

2020 is the Year of the Lavender

Lovely Lavender! The “Lavender Lifestyle” is real. Everywhere you look, people are incorporating this multifaceted plant into their daily lives: It’s seen in gardens, as well as in kitchens and décor. It’s even a special part of health and wellness routines. The texture, scent, attractiveness, and overall usability of lavender make it one of the most versatile plants you can grow.

Lavender Types

Lavender is a member of the mint family (Lamiaceae) and is found in many regions around the world, especially temperate climates. The most common types are English lavender (*L. angustifolia*) and Spanish or French lavender (*L. stoechas* or *L. dentata*).

English lavender is the most hardy in terms of garden performance. There are several varieties, such as Hidcote, Munstead or SuperBlue, that have been trialed to overwinter reliably through USDA Zone 5. English lavender blooms sit on spikes rising tall above a gray-green base of leaves. Both the florets and foliage are heavily scented. The plants flower mostly in pink-purple colors, but some silver-white varieties exist as well. It can grow as high as 3 to 6 feet (1-2m) depending on the region, but most of the top-selling varieties today are dwarf styles, which grow in a more manageable height of 6-24 in. (15-60 cm). Additional varieties of English lavender include Annet, Aromatico, Big Time Blue, Blue Spear, Ellagance, Lady, Lavance, Sentivia, Sweet Romance and Vintro, among others.



Spanish and French lavender are natives to the Mediterranean where they grow evergreen. Their leaves are longer and gray-green, and the taller flower stems are topped with thicker pink-purple pinecone-like flower clusters crowned with similarly colored bracts. (*Stoechas* is a Latin word derived from the Greek word for “in rows,” which is how these cones generally display their tiny purple clusters.)

This type of lavender is more fragile than English varieties; it is less winter hardy (USDA Zones 6-9). However, it still tolerates a wide range of temperatures. Its fragrance also makes it very attractive to bees – an excellent pollinator-friendly option for your garden or patio. Some reblooming Spanish lavenders, such as the Anouk or Bandera series, flower heavily in the spring with a secondary flush of flowers later in the growing season. Spanish and French lavender work well indoors, too, and can be a scented décor or gift item. Additional varieties include Castilliano, Javelin Forte, LaVela, Papillon and Primavera among others.

Then there are additional varieties, such as Phenomenal, Provence, Torch, Hidcote Giant, Edelweiss and Fred Boutin that are crosses between species to give an even wider array of lavender types, colors and habits.

As they say, there is something for everyone!

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Ideal Growing Conditions

Lavender grows best in full sun in dry, well-drained soil; it does not like saturated roots. Adding inorganic mulches, such as gravel or sand, could help the soil conditions for a successful lavender bed. All lavender types need little or no additional fertilizer, and it is a good practice to provide air circulation. If you live in a region of high humidity, watch out for root rot due to fungus infection. This is sometimes aggravated by using organic mulches, which can trap moisture around the base of the plant. Quick tip: Use gravel or crushed rocks at the base of the plant for a better growing environment.



Lavender DIY

The flowers and leaves of lavender plants are used in many herbal medicines and self-care regimes. Homemade projects and recipes include herbal teas, culinary spices, essential oils, aromatherapy, balms, and more. It is widely added to bath salts, soaps, soaks, perfumes, etc., for a fresh fragrance and calming effect. As a strong-scented herb, dried lavender florets can also be used to repel pests in the garden, or even in the home closet as a fragrant sachet pillow that can ward off moths. French chefs use lavender in a blend called *herbs de Provence*, which adds a fragrant spice to both savory and sweet dishes.



In your garden, planting lavender as a front border means you'll see it up-close. Feel free to run your fingers through the soft foliage and enjoy the fragrance! Lavender can also be planted in a mixed patio container with other sun-loving plants, or by itself as a fresh way to scent the air in a small space.

All of these uses add up to quite a versatile and enjoyable flower that's become a must-have in gardens and homes around the world. And it's easy to see how 2020 can be your Year of Lavender!

For more varieties, visit ngb.org

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