



*Gardeners Helping Gardeners Succeed*

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# All About Lavender

Lavender has been recognized since Roman times for its healing and antiseptic qualities, its ability to deter insects, and for washing. There are many references in the Bible to the high price of lavender, using its ancient name of spikenard. Roman soldiers were so impressed with its healing properties that they used it to dress their war wounds and treat head lice. Queen Elizabeth I drank lavender tea to treat her frequent migraine headaches. During the first World War modern antiseptics were in such short supply that the public was asked to gather garden lavender so the oil could be used together with sphagnum moss to treat war wounds.

Lavender is still used in herbal remedies. Cushions filled with dried lavender can help induce sleep and ease stress or depression. It can be brewed into a tea, used to make compresses for dressing wounds or for applying to the forehead to relieve congestion, headaches, hangovers, tiredness, tension and exhaustion.

*Lavandula angustifolias* (English Lavender) (formerly known as *L. officianalis*) are 'true lavenders', able to reproduce with seed. The oil has little or no camphor content and are best for burns. Flower stems (penduncles) are generally shorter and smaller in diameter than the *intermedia* flower stems. All English lavenders are culinary in nature and flowers, buds and leaves can be used as seasoning in pastries, cakes, or fish and can be used in place of rosemary. These bloom mid-late spring.

*Lavandula* hybrids are referred to as *Lavandins*. Hybrids between *L. angustifolia* and *L. latifolia* are called *Lavandula x intermedia*. They bloom later (late spring/mid-summer) than the ordinary English lavenders. These cannot reproduce by seed and their oil has a slight camphor content. *L. x intermedia* generally have much longer and larger stems and are generally more fragrant. The larger penduncles equate to higher oil production. However, because of the camphor content they are generally not for culinary uses but are better when it comes to antiseptic, anti-viral and anti-fungal properties. *Lavandins* are excellent for bouquets and craft projects.

Lavenders flourish best in dry, well-drained, sandy or gravelly soils in full sun. All types need little or no fertilizer and good air circulation. In areas of high humidity, root rot due to fungus infection can be a problem. Organic mulches can trap moisture around the plant's bases, encouraging root rot. Gravelly materials such as crushed rocks give better results.

Lavender is fairly tolerant of low temperatures, generally considered hardy to USDA zone 4. It tolerates acid soils but favors neutral to alkaline soils. In some conditions it can be short-lived. It is also **deer resistant**.

## Harvesting the flowers

If you are going to use the flowers and buds for crafts such as sachets or bouquets, the flowers should be cut when the first two rows of blooms appear from the buds at the end of the flower spike. Cut all the spikes at once and hang the flowers upside down in a cool, dark place to dry. After about two weeks to one month, strip the buds for sachets or leave them on the spikes for dried bouquets.

***Lavandula angustifolia* 'Hidcote'** One of the dwarf varieties of English lavender, it grows dark purple-blue flowers with strong fragrance. Drought-tolerant and hardy to hot climates, these plants are great for attracting butterflies and bees, while they are also deer and rabbit resistance. Blooms once some time from late spring to late summer. **Height:** Around 1.5-2 feet **Width:** 1.5-2 feet **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-9 **Utility:** Walkways and garden borders where its fresh scent can be appreciated; excellent choice for container plant

***Lavandula angustifolia* 'Munstead'** Tolerant to hot and humid conditions, this variety has low maintenance needs. Blooming twice in a year, during later spring to mid- to late summer, the **sweetly fragrant** flowers are of a cool bluish lavender shade, which contrast nicely with the plant's gray-green foliage. **Height:** 1 to 1.5 feet **Width:** 1 to 2 feet **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-9 **Utility:** Borders and flowerbeds where its feathery flower-heads can sway in breeze; container plant; cut/dry flower

