

Latin Name/Genus: *Lavandula sp.*

Family: *Lamiaceae*

Difficulty: Moderately challenging

Season: Warm Season

Exposure: Full-sun

Zone: Hardy as perennial to Zone 5 (grows as annual in cooler climates)



Timing: Germinate using lavender seeds collected in the autumn and sow on the surface of a seed tray with bottom heat maintaining 4-10°C; overwinter seedlings in a cool greenhouse or cold frame with good ventilation; can then be potted on as needed. Alternatively, start the lavender seeds indoors in winter, planting a few seeds in a few pots with sterilized seed starting mix; dampen the mix, press the seeds into the surface, insert the pots into plastic bags, and put them in the freezer for about a week, then let them defrost to room temperature on their own, followed by the use of bottom heat on seedlings as indicated in the previous method.

Starting: Barely cover the seed, and avoid using a plastic lid or covering, as this will keep the soil more moist than needed; lavender seeds should germinate in 14-21 days as long as the soil is warm. If watering is necessary, watering from below is recommended. If germination rate is low after 3-4 weeks, lower the temperature to 5-10°C for a couple of weeks, then raise it back up again. Pot up any tiny lavender seedlings, grow them in a protected greenhouse or on a windowsill, then relocate/transplant to the garden in spring.

Growing: Lavender prefers full sun and well-drained, fertile soil. Trim plants back hard in spring, just as new growth starts – but never prune back into the woody part of the stems - this should encourage even growth for the first leaves and bloom; cut back again in early autumn, but again – never the old woody part of the stems.

Nutrient Preferences: Lavender generally prefers feedings with more nitrogen than phosphorus and potassium, however it's recommended a balanced fertilizer gets worked into the soil prior to planting/transplanting.

Harvest: Gather lavender flowers just as they open - dry on open trays, or by hanging in small bunches; pick the leaves anytime to use fresh, or if dehydrating the leaves, gather before the flowering stage begins.

Companion Planting: Lavender appreciates being planted near alliums, coneflowers, daisies, echinacea, gaillardia, marigolds, oregano, roses (or any species in the *Rosaceae* family), rosemary, sage, sedum, thyme, yarrow, and zinnias; avoid planting near impatiens, mint, or any incompatible plants like camellias and hostas (whose sun/watering requirements don't pair well).