

Getting to know Lavender better

Lavender and Lavandin are produced in great quantity in South East France where a combination of factors like sunlight, climate and altitude serve to create what is regarded as the worlds finest and most abundant lavender. All in all lavender in southern france is farmed on 20,000 hectares by 2000 producers who send their products to 120 distillers.

Botanical name: *Lavendula Angustifolia* Miller

Characteristics: The colour of the flowers varies from blue white to deep blue. Each plant is different from its neighbour. It is grown at altitudes of between 600m and 1200m.

Yield: 1 hectare of lavender yields 15kg of essential oil. 90 tonnes are produced. Contains: Linalool, Linalyl acetate, phenol

Uses: cosmetics, perfumery, pharmacy and aromatherapy. A bouquet of lavender will keep pests, moths and insects at bay and fragrance the home.



Lavandin

Lavandin is a natural clone of Spike Lavender and *Lavendula Angustifolia*. The principal constituents are Borneol and Camphor so like Spike Lavender it must be used in aromatherapy with care. All the famous pictures of Lavender are in fact of Lavandin. Some 1000 tonnes are produced compared to 90 tonnes of true lavender. The most vigorous plants are propagated by cuttings, are disease and pest resistant and prolific. 1 hectare yields 100kg of essential oil. A typical farmer with 80 hectares will put 60 down to Lavandin and 20 down to true Lavender. Lavandin is used in soaps, washing powders and perfumes. An aromatherapist will use Spike Lavender.

While it has a much lower linalool and linalyl acetate content lavandin can be safely used everyday in the home and added to liquid soaps but in low doses. Just add a few drops to the front door mat and the perfume will rise when it is trodden on creating a relaxing welcome!

The many properties and uses of lavender

Lavender is used in 90% of mens perfumes to give a green smell of mown grass. Lavender is widely used in pharmacy and aromatherapy. Lavender is widely used in fragrance. Lavender has antiseptic (phenol), relaxing (linalool), and healing properties (linalyl acetate) particularly of burns.

A great researcher into the uses of Lavender called Gattefosse who coined the term aromatherapy used lavender to treat his own burns and gangrene after a laboratory accident. His and Dr Jean Valnets books remain in print. Like all alcohol an inhalation of lavender can be stimulating in a small does and relaxing in a large dose.

No one really knows what all the components of Lavender contribute. Some effects may depend on components present in tiny proportions but research continues.

Day to day use

A relaxing anti stress bath

A soothing massage

A relaxing massage

Lavender in cooking: Lavender honey. Or mix 1/3 lavender flowers with 2/3 cane sugar. Use this perfumed sugar in herbal teas, on strawberries, in cakes or creams. Add the flowers to meat dishes with rosemary.

Precautions: It is important to store essential oils correctly and discard after their expiry dates as their components can oxidise to allergens.

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Lavender in the house

In an essential oil diffuser. In a home made soap or candle.

Lavender pot pourri. Put lavender flowers in a glass container. Add rose petals and other flowers. Stir from time to time so the flowers give up their perfume. The smell of lavender helps you relax and sleep. Place lavender flowers in bags in the wardrobe to keep away moths (linalool)

Lavender in aromatherapy from Aromatherapy by Jean Valnet

For external use: essential oil to clean and dress wounds and burns

For internal use: infusion: a dessertspoon of flowers to a cup of boiling water. Leave to infuse for 10 minutes. 3 cups a day between meals. Calming, Soothing, Diuretic

Useful addresses



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