

Mayfield Lavender: The Revival of England's Lavender Heritage

While Mitcham's vast fields of blue slowly had disappeared by the 20th century, replaced by urban development, the revival of English Lavender cultivation seemed unlikely—until the early 2000s, when Mayfield Lavender rekindled the tradition, restoring the lavender fields to their former glory.

A VISION TO RESTORE ENGLAND'S LAVENDER LEGACY

The revival of Mayfield Lavender was driven by Brendan Maye, who worked in the fine fragrance division of Wella UK during the 1990s and early 2000s. At the time, Wella owned Yardley, one of England's most famous lavender brands, which was struggling to compete in the modern perfume industry. Brendan believed that visually showcasing English lavender fields would help reestablish Yardley's reputation, but Wella's board was unwilling to invest in farmland.

Determined to bring lavender back to life, Brendan partnered with BioRegional, a local environmental charity, and proposed using his marketing budget to sponsor a lavender-growing project. In 2002, he secured land in Banstead, an area once home to Victorian lavender fields. With 140,000 lavender plugs planted, it seemed like the first steps toward revival - until flocks of crows and magpies pulled up every single plant. Undeterred, Brendan replanted the field in 2003, and by 2004, the second half was successfully cultivated.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Despite the success of the newly planted fields, funding for the project soon vanished when Procter & Gamble acquired Wella in 2005, selling Yardley to another company with no interest in lavender sponsorship. BioRegional could no longer sustain the initiative. Faced with the possibility that lavender might disappear again, Brendan stepped in, personally acquiring the farm and incorporating Mayfield Lavender Ltd to manage its growth.

As Brendan's corporate career expanded internationally, his wife, Lorna Maye, took the helm of the farm, transitioning overnight into the role of lavender farmer. Her dedication to making the farm a success ensured that Mayfield Lavender would thrive.

By 2008, Brendan left corporate life, joining Lorna to fully commit to the project. They opened the lavender fields to visitors, attracting growing numbers each year, drawn by the stunning sight of expansive purple fields. Through word-of-mouth and increasing public interest, Mayfield Lavender became one of the most celebrated lavender farms in England.

Farming like the Forefathers: Mayfield's Commitment to Organic Farming

Mayfield Lavender is certified organic by the Soil Association, ensuring that its farming methods align with traditional practices used by lavender growers in the 18th and 19th centuries. Unlike modern industrial farms that rely on pesticides and synthetic fertilizers, Mayfield Lavender embraces natural, sustainable techniques.

ORGANIC FARMING METHODS

- No Chemical Pesticides or Fertilizers – Mayfield Lavender avoids synthetic chemicals, ensuring that its lavender remains pure and environmentally friendly.
- Hand-Weeding – Instead of using herbicides, all weed control is done by hand, just as it was in the past. This labour-intensive process ensures that the soil remains healthy and free from contaminants.
- Biodiversity Conservation – The farm is a haven for wildlife, attracting butterflies, bees, and birds.
- Sustainable Soil Management – The chalky soil of the region is naturally suited for lavender, reducing the need for artificial soil amendments.

The use of organic farming methods helps to maintain healthy soil and prevent fungal infections. By avoiding chemical pesticides and promoting biodiversity, they help protect lavender from diseases like Shab. Another benefit to organic farming is that it protects pollinators, preserves local ecosystems, and reduces environmental impact, ensuring that lavender cultivation remains sustainable for future generations.



CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT ON LAVENDER

Lavender thrives in warm, dry climates with well-drained soil, making it particularly sensitive to shifts in temperature, rainfall, and extreme weather patterns. As climate change accelerates, lavender farmers are facing new challenges that affect the long-term sustainability of lavender cultivation.

RIISING TEMPERATURES AND DROUGHT

Higher temperatures and longer periods of drought can stress lavender plants, reducing their oil production and overall yield. Unpredictable rainfall patterns and hotter summers also play a part in lowering oil production.

PESTS

Climate change and the transport of overseas pests can affect lavender. We are lucky that the only real threat is the Rosemary Beetle. This beetle which is not native to the UK feeds on lavender, releasing a toxin into the stems which can kill the plant. They are similar in size to a ladybird. If you see the Rosemary Beetle, please remove and pop into a jar. We have many jam jars at the shop!

