

Love Those Leucophyllums



Texas Rangers

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

Texas Rangers are sometimes referred to as barometer plants, since their spectacular flower displays coincide with periods of high humidity. You might also hear them called 'Texas Sage,' although they are not a true sage. Texas Rangers are actually related to Pentsemons and Snap Dragons, and they are native to Texas and Mexico. Interestingly, Eremophilas from Australia are part of the same family too, lending to why some have a similar look. Texas Rangers grow well in full sun and reflected heat locations, although they will also tolerate some shade but have reduced blooms. Leucophyllums will generally do better the hotter it gets!

These adaptable stalwarts of the landscape can handle considerable cold, and are generally cold hardy down to 10 degrees Fahrenheit if not colder. Well-drained soils are the best bet for planting, plants can rot out if overwatered. Too much shade, water, or fertilizer can cause plants to become leggy. Despite some popular opinion, Texas Rangers should require very little pruning as long as they are planted in full sun and allowed sufficient room to grow. Avoid pruning into gumdrops, soda cans, or tabletops! Not only does this destroy their lovely natural form, it also removes most of the flower buds that produce that wonderful summer show. If plants are properly spaced from the beginning, the only pruning necessary would be to remove damaged branches or a good rejuvenating prune every few years.

When Leucophyllums are left unpruned, you will be rewarded with masses of fragrant flowers. Twenty five years ago there was only one selection of Texas Ranger (*Leucophyllum frutescens*) available in the nursery trade. Today, thanks to the research efforts of Benny Simpson at Texas A & M University, as well as horticulturists from Mountain States and others, we now have over a dozen proven clone selections to choose from. Read on to select the best ones for your landscape!

Silver and Gray-Leafed Selections



Leucophyllum candidum 'Thunder Cloud' Thunder Cloud has long been a staple in our Southwest landscapes due to its compact size and dark purple flower show. It has a tight, compact form with stiff branches, growing slowly to only 3 feet tall and wide. The silver-white leaves provide a stunning backdrop for the dark purple flowers in the summer. This selection is one of the most susceptible to rot out if overwatered, so be sure to locate this plant in as much sun and heat as possible, while only providing infrequent irrigations.

Leucophyllum frutescens 'Compacta' Although this is one of the oldest Leucophyllum selections on the market, it is still a favorite. Its dense, rounded form requires little pruning, and its mature size of about 5 feet tall and wide is still small enough to warrant a space in most residential gardens. Compacta has silver-gray foliage and produces huge clusters of pink flowers when the humidity rises. This bulletproof performer can also tolerate more water and heavier soil than other selections.



Leucophyllum pruinosum Sierra Bouquet™ Sierra Bouquet™ has the most fragrant flowers of all the Texas Rangers. If you plant a cluster of these in your garden, the air will be perfumed with the scent of grape bubblegum whenever they burst into bloom. The larger stature of this selection makes it a perfect backdrop for smaller plants, Sierra Bouquet™ can reach 6 feet tall and wide.

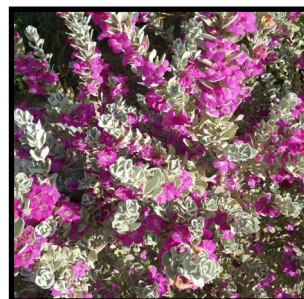
This selection has a naturally open and sprawling form making it a great choice for more natural desert landscapes. Violet blossoms line the silver-gray branches throughout the summer season.

Leucophyllum revolutum Houdini™ This selection of Texas Ranger was collected from a higher elevation in Mexico, making it especially well-suited to colder climates. Here in Phoenix it is completely evergreen, and tends to bloom a bit later than other species since it prefers the cooler fall weather. Houdini™ is still tough enough to handle full sun in the low desert, so it can be very adaptable! The texture of the foliage is very different from the other Texas Rangers. Its succulent, gray-green leaves have a texture similar to that of Rosemary. Houdini™ will bloom heavily in the late summer and fall with large, medium purple flowers. This plant will grow slowly to about 4 feet tall and 4-5 feet wide.



Leucophyllum zygophyllum Cimarron® This selection is a great choice for smaller spaces, Cimarron® reaches a mature size of about 3 feet tall and 3-4 feet wide. It has a softer silhouette than Thunder cloud with its fuzzy, cupped leaves. Blue-purple flowers will come with humidity in the mid-summer lending to one of its common names of Blue Ranger. Cimarron® is better adapted to higher moisture zones than Thunder Cloud and is less likely to rot out. Locate in full sun if possible, and reflected heat is not a problem.

Leucophyllum X 'Convent' This selection is newer to our production line, but has been in the trade for quite a while. Convent has a moderate size at maturity of about 5-6 feet tall and wide, plants can be a bit irregular when young but will have a nicely rounded form once at maturity. Bright magenta flowers will cover this plant from summer through fall and provide a great contrast to the silver-gray leaves. Convent grows best in full sun, but can also handle some partial shade or reflected heat.



Green-Leafed Selections



Leucophyllum frutescens 'Green Cloud' Since its introduction into the nursery trade in the early 1980's, Green Cloud has become the most widely used selection. Compared to other clones, it has the largest leaves and a lush green color. Green Cloud produces large rose-pink blossoms frequently throughout the summer and into the fall. This selection is fast-growing and relatively carefree, but it can reach 6-8 feet tall and wide at maturity. All too often this shrub is jammed into spaces that are far too small, which starts the viscous cycle of severe pruning and 'poodling.' Overpruning creates unnecessary

maintenance and greatly limits flower production. Give Green Cloud plenty of space to develop, and you will hardly have to worry about pruning it! This clone will go deciduous in colder climates but is quick to recover once spring warms up.

Leucophyllum laevigatum 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. Chihuahuan Sage has a reasonable size for most landscapes, growing to about 4 feet tall and 5 feet wide.



Leucophyllum laevigatum 'Summer Snow' Summer Snow is a selection of the Chihuahuan Sage that was found by renowned plantsman Greg Starr. This variety has white flowers instead of lavender that is expected with the species. These white blossoms make a great contrast with the dark green, narrow leaves. Summer Snow also blooms more often through the summer and fall than many other Leucophyllums, adding a rare white flowering component to any low water use landscape. Plants can be a little irregular with its young growth, but given time it will fill into a marvelous shrub. Mature size is about the same as the species, usually about 4 feet tall by 5 feet wide.

Leucophyllum langmaniae 'Lynn's Legacy' This selection of Texas Ranger was collected by Lynn Lowery, 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 moderately to about 5 feet tall and wide, with a dense, rounded form. Its sage green foliage is a wonderful backdrop for the lavender flowers. This clone is not as dependent on changes in relative humidity for flowering as compared to other Texas Rangers. For this reason, it blooms more often during the course of summer than other selections, and is known as 'Lynn's Everblooming' in Texas.





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 and rounded form without any pruning. Rio Bravo® 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 more lush appearance. Although it does have the same lavender flowers as Lynn's Legacy, it does not bloom as profusely.

Leucophyllum X 'Heavenly Cloud' This selection is a hybrid between Leucophyllum laevigatum and Green Cloud. Heavenly Cloud will reach a similar mature size to Green Cloud but a bit more narrow, reaching 6-8 feet tall and about 6 feet wide. The leaves are dark green and more narrow than Green Cloud, and they provide a great backdrop for the flowers. Heavenly Cloud is usually one of the first of the Texas Rangers to bloom for us at the nursery, and the purple flowers are an absolute magnet for pollinators. This selection can handle full sun and reflected heat, and if well placed in the landscape requires virtually no pruning.



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