

## Lavender

At some point we have all seen photos of an open field filled with tall purple stalks of lavender as far as the eye can see. This may not be as difficult to attain as you think. We have the right climate needed to grow lavender right here in Ocean County.

Lavender is an herbaceous perennial flower. It is also known as English lavender or *Lavandula angustifolia* of the Lamiaceae family. A fragrant addition to the perennial border, herb garden or rock garden, this shrubby perennial can be also be pruned into an informal hedge or used as edging. It has showy purple or pinkish flowers and the gray-green foliage remains attractive well into winter.

Success with lavender plants depends upon providing the proper growing conditions and selecting appropriate varieties. Lavender plants will tolerate many conditions but thrive in warm, well-draining soil and full sun. It is dampness, more than cold, that is responsible for killing lavender plants. That dampness often stems from wet roots during the winter months or high humidity in the summer. Since New Jersey often experiences high humidity in the summer, make sure to allow plenty of space between plants for air flow and always plant in a sunny location.

A layer of mulch applied to the ground after the first frost will protect the plants from the freezing and thawing throughout the winter. Also, remember to protect lavender plants from harsh winter winds. Planting next to a stone or brick wall will provide additional heat and protection. Lavender plants last about ten years and then begin to decline. Regularly harvesting the flowers will keep the plants well shaped and encourage new growth. The taller varieties can be cut back by approximately one-third their height. Lower growing varieties can be pruned back by a couple of inches.

Lavender has many wonderful properties. It is deer resistant and attracts beneficial insects such as butterflies and bees. It is non-invasive and its showy fragrant flowers can be cut and dried while maintaining their color. Lavender is also grown for its essential oils. For those interested in making lavender sachets, note that an alkaline soil will enhance lavender's fragrance.

Check with your local garden center for healthy lavender plants to purchase and add to your garden. You will enjoy its beauty for years to come.



## Checklist for September

### **Flower and Vegetable Garden**

- ✓ Dig up and cure tender summer bulbs when foliage turns brown. Store in a cool, dry place.
- ✓ Plant winter pansies and fall annuals, i.e., ornamental cabbage and kale.
- ✓ Collect seeds from perennials and annuals. Store in a cool, dry place.
- ✓ Buy and plant spring flowering bulbs, such as daffodils and tulips. See Rutgers fact sheet FS1220 "Spring Flowering Bulbs."
- ✓ Harvest herbs and flowers for drying.  
<https://extension.psu.edu/lets-preserve-drying-herbs>

### **Indoor Plants**

- ✓ Ensure houseplants are pest-free before taking them indoors.  
<https://pss.uvm.edu/ppp/articles/bringin.html>
- ✓ Check to see if your houseplants are root bound. If so, remove carefully and repot.

### **Lawn**

- ✓ Continue to mow and fertilize lawn, as needed. This is the best time to fertilize and seed your lawn or dethatch and aerate, if needed.  
<https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs102/>
- ✓ Check Ocean County Hazardous Waste schedule at 1-800- 55RECYCLE or (732) 506-5047 or [www.co.ocean.nj.us/OC/SolidWaste](http://www.co.ocean.nj.us/OC/SolidWaste) to dispose of pesticides and other waste.