

Spanish Lavender

(*Lavendula stoechas*)

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Culinary herb? Deer-resistant landscape plant? Striking perennial border accent? Yes, Spanish lavender (*Lavendula stoechas*) is all of these and more. It is yet another choice for our waterwise landscapes here in the Willamette Valley. *L. stoechas* is sometimes called French lavender, although *L. dentata* also shares this particular common name, so rely on the scientific designation if possible.

I have been growing this species in my own garden for many years, including the parking strip which receives no supplemental water. When I'm out working in the garden, people often stop to ask about the plant--what it is and where they can they get it. One person even came to a screeching halt as they were driving by to ask the same questions! Fortunately, Spanish lavender is available at many local nurseries, often in 4-inch pots, and sometimes in gallon size, so I was able to answer all of their questions.

L. stoechas is an evergreen shrub or sub-shrub, sometimes dying back to the woody part each year, growing 2-3 feet tall and just as wide. Grow it in full sun, or only a very slightly shaded site. The flowers are larger and showier than those of English lavender, and often a deeper purple as well. Various cultivars are available with more intense colors or different growth forms if you prefer these over the species. After several years, Spanish lavender might benefit from some severe pruning in mid to late spring. It does self-seed in the garden, but not prolifically in our area. This characteristic will provide new plants for your garden and for those of your friends and neighbors as well.

A Master Gardener in California has created a nice fact sheet on many of the garden-worthy lavenders, which you can find on the web at <http://ccmg.ucdavis.edu/Lavender.pdf> It provides a fascinating look at gardening with, cooking, and using lavenders in many other ways through time.

