



Gardening is good for you — and plant a little lavender, too

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Lavender is a known healing plant dating back thousands of years. (Photo: ~Courtesy of Laura DePrado)

Gardening is an essential part of life. People realized from the dawn of modern man thousands of years ago that plants and gardens and gardening and growing have countless benefits to medicinal application.

Since the beginning of history, gardens have been the center of well-being from the Garden of Eden to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon to the Laboratory at the Temple of Edfu, where more than 100 plant recipes and their applications were used by ancient Egyptians for a variety of health conditions still inscribed on the temple walls — the world's first "pharmacy."

In 21st century medicine, this simple fact is still not widely known and is rarely mentioned in today's articles about gardens and gardening. In a recent article published in Martha Stewart, "Here's How Gardening Benefits Your Health," there is much to celebrate in the marriage of modern science with the latest outcomes of how gardening is good for you. These include keeping you healthy, easing chronic pain, reducing stress, offering social outlet and improving your diet. Additionally, gardens are now accessible with adaptive tools and devices and planting tables and spaces to accommodate abilities.



Lavender is a known healing plant dating back thousands of years. (Photo: -Courtesy of Laura DePrado)

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Within the article there is a link to the top "healing plants," one of which is lavender, or lavendula, a plant that dates back to more than 2000 years.

The Egyptians used lavender in their mummification process. Decorative urns were found in the pyramids with residues of lavender still inside. The Egyptians also perfumed their skin with lavender. Lavender is referenced by the Bible by the name of spikenard, the Greek name for lavender. Spikenard was used as one of the 11 herbs for the incense in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Lavender is an herb in the mint family and native to the mountainous regions of the Mediterranean and northern Africa.

I use lavender weekly in horticultural therapy program activities with approximately 80 to 100 participants in memory care, adult day, rehabilitative and subacute care, adolescent and older adult psychiatric and workshops for corporations as part of wellness programs. The response to lavender is consistently positive.

Lavender can be used in culinary, cosmetic and ornamental ways, such as cold and hot teas, rubs for chicken, lavender butter, sachets, potpourri, sugar scrubs and bath salts, flower arrangements and essential oils.



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Lavender is consistently recognized by all of my client groups and facility staff (the treatment team) and is requested weekly. The versatility and known benefits make lavender a staple in my programs.

Here are examples of the responses reported and documented among diverse ages, medical diagnosis, social, physical and emotional circumstance:

"It makes me calm."

"Lavender helps me sleep."

"I place it on my legs for wrestles leg syndrome."

"I rub it on my tired feet."

"It improves my mood."

"It makes me feel alive again."

"It is intoxicating and calms me."

"I can't live without it."

"I hang the sachet I made on my work badge to help me and my patients."



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Research suggests that lavender may be useful for treating anxiety, insomnia, depression and restlessness. Some studies suggest that consuming lavender as a tea can help with digestive problems and help relieve pain from headaches, sprains, toothaches, and sores. It also can be used to prevent hair loss. Lavender oil is also believed to have antiseptic and anti-inflammatory properties, which can help to heal minor burns and bug bites.

Go ahead and garden and plant lavender in your garden. It holds in its delicate, powerful purple flowers a captivating and alluring calm blowing in the wind for another to capture and hold and use its bounty.

Laura DePrado is the owner of Final Touch Plantscaping