

# Pacific Northwest Introduced Lavenders



## PNW Lavender History

### History of Commercial Lavender Growing in the Northwest

Chris Mulder, Barn Owl Nursery

Did you know that the first commercially grown lavender in the Pacific Northwest began in the 1920s, around 100 years ago? L. J. Wyckoff, a resident of Seattle, Washington, was considered to be one of the pioneers of lavender breeding in the Pacific Northwest. He began growing *L. angustifolia* to be a source of essential oil for the American perfume industry. He found that *L. angustifolia* grew well along Puget Sound, where it had a good chance of remaining free from disease.

In 1924, Wyckoff agreed to work with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This allowed him to be a collaborator, and supply plants and supervise the lavender project, while the USDA paid for some of the expenses and helped publish their joint information. Three areas along Puget Sound were chosen to plant lavender: Bothell, Chimacum, and Chambers Prairie near Olympia, WA. In 1928, Wyckoff planted rooted cuttings that were propagated from large lavenders planted around the Seattle area.

In 1929, his new lavenders sustained considerable winter damage. It was discovered that the original plants that supplied those first cuttings were not *L. angustifolia* at all, but were actually mislabeled *L. x intermedia* plants! Fortunately, there were hardy lavender seedlings growing nearby that were true *L. angustifolia* and those plants proved to be the hardiest species of lavender to grow in the area.

So Wyckoff acquired seeds and plants of *L. angustifolia* cultivars from several sources in France and began growing them in those locations in Washington state.

In 1931, each of the acquired French lavender plants were grown apart, separated from the other lavenders, until the quality of the oil could be tested. Then further distillation was done to produce larger quantities of essential oil. Extensive data was gathered about each area where the lavenders were grown. Their data included extensive notes on their successes and the growing conditions.

In 1934, due to the depression, Wyckoff's agreement with the USDA ended. He moved his lavender plants to 10 acres of land that he rented, just to keep his project going. Eventually, Wyckoff received enough donations and financing to purchase 80 acres of land close to the rented land he was using. He built several buildings on the property, including a distilling room, a boiler house and machine shed. In early 1940, he built a house on the property and moved his family there to live.

By 1950, Wyckoff had been producing lavender oil for nearly 25 years in Washington state. He was regarded as the foremost authority on the commercial cultivation of *L. angustifolia* in North America! One of the directors of Yardley & Co. Ltd. in London, visited Wyckoff regularly from 1932 on. Several of the Norfolk Lavender field varieties that were grown during that time came from Wyckoff's plants.

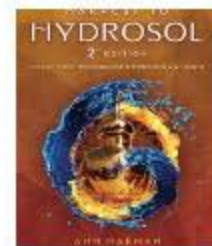
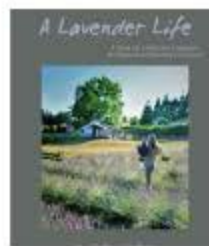
Despite his slow start and early problems, Wyckoff established that a good grade of lavender oil could be produced from lavender grown on Puget Sound and that lavender grew well there, even under some challenging conditions due to the soil, the site, and the climate.

Wyckoff noted that some of the lavenders he grew flowered early, with a 2 to 3 week difference in bloom time, and that later flowering lavenders could be grown too, which extended the flowering season. Also notable, was that he found the life span of some of the lavenders he grew was much longer than the plants grown in some other countries. Some of Wyckoff's plants survived up to 25 years!

When the oil distilled from Puget Sound lavenders was analyzed, the aroma was said to be very good. When that oil was compared with selected French true lavender oil, it was said that the aroma was "perhaps not as fine or as sweet" as the oil from lavenders grown in France, but his oil was similar to the French oil and no camphor was detected in the Puget Sound oil. **Source:** The Genus *Lavandula*, by Tim Upton and Susyn Andrews

Thanks to lavender pioneers like L. J. Wyckoff, and the many NW lavender growers that have followed over the years, we have a wealth of diverse lavender resources and a large variety of hardy lavender plants available. There are many local lavender farms to visit in person and online throughout the year where you can find Northwest grown lavender and many lovely, local lavender products from the Pacific Northwest. You have the opportunity to discover and be inspired by northwest lavender and experience what lavender can offer you

## Useful Reading



## Useful Lavender Courses

**Growing Lavender - a Curriculum for Growers -** <https://growinglavender.home.blog/>

**OSU Extension** <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/community-vitality/agritourism>

**WSU Extension** <https://extension.wsu.edu/regionalsmallfarms/agriculture/agritourism/>

## **Pacific Northwest Lavender Introductions**

### **Wyckoff Lavender Farm, Olympic Peninsula, WA. (1927)**

- L. angustifolia 'Wyckoff'
- L. angustifolia 'Wyckoff White' (NLA)
- L. angustifolia 'No. 9'

### **Dutch Mill Herb Farm, Cornelius, OR.**

- L. x intermedia 'Dutch Mill'

### **Fairie Gardens, Olympia, WA.**

- L. angustifolia 'Fairie Pink'

### **Goodwin Creek Gardens, Williams, OR.**

- L. x ginginsii 'Goodwin Creek Grey'
- L. angustifolia 'Chelsea Pink'

### **Nichols Garden Nursery, Albany, OR.**

- L. angustifolia 'Betty's Blue'

### **Premier Botanicals, Corvallis, OR.**

- L. angustifolia 'Buena Vista'
- L. angustifolia 'Premier'
- L. angustifolia 'Sachet'
- L. angustifolia 'Eola'
- L. angustifolia 'Sharon Roberts'
- L. angustifolia 'Aimee Roberts'
- L. angustifolia 'Bouquet'

### **McKenzie River Lavender, Springfield, OR.**

- L. angustifolia 'McKenzie River Purple'

### **Ravenhill Herb Nursery Vancouver Island, BC**

- L. angustifolia 'Alpine Alba'

## **Sunshine Enterprises Tenino, WA.**

*L. angustifolia* 'Purple Bouquet'

## **Vancouver, British Columbia**

*L. angustifolia* 'Summerland Supreme'

*L. stoechas* 'Peter's Pink'

## **Van Hevelingen Herb Nursery, Newberg OR.**

*L. angustifolia* 'Royal Velvet'

*L. angustifolia* 'Melissa'

*L. angustifolia* 'French Fields'

*L. angustifolia* 'New Zealand Blue'

*L. angustifolia* 'Opal Rain'

*L. angustifolia* 'Blushing Bride'

*L. angustifolia* 'Cedar Pink'

*L. angustifolia* 'Frances'

*L. x chaytorae* 'Silver Frost' (syn. *L. x chaytorae* 'Kathleen Elizabeth')

*L. x chaytorae* 'Ana Luisa'

*L. x chaytorae* 'Jennifer'

*L. x chaytorae* 'Isabel'

*L. stoechas* 'Ivory Crown'

*L. stoechas* 'Cottage Rose'

*L. stoechas* 'Purple Ribbon'

*L. stoechas* 'Portuguese Giant'

## **Sawmill Ballroom Lavender Nursery, Eugene, OR.**

*L. x intermedia* 'Tuscan' (*L. x i.* 'Tuscan Blue')

## **Loghouse Nursery, Eugene, OR.**

*L. angustifolia* 'Fashionably Late'