

# MEMÓRIA DA TERRA

~ Cycles of study with Native Plants and Ancient Wisdom ~

## LAVENDER

(*Lavandula* spp.)



Family: Lamiaceae (Mint)

Origin: Mediterranean region, Northern Africa, Southwest Asia and some areas of India.

Element and Planet: Air/Water. Mercury.

Actions: Carminative, Nervine, Sedative, Bitter, Antidepressant, Hypnotic, Anti-microbial, Analgesic, Spasmolytic

Energetics: Cold, Dry.

Medicinal Properties and Uses: With many medicinal constituents as Linalool, Linalyl Acetate, Terpinenes, Camphor and others, Lavender is a multi functional herb that can be used in the treatment of many illnesses.

Lavender is a famous nervine plant, used to treat strong headaches that are originated in accumulated tension and as a sedative to treat anxiety and tension.

The infusion of the flowers relaxes the spasms of the digestive system and treat intestinal gas, irritable bowel syndrome and nausea.

Lavender is useful in the treatment of respiratory infections, specially the variety *stoechas*, for its camphored aroma. Through inhalation of the steam of the tea, reduces inflammation in the lungs, relaxes the nervous system and heals coughs and colds.

Its essential oil is very effective to relieve insect bites and burned skin, earaches and muscular and reumathic pain.

Also a great remedy to treat acne and small wounds.

Lavender is one of our adaptogens, helping the body to adapt to stress and promoting overall balance.

Identification, Habitat and Ecology: Lavender is a small bush, although some species can grow up to 1,5m tall. The leaves of Lavender are opposite and linear, with a grey-green color. The flowers grow in terminating spikes from young shoots on long stems, and have a violet/purple/blueish color, sometimes white/rose, depending on the species. It mostly lives and prefers dry grassy slopes amongst rocks, exposed to full sun, often on calcareous soils. Thrives in well drained, low nutrient soil and is drought resistant.

Lavender's extensive root system acts as a natural soil stabilizer, preventing erosion.

The vibrant purple flowers are a beacon for many pollinators, specially bees. The strong aroma acts as a natural repellent for pests, making Lavender a good companion plant to have in gardens.

The volatile compounds released by the flowers can alleviate stress in nearby plants, which contributes to the overall health and vitality of the ecological system.

Lavender plants are allelopathic— capable of releasing chemicals that inhibit the growth of surrounding plants. This can help lavender outcompete invasive species. But on the flip side, planting extensively lavender in an environment where it doesn't belong can lead to inhibition of native plants and, ultimately, a loss of biodiversity.

History and Cultural Uses:

The use of Lavender dates back 2.500 years. The ancient Greeks called Lavender Nardus, after the Syrian city of Naarda. Lavender was one of the herbs used to prepare a holy essence called 'Spikenard'.

Lavender derives its name from the Latin 'lavare', that means 'to wash'.

The Romans used Lavender to scent their baths, beds, clothes and hair.

In ancient Egypt it was used as a perfume and incense and in the mummification process.

During the Middle Ages it was considered an herb of love and used as an aphrodisiac.

Due to its anti-bacterial properties, it was used as a disinfectant in sickrooms.

Lavender is also a favourite culinary ingredient, used in vinegars, jellies, pastry, teas and lemonades.

### Folklore and Mythology:

Lavender is associated with purity, love and devotion, purification and protection. In Celtic tradition has been used to protect against evil spirits, hung on the doors or burned in the house, to connect with the faerie realms and to attract love relationships. It was one of the herbs used in Summer Solstice celebrations.

Lavender is associated with many Goddesses and aspects of the feminine. To Aphrodite for its power to attract love, to Artemis for its purity, to Isis for its relation to healing and magic, to Hecate for its protective aspects, to Parvati as an herb of devotion and the Virgin Mary.

As a Mercurial plant, ruled by the element Air, it facilitates communication, direction of thought and spiritual connection. Some stories tell of Lavender being used to help communication with the dead.