

Fines Herbes

Lavender

Family	Lamiaceae
Botanical	<i>Lavandula angustifolia</i>
Parts Used	Flowers
USDA Hardiness	5A - 9B
Light	Full Sun to Partial Shade
Soil	Well Drained
Duration	Perennial



Propagation	Soil pH requirements: 6.1(mildly acidic) to 7.8 (mildly alkaline). From softwood cuttings, semi-hardwood cuttings or from seed, sow indoors before last frost.
Water	As needed, do not overwater
Growing	Does not like too much moisture, water only during drought. Lavender should be pruned back slightly after flowering. Lavender grows reasonably well in pots and can be brought indoors in cold or wet weather. It doesn't need a big pot. Just an inch or two wider than the root ball is sufficient. The important thing is that the pot drains well. Mix your potting soil with equal parts sand and put a layer of loose gravel in the bottom of the pot before adding your soil. This will encourage drainage. Water when the soil feels dry and try not to wet the leaves. Make sure your lavender plant gets plenty of sun.

Medicinal Uses	Carminative, anti-spasmodic, anti-depressant, rubefacient, anti-emetic and nervine.
Benefits	Effective for headaches related to stress. Clears depression and tonic to the nervous system. Soothes and promotes a natural sleep.
Preparation	Collect the flowers just before opening in early summer and early fall. Dry gently at a temperature not above 95 degrees. Infusion: Pour a cup of boiling water on 1 teaspoon of the dried herb and infuse for 10 minutes. Drink 3 times a day. Use the essential oil by inhaling or rubbing on the skin or in a bath.

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Culinary Uses

To cook with lavender, you must plant the sweetest scented varieties of these drought tolerant, deer resistant perennials. Look for *Lavendula angustifolia*, which also may be sold as *Lavendula officinalis*, *Lavendula vera* or True English Lavender. Also look for the Lavandins "Provence", "Grosso" and "Seal". Lavender flowers can be used either fresh or dried. They work to best advantage used to flavor the sugar or milk in baked goods.

Add a half dozen flower spikes to several cups of granulated sugar and seal for a week to make delicious lavender sugar to sweeten hot or iced green or black tea.



Add a subtle lavender essence to custard filled fresh fruit tart by infusing the warmed milk for the custard with 1/4 cup chopped lavender flowers to each 2 cups of liquid. Steep the mixture for an hour or two, then strain out the lavender and proceed with the custard filling recipe.

Make a delectable lavender syrup for fresh melon, berries or stone fruits by combining 1/2 cup sugar, 1/2 cup water, 1/4 cup sweet dessert wine and 2 tablespoons of orange juice. Heat the mixture to a boil, reduce to a simmer and cook for 5 minutes. Add 3 tablespoons of chopped lavender flowers and remove from the heat. Steep for 1 to 2 hours, then strain out the lavender. Pour this fragrant syrup over freshly cut up fruit and garnish with fresh mint leaves.

Add 1 to 2 tablespoons of finely chopped lavender flowers to your favorite sugar cookie recipe.

Steep 4 teaspoons of chopped lavender flowers in a cup of warmed honey with a tablespoon of lemon or lime juice for an hour. Reheat and strain out lavender. Drizzle this floral spread onto fresh toast with sweet butter or cream cheese.

Historical Facts

The use of lavender has been recorded for more than 2,500 years. Egyptians, Phoenicians and the people of Arabia used lavender as a perfume -- and also for mummification, by wrapping the dead in lavender-dipped shrouds. In ancient Greece, lavender was called "nardus," "nard," or "spikenard" (named for the Syrian city of Naarda) and was used as a cure for everything from insomnia and aching backs to insanity.

By Roman times, lavender had already become a prized commodity. Lavender flowers were sold to ancient Romans for 100 denarii per pound -- equivalent to a full month's wage for a farm laborer -- and were used to scent the water in Roman baths. In fact, the baths served as the root of the plant's current name. "Lavender" is derived from the Latin *lavare*, meaning, "to wash." Romans also used lavender as a perfume, insect repellent and flavoring. They even added dried lavender to their smoking mixtures. In Medieval and Renaissance Europe, lavender was strewn over the stone floors of castles for use as a disinfectant and deodorant.

Use of lavender was highly revered during the Great Plague of London in the 17th century, when individuals fastened bunches of lavender to each wrist to protect themselves from the Black Death, and glovemakers scented their stocks of leather with lavender oil to ward off the disease. Thieves who made a living stealing from the graves and the homes of Plague victims concocted a wash known as "Four Thieves Vinegar," which contained lavender, to cleanse and protect themselves after a night's work. Today, we know the disease was transmitted by fleas, so the use of lavender--which is known to repel these insects--could very well have saved lives and prevented further spread of the plague.

Additional Tips

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Nutrition Facts

- Very high in calcium
- Very high in iron
- High in vitamin A
- Very high in vitamin C