

Q & A from Practical Advice from Successful Farmers – Lavender
Host : Kelly McGowan

Q - Can we start lavender from seed?

McGowan - Yes, you can start from seed. When you buy lavender seed, often it will say, this is Munstead or a Munstead strain or something like that. And that's because a lot of times with lavender seed, it's not what the package says it is. It may say it's Munstead and then you grow it and it's something different. So that's not necessarily a bad thing if you're not really concerned about a specific cultivar. It's actually pretty easy to grow from seed. But I find that seed grown plants don't tend to be as hardy as ones that have that are just rooted cuttings, but they certainly can be grown from seeds and seeds are pretty easy to find.

Q - Someone says here they've used fall pruning to propagate new plants.

McGowan - That's a great idea. So one of the things I mentioned in the videos is that lavender is easy to propagate from cuttings of the plants you already have. Take a little cutting, three or four inches, take off the lower leaves, dip them in rooting hormone, and they're pretty easy to root. And then you always have a backup source of plants.

Q - As a home gardener, I've learned that I've been over watering my seedlings.

McGowan - Yes, that's a pretty common issue. I struggle with it too sometimes and is just something we need to watch.

Q - Do you really prune them like a hedge?

McGowan - Yes, so when I pruned my lavender, I had a hedge trimmer just like you would prune shrubs in your landscape. And it actually worked pretty well and it made quick work of it also.

Q - I plan to add some lavender to my pollinator garden on the farm.

McGowan - Great idea. Lavender is very attractive to pollinators.

Q - What type of coverings did you suggest for winter?

McGowan - A couple of things on the winter covering. In our research, we just used the spun bound fabric cover, kind of looks like a dryer sheet, kind of material and had pretty good success with it. With covering plants in the winter, make sure that the plants have gone completely dormant. If you put on the winter covering and the plants have not gone dormant, extra heat from those coverings will signal to the plant that summer's not over yet and they'll keep growing. So make sure the plant is completely dormant and we did that by watching the weather. If there is an extended period of time where the night time temperatures are below freezing, that's typically when we would want to put on our coverings. And that can be tricky because sometimes it's been in January before we've had that type of weather. So just watch

the weather, make sure we've had plenty of freezing weather and then you can put on your covering at that time.

Q - What's a good source for obtaining plants?

McGowan - That is a great question. And this was a limiting factor in some of our research because it is hard to find a large quantity of good quality plants. For our research, we used a lady here in Springfield who has an herb business, it's called a Red Barn Herb farm, and we purchased a lot of the plants through her, but I also purchased a lot of plants online. If there was a specific cultivar that we were looking for, I did order a lot online, so that is an option. And then we propagated a lot of our own plants. Donna Aufdenberg was on our research team and her part of the project was propagation. So we obtained plants a variety of different ways. I will mention though, if you do get mail order lavender plants, they do not like being shipped through the mail. So if you do order plants in the mail, open them up right away, inspect them, get them planted as soon as you can because they do not like being shipped and they don't like living in those nursery pots.

Q - Here's a question about using plastics for weed control. How about using wood chips for weed control?

I've used mulch for weed control and it seems to work well. You could certainly use wood chips. The thing with the black plastic is it is easier if you are planting a large area because you can tractor mount it and you can put it out pretty quick. But if you have just a small area, by all means, use wood chip mulch and it can work well.

Q - Do we need to use hoops for the coverings to keep them off the plants?

Good question. We actually did both as an experiment. The theory is that the covers will lay directly on the plants during the winter. And then if we get freezing weather, it might cause that fabric to freeze to the plants. So you can put hoops underneath it to keep that fabric up off the plants. We didn't see a lot of difference between the two, but we also didn't have a lot of icy weather when we did this as well. If I had it to do over again, I would probably use hoops over all of it or under all of the fabric just to be on the preventative side. That can be a lot of work, but it can certainly be helpful.

Q - I ordered lavender cuttings from Canada from Richter's, about \$1.00 a cutting.

McGowan - That's good to know. I have ordered things from Richter's before. They're a wonderful herb place. You can order all kinds of really cool herbs. I didn't realize they had lavender cutting, so that's good to know. Thank you for sharing that.

Q – What about spacing?

McGowan - We spaced about a foot and a half to two feet apart within the row. Some of these plants can get pretty large, so make sure that you're giving them a lot of space, but about a foot and a half to two foot is pretty standard for most spacing.

Q – Can you propagate Phenomenal Lavender?

McGowan - Phenomenal Lavender is patented, so, no. Thank you for mentioning that. Phenomenal is patented as is Sensational and there's one new one that just came out as well. Those cannot be legally propagated so don't propagate those.

Thank you all and I hope to hear from you and hope you learned some new things about lavender tonight.

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