



# LAVENDER GROWING TIPS

- **Drainage.** This is perhaps the most important factor for successful lavender growing. If planting in heavy or poorly draining soil, dig a hole much larger than the pot size and fill with soil amended with gravel or chicken grit. Make sure water drains readily from the hole before planting.
- **Acidity.** Lavender likes soil at neutral pH or slightly alkaline. If soils are acidic as is commonly the case here on San Juan Island, they will need amendment – calcitic lime works particularly well in this regard.
- **Sun.** Lavender likes to have at least eight hours of sun daily during the flowering season. Good sun exposure is important for full blooming and long life. It does especially well when planted near heat-reflecting materials, such as against rock walls, over crushed oyster shells or light colored gravel, etc.
- **Weed control.** In rich soil, lavender does not compete well with weeds. Make sure the area is well-cleared of weeds before planting, and be vigilant about removing them when they reappear.
- **Watering.** Over-watering is the most common reason for lavender failing to thrive. In our climate here in the San Juan's, watering is necessary only in the first year when establishing the plants. Make sure the plants neither dry out nor have soggy roots (if using a water meter, water only when "3" or less). Use drip irrigation where possible, or when watering by hand, avoid getting moisture on the leaves. Once plants are established, they should rarely need watering – though watch for early signs of wilting in the early stages of flower-head development when a short watering or two will be beneficial.
- **Fertilizing.** Except in pots (see below), lavender does not need fertilizer, which contributes mainly to leaf growth, but does little for flowering. Can also be the source of leaf yellowing.
- **Pruning.** Pruning is absolutely required for good flower development and to prevent woody stalks. The best time to prune in our climate is late fall. Cut the flowers down to within two leaf nodes above the grey/brown woody part of the stem (leaving approximately 2-3 inches of green stalk). Cutting below this point or in the woody stem can result in the plant becoming leggy over time, and can ultimately lead to stem-splitting. Lavender tolerates this relatively aggressive pruning and indeed the life of the plant will generally be extended following the above guidelines.
- **Potted lavender.** Lavender grows well in pots as long as there is enough sun and enough room to accommodate the plant's large root system. If you do plant in pots, use well draining potting soil amended with gravel. Unlike their field brethren, potted plants dry out much more readily, so in this situation more watering is required. Similarly, in pots lavender may benefit from occasional organic fertilizing like fish emulsion.

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