

Common Name: **Lavender**

Genus: *Lavendula*

Species: *angustifolia*

Family: Labiatae

AKA: *Lavendula vera*, *Lavendula spica*, Common Lavender, Spike, English Lavender, True Lavender, Narrow-Leaved Lavender; Formerly *L. officinalis*



Historical Uses:

Medical: “Lavender is warm and dry since it has just a little moisture. It is not worth a person to eat it, but it does have a strong smell. If a person has many lice, let the person smell lavender frequently; the lice will die. And its smell clears the eyes since it contains the power of the strongest aromas and the usefulness of the bitterest one. Therefore, it constrains many evil things, and evil spirits are driven out by it.” (1)

“The distilled water of lavender smelt unto, or the temples and forehead bathed therewith, is a refreshing to them that have the Catalepsie, a light Migram, & to them that have the falling sicknesse, and that use to swoone much. But when there is an abundance of humors, especially mixt with blood, it is not then to be used safely, neither is the composition to be taken which is made of distilled wine: in which such kindes of herbes, flours, or seeds, and certaine spices are infused or steeped, though most men do rashly and at adventure give them without making any difference at all.” (2)

“Stoechas grows in the Islands of Galatia over against Messalia, called ye Stoechades, from whence also it has its name, is an herb with slender twiggs, having ye haire like Tyme, but yet longer leaved sharp in ye taste, & somewhat bitterish, but ye decoction of it as the Hyssop is good for ye griefs in ye thorax. It is mingled also profitably with Antidots.” (3)

“Given for pains in the heart and fainting spells, it promoted sleep and was a sedative for headache when made into an application for the forehead. When used as a decoction, patients drank it to cure epilepsy and kidney trouble and to prevent apoplexy; it was also mixed into antidotes. When put into a plaster along with thyme, it healed scorpion bites.” (4)



“Mercury owns the herb, and it carries its effects very potently. Lavender is of a special good use for all the griefs and pains of the head and brain that proceed of a cold cause, as the apoplexy falling sickness, the dropsy, or sluggish malady, cramps, convulsions, palsies, and often faintings. It strengthens the stomach, and freeth the liver and spleen from obstructions, provoketh women’s courses, and expelleth the dead child and after-birth. The flowers of lavender steeped in wine, helpeth them make water that are stopped, or are troubled with wind or colic, if the place be bathed therewith. A decoction made with the flowers of lavender, horehound, fennel, asparagus root, and a little cinnamon, is very profitably used to help the falling sickness, and the giddiness or turning of the brain; to gargle the mouth with the decoction thereof is good against the tooth-ach. Two spoonfuls of the distilled water of the flowers taken, helpeth them that have lost their voice, as also the tremblings and passions of the heart, and faintings and swoonings, not only being drank, but applied to the temples, or nostrils to be smelt unto; but it is not safe to use it where the body is replete with blood and humours, because of the hot and subtle spirits.” (5)



Folklore/Astrology: Hot and dry in the third degree. Under the rule of Mercury. (6)

Additional Historical Facts: In ancient Rome it was used lavishly in the public baths. (7)

Contemporary Uses:

Parts Used: Flowers and flower stalks, oil

Medicinal: “Internally for indigestion, depression, anxiety, exhaustion, irritability, tension headaches, migraine, and bronchial complaints (including tuberculosis). Externally for burns, sunburn, rheumatism, muscular pain, neuralgia, skin complaints, cold sores, insect and snake bites, head lice, halitosis, vaginal discharge, and anal fissure. Combines well with *Rosmarinus officinalis* for depression and tension headaches, with *Verbena officinalis* for migraine and nervous tension, and with *Filipendula ulmaria* and *Actaea racemosa* for rheumatism. Added to baths for patients suffering from debility, nervous tension, and insomnia.” (8)

Fragrance: Lavender is commonly used in scents such as for toilet water, perfume, soap, and other toiletries. Sometimes dried flowers are used as pulpier for linens and lingerie.

Culinary: “Fresh flowers are crystallized or added to salads, jams and jellies, ice cream, and vinegar. Leaves are used in salads, marinades, and for flavoring soups and stews. Flowers and leaves are used to make herb tea.” (9)

Area of Origin: Mediterranean area, Middle East, Pyrenees and Northern Spain

Physical description: “Small shrub with downy, linear leaves which are gray when young.” (10)

Plant type: Perennial Herb

Form: shrub-like

Height: 2-3 feet

Flower color: purplish blue

Flowering period: July-September

Soil type: rocky and sandy, well dry

Soil requirements: Well drained

Hardiness zone: USDA 8-9

Sun requirements: Full sun

Propagation: Sow by seed on the surface of the soil in spring. Seeds of *L. angustifolia* germinate quicker if placed in a freezer for 2 hours before seeding. Lavender can also be propagated by semi-ripe cuttings in the summer. (11)



Close up of the flower stalks

Bibliography

1. Von Bingen, p. 34
2. Gerard, p. 583-584
3. Dioscorides, p. 256
4. Anderson, p.169
5. Culpeper, p. 85
6. Anderson, p.169
7. Ibid
8. Bown, p. 252-254
9. Ibid
10. Ibid
11. Ibid

Illustrations:

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| 2. PSUMG | 2012 |
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