

Plant Wise

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach

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Wonderful Lavender

The countryside of southern France is legendary for its fields of lavender, grown for the perfume industry. In North America, lavender is a shrubby perennial grown for its flowers and fragrance, but it also serves as a landscape item for its beauty and ability to stand heat and drought. In parts of California, it is used in the islands of parking lots, showing its ability to withstand the heat.



There are many different types of lavender. *Lavandula* is a genus of 47 known species of flowering plants in the mint family, Lamiaceae. It is native to the Old World and is found in Cape Verde and the Canary Islands, and from Europe across to northern and eastern Africa, the Mediterranean, southwest Asia to southeast India. Lavender prefers a slightly alkaline soil.

In a formal garden, lavender may be clipped to form a low hedge or an aromatic border along a path. In a rock garden, a single plant or just a few plants may be used to great effect as an accent. And, of course, lavender is a natural choice for any herb garden. The cool, gray-green foliage contrasts nicely with its own flowers, as well as dark green herbs and other plants.

Lavender also grows quite well in containers. In the Deep South, it actually does better in pots, as it benefits from improved drainage and air circulation.

While the plants thrive in arid Western climates, they are usually considered annuals in the South.

How to grow Lavender

Plant lavender in spring, once all chances of frost have passed. This beautiful, fragrant herb is a great addition to raised beds, gardens, and patio containers.

Space lavender plants 12 to 18 inches apart in an area with plenty of sunlight, good air circulation and sandy, well-drained soil with a pH of 6.7 to 7.3. You can add sand to the soil before planting to increase drainage, which is vital because lavender will not tolerate excessive soil moisture or humidity. To further improve drainage, plant lavender in a raised bed, along a wall, or near the top of a slope. In a herb or perennial bed, ensure good drainage by planting lavender on a small mound. Lavender also does well in patio pots.



Give young plants an excellent start to the growing season by mixing in several inches of compost or other rich organic matter into your native soil. Lavender survives well in dry conditions, so you'll only have to water when the top 2 inches of soil are dry. Promote vibrant blooms by regularly feeding with water-soluble plant food.

Lavender flowers bloom in summer; you can clip faded blooms to encourage continued blooming throughout the warm season. Prune lightly to promote branching, especially in spring once the plants show new growth.

Harvest and Storage

Generally, you want to harvest a stem of lavender when about half of the buds are in bloom. However,

avoid clipping more than every third stem to keep the plant looking full. (Never harvest more than 1/3 of the plant) And of course, you always want to harvest in the early morning, before the heat arrives. Lavender loses its oil to the heat of the day, so harvesting in the cool of the morning (before 10am) you'll harvest lavender with a higher oil content. Flowers will keep their perfume for months when you harvest just before they are entirely open. To dry flowers, gather a bunch of stems and hang them upside-down in a dark, well-ventilated place to preserve color and keep the stems from molding.



Multiple Uses of Lavender

Lavender flowers are not only fragrant but may be used in so many ways. Fresh, dried or as an oil. The internet is full of various ways to use lavender. Here are just a few uses!

Healing: Lavender is known for its ability heal burns and is anti-fungal making it a great choice for healing salves.

Calming: Sleeplessness and anxiety can often be calmed with lavender tea. You can also treat yourself to a soothing and calming herbal facial steam with lavender herb.

Softening: Dry skin can often become softer with lavender's many soothing properties in both the herbal and oil forms.

Massaging: The soothing scent and softening power make lavender oil a natural choice for massages and can help it be even more relaxing.

Moths

Put dried lavender blossoms into sachets in closets and drawer to protect clothes from moths. Lavender is a natural moth repellent.

Diffuser

Add a few drops of lavender oil to a diffuser at night to help promote deep sleep and keep the house smelling fresh.

Cleaning: Lavender oil has anti-fungal properties making it a perfect addition to homemade cleaners. Putting it laundry soap ensures a delicious and soothing scent and using it on a yoga mat can help kill sweaty odors.

Decorating: Fresh floral arrangements, and dried flower arrangements can be perked up with fresh or dried lavender. Not to mention all the crafts that can be made with stems of lavender.

Dinning: Lavender provides a lightly floral and sweet flavor to many dishes. It might not be the first spice grabbed off the rack but it does have a place in many meals. Get creative and try using a bit now and then and just see what happens to the flavor.

Food marinade: Include 2 teaspoons fresh lavender (or 1 teaspoon dried lavender blossoms) in marinades for beef or chicken for a delightfully floral twist.

