

Growing Lavender

Why do we love lavenders? Because they are drought and deer-resistant, attractive to bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds, and produce fragrant flowers for bouquets, sachets, and cooking. Lavenders are evergreen and tolerate both frost and heat. Lavenders are essential for Mediterranean style gardens, but are also at home in cottage, habitat, and cutting gardens.

Types of Lavenders

The genus *Lavandula* consists of over 30 different species, many hybrids, and hundreds of varieties. The most popular types for gardens are *Lavandula angustifolia*, *L. stoechas*, and *L. intermedia*. Many less common varieties are also garden worthy.

Lavandula angustifolia (*L. vera*)

- Commonly called 'English Lavender', this plant is actually native to southern France, Spain, Switzerland, and Northern Italy.
- Foliage is gray-green, with younger leaves grayer than older leaves.
- Most bloom in a range of blue-violet shades, rarely pink or white.
- Fragrance is sweet and floral, wonderful for sachets and cooking.
- Popular varieties include 'Hidcote' and 'Munstead'.
- Blooms mostly from late spring to midsummer.



'Hidcote' Lavender



'Otto Quast' Lavender

Lavandula stoechas

- Called 'Spanish Lavender', *L. stoechas* is common in Spain, Portugal, North Africa, and much of the Mediterranean.
- The most easily identified species, *L. stoechas* has showy bracts, often called 'rabbit ears' at the top of the flower spikes.
- Flowers are most commonly lavender-blue, but you'll also see white, pink, and bicolor flowers.
- Fragrance is herbal and almost buttery.
- Popular varieties are 'Otto Quast' and the 'Anouk' series. Blooms mostly from mid-spring to late summer.

Lavandula intermedia

- Sometimes called Lavandin or French lavender, *L. intermedia* is a hybrid of *Lavandula angustifolia* and *L. latifolia*.
- The classic French hedge lavender, *L. intermedia* has dense foliage mounds topped by long flower spikes, perfect for bouquets and wands.
- Most are blue-violet, but *L. intermedia* 'Alba' blooms white.
- Flowers from mid to late summer.
- Wonderful fragrance and high oil production make *L. intermedia* popular for sachets and perfumes. Popular varieties are 'Grosso' and 'Provence'.



'Provence' Lavender



Lavandula 'Goodwin Creek Gray'

- Silvery-gray, toothed foliage offers great color even when not in flower.
- Dark blue-purple flowers are very showy.

Lavandula dentata

- Sometimes called 'French Lavender' (although this common name is more often used for *L. intermedia*)
- Leaves may be green or gray, and are toothed, or dentate, giving this lavender its other common name 'Toothed Lavender'.



Lavandula allardii 'Meerlo'

- Striking variegated foliage is highly fragrant.
- Not a big bloomer, but makes a gorgeous hedge or specimen.

Planting and Growing Lavender

Lavender is a sun loving plant, so grow it where it gets 8 hours or more of sun daily. Excellent drainage is required for lavender to thrive. Plant on a mound or top of a slope, if possible, but never in a location where the soil stays wet. Following our general planting directions, amend the soil with **Gold Rush** or **Bumper Crop** so that the blended mix is no more than 1/3 amendment. Lavender, like all plants, needs regular watering when first planted. Don't let it dry out for the first few weeks, then gradually reduce the frequency of irrigation, while still watering deeply. After the first year, lavender only needs to be watered approximately once per week.

Pruning Lavender



Prune lavender hard after its first big flush of bloom in spring or summer (depending on the variety). Remove 1/3 to 1/2 the height of the plant, trimming into a nice, rounded shape. Don't prune stems below the lowest set of leaves; They are unlikely to grow back from such treatment.

Don't worry! These freshly pruned lavenders won't look like hamburger buns for long.

Potential Problems

Gardeners often complain that lavenders get woody and die back after just a few years. This is typically due to improper pruning, overwatering, or wet soil. Timid pruning can lead to woody centers that can't be rehabilitated, while pruning in the winter can lead to dieback. Follow pruning directions above for best results. Make sure your lavenders will have excellent drainage in their planting site, and don't overwater; Let established lavenders dry out between waterings.