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### *Lavandula angustifolia*

[Synonyms : *Lavandula officinalis*, *Lavandula spica*, *Lavandula vera*]

**LAVENDER** is an evergreen subshrub. Native to the Mediterranean it has small strongly scented, mauve or greyish-blue flowers.

It is also known as Common lavender, *Devandule* (Czech), *Dulenka* (Czech), *Echter Lavendel* (German), English lavender, *Espliego* (Spanish), Garden lavender, *Lavanda* (Italian), *Lavande* (French), *Lavende* (French), *Lavendel* (Dutch, German, Swedish), *Lavendo mallarĝfolia* (Esperanto), *Laventeli* (Finnish), *Levandule klasnatá* (Czech), *Levandule lékařská* (Czech), *Levandule úzkolistá* (Czech), Old English lavender, *Nardo* (Italian), *Spigo* (Italian), *Špikanard* (Czech), *Spiklavendel* (German), *Špikrnát* (Czech), Sweet lavender, and True lavender; and in flower language is said to be a symbol of acknowledgement, assiduity, distrust, failure, luck, and pleasant memories.

Flowers and leaves are distilled to give lavender oil. The quality of fragrance of the oil varies according to the warmth of the country in which the plant is growing (cooler countries produce an oil that smells more strongly of camphor). The dried flowers have a sweet, strong, long-lasting scent and a slightly bittersweet, very strong taste.

Warning – perfumes and cosmetics containing lavender can make the skin sensitive to sunlight.

*Angustifolia* is derived from Latin *angusti-* (narrow) and *-folia* (leaved) components.

It was French lavender that was originally chosen for medicinal use – but gradually this came to be replaced by hardier species eg. *Lavandula angustifolia*.

Lavender is used by the toiletry industry in soaps and the cosmetics industry includes it in creams, and lotions. It is a commercial ingredient for the perfumery industry in eau-de-cologne, toilet waters and perfumes. For the pharmaceutical industry it can be an ingredient in proprietary medicines to mask other smells and to scent creams. The food industry employs lavender as a flavouring agent in baked foods and the drinks industry flavours beverages with it.

It is the birthday flower for 9<sup>th</sup> January.