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How to Grow Lavender: The Complete Gardener's Guide



Photo Credit: Lynn Yeh/Shutterstock

Botanical Name:
Lavandula angustifolia

Plant Type:

[Herb](#)

FREE GUIDE!



Exposure:

Soil: [Alkaline](#)
[/Basic](#) ,
pH: [Neutral](#)
[to](#)
[Slightly](#)
[Alkaline](#)

Bloom Time:

Flower Color: [Blue](#) ,
[Pink](#) ,
[Purple](#) ,
[White](#)

Hardiness: [5](#) , [6](#) , [7](#) ,
[8](#) , [9](#) ,
[10](#)
Zone:

Special Features: [Attracts](#)
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Planting, Growing, and Caring for Lavender Flowers

By [Catherine Boeckmann](#)

Last Updated: April 24, 2025



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Lavender adds aroma and soft beauty to the garden—plus, this herb attracts beautiful pollinators! Learn how to plant, grow, and harvest lavender. We'll also discuss which varieties are edible and how to propagate lavender.

About Lavender Plants

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The commonly cultivated lavender is the common or English lavender *Lavandula angustifolia* (formerly *L. officinalis*), which is hardy to [USDA Zone 5](#). A bushy peren-

spikes with blue-green, needle-like foliage. The oils in the flowers give the herb its distinctive balsam-like fragrance.

BUY SEEDS NOW

Called “English” lavender because it proliferates in the English climate, this plant’s main requirements are lots of sun and good drainage. It is not fussy about soil, and its presence lures bees, [butterflies](#), and [pollinators](#) to the garden. Plant lavender along a walkway or near a seating area.

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Interestingly, the name lavender comes from the Latin root *lavare*, which means “to wash.” Lavender was used in baths to purify the body and spirit, and today, it’s often used in soaps and shampoos.

In addition, lavender has proven medicinal uses. When the essential oils are inhaled, lavender has calming properties that reduce anxiety; it’s also a gentle sedative for insomnia. In ancient times, lavender flowers were sewn into sachets to aid with sleeplessness.

Lavender is even useful in the kitchen in baking and in drink recipes! Learn more below.

Read Next

- [What Herbs Help With Anxiety?](#)
- [Lavender Benefits for Health and Home](#)
- [How to Grow Sage Plants: The Complete Guide](#)

PLANTING

ately fertile. Lavender makes only one demand for the soil: It must drain well. Standing water and wet areas could encourage root rot. Amend compacted or clay soil with compost or aged manure to improve drainage. Plant lavender in a spot with at least 6 to 8 hours of sunlight each day (“full sun”).

When to Plant Lavender

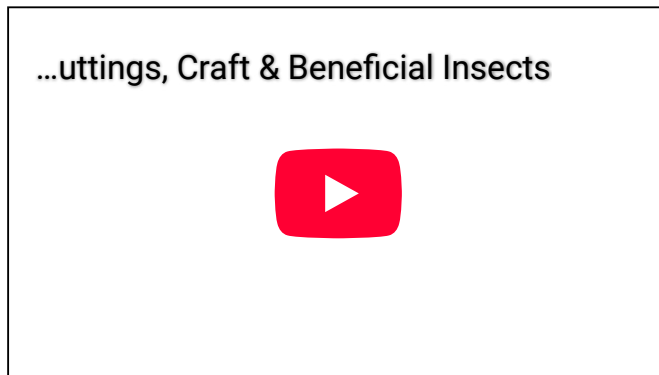
- Lavender is best planted as a young plant starting in the spring after the soil has warmed up to at least 60°F (15°C) and the threat of frost has passed.
- If planting in the fall, choose larger, more established plants to ensure their survival through the winter.

How to Plant Lavender

- Lavender is challenging to grow from seed; we recommend purchasing small starter plants from a garden nursery or taking a softwood cutting from an existing plant. Seeds may take up to 3 months to germinate, and seedlings

- Plant lavender 2 to 3 feet apart. Plants typically reach between 1 and 3 feet in height.
- Add mulch (rock or pea gravel work particularly well) to keep weeds minimal. Keep the mulch away from the crown of the lavender plant, however, to prevent excess moisture and root rot.

Check out this video to learn how to plant lavender:



GROWING

How to Care for Lavender

- Water once or twice a week after planting until plants are established. Water mature plants every 2 to 3

leaves are often a sign of overwatering.)

- In colder growing areas, plants may need extra winter protection. Cover the plants with a winter mulch of evergreen boughs or straw, insulating them from freezing winds and temperatures.

[Read more about winter care of lavender plants.](#)

- Another option for cold areas is to grow lavender in a pot, keeping it outdoors in the summer and indoors in winter. While indoors, place the pot in a south-facing window with as much light as possible —water sparingly, as the plant will be dormant at this time.



Pruning Lavender

to emerge from the base. Remove about one-third of the top to keep the plant from becoming leggy and bare at the base, but do not cut back into old wood, as it will not regrow.

In warm climates: All pruning can be carried out in autumn.

