



# Planting Lavender



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Lavender is a low maintenance perennial shrub which grows best by addressing these five basic requirements:

- 8-10 hours of full sun per day
- Good air circulation
- Well-drained soil
- Soil pH close to neutral between 6.5 (slightly acidic) and 7.5 (slightly alkaline)
- Low to moderately fertile soil

Garden grown lavender reaches maturity and full productivity in 3-5 growing seasons. The leaves and flowers of lavender contain strong aromatic essential oils that act as a natural repellent for deer, rabbits and other pests. These same oils attract butterflies, bees and other pollinators to the garden. Lavender can live 10-15 years or longer with good planting practices and post-planting care. Good planting practices help ensure first year lavender survival and growth. With careful attention to lavender's five basic requirements, the steps to successfully plant and grow lavender should address when/where, soil issues, weed management, spacing/drilling planting holes, and in-ground planting.

## When/Where

Young lavender (e.g., 4-inch pots) should be planted in the garden during the spring after the last frost when the soil has warmed to at least 60° F. In late summer or fall, larger more established lavender should be planted at least 8 weeks prior to the first frost to increase the probability of winter survival. Choose a location to plant your lavender that has full sun and well-drained soil. Site preparation related to soil issues and weed management needs to be addressed prior to planting.

## Soil Issues

Lavender does not tolerate standing water or excessive soil moisture, especially during the winter months. Planting on a slope and/or on raised beds will increase drainage. Since lavender grows best in soils with low to moderate fertility you don't need to amend the soil with organic matter before planting. However, if you have poorly drained clay soils then amend those soils with composted organic mulch. Soil testing is

a quick and accurate method to determine the relative acidity of the soil (pH) and the level of several essential nutrients. Consistently reliable results can only be obtained by submitting samples to a soil-testing laboratory. Test results will recommend adding sulfur to lower the pH to 7.0 if the soil pH is greater than 7.5. If the soil pH is less than 6.5 then garden lime is recommended to raise the pH to around 7.0.

## Weed Management

Lavender are poor competitors with weeds in terms of growing space, sunlight, water and nutrients. Weeds negatively affect lavender growth and health, and ultimately the quantity of plant material available for harvest. A weed control strategy should include tilling before planting, followed by subsequent tilling and/or hand weeding. Covering the soil with water permeable woven weed fabric is another commonly used method for weed control. The weed fabric should be secured with 12-inch landscape staples spaced 3- to 4-feet apart for wind protection. We only cover our raised beds with weed fabric and then grow grass between the beds. An organic or rock mulch can be utilized to control weeds along the edge of the weed fabric.



Rototilling and creating raised beds.



Woven weed fabric on raised beds.

## Spacing/Drilling Planting Holes

Space multiple lavender 2- to 4-feet apart depending on the cultivar and your planting objective. In general, smaller compact English lavenders are spaced 3-feet apart and larger Lavandin lavenders 4-feet apart. Narrower spacings can be used for forming a hedge. Well-spaced plants promote good air circulation between plants and lessen the opportunity for disease. When lavender is planted in rows, the distance between rows should account for the cultivar's growth habit and your required future access. For example, if grass is grown between rows the distance should be based on the cultivar's ultimate size and your lawnmower's width. Our rows are planted on 10-foot centers to allow easy access for harvesting and pruning.



If planting lavender through woven weed fabric, then burn a hole in the fabric using a template and a handheld butane torch. The hole is burned rather than cut to prevent the woven fabric from fraying. We use butane which is less susceptible to wind than propane.

The planting hole should be at least two times deeper and wider than the lavender root ball. A drill with an auger attachment works well for digging planting holes. Our planting holes are drilled approximately 18-inches deep.



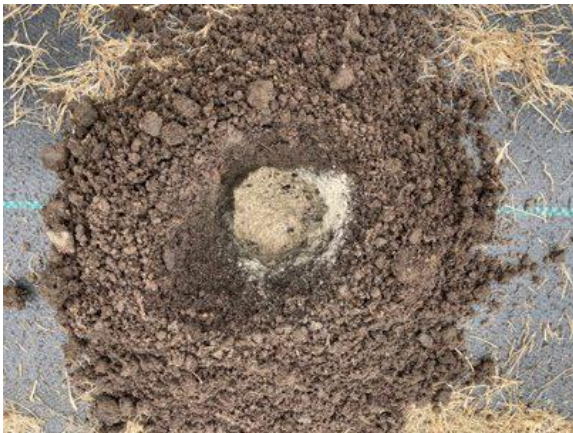
Burn planting hole in woven weed fabric.



Dig planting hole with auger attachment.

## In-Ground Planting

In each planting hole we first add about 6-inches of gravel to enhance soil drainage. Enough soil is then added so that 4-inch lavender plants will be placed no deeper in the ground than sat in the nursery pot or with the top of the root ball even with the soil line. Next, 1/4 cup of bone meal is added to the planting hole and mixed thoroughly with the soil. Bone meal, an organic fertilizer, has slow-release phosphorus which will promote root development.



Add bone meal to planting hole.



Plant lavender with attached root ball.

Prior to planting about 1- to 2-inches are pruned off the branch tips to remove apical dominance and promote additional branch growth, thus creating a bushier plant in year 2. Also, during the first growing season flowers are removed to re-direct the plant's resources to root growth. The plant with attached root ball is then placed in the planting hole, more soil is back filled and firmly pressed around the plant and watered to compress the soil and remove air pockets. Lastly, we add a 2-3-inch layer of crushed rock (e.g., 5/8 minus gravel) or pea gravel to enhance drainage, insulate the soil during the winter, and provide additional weed control. Compost or other organic mulches, which retain water and can lead to root rot or other diseases, are not recommended. Companion plants should have similar sunlight, watering and fertilization requirements.



Packing soil firmly around plant.



Adding 5/8 minus gravel around plant.

If you are planting lavender in 1- or 2-gallon pots then you will need to burn a hole in the weed fabric the size of the root ball, auger a larger planting hole, and mix 1/2 to 1 cup of bone meal with soil.