

LAVENDER

Scent of Success

A truly Mediterranean plant that roots itself in the wild even among the hot rocks and thin soils, lavender has become a cottage garden classic. The plant was named by the Romans after the Latin *lavare* (to bathe or wash), when the Romans used steeping scented bundles of lavender in the villa bathing water.

Aside from the roots, lavender oil is present in all parts of the silver-leaved, white to blue flowering plants. The long, thin leaves and the natural oils provide the plant with its natural protection in the wild, enabling it to survive midsummer droughts and yet, with its heady fragrance, attracting pollinating insects.

Sacred Mountain Lavender Farm, Salt Spring Island



Lavender was used by every civilization from the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and Arabs for medical purposes. As early as 77CE, the healing qualities from lavender for burns and wounds have been documented. The German Abbes Hildegard von Bingen (12th century) noted its effectiveness against fleas and head lice. In 1826, Culpepper acknowledged lavender's healing qualities in relation to "falling sickness" (epilepsy), the dropsy (bloating), cramps and convulsions as well as a dozen further ills, including to coming to the aid of the patient who has lost his or her voice.

However it was in the world of perfumery that lavender played a particularly significant role. In 1709, the Italian perfumier Giovanni Farina included a subtle blend of lavender in the perfume he named after his new hometown, Cologne. Thus, Eau de Cologne and its famous brand 4711 (named after the shop's street number) was born. Later, Provence, France, became the leading producer of perfume and, while the industry switched to synthetic perfumes by the mid 19th century, it could never match the quality of that essential oil, lavender.

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*From: *Fifty Plants that Changed the Course of History*
Bill Laws, Firefly books, 2010