The flowering stems can be harvested while in bloom or snipped off after the flowers fade to keep the plant tidy.

Types

- **English lavender** (*Lavandula angustifolia*), the most common, is hardy to [USDA Zone 5](#). It's edible and often blooms twice a season. Hundreds of varieties exist in many colors (white, pink, blue-violet, and purple) and sizes.
 - **'Hidcote'**: deep purple flowers; silver-gray foliage; compact form
 - **'Munstead'**: violet-blue flowers; dark green foliage; compact form
 - **'Miss Katherine'**: deep pink flowers; aromatic foliage;

- **Lavandins** (*L. x intermedia*)—a hybrid of English and **Portuguese lavender** (*L. latifolia*)—are generally larger plants that bloom only once yearly, later in the summer.
 - **‘Phenomenal’**: vigorous variety highly tolerant of heat and humidity; resistant to common root and foliar diseases; long flower spikes
 - **‘Provence’**: vigorous, long-stemmed variety; very fragrant
- **Spanish lavender** (*L. stoechas*) and **French (fringed) lavender** (*L. dentata*) are typically only winter-hardy in Zones 7 to 9.

HARVESTING

How to Grow New Lavender from Cuttings

- Cut following the plant’s bloom. Choose side shoots for cuttings that have no buds.
- Cut very low near the root, getting several inches of stem. Gently scrape

foliage on the bottom 2 inches of the stem.

- Fill a small pot (4 inches or so) with potting mix. Optional: Dip each cutting in the rooting hormone first.
- Insert bare stem into potting soil. Firm the soil and water in. Cover the whole pot with clear plastic or a polythene bag to create humidity. Place pots in a warm, shaded area.
- Allow about 3 weeks for roots to appear. (If you tug gently, the root shouldn't move.) Then, remove the bag.
- Water when soil is dry an inch down; feed with 1/4-strength liquid plant fertilizer once a week.
- After a few weeks, transplant it into a larger pot.



Lavender is a wonderful herb for drying.

Here's how to harvest it:

- Harvest in the morning hours when the oils are the most concentrated.
- Snip off stems when about half of the flower buds have opened, cutting the stems as long as possible.
- Gather them into bundles and secure them with rubber bands.
- Dry the bundles of lavender by hanging them in a sheltered, cool, dark place with good air circulation.
- After a few weeks, the flowers will have dried fully and can be shaken gently from the stems into a lidded jar. Store the flowers in a cool, dark place.

Use your dried lavender to make [lavender sachets](#)—a lovely gift. Lavender sachets can help to keep your sheets or towels smelling sweet, repel moths and insects, and even promote a restful night's sleep.

Storing Lavender

straight into a sachet to keep towels, sheets, or clothes smelling sweet and to repel moths. If you suffer from insomnia, try inserting the sachets into a pillow so the calming scent can help you drift off to a restful slumber.

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PESTS/DISEASES

Lavender Pests and Diseases

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
Aphids	Insect	Misshapen/yellow leaves; distorted flowers; leaf drop; sticky “honeydew” (excretion) on leaves; sooty, black mold	Knock off with water spray; apply insecticidal soap; inspect new plants carefully; use slow-release fertilizers; avoid excess nitrogen; encourage lacewings, lady beetles/bugs, spiders
Fusarium wilt	Fungus	Plants wilt (sometimes one-sided) in daytime; later, entire plant wilts/dies; stunting; yellow leaves; poor flowering; roots rot; stem cross-section reveals brown discoloration	Destroy infected plants/roots/surrounding soil (do not compost); remove plant debris regularly; disinfect tools; resistant varieties; avoid excess nitrogen; in acidic soils, raise pH to 7.0; weed; 3- to 5-year rotation
Leaf spot (bacterial)	Bacteria	Varies; water-soaked rust/black leaf spots between veins later dry/fall out, leaving holes; leaves	Destroy infected parts/severely infected plants (do not compost); remove plant debris regularly; disinfect tools; pre-

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
Phytophthora crown and root rot	Oomycete	Leaves discolor/wilt; dieback; oozing cankers near base; reddish brown discoloration of inner bark/wood; roots rot; plants slow-growing/stunted/die	Destroy infected plants/surrounding soil (do not compost); prune out branch cankers; for woody plants, remove soil near infected crown to dry tissue/replace afterward; remove plant debris regularly; resistant varieties; prevent plant stress/injury; provide good drainage/do not overwater
Pythium root and stem rot	Oomycete	Plants stunted/yellow/may wilt in day but recover at night/die; dieback; stem bases brown/blacken; crown rot; root tips die; outer root tissue easily pulls off	Destroy infected parts/plants/surrounding soil (do not compost); remove plant debris regularly; disinfect tools; solarize soil; avoid overhead watering; provide good drainage/do not overwater
Rhizoctonia root and stem rot	Fungus	Yellow/brown leaves; reddish brown lesions/sunken cankers on lower stem/roots; roots rot; plants wilt in day and recover at night/stunted/die	Destroy infected plants (do not compost); good air circulation; prevent plant stress/injury; provide good drainage