SOIL DEGRADATION AND WATER SCARCITY

Climate change is altering soil composition, making it harder for lavender to absorb nutrients. Additionally, water shortages in traditionally dry regions mean farmers must adapt by using irrigation systems or switching to more resilient lavender varieties.

How Mayfield Lavender is Adapting

Mayfield Lavender's organic farming methods help mitigate some of these climate-related challenges. By avoiding chemical pesticides, promoting biodiversity, and maintaining healthy soil, the farm ensures that its lavender remains resilient in the face of environmental changes.

MAYFIELD LAVENDER REPLANTING PROGRAMME (2024-2026)

Over the past 20 years, our organic lavender field has flourished, but the cold, wet weather in 2023 and 2024 combined with the persistent weeds, and natural challenges have taken their toll on our mature plants. To ensure that future generations can continue to enjoy the beauty of our lavender, we have made the decision to replant several acres and restore the fields to their full glory.

REPLANTING FOCUS:

- Grosso Lavender, the most affected variety, is being replanted. To help the new plants establish, we kindly ask visitors to avoid this area while they grow.
- At our Epsom farm, we are continuing to propagate lavender plants, which will be gradually introduced into the field over the next few years.

YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS:

- Every visit and word of encouragement motivates us to keep Mayfield Lavender as the most beautiful lavender farm to visit.
- We hope you will enjoy watching the fields thrive as the replanting process progresses.

Thank you for your continued support and understanding. We look forward to sharing the beauty of our farm with you for many years to come. P.S. If you'd like to learn more about organic farming and explore our products made with organic lavender oil, visit us at the Mayfield shop!

MAYFIELD LAVENDER'S EXPANSION TO EPSOM

In addition to its Banstead site, Mayfield Lavender has expanded its operations to Epsom, where it grows lavender and runs a plant nursery, café, and gift shop. This location allows visitors to experience lavender year-round, offering a selection of lavender-based products, plants, and refreshments. For the first time, this summer Mayfield is opening its Secret Lavender Garden.

The Mayfield Secret Lavender Garden is a secluded retreat offering visitors an intimate setting, allowing them to explore acres of breathtaking lavender in a peaceful, uncrowded environment.

Unlike the main farm, the Secret Lavender Garden limits entry to 40 guests per session, ensuring a tranquil experience. Visitors can enjoy the serene countryside views, wander through the fragrant blooms, and unwind in a setting that feels like the heart of the English countryside, yet remains just a short distance from Central London.

Timed entry sessions run throughout the lavender season, with special sunset viewings available from July to August. The Glasshouse Café on-site provides refreshments, making it the perfect place to relax before or after exploring the garden. Bookings can be made at www.mayfieldlavender.com

Mayfield Lavender Today: Preserving Lavender's Heritage

Today, Mayfield Lavender stands as a testament to England's rich lavender heritage, restoring the lost beauty of Mitcham's iconic fields. Thousands of visitors from around the world come to experience the breathtaking landscapes, learn about lavender's history, and appreciate its therapeutic benefits. The farm ensures that the legacy of English lavender growing continues, connecting the past with the present.

From Mitcham's historic Potter & Moore distilleries to the revival at Mayfield Lavender, England's lavender industry has endured cycles of decline and renewal.

Today, the Maye family remains at the heart of the business, with their two daughters now involved in its operations. Their commitment ensures that Mayfield Lavender continues to preserve England's lavender heritage, promote sustainable farming, and provide a unique experience for visitors during the peak blooming season from June to August. During this time, the fields transform into a vibrant sea of purple, filling the air with their calming fragrance. Visitors can wander through the rows of lavender, take stunning photographs, and enjoy the seasonal beauty of one of England's most iconic floral landscapes.

Whether visiting to learn about history, appreciate sustainable farming, or simply relax among the flowers, summer at Mayfield Lavender is an unforgettable experience.

A MESSAGE FROM THE MAYE FAMILY

"Thank you for visiting Mayfield Lavender and being part of our history. From the early days of reviving English lavender to growing as a family-run business, it has been a joy to share this journey with you. Your support keeps this tradition alive, and we hope you continue to enjoy the beauty, fragrance, and heritage of our lavender fields for years to come."