

All About Lavender



I just returned from 6 days in Virginia and Washington, D.C. I had hydrangea and peony envy...the entire time I was there. So today, I decided to stop pouting and start appreciating

the plants that grow here in Phoenix. Lavender is one of those plants that conjures up romance, serenity and bliss.



Climate

The climate in Phoenix is PERFECT for growing lavender~~these beautiful plants thrive in full sun, heat and fast draining, low fertility soils. They are at their very best in the more arid climates found west of the Mississippi where heat, sun, dry growing conditions and poor soils predominate. Humid heat and compost-enriched, water retentive soils are the enemy of lavender.



We have lavender growing in several beds around the yard and most of it is English lavender, but I still haven't figured out the variety~~is it Provence, Hidcote or Arbriallii?

What is it?

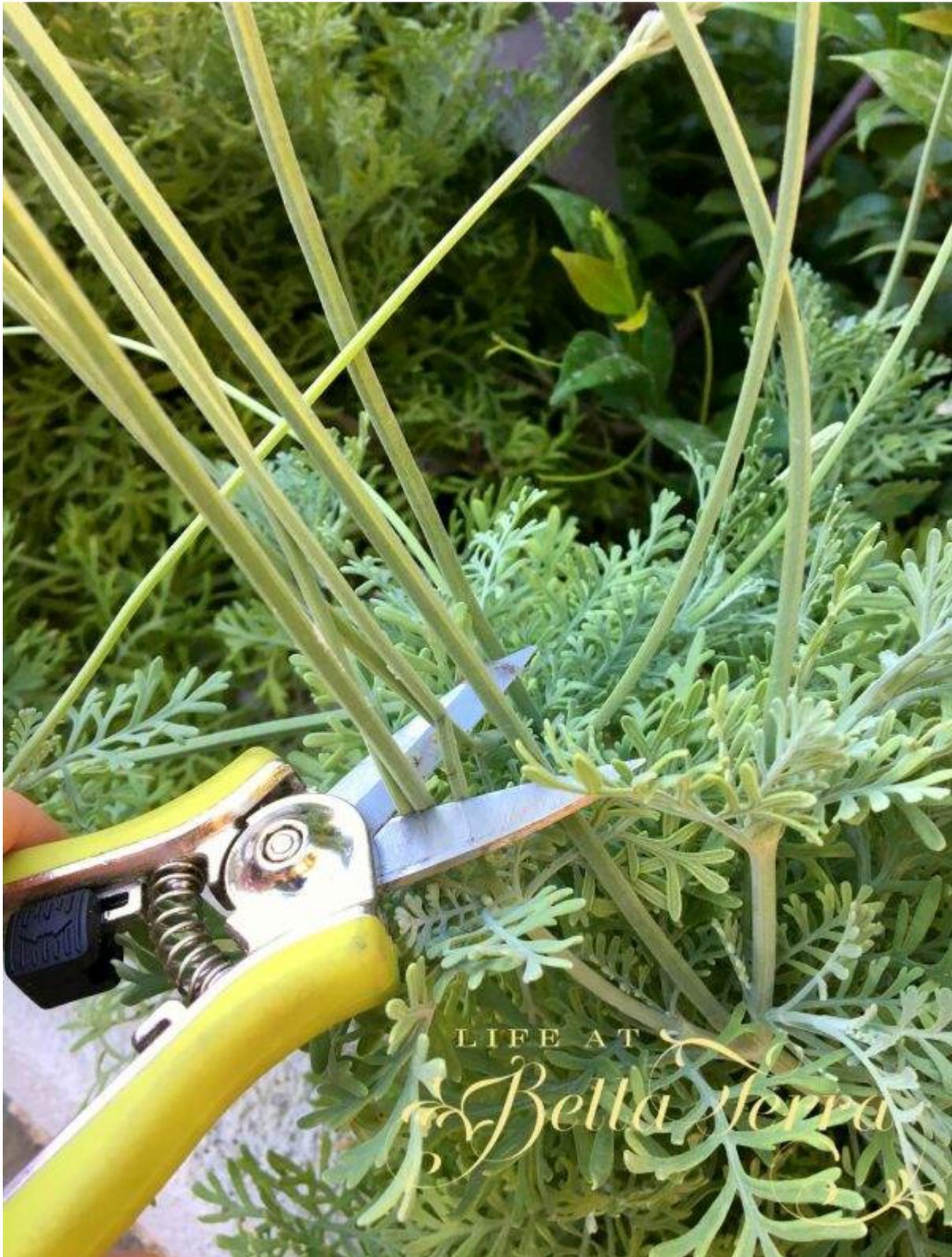
What is lavender? It's a perennial herb that's native to the Western Mediterranean region. Different types of lavender plants are hardy in different zones, but most is hardy in Zones 5 to 11. Who knew (not me!) that lavender is in the mint family (which also includes basil, thyme, lemon balm, oregano, sweet marjoram, rosemary, sage, savory, and summer savory).



Lavender love heat! These plants need good air circulation to maintain healthy leaves. A good rule of thumb is to space the plants as far apart as they'll grow tall. This ensures ample air circulation between plants.

Cutting

I try my hand at cutting lavender. It is recommended that you do so early in the morning to preserve the oils in the flowers. The snipping is near the base of the stems when the purple flowers are abundant.



Drying

Drying lavender is one of the easiest floral projects you'll undertake. You can dry the flower heads by standing them upright in a vase without water.



I choose to bundle the flower stems together using ribbon, and will hang them upside down in a dry, dark, warm spot to dry. With either method, you will have dried lavender in about two weeks.



Uses

Dried lavender has many uses. The fragrant, pale purple flowers and flower buds are used in potpourris. Lavender is also used extensively as herbal filler inside sachets used to freshen linens. Dried and sealed in pouches, place lavender flowers among stored items of clothing to give a fresh fragrance and to deter moths.



I don't know much about using lavender in a recipe (do you need a food grade lavender or can any lavender work?) but that might be something I will try next.

If you would like to see a post on making lavender pillows, click [here](#).

Have a wonderful Wednesday!

Mary