

July 1, 2020



The Enduring Appeal of Lavender
By Donna Marshall
UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County

There is a plant that has endured the test of time and could be in your garden right now-- the lovely lavender. With a history dating back 2500 years to the time of the ancient Egyptians, it has been celebrated in folklore for its healing and relaxing properties, as well as its contributions to the cosmetic and perfume industries and its many culinary uses. It is also a standout in the garden that does well in our area, with beautiful grey-green foliage displayed on a compact plant covered with stunning spikes of aromatic flowers. Lavender has a long bloom time (spring through fall) and is a favorite of pollinators. It is pest free, drought tolerant and deer resistant, and very easy to grow. What's not to love?

While lavenders need relatively little care after planting, the right growing conditions are very important. Select a planting spot that has six or more hours of sun per day -- too little sun can hinder flower production and cause leggy growth. Because lavenders won't tolerate "wet feet", soil should be gritty and drain well to avoid fungal root and crown rot problems. Soil used for backfilling the planting hole can be amended with sand or organic matter to improve drainage. Planting high, one inch above the soil line, will help water drain away from the plant's center. Where soil composition is heavy, consider creating planting mounds above the soil line; lavender also grows well in raised planters and containers. Proper spacing based on plant size is vital for good air circulation and helps prevent fungal problems -- carefully read the plant tag for best recommendations. As a final touch, apply two to three inches of mulch such as pea gravel or decomposed granite, leaving several inches of bare ground around the plant's stems. Water using drip irrigation to keep foliage dry, and allow the soil to dry before watering. Lavender is very drought tolerant once established, but new plants need regular watering during the first year. Likewise, new plantings can benefit from the application of a balanced fertilizer at half strength, but established plants do not need fertilizing.

July 1, 2020

Pruning is REQUIRED when it comes to lavender to help maintain a compact plant shape and discourage the development of woody growth. Remove faded flowers immediately at the end of the bloom cycle to encourage reblooming and pinch foliage to encourage branching. In the fall, cut the green plant material back one-third to two-thirds, depending on variety, leaving a tidy mound of foliage to overwinter. DO NOT prune into the wood below the green plant material. This dry wood will not generate new growth.

There are many beautiful lavenders varying in plant size, flower color and shape, foliage color and leaf shape/texture from which to choose. English lavenders, *Lavendula angustifolia*, are generally under two feet tall and known for their beautiful flowers, sweet fragrance, and narrow leaf shape. ‘Hidcote’ and ‘Munstead’ (both dark violet flowering) are excellent cultivars; ‘Thumbelina Leigh’ (violet blue) is an outstanding dwarf variety. The newer lavender hybrids, *Lavendula x. intermedia*, are crosses between English lavender and broader leafed varieties, with large highly fragrant flowers on plants that are up to three feet tall. ‘Grosso’ (rich violet) and ‘Provence’ (violet with light purple highlights) are well regarded selections. Spanish lavender (*Lavendula stoechas*) blooms early on plants 18-24’ tall and is known for its showy flower bracts; ‘Otto Quast’ (purple flower head with dark purple bracts) is highly recommended. The biggest problem when it comes to lavender may well be which beauties to plant in your garden. If you are discovering lavender for the first time or continuing to enjoy its enduring appeal, it is worthy of your time, effort, and affection.

You are invited to a Zoom meeting on Growing Lavender on July 8th at 9:00 a.m. Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://ucanr.zoom.us/j/9123456789>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Currently we are in phase 2 resumption of activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Master Gardener events will for the foreseeable future be limited. Please see our calendar of events for learning opportunities. We realize our public classes are valued by County residents and we especially appreciate your continued support and understanding during this public health challenge.

We do have some good news--the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, is open to the public, from 9 AM to noon on Fridays and Saturdays. State and county public health guidelines require us to limit visitors to ten at a time (including our docents) and ask that they practice social distancing and wear face coverings. Restrooms will not be open. Check http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden for more information. Have a gardening question? Master Gardeners are working hard remotely and can still answer your questions. Leave a message on our office telephone: 530-621-5512, or use the “Ask a Master Gardener” option on our website: mgeldorado.ucanr.edu. We’ll get back to you! Master Gardeners are also on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

Stay safe and follow recommended health and sanitation practices in the coming weeks.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website

July 1, 2020

at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see <http://ucanr.edu/mastergardener> e-news.