***Lavandula angustifolia* 'Folgate'** Blooming once or twice in middle to late spring, the purple flower heads rise above the evergreen foliage. The plants are pretty hardy, needing full sun, also able to tolerate cold, coming back every year once winter is over. **Height:** Between 1.5 to 2 feet **Width:** Around 2 feet **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-9 **Utility:** Mass planting, herb gardens, hedge in smaller gardens; **excellent for essential oil.**

***Lavandula angustifolia* 'Melissa Lilac'** The fragrant lilac fluffy flower spikes create a stunning view when contrast with the silver-/gray-green leaves. Leaves and flowers produce a nice aroma when brushed against. Does well with a pruning around the end of spring, and blooms in summer. **Height:** Around 1.5 to 2 feet **Width:** About 2 feet **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-8 **Utility:** Mass planting and garden borders

***Lavandula angustifolia* 'Twickel Purple'** Named after the Twickel Castle (Netherlands) where the plants were first cultivated, this is a large robust variety growing bright bluish violet flowers on 7-8 inch long stems. Blooming in summer, the flowers have a **wonderful strong fragrance**; the bushy plants tend to get unruly without proper pruning. **Height:** Up to 2 to 2.5 feet **Width:** Around 3 to 5 feet **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-8 **Utility:** Hedges and borders in medium gardens

***Lavandula angustifolia* 'Thumbelina Leigh'** One of the most compact varieties, 'Thumbelina Leigh' grows dark bluish-lavender plump flower spikes with a strong and pleasant scent. Flowers appear in summer, with the plant blooming three times a year. **Height:** Up to 1 foot **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-10 **Utility:** Evergreen garden borders and rock gardens; excellent as container plant

***Lavandula angustifolia* 'Buena Vista'** A very special cultivar that **blooms twice per season** (late spring and again in fall, in areas with a moderately long growing season), has superb fragrance and eye-catching, strongly bi-colored flowering spikes with a lax, informal habit. Bred in Oregon, 'Buena Vista's' attractive elongated flower spikes have very dark blue calyxes and lighter blue corollas (flowers) that are very different from more compactly flowered English lavenders like 'Hidcote Superior'. When promptly deadheaded by mid-summer, 'Buena Vista' will re-bloom in early fall. This is a distinctive and highly desirable cultivar not often available to the gardening public. **Height:** 2 feet **Width:** 18 inches **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-9 **Utility:** Extended bloom time; mass plantings

***Lavandula angustifolia* 'Blue Spear'** Blue Spear shows off **bigger, taller spikes** than any other seed lavender, with more upright flower stems that stand closer to each other for huge impact from a distance. Very easy to grow, with high uniformity, good habit and earliness **Height:** 13 inches **Width:** 11 inches **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 6-8 **Utility:** Ideal for planters and garden beds

***Lavandula angustifolia* 'Blue Cushion'** Compact shrub with a perfect 'cushion' form of gray-green foliage. Continuous blooms of deep purple-blue flowers arrive throughout the season, fading to pale lavender with age. Keeps scent and color all season long with its repeated blooms. **Height:** 12 inches **Width:** 18 inches **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-9 **Utility:** Herb garden, perennial border, or planted in containers

***Lavandula angustifolia* 'Sweet Romance'** The grey-green foliage forms a compact mound topped with plump, rich violet purple flower wands that are perfect for cutting for fresh and dried bouquets. Clusters of tiny flowers appear at the nodes up the stem in addition to the terminal inflorescence, adding color down into the plant. . **Height:** 18 inches **Width:** 18 inches **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-9 **Utility:** Border plant, container, dried flowers

***Lavandula angustifolia* 'Royal Velvet'** A rather showy dwarf variety with dark purple to navy blue wonderfully fragrant flowers that grow 3-4 inches long spikes. It has an extended blooming season between spring and summer, lasting around 4 weeks. **Height:** Around 1 to 1.5 feet **Width:** 1 foot **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-10 **Utility:** Excellent for drying as it is good at holding its color and scent

