

Opening the Door to Seed Salvia

This premium looking Salvia nemorosa 'Salvatore Blue' finishes early for key spring sales.

BY COR DE JONG

With the tallest spikes and the deepest blue color, the new *Salvia nemorosa* 'Salvatore Blue' from Kieft Seed is an excellent alternative to vegetative salvia. 'Salvatore Blue' offers a critical daylength of 10 hours for finishing in early spring, which previously was only possible with vegetative varieties.

Its premium look features a deep-colored calyx on striking black stems, providing an appealing color show even on mature blooms. More vigorous than the Kieft Seed 'New Dimension Blue', it is best suited for gallons and ideal for both annual and overwintering production — no vernalization is needed.

PLUG CULTURE

Here are some key culture tips to produce this amazing Fleuroselect Novelty winner.

- Plug crop time: 5 to 6 weeks
- Transplant to finish: 8 to 10 weeks

Salvia 'Salvatore Blue' is offered in a coated seed form. Sow one seed per cell in a 288-plug size; sow two to three seeds per cell for a 128-plug size. It germinates with a light cover at 68 to 72° F within three to four days. Light is optional in Stage 1. Maintain the media pH at 5.5 to 6.2 and EC of 0.75 during plug production. Keep moisture high at Level 4. Apply fertilizer less than 100-ppm nitrogen, less than 0.7 EC.

During Stage 2, provide moisture at Level 3 with temperatures lowered to 65 to 68° F. Set light at 2,000 to 2,500 foot-candles. Continue the application of fertilizer less than 100-ppm nitrogen, less than 0.7 EC. Use a well-balanced, non-ammonium based nutrition, including a micro elements mix. Standard formulations including 15-5-15 and 17-5-17 work well.

'Salvatore Blue' has a critical daylength of 10 hours, which means an early finish for spring sales, previously only possible with vegetative varieties.



With dark purple calyx and a black stem, 'Salvatore Blue' retains its appealing color all season.

to 1.5 EC, as necessary. Apply a daminozide 1,500 to 2,000 ppm spray at this stage.

Lower temperatures again to 60 to 65° F during Stage 3, with light regiments maintained the same as Stage 2. Maintain moisture levels at a 2 to 4 with good wet/dry cycles and feed at a rate of 100- to 175-ppm nitrogen, 0.7 to 1.2 EC. A daminozide 1,000 to 1,500 ppm spray can be applied. This will help with better plant branching, as short days do not bulk 'Salvatore Blue' due to its low critical daylength.

In Stage 4, keep moisture and temperatures the same as Stage 3. Increase light levels to 4,000 to 5,000 foot-candles. Provide fertilizer at 150- to 200-ppm nitrogen, 1.2

GROWING ON TO FINISH

Recommended temperatures for finishing 'Salvatore Blue' are:

- Day: 60 to 72° F
- Night: 50 to 59° F

The target media pH should be 5.5 to 6.2, with an EC of 1.1 to 1.4. Apply a fertilizer 175- to 200-ppm nitrogen, 1.2 to 1.5 EC.

'Salvatore Blue' is a facultative long day plant, but it is much less daylength sensitive than salvia 'New Dimension'. It will flower under 10-hour short day conditions and can be grown for annual programs, but also for overwintering production for spring sales.

KEY FINISHING TIPS

'Salvatore Blue' needs a little higher fertilization than salvia 'New Dimension'. Leaf yellowing can occur in *Salvia nemorosa*, especially once turning generative. Keep up fertilization and use iron leaf fertilization if needed, avoiding too high of pH. Grow relatively dry and provide an active climate. Note: Black spots may accumulate due to the dark calyx and stem color of 'Salvatore Blue'. This is not disease, nor does it indicate damage.

To see full crop scheduling details of 'Salvatore Blue' for both overwinter and annual production, visit www.panamseed.com, where we also share a perennials forcing chart on our "Culture" page for key seasonal sales windows. [gpn](#)

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