



TINDERBOX

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What's the difference between Lavender and Lavandin Essential Oils?



Lavender's love child

LAVANDIN

ESSENTIAL OIL

MOST PEOPLE are familiar with lavender, the popular garden plant that features tall purple flower spikes which define the plant's name.

Many people mistakenly believe that there is only one kind of lavender, however the *Lavandula* family is composed of 39 different species.

Lavender oil is the mainstay of aromatherapy but represents a complex situation with different species, subspecies and chemotypes. So how does lavandin fit into the lavender family?

True lavender, most commonly known in aromatherapy as *Lavandula angustifolia*, grows high in the mountains and requires elevations of over 550 metres above sea level to grow. The more common spike lavender, or aspic

LAVANDIN'S PARENTS

- **True Lavender** goes by several names as follows: *Lavandula angustifolia*, *L. vera* and *L. officinalis*.
 - **Spike Lavender** is *Lavandula spica* or *L. latifolia*.
- The resulting hybrid Lavandin is *Lavandula x intermedia* / *Grosso*

as it is sometimes known, can grow as low as 300 metres above sea level. Where their natural habitat meets, they often cross-pollinate, with the help of bees, to produce lavandin, which is a hybrid wild plant and has quite a different chemical and character profile to its parent plants.

This distinctive plant is now cultivated in large fields at lower altitudes. The wild lavandin plant is sterile, so clones are produced by propagating cuttings; the main one produced is called "grosso."

This is a more disease-resistant variety, more weather-tolerant and is main-

ly cultivated in France, but also Spain, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Argentina.

Lavandin's appearance can vary somewhat, but in general it is a larger plant and taller than true lavender with woody stems and it has three flowering heads on each stem, though otherwise it looks similar.

The Lavandin grosso plant has thicker panicles and is planted in neat rows for easy harvesting to produce huge amounts of oil. Lavandin's flowers vary from blue like true lavender to more greyish, similar to spike lavender.

The lavandin generally flowers later than the *angustifolia*. In the garden, la-

vanadin has its own special look – it is great for the back of the border, standing above the *angustifolia*s, and extending the flowering display to later on in the summer.

What's in a name?

Lavandin (*Lavandula x intermedia / grosso*) is the hybrid created from true lavender (*lavandula angustifolia*) and spike lavender (*Lavandula latifolia*).

The x in Lavandin's Botanical name (the inclusion of which is in compliance with the International Code of Botanical Nomenclature) indicates that this plant is a hybrid; one that was actually created in the 1920s from its wild predecessors.

Lavandula grosso is the most common of the hybrids produced when two lavender plants are cross-pollinated but there are also *Lavandin Abrialis*, *Super*, *Sussex*, *Soumian* and *reydovan*.

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True to form, lavandin shines

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Two important economic advantages of these hybrids is that they are more easily cultivated and they have a significantly higher yield of essential oil than true Lavender, which makes them less costly.

The same weight of lavandin flowers as *L. angustifolia* flowers (from roughly the same acreage and roughly the same amount of work) produces three times more lavandin oil.

It can be harvested with a four-row harvester, making the harvesting cost four times less, and the same machinery can be used to plant and harvest.

Confusion with counterfeits

It can be quite confusing because lavandin essential oil is often sold as lavender oil in the marketplace.

The lavandin aroma is closer to the synthetic aromas of lavender that are produced, which further adds to the confusion.

On seeing the diversity of lavender species and the economic interest that they represent, one can understand how true lavender is one of the most adulterated and corrupted of all essential oils.

In many people's eyes, cheaper means poorer quality - however in this case it isn't, it is just a different quality. So it is much more sensible to consider lavandin as a different oil, rather than compare it to the oil from *L. angustifolia*.

Lavandin itself is much less expensive, so there is not much need to adulterate the oil to make it cheaper, but what does happen is that lavandin is taken as a base fragrance and synthetics are added to make it smell more like an *L. angustifolia* oil and this can be done well enough to pass the blend off as such. This is done by heating lavandin to flash off the camphene and then adding synthetic linalols and lavandulol. These are the fragrance molecules that create the aroma that is recognised as true lavender.

The scent

Lavandin oil has a pleasant, penetrating and refreshing aroma, similar to that of lavender oil although less floral, more gutsy and perhaps courser to the tutored nose.

It has sweet, camphoraceous top notes (that should not be too strong in quality lavandin oil), with woody



herbaceous undertones. One could perceive the scent as more medicinal than the more refined *L. angustifolia*.

Chemical story

Lavandin, the hybrid lavender, has different chemical and therapeutic properties as can be expected from a hybrid, although lavandin will have elements from both its mother plants.

Lavandin has the largest amount of alcohols of the three, which means that its antifungal, antiviral, strong bactericidal, balancing and immune-stimulant properties are likely to be the strongest of the three too. Like true lavender, lavandin has esters but not to quite the same degree so it's balancing, calming, cell regenerating, anti-inflammatory at the primary phase of infections properties won't be as strong.

