

*Lavandula stoechas*

[Synonyms : *Stoechas officinarum*]

**FRENCH LAVENDER** is an evergreen shrub. Native to Asia Minor, Turkey, the Mediterranean, Portugal and the Canary Islands, it has very small fragrant, deep purple flowers each spike crowned with a tuft of petal-like purple bracts (leaves).

It is also known as Arabian stoechas, Bush lavender, Butterfly lavender, Candy rosemary, *Cantueso* (Spanish), Cassidony, Cast me down, *Dharu* (Hindi), *Leváanta* (Greek), *Levandule korunkatá* (Czech), *Levandule smilovitá* (Czech), *Mirofora* (Greek), *Ranskanlaventeli* (Finnish), *Rosmaninho* (Portuguese), *Schopflavendel* (German), Spanish lavender, Stichados, Stickadove, and *Welscher Lavendel* (German).

Aromatic oils can be extracted from the plant.

*Stoechas* means ‘of or from the Stoechades. These are islands off the southern French coast (near Toulon) known today as *Îles d’Hyères*’.

In the Middle Ages French lavender was used for strewing in homes and churches in Spain and Portugal where it grew profusely. It was also burnt on St. John’s Day (24<sup>th</sup> June) to counter evil spirits (as other plants were similarly treated in England and other European countries).

In Cyprus they still maintain a long held Easter tradition in the Christian community there. Sprigs of lavender are included in the decorations on the bier built on Good Friday for religious rituals to commemorate Christ’s burial.

Today the oils are used by the perfumery industry.

Medicinally, french lavender has been used in remedies for thousands of years. The Spanish and Portuguese used it to treat lung ailments, cramp and asthma. It was one of the ingredients in a noted remedy known as Four Thieves’ Vinegar. During the same period in England until about the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century this species was also used medicinally. Its flowers were included in medicines administered by the Arabs and are still familiar today in Moslem remedies.