

# GARDENS

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## Lavender fields forever



(Photos courtesy of Mary Averill of Averill & Associates Creative Lab and DayBreak Lavender Farm.)

## Bursting with pride!

In July, DayBreak Lavender Farm — Ohio's first lavender farm — will host Ohio's First Annual Lavender Festival, according to owners Jody Byrne and Michael Slyker.

In November 2004, Byrne and Slyker received official notification that after combing Ohio's Historic Archives, DayBreak Lavender Farm was declared the first lavender farm in the state's history.

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

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

Byrne and Slyker have been growing lavender organically on their 14-acre Streetsboro farm since 2001. From that cash crop, they create handmade natural soaps and other bath and body products.

## STREETSBORO

### Daybreak Lavender Farm offers free workshop during open house

STREETSBORO - Experience all that lavender is and tour the first lavender farm in Ohio's history at DayBreak Lavender Farm's 5th Annual Spring Open House, to be held April 28-30.

"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 husband, Michael Slyker.

The couple is offering a free workshop entitled "Lavender Naturally" on the tips and tricks of successfully growing lavender in Ohio.

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

Michael 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. April 28 and 29, and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. April 30. The tour will begin at 2:30 each day, to be followed by the 3 p.m. workshop in the Canoe Barn. 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. "Lavender is a culture — it's the marriage of gastronomic, herbal, healing, home-keeping and decorative traditions dating back to Roman times when Nero paved the streets with lavender buds to celebrate a victory," she explained.

Benefits of visiting Daybreak's Lavender Farm's 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 will also be able to buy live plants. "We will have Hidcote and Munstead, two incredibly reliable varieties for Ohio, but we'll also be offering Provence, which is a wonderful culinary lavender," said Byrne. She said 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



Volunteers Justin Harris and Ashley Suzelis help DayBreak Lavender Farm co-owner Michael Slyker, right, with planting chores last spring. At top is a photo of a DayBreak field in bloom last summer. Planting occurs throughout spring and summer, and volunteers are always welcome to help out.

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 will even 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 two-acre pond.

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

For complete details, daily schedule and driving instructions, visit:

www.daybreaklavenderfarm.com  
or send e-mail to soapplease1@aol.com.