



# Lavender

## Drying Lavender

Lavender, whether for potpourri or for drying, should be cut as soon as a good proportion of the lower leaves in the spike are out. . . If it is picked for drying and is laid too thickly, it soon goes moldy; it must be laid thinly and turned once or twice till it is dry enough to be safe.

—G. Jekyll, *Home and Garden*

For fragrance, form, and abundance of blooms, it's hard to find a better group of high-summer beauties. **Renee Shepherd**

SEVEN YEARS AGO I indulged all my lavender fantasies by planting a 60-foot-long border of the hybrid 'Grosso' down one side of my driveway. The plants charm me in every season with their gracefully rounded form, rich color, heady fragrance, and glorious abundance of blooms. I can't imagine a less demanding or more rewarding low hedge, or a better plant.

I have always felt a special affinity for lavender. My collection of plants provides me with a long season of pleasure in the garden, and the dried flowers—used in the kitchen and elsewhere—carry this connection indoors. For me, the lovely plants evoke a warm sense of continuity with many centuries of fellow plant lovers.

Probably native to Asia Minor, lavender followed the spread of ancient civilizations. Cultures as old as the Egyptians grew the plant and painstakingly extracted its aromatic oil as a perfume and preservative. The Romans brought lavender into all the territories of their empire, including England, as a bath

herb and for use in the laundry—the English word lavender may well come from the Latin *lavare*, to wash.

Over the centuries, the essential oil found in lavender stems, leaves, and flowers has served humans in a myriad of ways—to calm, soothe, heal, freshen, season, perfume, and enhance life in beneficial ways for countless generations. As landscape plants, in borders or as classically elegant container specimens, lavenders are captivating, long-season foliage plants, and when in bloom, their undulating wave of richly saturated colors and fragrances is the stuff of romance and memory.

There are more than 15 species of lavender, and most of them have many named varieties, with a wide assortment of flower forms and foliage colors. From the beautifully notched, silvery leaves and plump, smoky purple blossoms of *Lavandula dentata* (also called French lavender or fringed lavender) to the butterfly-like bracts that top the little pineapple-shaped flower heads of gray green *L. stoechas* (also called Spanish