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
Root-knot nematodes	Nematode	Typically, roots “knotty” or galled; plants stunted/yellow/ wilted/weakened; leaves and other parts may distort or die; poor flowering	Destroy infested plant debris after flowering season, including roots (do not compost); disinfect tools; choose resistant varieties; solarize soil, if possible; plant French marigolds as a trap crop
<u>Thrips</u>	Insect	Stunted plant growth; stippling; leaf drop	Knock off with water spray; use sticky traps; shake foliage/flowers; clip off unopened/infested buds and shoot tips; submerge in mixture of 7 parts water to 1 part isopropyl alcohol and discard; plant resistant cultivars and those adapted to local conditions; water adequately, avoid excess nitrogen; deadhead flowers
Viruses	Virus	Varies; leaves with yellow/light green mottling or rings; distorted leaves/stems/flowers; flowers streaked; stunting	Destroy infected plants (do not compost); remove plant debris regularly; disinfect tools; resistant varieties/certified virus-free plants; control sap-sucking insects; weed

Pest/Disease	Type	Symptoms	Control/Prevention
		dew” (excrement), sooty, black mold; yellow/silver areas on leaves; wilted/stunted plants; adults fly if disturbed; some species transmit viruses	knock off leaf undersides with water spray in morning/evening; set yellow sticky traps; apply insecticidal soap; invite beneficial insects and hummingbirds with native plants; weed; reflective mulch

WIT AND WISDOM

- Ancient Egyptians used lavender in the embalming process. They wrapped the dead in shrouds that had been soaked in lavender water.
- The Romans, all the way back in A.D. 77, are documented to have used lavender to repel insects and soothe insect bites. Add a lavender sachet to your towels, sheets, or clothes to repel moths.
- The herb is also known for its calming effects. If you suffer from insomnia, try slipping a lavender sachet into your pillow. Lavender oil is used to naturally

[Learn more about the health benefits of lavender!](#)

RECIPES

LAVENDER SCONES

HONEY-LAVENDER SYRUP

COOKING NOTES

Although edible, lavender should be used sparingly in recipes. The herb has a lovely perfumed flavor, but it can be too strong or bitter if overused.

The herb is often used in *herbes de Provence* mixes, and leaves can be chopped and added sparingly to some sauces, shortbread biscuits and baked goods, ice cream, teas, and lemonade.

See our recipe for [lavender scones](#) and

HERBS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Catherine Boeckmann



Catherine Boeckmann loves nature, stargazing, and gardening so it's not surprising that she and The Old Farmer's Almanac found each other. She leads digital content for the Almanac website, and is also a certified master gardener in the state of Indiana. [Read More from Catherine Boeckmann](#)

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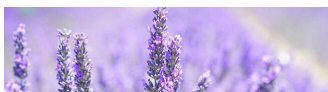
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COMMENTS

ADD A COMMENT

Faith (not verified)2 months 1 week ago

I live in southern (lower peninsula) Michigan from fall to spring and spend my summers in the southern (upper peninsula). When should I

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when would it be best to transplant them in the UP?

REPLY

The Editors 2 months 1 week ago

Hi, Faith. You should start your seeds anywhere from 6 to 12 weeks before you are planning to transplant. If you are transplanting in UP, that date would be around the last week of May into early June.

REPLY

Carla (not verified) 8 months 1 week ago

I'm told that lavender repels mosquitos. Is that factual or just another internet rumor?

REPLY

Joe Bills 8 months ago

Multiple studies have found that the

repellent. I don't know of studies, however, that have shown that the plant in its natural form bothers mosquitoes much. Here's a collection of some of our thoughts on natural repellents:

<https://www.almanac.com/plants-repel-mosquitoes-and-insects>

REPLY

Diane Ruonavaara (not verified) 8 months 2 weeks ago

I live in zone 3 northern Minnesota. Can I bring lavender in the house to over winter?

REPLY

The Editors 8 months 2 weeks ago

You can! In fact, we have a whole article about [how to overwinter lavender](#).

REPLY

Can you grow lavender in pots and they will come back yearly? Or is it best to plant them in the Ground? Thanks.

REPLY

Jessica Hansen (not verified) 10 months ago

We are moving in a and I would like to take my lavender with me, what is the best way to go about potting the plant?

REPLY

The Editors 9 months 4 weeks ago

Goodness, you are moving a lot of plants, based on other comments. I'm not sure we can get to them all, but here are tips on transplanting lavender. Move in cool weather when the plant is dormant. As with most plants, gently dig a wide circle to get as much of the root ball intact as well as the soil around it. You can also cut back the lavender by a third before transferring.

Assuming you're putting in a pot temporarily, just at soil to pot and ensure the root ball is at the same depth as it was before. Pat soil around root ball but don't cover the crown! Water

REPLY

Jan (not verified) 10 months 1 week ago

Our lavender plants were put into the ground a week and a half ago and now look like they are dying. We have kept them watered. Any suggestions, thank you

REPLY

MORE COMMENTS

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