

Master Gardener Favorites

Lavenders

I have a form of English lavender called *Lavandula 'vera'*. It is popular in our area due to its full sun and low water needs as well as its wonderfully fragrant smell. The plants can grow to four feet high; however, they are easily cut back if you desire a more compact look. Leaves are gray and provide a nice background for the small (1/2") lavender flowers that bloom during our hottest months. No fertilizer necessary - just well draining, loose soil. Merely rubbing the foliage gives a nice fragrance!

Lavandula stoechas 'Silver Anouk' Love this lavender principally due to its white-grey foliage. Many grey foliage plants have a yellowish tinge, but *Silver Anouk* is very bright white-grey, a stand-out evergreen plant in my garden for year-round interest. The abundant purple flowers contrast beautifully with the foliage.

<http://nativeson.typepad.com/plants/2010/08/lavandula-stoechas-silver-anouk.html>

My favorite is *Lavandula stoechas 'Bella'* series. *Bella Rouge'* is a great rebloomer with nice foliage year round and has compact, bushy growth.

There are so many different types that I like, but I'll name my top three:

Provence: for color, fragrance, and cooking

English: for stem length (It's perfect for making lavender wands!), and the fragrance lasts forever in potpourri

Pinatta: an unusual variety! I like it for its gray leaves and stems, and the flower itself. It is a perfect landscape lavender!

I could go on, but I guess that I just like them all!

The two I have are the most common: *Lavandula angustifolia* (English Lavender) and *Lavandula dentata* (French Lavender).

I just like the **French lavender** for its culinary and medicinal qualities as well as aroma...and its color and texture

Spanish lavender for its beauty in color, texture and beautiful flower,

I've experimented with lavender cultivars in Fresno for almost 20 years, and find that the results vary by soil/neighborhood, planting technique, variety, drainage, and what seems to be random acts of the hostile universe. Best picks for my garden (Old Fig area, lots of hardpan, our soil has been dug out and heavily re-worked to improve drainage) at this time:

- **Dwarf Hidcote:** 12-15" including flowers, very dark purple buds, opening to dark purple flowers about 1" can get a bit leggy, benefits from gentle but regular shaping.
- **Goodwin Creek Grey:** tall, abundant plant with fine feathery foliage, the first to bloom in the spring, moderate scent, flowers an unusual intense smoky purple Prune vigorously.
- **White Grosso :** Pure white, long plump blooms on very long stems. Showy!
- **Blue Cushion:** Neat, very compact bush about 12" when mature, with bright blue blossoms on long stems. Stays small, needs only gentle trimming for shape

- **Fred Boutin:** Large hearty bush, very abundant bloomer, medium purple, long blooming season with generous fall re-bloom, good scent
- **Provence:** Good cooking lavender
- **Vera:** Best scent

I've killed off probably another 12-20 varieties over the years, trial and error. I found Jean Davis particularly sensitive to wet roots. Sometimes things will grow great in a pot but not in the ground and vice versa. Of course all dislike poorly draining soil and all love sun. I try 1-2 new varieties each year. Some live. Some don't!

It isn't very 'sexy' or unique, but **Lavendula angustifolia cv. vera** is a compact, hardy, tough as nails reliable performer with glorious deep lavender flowers that last and last. one of my favorites.

I have a huge bush of **English angustifolia**, which reliably produces masses of blooms all summer, as long as I don't water the nearby flowerbed too much!! I always like to have some English lavender in my gardens. It brings the bees in masses, makes everything smell so nice, and is a staple in my herb collection.

I also have a **Spanish lavender**, which has a most wonderful purple flower that looks wonderful next a blood-red floribunda rose. Of course, it doesn't smell quite as wonderful, but it can also be depended to re-appear each spring, which is in keeping with my lazy gardening habits! :)

I do have lavender in my garden and have some experience with three different varieties: **Spanish or Lavendula stoechas 'Otto Quast'**, **French or Lavendula dentata** and a small English variety or **Lavendula angustifolia 'Munstead'**. I love the show that the **Spanish stoechas** gives in the spring and the bees love it too but I find it gets woody after a couple of years, doesn't have as good a scent as the others and isn't great for drying. I've ended up pulling several out and haven't replaced them. The **French dentata** can get huge so it needs to be in a place that it can spread out. It will crowd out other plants, at least it did in my garden. It does have a wonderful fragrance and it has a much longer bloom time than stoechas. Since I have a small garden my favorite is the **little English Munstead**. It's not particularly showy but it is short and robust with a wonderful fragrance and is fantastic for drying. I have an old armoire upstairs that I hang bunches in to dry, smells so good. It doesn't get woody like stoechas so it has good staying power. I found the following information about Munstead on the website <http://everythinglavender.com/munsteadlavender.html>.

" 'Munstead' is named after Munstead Woods in Surrey, England which was the home of Gertrude Jeckyl, a famous English garden designer. Munstead is able to tolerate heat better than some of the other varieties as well." It's a good one for our central valley.

I grow several types of lavender, 3 huge plants of **'Provence'**, which smells great. Also have 3 **French lavenders**, including a cultivar and put in 3 **'Grosso'** last year which is in bud. For closet sachets I love the **Provence**, a good typical fragrance. The French is pretty but the fragrance not as pleasing. BUT, just saw a friend's **'Hidcote'** and **'Munstead'** which are both very deep blue and dwarf. So after this year's bloom, I'll replace the Provence with the smaller plants.