



LAVENDER: Leader's Guide

2024 KAFCE Education Program Year

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Educational Goals

Learn to plant Lavender

Learn how to tend Lavender

Learn how to use Lavender in household décor

Community Action

Take a trip to a Lavender farm

Have a demonstration on using Lavender in décor

Have a baking session using lavender



Lavender is a bushy perennial shrub. The lavender plant is native to the Mediterranean area. It does well in zones 5-8. Kansas is in zones 5-7 according to the USDA. Lavender likes full sun and slightly alkaline soils and does not like to have its feet wet. It can grow to a height of three feet or more. The flowers are usually purple, but you can also find rose and white varieties. The flowers will be in whorls of about 10 at the end of the stock and are noticeable from June to August. The best time to harvest, for the best smell, is when the flowers start to open. Major commercial growing areas are in France, England, New Zealand, and Australia. In North America, Lavender is grown as a cash crop in the states of Washington, New Mexico and Texas. Lavender is a member of the mint family.

English Lavender is hardy to USDA zone 5. It is a bushy perennial; it grows from 1 to 3 feet tall. It bears small blue-violet flowers on spikes with blue-green foliage. The flowers will bloom from April to June. The oils in the flowers give the herb its distinctive balsam-like fragrance. English Lavender produces a small amount of lavender oil, but it is superb quality.

French Lavender plants are bigger and the aroma is sweet with slight camphorwood scent. You can deadhead French Lavender to simulate more growth. French Lavender grows better in USDA zones 7-9. It will survive winter in climate like Southern France, Spain and Italy. In our zone, it should be potted and brought in.

The Lavender plant has many uses. It was used medically for most ailments including hysteria, palsy, colic, apoplexy, bruises, headaches, acne and halitosis. In 1770, an herbal claimed it was good also against biting of serpents, mad-dog and other venomous creatures. It would be applied poultice-wise to the parts of the wound. It is also good for potpourris, soaps, colognes, sachets and crafts. It has culinary uses also.

It is an ingredient of Herbe de Proence and it is found in Asian cuisines. It can flavor jellies or desserts and the flowers can be candied.

Lavender can be used as an edging shrub, container or bonsai plant or it can be planted in an English or Victorian herb garden. Lavender can be used to line patios to repel insects. You can plant lavender along your sidewalk and as you walk, rub your hand along the flowers to release the scent. The flowers will bloom from Mid spring till June

Ways to use Lavender in the kitchen: chop up buds and put in cake batter or pastry dough, use fresh lavender to infuse tea, cocktails and drinks. Add buds to preserves or fruit compotes to give them subtle spicey notes. You can use lavender in lamb, chicken, and rabbit.

Propagation-Planting hybrid seed is not a good method of propagation. The best methods are root division, layering or cuttings. Take a 2 or 3 inch cutting in early fall by pulling downward on a one season sprig so that some old wood comes with it. Place in moist sandy soil, with some shade for protection, for one year until planting in a permanent location. They should be protected from excessive wind and flowers should be removed to allow the plant to strengthen. You should surround the plants with gravel and mulch.

Mulching-Organic mulches are not good for lavender because of the plant's susceptibility to mold and fungus.

Irrigation-It is recommended watering lavender once or twice a week until plants are established. Water once a week until the buds form. Then back to once or twice a week until harvest.

Harvesting-Use scissors to cut lavender with long stem in the morning, when the oils are the most concentrated and half of the flower buds are open. You can dry lavender by making bundles and secure them with rubber band. Hang upside down in a cool dark place with good air circulation.

I hope you enjoy working with lavender. There are several Lavender farms around the state. If you have time to visit, I am sure you would enjoy the tour.

There are several home décor projects on these sites. Please take a moment to look and decorate your home.

Resources:

Oregon FCE Lessons: <https://www.oregon-fce.org/lessons-from-conferences-and-the-past/> “*Lavender 101*” by Ellen Scannell, 2013.

Almanac: <https://www.almanac.com/>

Colorado State University Extension: <https://extension.colostate.edu/>

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