

Deep Creek Lavender Farm

For Love of Lavender

Written by: **Sara Mullins**
Photography by: **Lance C. Bell**



Lavender has been called “The Queen of Herbs,” and rightfully so. This distinctively English favorite has enchanted humans for centuries with its spiky, colorful blossoms and pungent, yet alluring aroma. Its botanical name, *lavandula angustifolia*, comes from the Latin verb “lavare,” meaning “to wash.” Long revered for a multitude of medicinal properties, lavender has become a trendy culinary ingredient.

In 2004, Anne and Scott Davidson of Crofton, Maryland, purchased eight acres of raw land in Accident, Maryland, with the intention of building a second home. Anne, a real-estate agent in the Deep Creek Lake area and Anne Arundel County, wondered, “What can we do with this land?” After completing construction on a new log house in 2007, they decided to pursue some sort of farming that wouldn’t require maintenance while she and her husband were gone. During the summer months, Anne would manage the farm while Scott, an IT professional at

the University of Maryland in Baltimore, would remain in Crofton during the work week and join Anne on weekends.

“The decision was made with Google and a bottle of wine,” Anne says. “We decided on lavender. It doesn’t need daily attention – and it could hibernate through winter.” And it seemed like a good fit for a tourist area. The Davidsons embarked on a lavender farm tour throughout the country to learn more about the business.

Their new knowledge, hard work and persistence paid off. “We tried three test batches, and the third time was a charm,” Anne recalls. They planted 600 lavender plants and repeated the process the following year, selecting 15 varieties of English lavender in shades of purple, pink and white. By summer of

2016, they hope to have another 800 plants in the ground. Anne has selected a mix of varieties that will bloom at different times during the June through September growing season.





Visitors can savor the lavender's distinctive aromas as they relax amidst the natural beauty of the farm. Groups are welcome for tours, educational programs, and more.

By 2012 the lavender plants were well established. Anne and Scott turned their energies toward building a barn with space for a store by the main entrance, a drying loft above for the herbs, and a spacious classroom area in the rear.

“We wanted a farm store vibe,” Anne says. “We’re always changing the product line because we want people to find something new each time they visit.” At the store, visitors will find a wide selection of lavender-based, hand-crafted products to sooth and nurture the body and spirit: soaps, lotions, massage and bath oils, eye masks, neck wraps, sachets (and buds to make your own), padded hangers with sachets, candles, tea sets and cups, mist sprays and even dryer balls. Culinary treats include tea blends, jams and jellies, lavender-infused sea salt and farm-raised sprigs for home use. The Discover Cooking with Lavender cookbook offers guidelines and recipes. Gardeners can purchase plants and a copy of the Lavender Lover’s Handbook for advice and tips on lavender’s many uses. Anne’s sister makes quilts available for sale and her brother-in-law plays live music on several weekends throughout the summer.

The farm’s “Pick Your Own” program allows visitors to borrow a pair of scissors to cut as much lavender as they want. A spaghetti measure is used to determine the price.



Deep Creek Lavender Farm owners, Anne and Scott Davidson, are founding members of the United States Lavender Growers Association.

Purchases are then wrapped with tissue paper and embellished with ribbon – in purple, of course.

Visitors can order one of three lavender-themed boxed lunches provided by Moonshadow Café of Accident, Maryland, that feature imaginative offerings like lavender lemonade and lavender buttercream cupcakes. Lunches must be ordered at least 24 hours in advance. Picnic tables, some with umbrellas, offer seating nearby. Anne and Scott are working with area businesses like Moonshadow Café and Lakeside Creamery to spread the word about the culinary uses of lavender.

“All lavender is culinary,” Anne says. “You can use the buds and flowers. Varieties have different intensities, ranging from a strong camphor flavor to mild and sweet.”

Lavender offers visual and olfactory pleasures as well. Visitors who want to savor its multi-color blossoms and distinctive aromas can sit in their choice of an Adirondack chair, a swing or the gazebo and simply relax amidst the natural beauty of the farm.

Anne hopes to instill in visitors a sense of connection to their agricultural roots. She welcomes groups interested in touring the farm and learning more about lavender, and



At the farm store visitors will find a wide selection of lavender-based, hand-crafted, frequently changing products.

Inset photo: Sara Carr with an armful of fresh-cut lavender.



maintains a busy schedule of educational programs. In May and June, she offers Growing Lavender Seminars with information and plants for purchase. “Make and Take” attendees can learn how to propagate lavender or make items ranging from the practical (vinegars, mists and sachets) to the fanciful (wands and halos). Popular social events include “Sip and Paint with a Thirst for Art.” Demos include Candle Making and Lavender Microwave Distillation. “Sustainability Weekends” focus on garden-related projects such as growing shiitake mushrooms, solar oven cooking, enhancing soil and Bokashi composting, an odor-free way to compost kitchen scraps indoors. The list continues to grow and evolve.

As founding members of the United States Lavender Growers Association (USLGA), Anne and Scott continue to learn from and educate others engaged in the business. The group evolved from an initial meeting in June 2011 of lavender growers and crafters who saw a need for a national organization. Its mission is posted at the top of the USLGA website home page: “Supporting, promoting, educating, researching, marketing and networking.” Join the USLGA – it makes good scents. Five years later, the group has grown to about 250 members, with a national conference scheduled for January 2017 in Mesa, Arizona. Anyone interested in lavender is welcome to join the USLGA.

We want the farm to be a small, sustainable business,” Anne says. The couple tends a flock of chickens and keeps bees. Future plans include installing solar panels and offering more programs for children.

Deep Creek Lavender Farm is open from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Hours are 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays in season. Much of the store’s merchandise can be purchased online (www.deepcreeklavenderfarm.com) during the off-season when the farm is closed to the public. In the meantime, the farm’s Facebook page offers updates, recipes, photos and inspiration.

Deep Creek Lavender Farm is located at 625 Doerr Road, Accident, MD 21520. Phone **240-608-8282**.