

Lavandula - Care Guide

Lavender Care

So complex are the origins of cultivated lavenders, and the 39 or so species now recognised, that my friend Susyn Andrews has recently written a huge new book on the subject. We will attempt to keep things more simple here.

Lavandula are highly aromatic evergreen shrubs and sub-shrubs growing in the wild in exposed rocky coastal and mountain habitats right across the Mediterranean from the Canary Islands to the near east, northern Africa and on into India. Lavender may have been cultivated in Britain at least since the 16th century. *Lavandula angustifolia* is the source of the true oil of lavender which was once widely regarded in medicine as the cure for many ailments. It was also said to make a spirituous tincture which was 'a popular cordial, very commodious for those who wish to indulge in a dram under the appearance of an elegant medicine'.

Today lavenders are cultivated for their scent and flowers, for their attraction to bees, and because they have so many ornamental uses in modern as well as older 'cottage' gardens. Today we do not pay much attention to using dried lavender flowers to scent lavatories or to keep moths out of clothes cupboards or indeed for their oil.

Lavenders make a perfect edging to a lawn or border, underplant well in groups with roses and many other herbaceous plants as well as, with the taller growing varieties, creating a low flowering hedge.



Lavander as a hedge



Lavander as a hedge



Lavander as a hedge



Lavander needs pruning



Lavander needs pruning



Lavander pruned in pot



Lavander pruned in pot

Lavandula angustifolia is a compact shrub with grey-green leaves up to 2in long. In mid and late summer it produces long, tall stalks of fragrant pale to deep blue flowers in dense spikes. The most popular forms of L. angustifolia are 'Hidcote' and 'Munstead'. The former is more compact with silvery-grey leaves and dark purple flowers up to 2ft. The latter grows slightly shorter blue-purple flowers and both are perfect edging plants. There are many other forms of L. angustifolia ranging in size and flower colour from blue to lilac and white. It is really a choice which only you can make.

Lavandula x intermedia 'Grosso', or Dutch lavender, has tall flowering spikes of up to 3ft in height and mid blue flowers.

Lavandula stoechas, or French lavender, has a rather different shaped flowering head. The uppermost flower bracts are sterile and form a conspicuous tuft known as the 'coma'. These compact plants grow 2 or 3ft tall and the leaves are covered in a fine grey down. The flowering stalks are generally shorter than on other species and *L. stoechas* itself has fragrant dark purple flowers topped by conspicuous purple bracts (the coma). There are many forms of *L. stoechas* with white, crimson, plum purple or blue flower heads. *L. stoechas* 'Tiara' has white bracts on top of purple blue flower heads.

Lavenders are usually grown from semi ripe cuttings taken in early to mid summer. They will root quickly and should be potted and grown on before the autumn so that you have a new crop ready to plant out if required at the start of the next season. After flowering, and when the seed heads are dry but still retain their now fully formed seeds, these can be hung and dried off in a dry shed above some newspaper. The seeds will quickly fall down for collection and sowing in seed trays in the greenhouse in the spring.



L. angustifolia 'Hidcote'



L. angustifolia 'Hidcote'



L. angustifolia 'Hidcote'



L. angustifolia 'Munstead'



L. angustifolia 'Munstead'



L. angustifolia 'Munstead'



L. stoechas 'Kew Red'



L. stoechas 'Pretty Polly'



L.stoechas 'Regal Splendour'



L. stoechas 'Tiara'



L. x intermedia 'Grosso'



L. x intermedia 'Grosso'

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/1zA9PweBxMQ?rel=0>

Pruning French Lavender - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here https://www.youtube.com/E0A1_yWC7IE?rel=0

General Dead-heading Of Lavender - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/GWYyB1xs5PQ>

Propagation By Cuttings - Video Tip

View this video on Youtube here <https://www.youtube.com/adUCaG9qnFQ?rel=0>

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