Have you planted any sage lately? If you are looking for a shrub that can take the heat, you should try this sage, known as a salvia, by the name of Allen Chickering. The scientific name is *Salvia*. *How can a man grow old who has sage in his garden?* is an ancient proverb in China and Persia. The name salvia is from the Latin *salvere*, which means to be in good health, to cure, to save—a few of the virtues attributed to salvia.

I discovered the beauty of the Allen Chickering salvia in the late 1990s when I purchased it from the Native Plant Society. I still have the original shrub, which I have kept pruned back to a nice-sized plant. It has very interesting wood, and its a plant I take cuttings from to start new ones in January. The Shasta Chapter of the California Native Plant Society propagates this hybrid for its spring and fall sales. According to one source, one of the parent plants, *Salvia clevelandii*, is native to the chaparral slopes of San Diego County. Its other parent, *Salvia leucophylla*, is native to the southern coastal mountain ranges of California and Baja California. Although it has been designated to grow best in Sunset Zones 10 to 24, I have had no problems growing it at the 1,000 foot elevation, just east of Redding.

*Salvia* Allen Chickering is an evergreen, perennial shrub. It will grow four to six feet in height, and three to four feet across. It has gray-green aromatic foliage. We love the smell of this salvia so much that
we planted it right next to our patio. It produces light blue flower clusters in summer. The flowers grow on one- to two- foot stems, like pom-poms arranged up the stem. I use both the flowers and leaves in making floral arrangements, wreaths, and potpourris. Another plus for the Allen Chickering salvia is its ability to survive without supplemental watering once it is established. This plant makes an excellent choice for dry gardens, for naturalizing an area, or for slope erosion control.

I enjoy leaving the flowers on the plant until late in winter when I prune it back, usually in January. I have taken cuttings, dipped them in a rooting compound, and planted them in the yard. They don’t all make it but, surprisingly, enough do that I continue to have Allen Chickering salvia plants throughout my yard. The California Native Plant Society plant sales are another great way to add them to your yard.

One of the companion plants that I have grown alongside the Allen Chickering salvia is Santolina chamaecyparissus, commonly known as lavender cotton. This is a Mediterranean plant and not a native of California. It produces yellow button flowers at the same time that the salvia blooms and makes a lovely contrast to the blue flowers. I also have planted Artemisia, a hybrid called Powis Castle, that I purchased from the Arboretum. I would caution that some plants do not like this plant because it can be toxic. However, I have not had any adverse reactions growing it next to the Allen Chickering salvia or Santolina. Artemisia has a silver, lacy foliage. All of these plants will thrive in Redding’s summer heat.

In fact, it has been my philosophy for many years now that, if it can’t make it without supplemental watering, it won’t make it in my yard.