All About Lavender

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Lavender Makes a Gardener Look Good!

- Relatively easy to grow
- Is a perennial plant
- Only needs occasional attention
- Uses less water than other crops (once established)

Lavender can be grown in poor soils
Can be used in phytoremediation of heavy metal contaminated soils

Lavender is a perennial shrub in the mint family
- Square stems
- Opposite leaves
- Butterfly shaped flowers
- Aromatic

Mature Size of Lavender Plants

- Can range in size from 1 foot in diameter to 6 ft or more for some hybrid cultivars

Lavender Flowers

- Flowers are clustered on a spike called an inflorescence
- Flowering time is from May to late summer depending on location and weather conditions
- Duration of bloom time is 2-3 weeks
- Flower colors range from white, pink, light lavender to deep, dark purple
Where does lavender originate?
- Lavender is a desert plant
- It prefers hot, dry, sunny, cloud-free summers
- Prefers low humidity and mild, wet winters
- Needs well-draining, alkaline soils
- Is a woody shrub that can live for up to 10 years
- Most commercial lavender is grown in France

What if I don’t live in a desert climate?
- Lavender can survive in growing zones 5-9
- Plant in full sun
- Be aware of soil needs for lavender

Soil Requirements
- Sandy loam to course/gravelly
- Alkaline pH (around 7 is ideal)
- If too alkaline, boron deficiency can be an issue
- Porous and well-drained (lavender cannot tolerate wet feet; root issues are the biggest problem with lavender) both in winter and summer

How do I improve my soil?
- Do a soil test and find out pH (can add lime to increase pH)
- Observe planting area for ponding after heavy rains
- Plant in a raised bed or raised row to assist with draining

Lavender vs Lavandin
- Lavandin is considered a separate species
- Lavandula x intermedia
- Lavandin is considered a hybrid lavender
- Plants are usually larger than English lavender
- Longer and larger flower spikes than English lavender
- Produce more oil than English lavender
- Flower later in the year than English lavender
Lavandin produces 3 times more oil than English lavender. Often used to make commercially produced fragrances such as household soaps and detergents. Not necessarily an inferior quality than English lavender, just has different uses.

Essential Oil Production
- English lavender oil 0% to 0.6% camphor
- Lavandin oil contained 8% - 10% camphor
- Essential oil is a hydrosol (a water based compound generated through distillation)
- Camphor is a waxy, flammable transparent solid commonly used in creams, ointments and lotions
- Derived through camphor trees or from turpentine oil
- Camphor gives lavender oils a more pungent and stronger smell

Lavender Plant Care
- Takes 3 years to reach maturity
- No fertilization needed
- Once established, light watering needed during dry periods
- Annual pruning and shaping needed to prevent it from getting woody
- Gravel can be used as a mulch
- Proper spacing at planting time for good air flow

Winter Protection
- How to prune lavender
  - Prune annually to keep rounded shape
  - To prune, trim off 1/3 of lavender foliage, leaving at least 2–3” of green, soft foliage, taking care not to cut into the woody part of the plant
  - Prune in late winter/early spring

Harvesting Lavender
- Harvest lavender when the bottom flowers are just opening
- Lavender is at its peak for color and fragrance at this time
- Cut the stems down to the foliage
**Drying Lavender Bouquets**

- Hang bouquets up-side-down, suspended from a nail, string or wire in a hot, dark, dry location
- Allow the lavender to dry for about 10-14 days

**Fresh Bouquet Care**

- Cut when it blooms and do not place it in water.
- The water just accelerates the florets falling off of the stems and the stems get very mushy, messy and smelly.
- Cut them, place them in a vase or bottle.
- They will dry on their own.
- Grosso and Hidcote dry very nicely this way and the florets stay on the stem quite well.

**Propagating Lavender**

- Can use hardwood or softwood cuttings
- Use blossom free stems
- Cut healthy, straight, vigorous stems
- Cut a segment 3-4 inches long just below a leaf node
- Remove leaves from bottom 2 inches of cutting
- Dip in rooting hormone
- Place in soil
- Put some type of cover over pot to help with humidity
- Softwood cuttings should root in 2-4 weeks, hardwood cuttings take longer
- Keep misted with water during this time

**Cultivars of Lavender**

- **Lavandula**
  - Grosso
  - Provence
  - Dutch
  - Phenomenal (cold hardiness, heat hardiness, and tolerance to humidity)
- **English Lavender**
  - Hidcote
  - Munstead

**Current Research Project**

- 3 sites in Missouri
- Cultivar trials
- Grower guides for homeowners and commercial producers
- Workshops and farm tours
- Lavender for pollinators
- Essential oil distillation

**What can you do with lavender?**

- Enjoy it in the garden
- Dried bundles
- Fresh bundles
- Essential oil (the lavender oil market is expected to surpass $124 million by the end of 2024 in the U.S.)
- Culinary uses
- Body care products such as lotions