



J & K Llamas

Landscape, Nursery & Decorative Rock

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## All About Lavender

Lavender is known as the "John Wayne" of plants: it's rough, it's tough and it will take most of what you can give it. Originally from the Mediterranean area, it is well adapted to our high altitude climate of hot, dry summers and dry winters. They are beautiful planted in flower beds, herb gardens, desert-scapes, or as small hedges.

Lavender is grown for its beautiful blooms, to be used for perfumes, aromatic oils, sachets, floral arrangements, medicine, an insect repellent and as an edible herb (**intermedia and angustifolia varieties ONLY—the others contain harmful/poisonous chemicals that should not be ingested**). It has been used for thousands of years by civilizations around the world. Its modern name comes from the Latin word lavare "to wash" and/or livendula "livid" or "bluish". In the Victorian era, it signified love and devotion.

As an herbal medicine lavender is and has been very widely used. For soothing, relaxing qualities few herbs can be claimed as effective. Constituents of the oils found in lavender can treat hyperactivity, insomnia, flatulence, bacteria, fungus, microbial activity on gums, airborne molds, and (in mixture with pine, thyme, mint, rosemary, clove, and cinnamon oils) "Staph" bacteria. Compounds in the plant have even shown promise as a treatment for certain cancers. Lavender may even be useful against

impotence. In a study of men the scent of pumpkin and lavender rated as the scent found most arousing. (*Please keep in mind we are not doctors and do not advocate these treatments, this is for informational purposes only.*)

Lavender can be bought in your local nurseries in 4", #1 & #5 pots. Buy them in the Spring and early Summer. Plant them in a sunny area (all day sun is great!), with very good drainage. It needs little or no soil amendments and little to no fertilizer. When first planting, make sure your plant receives enough water to prevent drooping and encourage root establishment. Once the plant is established, you can cut back on the water—they thrive in drought conditions—this does not mean stop watering. If your plant is in an area where it receives water and it is happy then let it be and do not change anything as it has acclimated to where you have planted it.

Place a nice layer (2 inches) of mulch around (but not on or up against) the lavender to help with soil moisture and insulation. After the plant has bloomed and the blooms have been removed, shape the plant by removing about 2 inches off the foliage. If your plant becomes "open" in the middle or woody—simply remove up to ¼ of the old branches—if this does not help—it may be time to dig it up and replant.

Cut blooms when freshly bloomed, put into water—they will last for 10-15 days in a vase. Change the water fairly often as the water will become oily. If you want to dry the lavender blooms, then bind the stems, once cut, and hang them upside down in a cool, dark place. (Closets are a great place—plus your clothes will smell wonderful.)

## Good varieties for our area

### Angustifolia

These are also called "True Lavenders," these are perennials but they die back in the winter and come back strong in the Spring and Summer. These are the best for cooking.

**Varieties:** English, Munstead(excellent flavor), 'Premier', 'Betty's Blue', 'Skylark', 'Fred Boutin', 'Ana Louisa'

### Intermedias

These stay green all winter long and normally do not die back. These are the most fragrant and are mostly used in bouquets, sachets, oils. 'Provence' can be used both for cooking and fragrance!

**Varieties:** 'Provence', 'Twickle', 'Grosso', 'Abrialii'