

Lavender Festival: June 26 - 28

Lavender is a ‘blooming’ business in the Applegate Valley

The Southern Oregon Lavender Trail (SOLT) includes six lavender farms, nurseries and gardens in the Applegate Valley between Jacksonville and Grants Pass. Owners are local farmers dedicated to growing quality lavender, making handmade lavender products, maintaining the Applegate Valley’s agricultural heritage, and contributing to the region’s development of an agritourism industry.

This year we are working harder than ever to educate our visitors on the importance of taking care of pollinators. Most of us love the smell of lavender, and the fact that it is such a bee- and butterfly-friendly plant has led SOLT members to encourage the region’s gardeners to plant more of it. Pansies, petunias and begonias are showy and look lovely in the garden, but they are quite useless for insects. In general, old-fashioned cottage garden

perennials, like lavender, are best, cheaper and more environmentally friendly; once they are bought they will last a long time.

If we include the right kind of pollinator-friendly plants in our gardens and encourage insects by building and maintaining habitats to support them, we will be helping to counter the problems pollinators are facing. Pollinators are a vital part of our environment; they are essential for the reproduction of our native plants and crops. Pollinators include some birds, bats, and a wide array of insects, but bees are probably the most important. All of these are threatened currently by loss of habitat, pesticides and diseases.

To encourage pollinators into your garden, it is best for plants to be “clumped” in a small

area rather than spread out. Try planting several lavenders in a group (taking note of the spacing requirements of each variety) and include other pollinator-friendly plants like borage, milkweed, sunflowers, calendula, cosmos or alyssum. If you can, plant an area of at least 25 feet square—this may be more ideal for attracting pollinators and providing them with efficient forage.

Try to think about habitat requirements for the pollinators in your garden. As an example, butterflies and bees need shelter and water, so you could include rock piles or trees with peeling bark and cavities, patches of bare soil, and standing deadwood. A birdbath or a small pond can also help.

Including lavender in your garden helps to support our pollinators and other beneficial insects and allows

you to grow beautiful healthy plants without having to resort to chemicals. In our modern world, urban areas will continue to expand whether we like it or not. Let’s take advantage of this and turn our cities into pollinator paradises where honeybees, bumblebees, solitary bees, butterflies and a myriad of other creatures can thrive.

Lavender plants will be available at most of the farms on the Southern Oregon Lavender Trail this summer, and you can visit the farms from June through August on Fridays to Sundays from 10 am to 4 pm. Hours may vary at each farm so check our Facebook page for more details: facebook.com/southernoregonlavendertrail.

Our lavender festival weekend is June 26 through June 28, and each farm will have additional special activities.

Look out for an SOLT brochure locally or download a map from our website at www.southernoregonlavendertrail.com. See you on the Trail!



Photos by Ron Williams.

