



# BWSR Featured Plant

**Name: Blue Giant Hyssop (*Agastache foeniculum*)**

**Plant Family: Mint**



*Spikes of clustered, lavender flowers*

Considered one of the best sources of nectar for honey bees and native bees, blue giant hyssop is widely used for prairie plantings, raingardens and shorelines. Multiple cultivars are also sold for perennial gardens. The species is valued for its spike of lavender flowers and its aromatic leaves that smell like licorice. The species readily self-seeds, helping it to persist in plantings. Like other mints it is generally avoided by deer and rabbits.

## Identification

With a height up to five feet tall and purplish flower spikes the species can be easy to spot. The one to five inch tall flower spikes are made up of dense whorls of individual flowers that are about 1/3-inches long. Despite its showy flowers that bloom from mid to late summer it has no floral scent. It has a square stem and opposite leaves like other mints, and the leaves smell like licorice when crushed. The leaves have short petioles and are up to 4-inches long. The leaf edges are coarsely toothed and the upper surface is dull green while the underside is whitish in color. Individual plants grow in clumps that can spread over time.

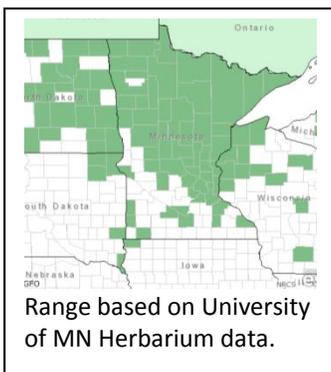
Statewide Wetland Indicator Status:

- Upland



*A diverse mesic prairie planting*

## Range



Often found in partial shaded conditions with well-drained soils, giant blue hyssop is found throughout the northern and eastern parts of Minnesota, but is less abundant in southwest parts of the state. Within the United States it is most common in the Great Plains, growing in mesic prairies, woodland edges, savannas and roadsides, but is also found in several states in the northeast part of the country. A similar species "Purple Giant Hyssop" (*Agastache scrophulariaefolia*) is also



*Coarsely serrated leaves with short petioles*

found in Minnesota, but the foliage does not smell like licorice and the undersides of the leaves are a darker green color.

## Uses

With a taproot and fibrous roots the species is effective at stabilizing shorelines. It also provide beauty and pollinator habitat to raingardens, prairies and woodland edge plantings. As it handles both moist soil and drought, it can work well on the edges of retention ponds or in dry ponds. A wide range of pollinators use the species including honey bees, bumble bees, masked bees, halictid bees, leaf-cutting bees, native flies, butterflies, skippers and moths. Native Americans used Blue Giant Hyssop medicinally for coughs, fevers, wounds and upset stomachs. The aromatic leaves can be used in teas, as seasoning, and have been used in potpourri.

### Primary Uses:

- Shoreline stabilization
- Pollinator Habitat
- Aesthetics

## Planting Recommendations

### Planting Methods

- Seed
- Bare Root Plants
- Containerized Plants
- Transplants

Planting can be accomplished with seed, bare-root plants, containerized plants, or by transplanting. The very tiny seeds (90,000 seeds per ounce) should be broadcast on the soil surface in areas with partial shade to full sun and moist soils. The seeds require a cold moist stratification, so they are commonly seeded in

late fall to allow winter conditions to naturally break dormancy, and to provide good seed to soil contact. The species can be transplanted in early spring or late fall. Individual clumps can be separated into several plants.



Blue giant hyssop growing with bergamot, yellow coneflower and Canada goldenrod

## Similar Species



Purple Giant Hyssop (*Agastache scrophulariaefolia*) is generally shorter, has leaves that are darker green underneath and the leaves do not have a licorice smell. Photo by Peter M. Dziuk



Hedge Nettle (*Stachys palustris*) has flowers  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches long (compared to  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch for blue giant hyssop) in flower spikes with groupings of around six flowers, and the stems are hairy along the edges. Photo by Dave Hansen



Wild Germander (*Teucrium canadense*) has flowers  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches long in a flower spike, serrated leaves up to 5 inches long and there are hairs on the leaves and stem. Photo by Dave Hansen

## References

Minnesota Wildflowers <https://www.minnesotawildflowers.info/flower/blue-giant-hyssop>  
USDA Plants Database: <http://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=AGFO>