

## Why Plant Lavender?

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Spring is in the air! Giddy gardeners everywhere are day-dreaming of what plants to add to their gardens this year. Despite the glorious rain, many gardeners here on the Central Coast are leaning towards transforming their water-loving gardens into drought-tolerant ones. While researching drought-tolerant plants, why not consider the ever-versatile herb that is lavender?

There are many varieties of lavender to choose from (English vs. hybrids) but one thing is certain: they will all look magnificent in any garden. Lavender planted close together in a row will easily form a beautiful, tidy hedge; planted next to a decorative boulder, lavender looks classy and aesthetically pleasing to the eye. And, who can resist a beautiful ceramic pot with a fragrant lavender plant growing inside of it?

Lavender is a wonderfully versatile plant. There are varieties for culinary use (lavender shortbread cookies? Oh my!) as well as for essential oil production which has many applications. Lavender plants can have sweet, floral aroma or have a more intense, camphor-like smell which naturally repels mosquitoes and other bugs. Deer steer clear of it, too. When the buds are dried, they can be used in sachets to store in clothing drawers or to use in clothes dryers for fragrance. Dried lavender on stems are used dried flower arrangements. Lavender in any form is a wonderful aromatherapy tool and has a natural calming effect.

While there are many drought-tolerant plants to choose from, lavender is a very popular choice for a low maintenance and low-water use garden. Lavender prefers soil that has higher pH or alkaline soil (sandy-loam) with excellent drainage. Because of its evergreen status, lavender plants look great all year round but are especially magnificent to look at when their various shades of blue-purple blooms are on display during the late spring and summer months. When the blooms are done, simply cut the stems off where they meet the plant and you'll have an eye-pleasing, neatly-groomed plant on display.

With its sublime, relaxing fragrance, hardiness in dry conditions and extreme versatility, why *not* add a few lavender plants to your garden?