Infuse: Layer fresh blossoms with sugar in a jar and let it sit for a few weeks. After it sits the sugar will take on a slight lavender flavor and the color of the blossoms make it a perfect addition to cookies and cakes.

Drinks: A bit of lavender in lemonade or cocktails is refreshing and delicious on a hot day. On cold days, add some to herbal hot chocolate for a delicious reminder of summer days.



With all of these amazing uses, it's no wonder that lavender has a place in the hearts and homes of many. Be sure to make the most of this beautiful and aromatic herb in your home by keeping some in the bathroom, cleaning closet, and spice rack.



Preparing for Japanese Beetles

In the past few years, we have become more familiar with the coming of the Japanese Beetles. Unfortunately, that time will soon be upon us.



Japanese Beetles are ½ inch in length with metallic blue-green heads, copper-colored backs, tan wings, and small white hairs lining each side of the abdomen. Here are their growth stages.



They lay eggs in the soil during June, which develop into tiny white grubs with brown heads and six legs that are up to ¾ inch in length. These grubs will remain underground for about 10 months, overwintering and growing in the soil. They emerge from the soil as adult beetles and begin feeding the following June. They usually attack plants in groups, which is why damage is so severe. The lifecycle of the adult Japanese beetle is barely 40 days, but it can cover a lot of ground. Japanese beetles feed on over 300 varieties of flowers and crops, but in terms of garden plants, they are especially fond of roses, beans, grapes, and raspberries.



Skeletonized Leaves and Flowers

Japanese beetles can devour most of the foliage on plants, as well as the flowers. Look for leaves that are “skeletonized” Japanese beetles are not usually far from damaged leaves, so inspect the plant thoroughly. Look on the ground beneath the plant; the beetles may drop off the plant if disturbed.

Unhealthy, Brown Patches in Lawn

Japanese beetle grubs damage grass when overwintering in the soil, as they feast on the roots of lawn grasses and garden plants. This can cause brown patches of dead or dying grass to form in the lawn, which will pull up easily thanks to the weakened roots. You may notice an increase in lawn damage by raccoons, skunks and opossums, as they forage in your yard, digging up and feasting on the abundance of beetle grubs.

CONTROL AND PREVENTION

HOW TO GET RID OF JAPANESE BEETLES

Good horticultural practices, including watering and fertilizing, will reduce the impact of the damage caused by these beetles, but oftentimes you simply need to get rid of them. Here are some ideas:

Row Covers: Protect your plants from Japanese beetles with [row covers](#) during the 6- to 8-week feeding period that begins in mid- to late June. Row covers will keep the pests out, but they will keep pollinators out, too; be sure to remove them if your crops need to be pollinated.

Hand Picking: Unfortunately, the most effective way of getting rid of Japanese beetles is to hand pick them off of plants. It's time consuming, but it works. When you pick them off, put them in a solution of 1 tablespoon of liquid dishwashing detergent and water, which will cause them to drown.

Neem Oil: Neem oil and sprays containing potassium bicarbonate are somewhat effective, especially on roses. The adult beetles ingest a chemical in the neem oil and pass it on in their eggs, and the resulting larvae die before they become adults. **Note:** Neem can be harmful to fish and other aquatic life, so don't use it near lakes, rivers, and ponds. It must be reapplied after rain.

Use a Drop cloth: Put down a drop cloth and, in the early morning when the beetles begin to be active, shake them off and dump them into a bucket of soapy water.

Insecticides: If you wish to spray or dust with insecticides, make sure it is an approved insecticides in your area. Apply sprays in the morning, never in full sun or at temperatures above 90°F. If your plants start to wilt, rinse the leaves immediately with clean water.

Japanese Beetle Traps: Japanese beetle traps can be helpful in controlling large numbers of beetles, but they also attract beetles from beyond your yard. Unfortunately, the traps do not effectively suppress adults and might even result in a higher localized population. If you want to try them, be sure to place traps far away from target plants so that the beetles do not land on your favored flowers and crops on their way to the traps.

Fruit Cocktail Trap: You can buy Japanese beetle traps of all sorts, but most are no more effective than a can of fruit cocktail. Open the can and let it sit in the sun for a week to ferment. Then place it on top of bricks or wood blocks in a light-colored pail, and fill the pail with water to just below the top of the can. Place the pail about 25 feet from the plants you want to protect. The beetles will head for

the sweet bait, fall into the water, and drown. If rain dilutes the bait, start over.

Geraniums: Japanese beetles are attracted to geraniums. They eat the blossoms, promptly get dizzy from the natural chemicals in the geranium, fall off the plant, and permit you to dispose of them conveniently with a dustpan and brush. Plant geraniums close to more valuable plants which you wish to save from Japanese beetles.



