



CLAIRMONT FARMS



Premier Issue

Scentilation

Dear Lavender Lovers:

Thank you so much for giving us permission to send you our newsletter. Each year many visitors come to our farm from all over the world, and the most asked question is "When does it Bloom?" We will have a section each newsletter about what's happening in the field.

As you may be aware our lavender farm began as a dream to create a beautiful sight for all to see. The planting of the field was not romantic but just plain hard work. It took three years to have a significant crop of flowers. People drove by and slowed down, then shyly drove down the driveway on this old farm where we have lived for the past thirty two years and asked us "what plant is that?"

We opened the farm to the public in 2002. We had a little oil, lots of sachets and fresh flowers.

It was a wonderful summer. As time passed each season brought new friends, and we began making healing products. We are delighted that you enjoy them. People tell us every day about their experiences with lavender. Most people have never seen a lavender field. We enjoy being green. As you may know, lavender has no pests and there is no need to spray.

What we will be doing is to have a topic and a picture for each section. Our goal is to make our newsletter fun and easy to read: Something that people will look forward to once a month. We will start out with the most frequently asked questions. But we also want to hear from you. So if you want a topic included or have a question, send us an email at info@clairmonmtfarms.com

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Meryl shares our harvesting method with some young visitors

WHEN DOES IT ALL BLOOM?

The main field is a variety of lavender called "Grosso". Grosso is a hybrid which is sterile, hardy and produces by far the most oil. That is why we and most growers around the world plant it for oil production. Its precise name is lavender x intermedia. This variety blooms once per year in mid June July. And if you really want to get precise, it is actually a lavandin. As with any other plant, the weather affects it, so if it is a warm spring with hot days in April and May, the bloom will be sooner. If it is cool and rainy, it will be later.

Other lavenders (there are many) bloom 2, 3, or 4 times a year, but don't have the fragrance, oil production or color of Grosso.

Meryl found a great piece of history about Grosso lavender the other day. There was a disease in Europe that killed most of the lavender. In a field of dead lavender Pierre Grosso found one lush plant blooming. It was a cross that had taken place in the wild (many people cross lavenders and use it as a hobby

plant similar to orchids). Grosso then took cuttings from this plant. And it is from this one plant that all the grosso plants today descend.

EARLY SPRING WORK IN THE FIELD

If you look closely you can see the drip lines above the plants. At this time of year the plants like a final trim before they come out of dormancy. Depending on when they were harvested and the weather the year before, some have secondary growth. They like to have a couple of inches of green as they start the growing season.

Every year we also have to check each of the 12,000 drips as they may become clogged with minerals. This year we are planning on feeding the plants some organic fish meal and bone meal. With lavender “less is more” - too much food will hurt oil production. Lavender, like grapes and olives that also are native to the Mediterranean, likes to be stressed a little— then it produces its best oil.



Grosso lavender field



LAVENDER PLANT CARE

“I just can’t seem to get it to grow” or “It must be the shade” or “It’s too hot” are the things that we hear about most often as possible causes for dead lavender plants. When we ask how much water the plant is getting there is an often a pregnant pause followed by “maybe too much”. The culprit is almost always too much water. Here are a few tips:

- **NOT TOO MUCH WATER** – once a week is usually enough – more **ONLY** if dry.
- **Water the soil not the top of the plant** - no overhead sprinklers.
- **Full sun if possible, some shade is OK** – but inside the house will not work.
- **Soil should be slightly alkaline.**
- **Do not feed the plant a lot** – it will make it unhappy.
- **Cut the plant back to a “hedgehog” shape in the Fall** before it becomes dormant .
- **If in a pot, make it a big one with holes in the bottom** for drainage.