



LAVENDER OFFICIANALIS

also *L.angustifolia*, *L.spica*, *L. vera* and others.

Lavender belongs to the Lamiaceae family of mints. It appreciates mediterranean conditions of hot summers and dry winters. It was probably taken to Britain by the Romans. There are many kinds of lavender, and many interchange genes. It has given its name to a colour. It is thought that the name derives from 'lavare' meaning to wash because it was used in the laundry and for keeping clothes smelling fresh and clean.

This woody shrub must have a well-drained, sunny position and needs light pruning to keep it dense and flowering several times a year. It does very well with rosemary as on the TLC Garden berm, which is a feature of our Garden. Few pests bother lavender, it does not do well in clay or in an acidic soil. It does not like to be moved, but grows easily from cuttings.

The perfume of this well-loved herb is a most useful aspect of its medicinal value. Lavender oil is known for its soothing effect on the nervous system, itching skin and tight muscles.

Dorothy Hall related how lavender oil it was issued to WW 11 soldiers, as it carries well, keeps forever and is both calming and a strong antiseptic and analgesic.

It is indeed a wonder oil as it is also anti-fungal, anti-histamine, anti-inflammatory, anti- microbial, anti-spasmodic, and cardio tonic, regenerative, sedative and insect repellent.

Lavender mixes well with many other essential oils. Personally, I make up a very effective mosquito and midge repellent using a few drops lavender and lemon myrtle oil in a base of witch hazel.

(This year I am also adding Kunzea oil as a tick repellent).

The French scientist Rene Gattefosse related that when he severely burned his arm in a laboratory accident, he quickly plunged his arm into a vat of lavender oil. Not only did he reduce the pain, but he discovered lavender's ability to regenerate skin

and speed the healing of a wound. Lavender is one of the few essential oils of today that is listed in the British pharmacopeia.

If you choose to use lavender oil, make sure it is true lavender and not one that has been extended with 'lavandin', or a synthetic linalool, linalyl acetate.

Dorothy Hall recommended lavender oil to patients who refuse to admit that they have problems with their nervous energy, emotions or behaviour.

She used to advise people to use the bath as a 'medication'. Just add one or two drops, it works wonders for the entire household as the perfume flows throughout the house, benefiting children and adults alike. Lavender oil is for over-conscientious people, who in order to be 'perfect' set up enormous tension in the trapezius muscle going down the back and sides of the neck. Massage lavender oil into the neck and down the cerebral vertebra especially over C.7. The lavender oil relaxes and calms the nerves and muscles.

If you have too much to think about and can't sleep use lavender oil rubbed into the temples, or wrists and have a cup of camomile tea at bedtime to relax your mind, body and spirit.

Newton's Pharmacopeia at 119 York Street has a lovely *L. angustifolia* (Mont Blanc).

There are a great many uses for lavender and Anthony Zappia an essential oil writer/researcher has listed 20 on his website.

Lavender as a herb can be used with discretion in cooking and flavouring many foods. Dorothy Hall did not advocate it for internal use. Picking the flowers for perfume and visual delight may be enjoyed throughout most of the year.

Notes prepared by Janet Fairlie-Cuninghame



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