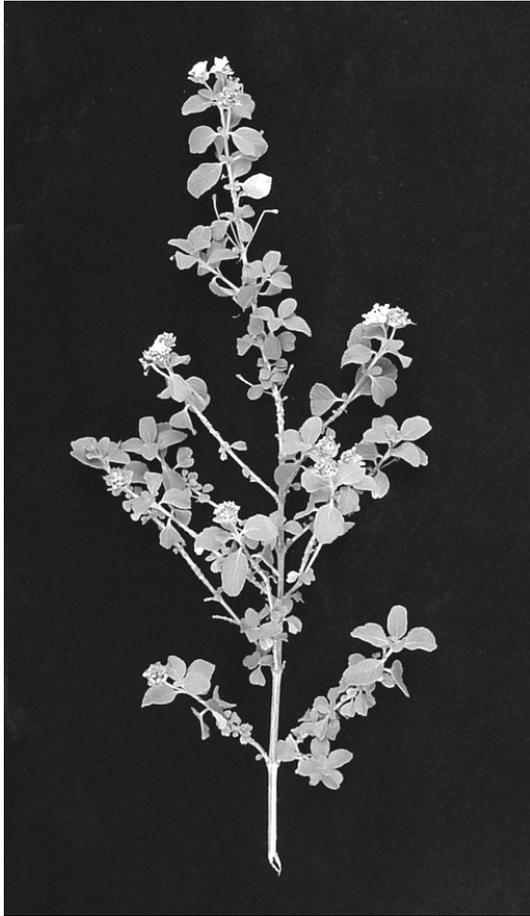


***Lantana involucrata* L.**
VERBENACEAE

wild sage

Synonyms: *Lantana odorata* L.



General Description.—Wild sage, also known as button sage, common sage, sea sage, white sage, orégano, terete, peonía colorada, contite, and frutilla, is a shrub commonly 1 to 2 m in height with showy flowers. The plant is supported by many stiff lateral roots and abundant fine roots. The roots are light brown with a corky bark. Older plants, often with a basal diameter of 5 cm or more, have several main branches arising at or near the ground line and a branchy crown. The bark is yellowish and the wood is brittle. Petioles are 3 to 5 mm long and the leaf blades are 1 to 4 by 1 to 2.5 cm wide and broad, rotund to narrowly elliptic-oblong, rough and stiff with a crenate or toothed margin. The leaves are aromatic with a spicy, sage-like smell. The small tubular flowers form compact terminal heads. The corolla may be white, pink to pinkish purple, or pale blue. The

infructescences are clusters of purple to blue-black drupes 3 to 4 mm in diameter containing one seed each. The chromosome number is $2n = 36$ (author's observation, Howard 1989, Liogier 1995, Long and Lakela 1971, Nelson 1996).

Range.—The native range of wild sage includes southern Florida, the West Indian islands, Mexico through northern South America bordering the Caribbean, and the Galápagos Islands (Howard 1989, Liogier 1995). It is naturalized or possibly native in Bermuda (Britton 1918). Wild sage is now widely planted as an ornamental and probably has naturalized in additional areas.

Ecology.—Wild sage grows on most well-drained soil types derived from both sedimentary (including limestone), igneous, metamorphic (including ultramafic) rock types. Mean annual precipitation in areas where it grows in Puerto Rico varies from 750 to about 1700 mm. The species grows from near sea level to 600 m or more in Puerto Rico. In Mexico, wild sage is reported to occur from 1,000 to 2,000 m above sea level (Secretaría del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales 2002). It requires disturbance to become established and full or nearly full sun to grow and reproduce. Wild sage is especially common in over-grazed range and poorly managed pastures, and may be found in abandoned farmland and early secondary forest as well as road cuts, cliffs, and rocky sites. It grows in pinelands, hammocks, and shell mounds in Florida (Long and Lakela 1971, Nelson 1996).

Reproduction.—Wild sage blooms all year (Nelson 1996) and also is a good fruit and seed producer. The seeds number about 110,000 seeds/kg (air-dried). They may be cleaned by maceration and wet sieving. No pretreatment is necessary, and germination begins in about 15 days. Wild sage sprouts when cut. Seedlings are fairly common in favorable habitat near seed sources.

Growth and Management.—The growth rate is moderate and plants live for 10 years or more. Propagation may be by seed, by rooting of softwood cuttings, or by transplanting wildlings.

Wildlings transplant well if the roots are not badly damaged and about one-third of the top is pruned away. Periodic pruning of ornamental plants is necessary to prevent them from becoming lank (Workman 1980).

Benefits.—Wild sage contributes to biodiversity, helps protect the soil, and furnishes wildlife food and cover. The wood is useful for fuel, but it is generally too small for anything but campfires. The species is used as a foundation plant and to form low hedges (Workman 1980). It is listed as one of the best butterfly nectar plants (Malone 2002). The leaves are used as a condiment in cooking, and the essential oil is used in cosmetics and liquors (Secretaría del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales 2002). Leaves are added to baths to ease heat rashes and mild insect bites (McNary-Wood 2002). Extracts of the plant are also said to have a sedative effect (Beattie and others 2002). Teas and decoctions of leaves and twigs are used to control colic, vomit, cough, fever, and congestion (Secretaría del Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales 2002). It is reportedly not as poisonous as the more widespread *L. camara* L. (Workman 1980).

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