

LAVENDER

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Favored for their clouds of purple blooms and sweet fragrance, hardy lavenders are always popular. Native to the Mediterranean region (not England or France!), they are drought tolerant and are found in colors from white to pink to lavenders, blues and purples. Foliage is green, silver, gray or variegated, and the hardier lavenders are evergreen. Our favorite grower produces beautiful plants and we keep a large selection in 4 inch and gallon pots in stock March thru mid-summer.

GROWING TIPS

Lavenders prefer well drained soil, and deep but infrequent water. Organic matter mixed with our heavy clay soil helps with drainage, as will a raised bed or mound. Lavenders require little to no fertilizer. They like a lime based soil, so it is recommended to add a little lime in autumn or when preparing soil for planting – blood or bone meal make good nitrogen sources. Avoid chemical fertilizers as well as chicken and pig manures. A little compost spread over roots in spring is also beneficial. Once established, avoid overhead water which can cause the plant to split open and also makes the plant susceptible to diseases. Prune by cutting back from 1/3 to 1/2 of foliage after each year's bloom period.

HARVESTING

Harvest just as first two flowers open on spike, after the morning's dew has dried. Hang in small bunches in dark and well ventilated area for quick drying.

COMMONLY AVAILABLE VARIETIES

***Lavendula angustifolia* (English Lavender)** The hardiest of all lavenders, early summer bloom, mounding with short flower spikes. Used in cooking, best for crafts, soaps, candles, perfumes, sachets. This is the classic lavender scent, and you will find many, many varieties available.

'Hidcote' has one of the deepest purple blooms, gray-green foliage and is 18-24" tall.

'Munstead' has violet buds, lavender-violet bloom, and mid-green foliage. Makes a nice border at about 18" tall.

'Jean Davis' is popular for its pink to pink-lavender bloom and reaches 18-24".

***Lavendula x intermedia* (Hedge Lavender)** Sterile hybrid of *L. angustifolia* and *L. latifolia*, this grouping tends to be taller than the English lavenders, and are less hardy. Strong scent, but not sweet like the English lavenders. Bloom period is a little later than the English. Can be used in fragrances, oils, potpourri, and wands.

'Provence' is quite spectacular in bloom, 2-3' tall, and is one of the most fragrant in this group. The bloom is light violet and dries well.

'Grosso' has green-gray foliage, violet-blue bloom, is about 2½' tall, and is beautiful in bloom with long flower stems. This is a popular variety for oil extraction.

'Silver Edge' ('Walvera') has a light blue flower, and green and silvery cream variegated foliage.

Growing 1½ -2' tall, we especially like its compact habit. This is a beautiful lavender even when not in bloom.

'Albriallii' has dark violet blue blooms, grows to about 2 ½' tall, and was once a mainstay of the French lavender oil industry.

***Lavendula stoechas* (Spanish Lavender)** An absolute favorite for showy blooms – there are large, showy bracts at the tip of each flower spike which look a little like butterflies or rabbit ears. Spanish lavenders are also the earliest blooming, and although with a reputation for unhardiness, we've seen them easily go five years with no problem. They tend to grow from 1 ½ to 3' tall and really benefit from annual pruning/shaping. **'Otto Quast'** is quite popular with a rosy-purple bloom. Deadhead and there will be a few blooms continuing thru summer.

Lavendula 'Goodwin Creek Grey' is a hybrid from Oregon's Goodwin Creek Nursery, 2 ½ to 3' tall, violet-blue flowers thru much of summer, and silvery leaves. We find this one to be a little loose in form, no doubt due to its size. So give this one an annual pruning in early Fall.

***Lavendula multifida* (Fernleaf lavender)** Not a perennial, but makes up for this deficit by its almost continuous bloom spring till fall! Light green 'ferny' foliage has a medicinal lemony fragrance. Terrific in planters, deadhead occasionally. We use it in herb bowls because of its long bloom.