

## It's a Gardener's World!

Have you smelt it on your wanders round Stokesley? There seem to be swathes of it in gardens everywhere! I've even passed a garden on Ashwood Drive where one kind home-owner had collected bundles of it & was asking passers-by to take one for FREE! Lavender, a herb with many culinary uses, also makes a stunning addition to borders and perennial gardens, providing sweeping drifts of colour from early summer into fall. With its silvery-green foliage, upright flower spikes and compact shrub-like form, lavender is ideal for creating informal hedges. You can also harvest it for fragrant floral arrangements, sachets, and potpourri.



Its name derives from the Latin root "lavare," which literally means "to wash." The earliest recorded use of lavender dates back to ancient Egypt. There, lavender oil played a role in the mummification process. Even King Tutankhamen tomb is said to have been filled with lavender and upon opening some sprigs still held a distinct fragrance. During later times, lavender became a bath additive in several regions, including Persia, ancient Greece, and Rome. These cultures believed that lavender helped purify the body and mind. Long before the world made deodorants and bath salts, the Romans would steep bundles of the herb in their bathing water.

While it was ancient Arabia that first farmed the plant and distilled its oils, it was the Greeks and Romans that traded it into England & from then on monks cultivated it in their monastic gardens. The plant pops up in ancient history and the Bible alike. Cleopatra used its fragrance in her grand seductions. It's even claimed the asp that killed her hid among her lavender bushes.

When God kicked Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Evil, they took lavender with them. When a woman washes Jesus' feet, the lotion she applies contains lavender (also known as spikenard). When his mother Mary hung his drying clothes on a lavender bush his scent was apparently transferred to the plant. Lavender was one of the holy herbs used in the biblical Temple to prepare the holy essence. It's so popular in the Bible that Christians would make crosses of lavender to protect themselves from evil.

Since ancient times, lavender has been used to treat many different ailments. From cleaning wounds to repelling plague, lavender has a myriad of uses throughout the centuries.

In the Victorian era, small floral bouquets, known as talking bouquets, were gifted as tokens of love, expressing feelings that could not be spoken in public. The distinctive fragrance of Lavender was said to bring luck and expressed strong commitment. Lavender flowers are known to represent purity, silence, devotion serenity, grace and calmness.

"As Rosemary is to the spirit, so Lavender is to the soul" – English saying

We all have felt fearful, especially over the past months. Our Gospel reading today reminds us that even the disciples experienced fear. "When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. 'It's a ghost' they said, and they cried out in fear".

But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."

When we are frightened we need to let someone know, just like the disciples did. To keep fear inside and not talk about it causes us to worry even more. Come to church when we are 'Open for Private Prayer' & in the silence talk to God about your fears. Remember the comforting words that Jesus spoke when he came to rescue his disciples & don't forget that "the wind died down". Have faith, stay calm, Jesus will always stretch out his hand. Whenever we are asked to do hard things in our lives or to step out & take a chance, know that God will be there watching and supporting us.