Introduction to Commercial Lavender Production

Harvesting, Drying, Pruning

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Harvesting Lavender
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- If harvesting lavender for producing dried bundles, harvest stems when the first few flowers have bloomed.
- If harvesting lavender for producing dried lavender flower buds, harvest when about half of the buds are in bloom.
- If harvesting lavender for fresh bundles, harvest when about 20% to 50% of buds are in bloom.
- If harvesting lavender for oil production, harvest at full bloom, or when up to half of the blooms have withered.
- Small scale growers typically harvest by hand with a curved sickle/knife, and tie bundles together with a rubber band.
- Larger growers who grow for oil production use various mechanical harvesters.

Never harvest lavender when wet.
A group of inexperienced lavender harvesters – not doing the best of jobs!
Firmly grasp a bunch of stems at their base
Harvesting Lavender Efficiently and for Quality

Use sickle knife and quickly pull it at base to cut off bunch – may need to make 2-3 cuts to complete a bundle.
Use rubber bands around the wrist to tie off bundle.
Harvesting Lavender Efficiently and for Quality

Pile cut bundles on top of harvested plants.
And experienced harvester can harvest one plant in about 3-5 minutes – about 4-7 bundles per plant depending upon size of plant.
Effective drying is absolutely critical to producing quality lavender products!

Lavender needs to be dried in a dark, dust-free place with good ventilation to allow for quick and complete drying.

Too humid conditions and/or poor air movement will result in moldy lavender.

Light—especially sunlight—will cause lavender to fade and turn gray.
Pruning Lavender

- After harvest, plants need to be pruned and shaped. This should be done before the first hard frost.
- Cut plants back to leave 1-2 inches of green beyond woody stems (try to leave 2-3 nodes of the current season’s wood).
- Lavender needs to be pruned back hard, or plants will become too large, woody and will splay open in the middle.
This is NOT the way to efficiently prune lavender!
A typical plant after harvest

OK, I harvested this one way early for the purpose of demonstration
Using a gas hedge trimmer to prune takes about 1-2 minutes per plant.
A properly pruned plant
A properly pruned plant
Leaving about 1” of green growth above old wood
Properly pruned lavender will withstand winters better, will last longer, be healthier and produce more quality product.