



Photo: Janet Henderson Schoniger

Left: Paola Legarre, owner of Sage Creations, grows more than 50 cultivars of lavender in her greenhouse and on her small farm in Palisade, Colorado. She sells fresh-cut flowers, dried bouquets, and potted plants, as well as essential oils and lotions.

Below: A display of Paoli's products. From love potions and soothing lotions to soaps and sachets, lavender has been used to treat all kinds of ills, including insomnia, headaches, and anxiety.

Love of Lavender Grows Into a Thriving Business

Paola Legarre never gets bored with lavender. Six years ago, she started with 40 plants. Today, her lavender fields boast 11,000 plants and more than 50 cultivars, and her line of lavender products has grown almost as fast.

“The biggest reward is the whole creative process, creating a business, having a vision, and working toward it. That’s rewarding,” says Paola, who owns the family business, Sage Creations Organic Farm, a small, certified organic farm located in Palisade, Colorado.

From June through September, in a modest farm stand near her home, Paola sells lavender plants, both fresh and dried cut bundles, and an array of lavender products ranging from lotions, essential oils, neck wraps, eye pillows, and wreaths. While interest in lavender products has escalated in the past few years, the farm has always been diversified. The family also grows sweet cherries and heirloom tomatoes, along with a host of other potted culinary herbs. In fact, when she and her husband moved from California to Colorado seven years ago, the land they purchased already had cherry orchards. “I love cherries,” Paola says, adding, “With lavender, I never get bored working with all the different cultivars and the distillation process.”



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Born in Argentina and raised in California’s central valley, Paola says she got her first taste of farming when she visited her grandmother’s walnut groves near Stockton, California. In her 20s, she began working for organic farming operations. When her husband learned of a job opportunity in Grand Junction, she knew then she wanted to start a small family farm in Colorado. “I fell in love with Palisade,” she recalls.

Her 20 years of experience with organic farming paid off. As she added a greenhouse, she began propagating for retailers and

wholesalers in the Rocky Mountain region. You can find her plants in Murdoch’s Ranch and Farm Supply stores in Colorado. There’s more on the horizon. She continues to expand her business, noting that by December she hopes to have her lavender products available for sale on her website: www.sagecreationsorganicfarm.com.

Paola adds that running your own business is not without challenges. “The biggest challenge has been marketing and promotion. You have to do a lot of education about the plants, their uses, and benefits,” she says.

For those who want to learn more about this prized medicinal herb, mark your calendar for Palisade’s Annual Lavender Festival scheduled for July 12-14, 2013. Its three, educational, fun-packed days are organized by the Lavender Association of Western Colorado. For more information, see www.coloradolavender.org/. You’ll find Paola there, along with other local growers from across Colorado. You’ll have the opportunity to buy all types of lavender plants and products, attend workshops on craft-making, and tour local farms.

For gardeners who simply want to add lavender to their landscapes, Paola reminds us this aromatic herb does best in alkaline, well-drained soil with full sun. She recommends true English lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) because it’s considered hardy to zone 5 and can withstand the Rocky Mountain climate better than some hybrids. It’s the perfect xeriscape plant because it requires little water once established and also thrives when planted in mounds. With minimal care, these long-stemmed beauties will grace your garden with sweet-smelling blooms for many seasons to come.

—Janet Henderson Schoniger