Japanese Beetles on Roses? Note that insecticides will not fully protect roses, which unfold too fast and are especially attractive to beetles. When beetles are most abundant on roses, nip the buds off and spray the bushes to protect the leaves. When the beetles become scarce, let the bushes bloom again. Timeliness and thoroughness of application are very important. Begin treatment as soon as beetles appear, before damage is done. Or you can cover your roses with fine netting during the time the beetles are out.

Grub Stage: To get rid of the grub in late spring and fall, spray the lawn with 2 tablespoons of liquid dishwashing soap diluted in 1 gallon of water per 1,000 square feet. The grubs will surface and the birds will love you. Spray once each week until no more grubs surface.

Unfortunately, even if you succeed in controlling your Japanese beetle population, your neighbor's Japanese beetles might come on over.



Become a Master Gardener!



We are looking for volunteers who:

- ❖ Are interested in gardening and horticulture
- ❖ Are curious and love to learn
- ❖ Can make a commitment to the program – 40 hour educational course and 40 volunteer hours in the

first two years. Then 20 volunteer hours and 10 education hours per year after becoming a certified Master Gardener.

We welcome participants with all levels of gardening experience.



Who are Master Gardener Volunteers?

They are passionate about serving their communities and sharing gardening best practices. Master Gardener volunteers are individuals who have completed the Master Gardener training and share their time and expertise as volunteers in community gardens, city beautification projects, and farmers markets, to name just a few.



If you are interested in the Master Gardener Training for professional development, or do not intend to volunteer, you may apply for the course as a Pro-Hort participant.

Important Dates:

- ❖ **Application Deadline:** July 1, 2021
- ❖ Participants are notified of acceptance to MG Training in early August; payment due at that time.
- ❖ Online Asynchronous Course: August 30 through November 5, 2021

Steps to Become a Master Gardener Volunteer

- ❖ **Apply online by July 1, 2021** to be a part of the Master Gardener Volunteer Training
- ❖ Be selected to participate
- ❖ Submit and pass the background check. (Background check not required for Pro-Hort).
- ❖ Pay class fee (\$195 for MG trainees; \$550 for Pro-Hort); fee includes the training book ([MG Resource Guide](#)).
- ❖ Complete the ISU Extension and Outreach Master Gardener training
- ❖ Complete online course materials on your own time from: August 30 through November 5.
- ❖ Take pre- and post-assessment to gauge knowledge change.

- ❖ Topics include: Vegetables, insects, houseplants, flowers, fruits, turfgrass, landscape design, native plants, plant propagation, wildlife, integrated pest management, and common plant problems.
- ❖ Receive the MG Intern certificate (or Pro-Hort certificate) upon completion of the online training.
- ❖ Volunteer in your community
- ❖ Complete 40 volunteer hours by Dec. 31, 2022.
- ❖ Not interested in volunteering? Register for the core course as a Pro-Hort trainee (\$550 fee) and receive a certificate upon completion of the training.
- ❖ Stay involved
- ❖ Master Gardener volunteers remain active members by completing 10 hours of continuing education and contributing 20 hours of volunteer service each year following certification.
- ❖ Each year report your volunteer and continuing education [hours online](#) by December 31st. Consider becoming a volunteer! Not only do you gain a vast knowledge of information, but you gain friends with similar gardening interest.



Do You Remember When?

School was out for summer! You and the neighborhood kids played fun games outside! The conventional games of hop scotch, baseball, tag and hide & go seek. But did you play "Red Rover"? This was for children 10 years of age and under. Players divided into two teams, each forming a long line, holding hands, facing the other team. The two teams stood around 20 feet apart. The teams took turn calling out, "Red Rover, Red Rover, let Billy come over!" Then Billy leaves his team's line, runs as fast as he can toward the other line and tries to break through the held hands. If he does, he gets to take someone back to his team. If he didn't, he joins the new team. When a team only has one person left, that person tries to break through the other team. If they do not, then their team loses. If they do, they gain a player and the game continues.

Friends, fresh air and fun! Those were the Days!



Teriyaki Shish Kabobs

YIELD: Serves 8 PREP TIME: 20 minutes
Grill: 15 minutes

Ingredients:

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 cup ketchup
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons ground ginger
- 2 pounds beef top sirloin steak, cut into 1-1/2-inch cubes
- 2 to 3 small zucchini, cut into 1-inch slices
- 1/2 pound medium fresh mushrooms
- 1 large green or sweet red pepper, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 small onion, cut into 1-inch pieces
- 2 cups cubed fresh pineapple

Directions:

For marinade, mix first five ingredients. Place beef and half of the marinade in a large re-sealable plastic bag; seal bag and turn to coat. Cover and reserve remaining marinade. Refrigerate beef and marinade overnight.

