



Lawn & Garden

Public gets opportunity to view a lavender farm

Area residents will have the chance to tour the first lavender farm in Ohio's history Friday to Sunday, when DayBreak Lavender Farm in Streetsboro sponsors its fifth annual spring open house.

"Since we received our designation as Ohio's first lavender farm, we've received so many inquiries about growing, harvesting and drying that we've decided to say 'thank you' by sharing what our fields have taught us," said Jody Byrne, who co-founded the 2129 Frost Road farm with her husband Michael Slyker.

The couple is offering a free workshop titled "Lavender Naturally," providing tips and tricks of successfully growing lavender in Ohio.

"We'd like to make this area the lavender capital of Ohio with a beautiful lavender display in every garden," said Byrne.

Slyker will host a guided tour of DayBreak's organic lavender field and share in detail how the farm's lavender is organically cultivated, grown, pruned, harvested, dried and propagated — all by hand and without any synthetic chemicals or fertilizers.

Everyone is welcome — from lavender-loving gardeners to area farmers wanting to add lavender to their crop mix.

Open house hours are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday. A tour will begin each day at 2:30, followed by the 3 p.m. workshop. The event will occur rain or shine.

Dubbed "the Swiss Army Knife of herbs," Byrne said she views lavender as much more than a perennial herb.

"It's a culture; it's the marriage of gastronomic, herbal, healing, homekeeping and decorative traditions dating back to Roman times when Nero paved the streets with lavender to celebrate a victory," she explained.

BENEFITS OF visiting DayBreak's lavender farm open house include:

- Gardeners and herbalists will find a wealth of horticultural and cultivation knowledge in the workshop. This year for the first time, they also will be able to buy live plants.

"We'll have Hidcote and Munstead, two incredibly reliable varieties for Ohio, but we'll also offer Provence, which is a wonderful culinary lavender," said Byrne, who added cooks can use lavender in the same recipes that call for rosemary.

- Gourmet cooks and crafters can see, smell, touch and taste DayBreak's organic lavender in everything from lavender chamomile tea to handcrafted soaps, splashes, creams and scrubs, to aromatherapy and sleep aids; from wreaths and still-life to poultry rubs and gourmet salts.

There even will be samples of dark chocolate lavender torte.

- Artists and photographers are encouraged to bring their sketchbooks and equipment to photograph the emergent spring and the farm's 2-acre pond.

- Hikers are invited to walk the fields and surrounding woodlands. "It is 'mud season,' so treat your feet accordingly," Byrne advised.

For driving instructions, visit www.daybreaklavenderfarm.com or



Volunteers Justin Harris and Ashley Suzelis, left and center, help DayBreak Lavender Farm co-owner Michael Slyker, right, with planting chores last spring. The farm will host an open house this weekend. Below is a field in bloom last summer. (Photos courtesy of Mary Averill of Averill & Associates Creative Lab and DayBreak Lavender Farm)



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Meanwhile, in July, DayBreak Lavender Farm will host Ohio's first lavender festival.

In November 2004, Byrne and Slyker received official notification that after combing Ohio's historic archives, DayBreak was declared the first lavender farm here.

"Lavender is not supposed to grow here because of the harsh and often wet winters," Byrne said.

The couple received a proclamation from the Ohio Senate, arranged by Sen. Kimberly A. Zurz of the 28th District.

Byrne and Slyker have been growing lavender organically on their 14-acre Streetsboro farm since 2001. They create handmade natural soaps and other bath and body products.