

The Smell of Summer

Lavender for health and beauty is easy and useful

Breathe in a deep breath. Inhale the scent of the Mediterranean. Of relaxation. Of the height of Portland summers. Especially in hot gardens. You may very well be inhaling the peaceful scent of lavender.

The pungent herb and flower is abundant in the lavender farms in Yamhill and Helvetia and especially the purple hills in Hood River. If you've ever come across these rolling purple hills, you know how scenic and beautiful they are. Stop the car or bike and relax with that intoxicating scent. Can you tell I love lavender? It's a great plant in the Portland area and does incredibly well if you follow a few rules of thumb.

First, lavender loves southern exposure and some nice, hot sun. Lavender hates wet roots. If you have heavy clay soil, your lavender will survive the wet, soggy winter and spring if you amend a little with gravel or adjust the pH level with lime or bone meal.

It's not necessarily the cold snap in January that will get your lavender but soggy, wet roots if it's planted in boggy conditions.

A great place to plant lavender is in areas where hot afternoon sun reflects and soaks into the ground. Along gravel paths, lavender is the perfect softener to the path's curves and can be allowed to spill over onto the pathway a bit. As you walk by, your leg may brush it and allow its scent to waft through the garden.

Lavender does well with some light summer watering, especially during its first year, but the most important thing with lavender is keeping it pruned, and knowing how to do it right. Regular pruning

will reward you with longer living lavender, but if you find it's aging and getting a little flat in the middle, rule of thumb calls for pruning back never more than a third of the plant. Follow the next season up with another third and you'll have a well-balanced and happy plant.

Renowned for its many medicinal uses, lavender is used in the production of lavender oil, and its flowers are a classic used in potpourri, sachets and herbal infusions. It can be used as an antiseptic and to calm nerves.

There are many kinds of lavender. It's hard to choose, but here are a few tips and all mentioned here specifically grow well in the Northwest. A classic English lavender, Hidcote is famous for its fragrance. Grosso and Provence are especially good for crafts and as cut flowers, because they have nice, long, sturdy stems. The lavenders you've seen with the butterfly swirl flowers on top? Those

are *Lavandula Stoechas* (Spanish or French Lavender) and are mainly used in the landscape and for their handsome good looks. For culinary use, stick to any of the lavenders from the *lavandula angustifolia* family: They'll have less pungent or camphor flavor and stay more on the sweetly fragrant side of the flavor wheel.

If you like to use everything you grow, lavender's your girl. She can provide fresh bouquets, dried bouquets that last for months, fragrant lavender wands, buds for luscious sachets and even the makings for homemade herb mixes like herbs de Provence, named for the herbs growing wild on the hillsides of Provence and include



Lavender grows great in the garden and in the lavender farms of Helvetia. The scent and romance can't be beat.



Sassy Gardener
BY LEANN LOCHER

lavender, thyme, rosemary, savory and fennel. And then there's the deliciousness of lavender lemonade, lavender ice cream or my favorite, lavender shortbread cookies. These are

particularly perfect for making ice cream sandwiches. Press a scoop of vanilla bean ice cream between two, wrap in plastic wrap, and individually freeze. You have the perfect casual dinner dessert.

Lavender Shortbread Cookies

Combine ¼ cup powdered sugar, ¼ cup of granulated sugar and 1 cup softened butter. Beat with a mixer until soft. Add in 1 tablespoon lavender buds and 1 teaspoon vanilla. In a separate bowl, combine 2 cups flour, ¼ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon baking powder. Gradually add the flour mixture into your butter mixture until combined. Roll dough into balls and flatten on a greased cookie sheet. Bake in a 375-degree oven for 20 minutes. Makes 3 dozen small cookies.

Lavender Lemonade

Lavender lemonade is refreshing and makes a wonderful cocktail base. Boil 2 ½ cups of water with 1 ½ cups of sugar. (You can reduce the sugar and increase the water if you like.) Add 12 stems of fresh lavender and remove from heat. Cover the pot with a lid and let it cool. When cool, add 2 ½ cups water and 2 ¼ cups lemon juice (12 to 14 lemons). Strain out the lavender, serve with ice and enjoy. 10

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