***Lavandula angustifolia* 'Big Time Blue'** Big, abundant flowers on a compact lavender with aromatic, silvery green foliage contrasting beautifully with its darker flower color. The fragrant, nectar-rich flowers come early and continue from early summer into fall. **Height:** 20 inches **Width:** 30 inches **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-9 **Utility:** perfect for pots, perennial borders, or massed as a flowering hedge

***Lavandula x intermedia* 'Hidcote Giant'** This is an award winning variety with dense plump bright purple flowers with a strong sweet fragrance, growing on long stems. The showy evergreen plants bloom in mid to late summer. **Height:** 2.5 to 3 feet **Width:** 3 to 3.5 feet **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-8 **Utility:** In large herb gardens, mass planting, garden hedges; cut flower arrangements

***Lavandula x intermedia* 'Provence'** Commercially grown mainly in Provence, France, this variety grows long purple-mauve flower stalks having an intoxicating scent. The plants are extremely tolerant to heat and humidity, blooming in summer. **Height:** 2 to 3 feet **Width:** Over 2 feet **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-9 **Utility:** Mass planting, garden borders, hedges; in dry flower arrangements, wreaths and lavender wands

***Lavandula x intermedia* 'Phenomenal'** One of the newer introductions, this variety is fast growing in popularity for its exceptional drought-, heat-, humidity-, and even cold-tolerance, making it quite easy to take care of. The bright bluish-purple long flower stalks bloom in spring and summer **Height:** 2 to 3 feet **Width:** 2 to 2.5 feet **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 4-9 **Utility:** Borders, hedges; dry flowers; potpourri

***Lavandula x intermedia* 'Seal'** Counted among the largest lavender types, 'seal' is also one of the most striking varieties with bright purple flowers contrasting with the dark green foliage. The flower stalks alone can grow up to a foot, with the blooming season being in summer. Suitable to be grown only in large gardens as it tends to take over. **Height:** Up to 4 feet **Width:** 2 to 3 feet **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-8 **Utility:** Fresh cut or dried flowers (retains its scent for about 2 years); potpourri; hedges and borders

***Lavandula x intermedia* 'Edelweiss'** As evident from the name, it grows white flower spikes, which look stunning when planted with other darker lavender cultivars. The flower buds look pinkish before the flowers appear. Extended blooming season starts in spring, continuing through summer to fall. **Height:** Up to 2 feet **Width:** About 3 feet **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-11 **Utility:** Ground cover, hedges; fragrant fresh and dried flower arrangements and crafts

***Lavandula x intermedia* 'Grosso'** It is often considered to be the most cultivated lavender plant, widely used in the perfume and cosmetics industry. Long dark blue flower spikes appear around the early or middle part of summer. **Height:** 2 to 3 feet **Width:** up to 3 feet **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 6-10 **Utility:** Essential oil production

***Lavandula x intermedia* 'Fred Boutin'** An evergreen French lavender hybrid with light blue to purple flowers and stunning silver-green foliage that retains its color through winter. Blooming season is early to late summer, with the flowers retaining their scent for years after drying. **Height:** 2 to 3 feet **Width:** 2.5 to 3.5 feet **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 6-9 **Utility:** fresh cut and dried flowers, homemade potpourri

***Lavandula x intermedia* 'Impress Purple'** The size and foliage somewhat resemble the 'grosso' variety, but the flowers are a dark purple, growing on flatter spikes. The evergreen shrub flowers in summer, with the tall, upright gray-green foliage adding to its charm. **Height:** 2 to 3 feet **Width:** 3 to 3.5 feet **USDA Hardiness Zone:** 5-9 **Utility:** Tall aromatic hedges; fresh cut flowers and dry flower arrangements



*Lavandula - Lavender*

*LET'S GO TO THAT HOUSE, FOR THE LINEN LOOKS WHITE AND SMELLS OF LAVENDER,  
AND I LONG TO LIE IN A PAIR OF SHEETS THAT SMELL SO.*

*The Compleat Angler, Izaak Walton, 1653*