowers. Thunder Cloud™ blooms repeatedly during the summer and fall, making it one of the most floriferous selections on the market. It is also the most likely to rot out if over-watered, so be judicious with your irrigation. It is trademarked by Texas A & M University.



**Leucophyllum zygophyllum Cimarron™**

Another petite choice, Cimarron™ tops out at about 3 feet tall and wide. It has a softer silhouette than Thunder Cloud™, grey-green foliage, and blue flowers. This species is sometimes called Blue Ranger. The distinctive cupped leaves easily identify this clone. It seems less likely to rot out than the Thunder Cloud™. Cimarron™ is trademarked by Mountain States Wholesale Nursery.

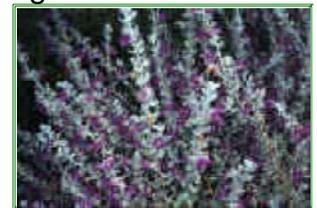


**Leucophyllum x Rain Cloud™** Trademarked by Texas A&M, this is a hybrid between Leucophyllum minus and Leucophyllum frutescens. This selection has an unusual vertical growth habit, growing to 6 feet tall by 3-4 feet wide. It has silver-grey foliage and violet-blue flowers.



**Leucophyllum frutescens 'Compacta'** Although this is one of the oldest Leucophyllum selections, it is still a favorite. Its dense, rounded form requires little or no pruning, and its mature size of 5 feet tall and wide is still small enough to warrant a space in most residential gardens. 'Compacta' has grey-silver foliage and produces oodles of pink flowers when the humidity rises. It tolerates more water and heavier soils than the other selections.

**Leucophyllum pruinoseum Sierra Bouquet™** Sierra Bouquet™ has the most fragrant flowers of all the Texas Rangers. If you plant a cluster of these shrubs in your garden, the air will be perfumed with the scent of grape bubble gum whenever they burst into bloom. Its larger stature, to 6 feet tall and wide, makes it an ideal backdrop for some of the smaller selections. Open and sprawling in form, the Sierra Bouquet™ is a good choice for more natural desert landscapes. Violet blossoms enhance the silver-grey foliage. Sierra Bouquet™ is a trademark of Mountain States Wholesale Nursery.



**Leucophyllum frutescens White Cloud™** The large white flowers of this clone provide a cooling contrast when mixed in with purple or pink-flowering Texas Rangers. Another good background shrub, White Cloud™ has a somewhat rangy growth form to 6-8 feet tall and wide. Its grey foliage allows it to blend in well with Sonoran desert natives.

## Green-Leafed Selections



**Leucophyllum laevigatum...Chihuahuan Sage** Chihuahuan Sage has an informal, relaxed growth habit. Its loose, spiky form and small olive-green leaves blend in well with our Arizona natives. Periodically throughout the summer and fall they explode with fragrant lavender flowers. They are a reasonable size for most gardens, growing to about 4 feet tall by 5 feet wide.

**Leucophyllum langmaniae 'Lynn's Legacy'** This selection of Texas sage was collected by Lynn Lowrey, a very special plantsman from east Texas. Lynn, who passed away in 1997, is a legend among botanists and plant collectors. With his usual discerning eye, Lynn picked out this clone for its profuse and frequent flower displays. 'Lynn's Legacy' grows slowly to about 5 feet tall and wide, with a dense, rounded form. Its sage green foliage is a wonderful backdrop for the lavender flowers. Compared to most selections of Texas sage, this clone is not as dependent on changes in relative humidity for flowering. This means that it blooms more often during the course of the summer than other selections. In fact, this clone is called 'Lynn's Everblooming' in Texas. In many ways, 'Lynn's Legacy' is very similar to Rio Bravo™, but grows more slowly, blooms more frequently, and has lighter green foliage.



**Leucophyllum langmaniae Rio Bravo™** If you prefer a more formal look, you might consider using Rio Bravo™. It is very similar in appearance to Chihuahuan Sage, but maintains a tight, rounded form without any pruning. It forms a dense mound to 5 feet tall and wide. Its foliage is a slightly richer green than Chihuahuan Sage and 'Lynn's Legacy', providing a lush appearance. Although it has the same lavender flowers as Chihuahuan Sage and 'Lynn's Legacy', it does not bloom as profusely. Rio Bravo™ is trademarked by Mountain States Wholesale Nursery.



**Leucophyllum frutescens Green Cloud™** Since its introduction to the nursery trade in the early 1980's, Green Cloud™ has become the most widely-used selection. Compared to the other clones, it has the largest leaves, and a lush green color. Frequent summer flowering, with large rose-pink blossoms, are other selling points. Green Cloud™ is fast-growing, and relatively carefree. However, many people are not aware that Green Cloud™ is one of the largest

Texas Rangers, easily attaining a size of 6-8 feet tall and wide. All too often this shrub is jammed into spaces that are far too small, starting the vicious cycle of severe pruning and "poodling". This creates unnecessary maintenance and limits flower production. Give Green Cloud™ plenty of space to develop, and maybe we can eliminate gumdrops forever! This clone is the most deciduous of the selections discussed in this handout.



**Leucophyllum revolutum Houdini™** Collected from a higher elevation in Mexico, this species is especially well-suited to colder climates. It is completely evergreen in the Phoenix area, and blooms later than some of the other species, preferring the cooler fall weather. The texture of the foliage is very different from the other Texas rangers. Its succulent, light green leaves have the texture of rosemary. It blooms profusely in the fall with large, medium purple flowers. This plant grows slowly to 4 feet tall by 4-5 feet wide.

Love Those Leucophyllums

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