



Fact Sheet

Lavender

Identification of particular lavender species has long been a bone of contention amongst gardeners, growers and horticulturists all of whom seem to have difficulties agreeing just which variety is which. Even the source of the name lavender is in dispute with one theory advanced saying that it was derived from the Latin 'lavare' meaning to wash, a reference to its use in toiletry whilst another theory proffers the suggestion that it came from medieval Latin 'livendula' meaning leaden blue.

What is not in dispute is that lavenders are one of our most popular and hardy shrubs comprising a genus of more than 30 species native to most of the countries around the Mediterranean and Arabian peninsula..

Lavenders prefer a full sun position in any reasonable friable soil. In their natural state the English, French and Italian forms grow in soils of limestone origin but will also do very well on light sandy soil or in loam over chalky soils. Good drainage is essential, they are fairly drought tolerant once established. Ensure that the soil is not too rich in Nitrogen as this encourages leaf growth rather than flower production however extra Calcium in the form of Gypsum for neutral and high pH soils and dolomite lime for low pH soils will help.

They make an extremely effective garden plant where they can be used for hedges, perennial borders or just individual specimens. The grey foliage with mainly blue (though sometimes white or pink) flowers provide wonderful foliage contrasts. They are much valued for fragrance and have been used in toiletry for centuries. All parts of the bush are fragrant but the essential oils are produced from the flowers. Even after all these years lavenders still provide the bulk of the oil used in modern perfumes and soap. Apart from oils, lavenders are very popular as dried flowers or in pot pourris.

Many lavender farms have sprung up around the country in recent years including Bridestowe in Tasmania which at one stage was thought to be the only successful attempt to grow the species lavender angustifolia outside France, since then others have come into the market place. Lavender growers on a large scale tend to plant 1/5th of their eventual crop each year. After 5 years when full cropping is attained the oldest planting is replaced and so on each successive year. In this way good oil production is maintained.



Lavenders should be trimmed after flowering with generally a light shaping to keep them tidy. Removing spent flowers is the main task. They benefit from occasional dressing with lime.

Propagate from leafy tip cuttings in autumn or winter into a mix of coarse sand with added peat moss.

They are fairly disease and pest free apart from occasional caterpillar problems.



There are many varieties available these days and more are being released each year, the majority of these range from 50-90cm high. Listed here are some of the more popular varieties:



Lavender angustifolia

(Syn *L.officinalis* *L.vera*) - grows to 1m, sometimes called true English lavender, best source of quality oil.

Lavender dentata

French lavender, native of Spain and surrounding countries, grows to 1.2m, serrated leaf, bright mauve blue bracts, good for hedging, little value for oils.

Lavender stoechas

Italian lavender (though sometimes called French lavender), grows to 1m. Clusters of purple bracts. No oil value, good for hedges.

L.angustifolia 'Munstead' - Dwarf lavender to 50cm, mauve flower excellent low hedging variety.

L.a.'Hidcote' - Similar to Munstead except flowers are much deeper purple.

L.x Allardii - Tallest of the lavenders to 1.3m, brilliant for hedging, very tough.

FACT: Lavender oil is successfully used to treat ulcers, sores, burns and scalds and was used to swab wounds in the First World War.



The best of the newer varieties include:

Lavender 'Avonview' - Purple flowers about 1m. (Italian type)

L.'Impress Purple' - Mauve flowers about 1m. (English type)

L. 'Sugar Plum' - Burgundy flowers about 50cm. Italian type

L.x intermedia 'Grosso' - Deep purple flowers, about 80cm has become one of the main oil varieties in Europe. (English type)

L. 'Seal' - Mauve flowers around 70cm. (English type)

L.'Pukehou' - New Zealand variety, 80 x 80cm winged purple flowers. (Italian type)

L. 'Winter Purple' - 60cm x 60cm excellent hedging variety, masses of blue spikes. (Italian type).

L. 'Butterfly' - 80cm x 80cm large winged mauve flowers. (Italian type)

L. 'Sidonie' - Australian bred variety to 80cm, pure blue flowers.

L.stoechas 'Fairy Wings' - Unusual winged blue flowers 70-80cm. (Italian type)

L. 'Marshwood' - Approx 1m, mauve flowers. (Italian type)

There are many more available, any visit to this nursery will give you an indication just what is currently available, suffice to say that no garden is complete without one or more lavenders.



FACT: Essential oils (lavender) when mixed with 1-4 drops on sugar or in a spoonful or two with milk is said to be a tonic against faintness, palpitations, giddiness, spasms and colic. It will provoke an appetite, "raise the spirits" and dispel flatulence.

