

Pruning Lavender is Essential

Chris Mulder, Barn Owl Nursery

- Pruning should begin early, when lavender plants are still young. Young plants that are not allowed to flower their first year, produce less woody looking shrubs with more growth at the base of the plants.
- Pruning lavender plants in the spring, summer and early fall helps the plants look and grow better over a longer period of time.
- In the garden, most lavender plants will hold their shape for at least 8-10 years, if they are pruned regularly.
- English lavender cultivars (*L. angustifolia*) usually require more pruning to hold their shape.
- French lavandin cultivars (*L. x intermedia*) do not need to be pruned as hard.
- Spanish lavender cultivars (*L. stoechas*) need hard pruning often to hold their shape.
- Lavenders grown in pots will need more pruning than lavenders grown in the ground.
- Tender species of lavender do not need to be pruned as often, if they are growing outside for less than a year. However, many of these plants grow quickly and will continue to bloom throughout the summer if their flowers are cut off regularly.
- Pruning can be done when you are harvesting lavender flowers for fresh and dried bouquets. Cut the flowers with as long a stem as possible, so the stems have a few sets of leaves on them. You can also help to shape the plant at the same time.
- Some English lavender cultivars (*L. angustifolia*) will bloom again, later in the season and early in the fall. Cut the flowering stems off those plants in September or early October.
- If you only have time to prune your lavender plants once a year, then try to do the major pruning in the summer or early fall, after the flowers lose their color. If you do not harvest the flowers, then cut off the long stems off your lavender plants at this time.
- When you prune lavenders growing in rows, borders and hedges, prune them hard into the foliage. This will encourage them to grow in a uniform shape, provide better air circulation between the plants and force new growth at the base of the plants.
- Once lavender plants are established in the garden, they should be pruned well, at least once a year, for the whole life of the plant. You can prune healthy lavender plants hard, to about one third of their size.
- If you start early and prune regularly, then the shape of the older lavender plants will look nicer and produce more flowers for more years.

