

THINGS TO DO

# A tranquil oasis at Lavender Waves Farm

Soak up the soothing scent — and the relaxing atmosphere — at this pick-your-own destination in South Kingstown

By **Jenna Pelletier** Globe Correspondent, Updated July 20, 2021, 10:29 a.m.



Collins Pfefferle sits with her mother Mia Pfefferle at Lavender Waves Farm in South Kingstown, R.I. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

**SOUTH KINGSTOWN, R.I.** — Standing before rows of purple blooms, Henry Cabrera points out the varieties of lavender he is growing at his farm off Route 1 near Moonstone Beach.

The hybrid Phenomenal is the “Rolls-Royce of lavender,” he said, because it’s “the best of the best.” The white flower variety Edelweiss is good for culinary purposes, he added. Looking for a highly perfumed bud? Try Hidcote. Cabrera is also growing Super Blue, Folgate, and several other varieties of the fragrant flowering herb, known for its calming effects.

“Lavender is kind of like this cool, sexy crop,” he said. “It’s beautiful, it’s romantic, and it comes back every year.”

Boasting more than 4,000 lavender plants representing about a dozen varieties, Cabrera’s Lavender Waves Farm has attracted visitors from Rhode Island and beyond since it opened to the public last year for cut-your-own sessions and other events.

Cabrera lives in a home on the property and runs the farm’s business operations with his girlfriend, Rebecca Carney. It’s a second job and passion project for both of them: He’s an anesthesiologist at South County Hospital, and she’s a psychologist with Southcoast Health.



A basket filled with blossoms at Lavender Waves Farm. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

Peak bloom happens throughout July and August, and there is a second, smaller flowering in September and October.

Visitors can meander through a well-tended field of flowers: rows of plants are arranged in a circular formation around a white gazebo. The farm is also home to several animals, including Minnie, a friendly Harlequin-colored Great Dane; a donkey named Diego; and several sheep and alpacas.

Cabrera and Carney refer to the farm's most enthusiastic visitors as "lavender groupies."

"We didn't realize how into this people can get," Carney said. "They're dying their hair purple, they're wearing purple dresses, and someone even came in a lavender car."





Rings of lavender bloom at Lavender Waves Farm. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

While visiting the farm on a recent Saturday for a cut-your-own lavender event, Patricia Bousquet of East Providence said she understands its appeal as a local destination.

“I just love the scent of lavender, ” she said. “I’ll hang it up to dry, and then keep it throughout the house.”

In another part of the field, Kim Johnson of Exeter and her daughter, Carissa Johnson, were taking their time snipping individual stems.

“We noticed that everybody here just looks at ease, like they’re relaxing, which is really nice to see instead of the usual hustle bustle, and especially after the stress of the pandemic,” Kim said.

The farm’s tranquil landscape is only enhanced by the therapeutic effects of the plant



itself. Lavender flowers and oils have long been used as an antidote to stress, anxiety, and insomnia, among other issues.

“The studies are out there, but I don’t get too involved with the medical stuff because it’s kind of a liability, so I keep the two things separate,” Cabrera said.



Visitors stroll around Lavender Waves Farm. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

But he admits that it’s a funny coincidence how well his farm business correlates with his other job “putting people to sleep” as an anesthesiologist.

After buying the farm in 2016, Cabrera wanted to come up with a business idea that would contribute to the cost of renovating and maintaining it. He and Carney mulled over a few options, including growing hops, but settled on lavender because it is a relatively low maintenance crop that does not require a lot of water. They also liked its agricultural tourism appeal and how it can be turned into valuable oils, dried buds and scented products such as soap and candles.

The couple learned how to successfully grow lavender by reading books and watching YouTube videos, along with a lot of trial and error. They've discovered, for instance, that some varieties of the Mediterranean herb do not do well in South County's climate, but most of their plants have thrived.

They planted the first rows — the “inner circle” — of lavender in 2018, with help from several University of Rhode Island students.

Then, in 2019, they added thousands more plants and transformed a garage on the property into a luxurious two-bedroom rental suite outfitted with a massage shower, an amethyst geode sink, and China dinnerware. Guests can opt to have a personal chef cook them a five-course lavender-themed meal in the suite's kitchen.

Last summer, Cabrera and Carney began offering cut-your-own lavender events on a trial basis and are hosting them again this season. For \$20 per person, guests can access the farm for about an hour and a half and cut a 6-ounce bouquet.





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Ariel Finkle, left, and Daisy McNamara hold bouquets at Lavender Waves Farm in Rhode Island. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

Currently, the couple sells most of their harvest — about 15,000 bundles a year — through their online store and on-site at farm events. They also supply the herb to florists, restaurants, and bars, including Tiny Bar, in Providence.

They've just started offering [on-site picnics](#), with a choice between a simple set-up on picnic tables, a “French Countryside picnic” at the edge of the lavender fields, and a luxurious “Tiffany Picnic” near the gazebo with items from the famed jeweler and retailer (customers can bring their own food, or ask the farm to provide the picnic). And Cabrera said they'd like to resume hosting weddings, which they've paused after some neighbors voiced opposition to the town of South Kingstown. He adds that “all of the red tape” has been the most challenging aspect of the business so far.

“We have big plans to do more and more with the farm,” Cabrera said. “Turns out, if you plant it, they will come.”

*Lavender Waves Farm, 3814 Commodore Perry Highway, South Kingstown, RI, [lavenderwavesfarm.com](https://lavenderwavesfarm.com). Open on select weekend days throughout the summer and early fall; see the website for details.*

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