On metal or soaked wooden skewers, thread vegetables and, on separate skewers, thread beef with pineapple. Discard remaining marinade in bag. Grill, covered, over medium heat until vegetables are tender and beef reaches desired doneness, 12-15 minutes, turning occasionally.

In small saucepan, bring reserved marinade to a boil. Stirring occasionally; cook 1 minute. Remove vegetables, pineapple and beef from skewers before serving.

Serve with sauce.



June UP COMMING EVENTS



- **March 1, through July 1, 2021** Master Gardener Training applications open. Classes will be virtual. Application deadline is July 1, 2021. Follow the link below to apply. <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/mastergardener/application-opens-2021-master-gardener-training>
- **April 5, 2021** Registration opens for the "International Master Gardener Conference". It is virtual this year. It will be held **September 12-17, 2021** (Cost \$150.) Follow these two links for more information. [About](#) | [Registration opens April 5](#)
- **May 31, 2021** Memorial Day
- **July 9, through July 13, 2021** Mills County Fair [Open Class Fair Book](#) [Mills Fair Schedule 2021](#)



June GARDENING TO DO LIST



- **Remove** suckers from tomato plants.
- **Prune** shrubs that bloom on old wood after they are done flowering.
- **Prune** wisteria after it finishes blooming.
- **Be on high** alert for insect pests and diseases. These include but are not limited to aphids, asparagus beetles, cabbage worms, cutworms, scale, snails, slugs, leaf spot, mildew, and rust.
- **Stop** picking asparagus and rhubarb by June 15th to let it can store enough energy to multiply for next year.
- **Cemeteries** ask that you pick up your Memorial containers 2 weeks after Memorial Day. Take them home, set them out around your house or replant them in your flower beds.
- **Place** row covers or netting over bushes with ripening berries to keep the birds from eating them.
- **Inspect** plants for Japanese beetles, including gourds, pumpkins, and squash. Placing netting over your favorite roses and other flowers helps to keep the damage down.
- **Check** Ash trees for signs of Emerald Ash Bore.
- **Keep** birdbaths full. Clean and fill regularly with fresh water to help keep from spreading diseases.
- **Wash** Hummingbird and Oriole feeders between fillings. Even when the Orioles slow down on feeding. Once the babies fledge the parents will bring them to the feeders. Orioles love grape jelly and fresh oranges.

- **To prevent** them from wasting energy on producing seed, deadhead your spring bulbs after they are done blooming. Also, fertilize them. But wait till the leaves have yellowed before trimming them off.



Resources for Horticulture information Iowa State University Publications

ENT 57	Emerald Ash Bore Management Options
NCPA 33	Insecticide Options for Protecting Ash Trees
PM 3074	Finding a Certified Pesticide Applicator for EAB
PM 717	Growing Strawberries in the Home Garden
HORT 3082	Growing Basil
HORT 3087	Cole Crops
HORT 3085	Onions
PM 1893	Cilantro
HORT 3084	Peppers
PM 1706	Growing Raspberries in the Home Garden
RG 501	Pruning Raspberries
HORT 3091	Tomatoes
PD 0054	Tomato Diseases and Disorders
PM 1895	Tomatillos
PM 607	Suggested Vegetable Varieties for the Garden
PM 534	Planting and harvesting times for Garden vegetables
PM 666	Weed Management in the Home Garden

Horticulture Publications on-line

<https://www.extension.iastate.edu/store/ListCategories>



ISU Hotline Links and Numbers

Hotlines available for all

Iowa Concern 800-447-1985 Financial questions, legal education, stress counseling, crisis/disaster resources and referral (24 hrs - all days)

Beginning Farmer Center 877-BFC-1999 Program to match beginning and retiring farmers (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.)

Teen Line 800-443-8336 Personal and health-related information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

Iowa 2-1-1 211 Resource referral for housing, health, food, family, transportation, employment, education, and legal assistance (24 hrs - all days)

Hot lines available for Iowa Residents Only

AnswerLine Toll-free: 800-262-3804 Local: 515-296-5883

Questions relating to home and family (9 am-noon & 1-4 pm)

Iowa Healthy Families 800-369-2229 Health information and referral (24 hrs - all days)

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