

## LAVENDER

Lavender, just the fragrance alone would be enough to warrant high praise and most of the time lavender is used for its aromatherapy uses. Although it is great in sachets and soaps it is a very important herb.

### HISTORY

The name derives from the Latin verb "to wash". Both the early Roman and Greeks scented their bathwater and soaps with this herb. In the Middle Ages lavender was used as an herb for love, but it worked two ways. It was considered an aphrodisiac and it was reported that sprinkling lavender water on someone's head would make the wearer chaste.

Throughout time lavender flowers and leaves were used to deter moths in linens and clothing. Lavender sachets have also been used to freshen sickrooms. There was once a story that the Asp would nest in the lavender bushes. This story was believed and it drove up the price of lavender.

Medicinally throughout history lavender has been used in Europe to quiet coughs and soothes a rumbling digestive system. Up until WWI lavender was also used to disinfect wounds.

### USES

Most of the lavender that is commercially grown is used for perfume or fragrance products. 1 acre of healthy lavender plants will yield 15-20 pounds of lavender oil. Besides still being used for its fragrance in perfumes, soaps and sachets, many people use lavender for crafts, dried arrangements and wreaths. Lavender does have culinary purposes. The perfumy flowers and leaves have been used sparingly to flavor vinegars, jellies and the flowers can be used as an edible flower in salads. I have used the flowers to make lavender sugar that I dust onto sugar cookies or shortbread.

British herbalist Maude Grieve believed that a medicinal cordial of lavender oil, rosemary oil, cinnamon bark, nutmeg, sandalwood, steeped in wine for a few days if given in a small dose of 1 tsp would relieve indigestion. Lavender is safe, used in moderation. 1 teaspoon of flowers to a pint of water is safe for infusions. Most often lavender is used for skin irritations, sore feet and muscle aches. A few drops of lavender oil in your bath are very soothing. Lavender has been used to aide the body as a carminative, antispasmodic, and a stimulant. At one time lavender was used as an ingredient in smelling salts,

There are many varieties of lavender. The English varieties of Munstead and Hidcote are the hardiest for our climate. The spike varieties of Grosso and Provence are also hardy here. We find the French and Spanish are not as hardy. Also the English varieties are the highly prized and most commonly used for their fragrance. In the opinion of those in the perfume world the English varieties aroma is more complex and delicate. It is often noted that the harsher the climate the better the oils and fragrance.

Lavender stoechas

Lavendula dentata fernlike foliage

Lavendula alba white flowers

Lavendula angustifolia dwarf and compact

Lavendula Triphylla small leaflets at the base of the flowers

Lavendula angustifolia rosea pink flowers

Lavendula spike is coarser and its oils are used in lacquers and varnishes.

Dye from this flower is also used in China painting.

Lavendula latifolia the oil is used to stretch the fragrance of higher quality lavenders

The hardiness zone on lavender varies by variety, but most range from zone 5-8. Lavender prefers coarse drainage and likes a ph of 7.1. Once established, lavender is very drought tolerant. Lavender prefers full sun. I find that after 4-5 years you may have to give your lavender bush an overhaul. Cut out the old woody stems and branches and plant new plants every few years to help you keep a good supply of leaves and flowers.

The annual varieties are easy to grow indoors in pots. I grow the annual varieties all winter. The winter temps should be indoors 40-50 night and 45-55 day. Provide good light.

Deer, Elk and Rabbits will pass on lavender.

## **HARVEST**

Most often Lavender will bloom June to July. Harvest when the flowers first begin to open or when they are fully open. Harvest in the morning before the heat of the day. Either dry them on screens in a cool and shaded area or hanging upside down out of the sun. The dried flowers will remain aromatic for a long time. Cutting the spent blooms will help the plant to flourish