

Q: What is Lavandin?

A: Lavandins are hybrid lavender plants. There are over 25 species in the genus *Lavandula*, and lavandins are in the Spica group. This group includes *Lavandula angustifolia* (True Lavender), *Lavandula latifolia* (Spike lavender) and *Lavender x intermedia* called lavandin. These hybrids are more tolerant of cold temperatures than some of the other species, are easy to grow and produce flowers high in volatile oils. Lavanders are one of the best adapted sub-shrubs for this part of California, as long as you have a site with full sun and good drainage. If you are in an area with heavy soils, you will need to plant on mounds or in raised beds, increasing the drainage as best you can. Lavandins are drought tolerant, and may succumb to root rots if over-watered. Mound forming, the gray-green foliage looks good all year, and require little attention.

If you wish to cut the stems for crafts or cooking, do so just prior to the blossoms opening. This is the time to shape the shrubs if needed. The Lavandins will often bloom a second time if spent blossoms are removed after the first summer bloom. If you are cutting the blossoms for potpourri, cut them in the early morning hours when the oil content is highest. Dry by hanging clusters upside down in a dark area for several days. There are many varieties of lavandins available, although you may need to mail-order the more unusual ones. The most common Lavandin at this time is *Lavendula x intermedia* 'Grosso.' The flower heads are 3-6inches long and an inch wide on long spikes, bloomin summer-fall. The flower color is silvery-lavender, with a high oil content, and the plant is hardy to 15° F. This is one of the Lavandins grown for lavender oil production. Other varieties to look for include 'Provence,' 'White Provence,' 'Grappenhall,' 'Giant Hidcote,' 'Seal,' 'Fat Spike,' and 'Fred Boutin.'