

Lavender growers in Provence choose a harvest moment by reading the flowers, watching the forecast and deciding how the crop will be used. Since oil and dried bunches call for different stages of maturity, there is no single harvest date for every field.

Reading the flowers in the field

Growers begin by judging how mature the plants are. They scan the whole field and inspect individual stems, knowing that plants do not all bloom at the same rate. The share of flowers that have opened, the shade of each flower spike and the state of the stems offer clues about the crop's progress.

For essential oil, the flowers need to develop enough oil and reach a scent profile that suits the intended result. As the plants mature, both the amount of oil and its composition can change. Cutting before the right stage or waiting too long may affect what the harvest produces.

Stems destined for dried bunches are assessed differently. Flowers that are widely open can drop more readily during drying and later handling. Growers may cut these stems sooner, while the spikes retain an even shape and appealing color.

Local conditions and the forecast

The crop does not follow an identical calendar from one year or place to the next. In Provence, flowering and cutting dates depend on elevation, local climate, lavender variety and the season's weather. A field higher up may be ready after a warmer field at a lower elevation.

Conditions around harvest also count. Dry weather is usually preferable, particularly for flowers that will be dried. Moisture can slow drying and raise the risk of spoilage, so the forecast may persuade a grower to cut promptly or hold off briefly.

People and equipment affect the schedule as well. Harvesting and distilling require time, labor and suitable machinery. A grower may have to weigh the best moment for one field against the maturity of another and the resources available to work them.

Checks to make before harvesting

Rather than relying on one sign, growers combine several observations before choosing when to cut:

- How much of the field is in flower
- The lavender type and the crop's planned use
- The shape and condition of stems and flower spikes
- Recent rain or humidity, along with the forecast
- How quickly the crop can be dried or distilled

These details matter because appearance alone does not set the ideal harvest point. A field that looks lovely may not yet be at the right stage for oil, and a fully open flower may not suit a bunch that must keep its shape.

Common questions about cutting lavender

Do Provence fields get harvested on the same day?

No. Fields mature at different times, and the desired stage can also differ between lavender for oil and flowers for drying.

Is the crop always cut in summer?

Harvest usually takes place in summer, although the exact timing changes with location, plant type and seasonal conditions.

Why not wait until every flower has opened?

By then, flowers that opened earlier may have passed the preferred stage. More open flowers can also shed during handling if they are meant for dried bunches.

More to read: https://theologischer-ausblick.com/blumen-bei-trauerfeiern-und-beerdigungen-symbolik-und/