In general, lavandin has much less complexity in its chemistry and aromatic profile than true Lavender. *Angustifolia* is sweet and subtle, with a rich blend of monoterpenes, sesquiterpenes, esters (including linalyl acetate), non-terpene alcohols, oxides, and more.

Lavandin also contains linalool, but much higher concentrations of terpenes, most notably camphor, making it a more lasting, piercing aroma.

The percentages depend on soil, nutrients, sunshine, and rain, which can vary substantially. Like lavender, it is often used as a natural source of linalyl acetate and linalool for the cosmetic

and perfumery industry. Lavandin's higher camphor and 1,8-cineole constituents make it a superior bronchial medicine than true lavender. Lavender has about 160 chemical constituents while Lavandin has only 60. Diehard Lavender lovers tend to prefer *lavandula angustifolia* oil for use in natural perfumery.

Medicinal uses

Lavandin does have many of the same actions as true lavender, but despite its similar aroma, lavandin's properties do not cover as broad a spectrum as those of true Lavender.

It has its own unique properties and is no less valid than *L. angustifolia* in the toolbox of a therapist.

Lavandin is a cost-effective substitute for true Lavender in scenting personal and home care products.

It is often used in soaps, detergents, and skin and hair products because the aroma is more lasting than that of true lavender.

In general lavandin does not have the same high level of calming, sedative action that is so characteristic of true Lavender, however it is considered a cerebro-spinal tranquiliser and it does make the senses feel calmer while still alert.

A particularly effective remedy for respiratory infections, this oil is also a powerful expectorant.

It eases breathing in bronchitis,

and helps expel mucus in the respiratory tract, thereby relieving coughs and colds. Lavandin clears the sinuses and promotes cleansing of toxins from the body. It is likely to build up immunity to further viral attacks.

Both lavandin and lavender are non-toxic, non-irritating and non-sensitising to the skin.

Lavandin helps in relieving many skin afflictions including dermatitis and psoriasis. Inclusion of this oil in blends helps the formation of scar tissue.

Where lavender is a well-known burn treatment, lavandin is not suitable for this, although it is an antiseptic agent that can be applied to cuts and bruises to prevent microbial infection.

Lavandin does have some anti-fungal properties to help ringworm and athlete's foot.

Lavandin oil is a potent analgesic that helps relieves pain; especially muscle aches because it promotes relaxation of the nerve fibres.

It is considered beneficial for inflammation and helps with joint pain. Rubefacient by nature, lavandin is naturally warming as it boosts circulation. Try adding lavandin to an invigorating blend to relieve restless leg syndrome.

This oil promotes blood clotting and is thus helpful to hasten healing wounds.

Lavandin is possibly a better insect repellent than true lavender for moths, mozzies, carpet beetles and ants, because of its more enduring capacity.

The psyche

Lavandin Oil boosts self-esteem, confidence and mental strength so it may be employed as part of a program to combat depression, especially for those disheartened by failure and rejection.

Lavandin allows the individual to recognise the difference between loneliness and being alone and the value in the stillness of solitude.

It also beckons one to break free of isolation to connect with others and realise the universal connection of all beings.

An excellent choice for those with acute depression, or those who are undergoing rehabilitation because it eases anxiety and stabilises neurosis during times of transition and change.

Clearing to the head, lavandin promotes a greater inflow of life-bringing prana - the breath of life, to flush out stagnation and complacency.

Lavandin provides a good calming option instead of lavender in a meditation blend if one has the tendency to fall asleep instead of maintaining an aware alertness.

LAVANDIN ESSENTIAL OIL

Botanical Name: *Lavandula x intermedia* /Grosso
Family: Labiatae

The Plant: generally larger and taller than true lavender with woody stems and three flowering heads on each stem. Generally thicker panicles and the flowers vary from blue (similar to true lavender) to a more grey flower (similar to spike lavender).

The Oil: Lavandin oil is extracted from the flowering tops of lavandin grosso, which are botanically referred to as *Lavandula x intermedia*. The essential oil is extracted by steam distillation, is colourless or pale yellow and very mobile.

Scent: Pleasant, penetrating and refreshing. Similar to true lavender though less floral. Sweet, camphoraceous top notes with woody herbaceous undertones.

Blends well with: Bergamot, Cedarwood, Chamomile, Citronella, Clary Sage, Clove, Geranium, Jasmine, Labdanum, Lemon, Mandarin, Orange, Patchouli, Rose, Rosemary, Thyme, Vetiver.

Indications: antidepressant, antiseptic, analgesic, cicatrising, expectorant, repellent, nervine, and vulnerary.

Precautions: except for a small risk of allergy, lavandin is considered one of the safest herbs to use.

Tinderbox

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