

# Lilacs

For heady fragrance, masses of blooms and ease of care, these old-fashioned favorites have it all. Lilacs steal the show in spring, they provide an interesting backdrop for summer-blooming perennials and shrubs. Lilacs are not difficult to grow, but they do have a few basic requirements.

## Requirements

To bloom well, lilacs need full sun. Lilacs may be able to survive in shade, but they will disappoint you come spring. Lilacs do best with a neutral to alkaline soil pH. Lime can be added to acidic soils to raise the pH. It is also important to plant lilacs in a well drained spot. Heavy clay soils should be amended with perlite to provide better drainage. Lilacs respond best to transplanting in early spring, before they leaf out, or in early fall, after they go dormant.

## Spacing

When planting lilacs be sure to give them enough space. Overcrowding is the most common error gardeners make with lilacs. For most varieties, planting them at 6-10' intervals will allow them ample room to grow.

## Fertilizing

Once planted, lilacs may take several years to bloom, even though it may have been blooming when purchased. Those flowers were formed the summer before bloom, and winter over in plump terminal buds. Allow your lilac a few seasons to become established. Fertilizing isn't usually necessary for established plants, but if you feel the need, fertilize in early spring with 5-10-10. (See Planting Instructions for Fertilizing of New Plants.)

## Pruning & Maintenance

Lilacs are prone to a gray-white leaf residue called powdery mildew. It may look bad, but it doesn't do permanent damage. Provide good air circulation by allowing proper spacing. Also pruning provides better air circulation, encourages more blooms and better shaped shrubs. Because lilacs bloom on old wood, prune in early summer after the blooms have faded, but before new buds are formed. When pruning, start with the three D's - remove any wood that is dead, damaged, or diseased. Every year or two, cut out several suckers from the base of the plant and also prune back wayward branches to maintain an attractive shape and size. Deadheading spent blooms is not necessary, unless the blooms become unsightly.

## Planting Instructions

- Dig hole 2 times larger than diameter of pot and 6 inches deeper.
- Prepare special planting mixture: 1/3 perlite, 1/3 topsoil, and 1/3 peat moss. (Excellent soil conditions may require less peat & perlite).
- Fill extra depth of hole with soil mixture and tamp firmly to eliminate settling after the bush is planted.
- Remove the plant from the container. “Scoring” the root ball several times vertically (1/2” deep) with your fingers or a sharp tool will loosen the roots.
- Place plant in the hole with top of root ball 1” above or ground level. Fill hole 1/2 full with soil mix and tamp firmly to prevent air pockets.
- Soak thoroughly several times. After water soaks away, finish back filling to soil, level with soil mix. (Shrubs planted too deep will result in death.)
- Spread a fine layer of mulch around the shrub being sure not to cover-up branches or pile against stems. Create a small basin with mulch around the edge of the hole to retain water.
- Fill basin with water several times, soaking plant thoroughly.
- Apply a root stimulator to the base of the plant as per the manufacturer’s recommendations. Apply monthly during the growing season to encourage a healthy deep root system.
- Water newly installed plants every 2-4 days for the first month, by placing a hose at the base of the plant, letting it trickle slowly until saturated. This is preferable over shallow watering every day. (Be careful of over watering when planting in heavy clay soils!) Deep roots are developed by deep watering. Continue deep watering every 1-2 weeks, depending on rainfall amounts, for the first year until the ground freezes for the winter. (Remember, if a plant looks like it need water, it is often too late!)

# Stauffers Recommended Lilacs

Variety	Comments
<b>French or Common Lilacs (<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>; Sweet Fragrance)</b>	
Charles Joly	Prolific bloomer; very fragrant wine red flowers; flowers bloom above foliage.
Katherine Havemeyer	Rich mauve pink flowers; consistent profuse bloomer with exceptional fragrance.
Sensation	Unique bicolor with deep reddish-purple flowers edged with white; good fragrance.
Monge	Dark purple blooms; fantastic fragrance.
<b>Hyacinthifloras (Bloom 7-10 days before French Lilacs)</b>	
Assessippi	Fragrant pale lavender blossoms cover entire bush; rounded shape needs little pruning.
Mount Baker	Heavy bloomer; single white blooms; Canadian hybrid - very hardy.
Pocahontas	Fragrant deep purple flowers.
<b>Preston Lilac (Bloom 1-2 weeks after French Lilacs)</b>	
Donald Wyman	Wine red flowers.
Minuet	Dwarf, late blooming with 4-5" lavender flower spikes.
Miss Canada	Very red buds open to pink flowers; very hardy and vigorous grower.
<b>Other Species and Hybrids</b>	
Ivory Silk Tree Lilac ( <i>S. reticulata</i> )	Creamy white blooms in June; cherry - like bark; shapely small tree.
James MacFarlane ( <i>S. villosa</i> )	Single large clear pink flowers; large dark green leaves; vigorous grower.
Miss Kim / Korean ( <i>S. patula</i> )	Very fragrant lavender flowers; disease resistant; compact plant reaches 5-8 feet tall.
Palibin / Korean	Compact, small leaved, prolific fragrant lavender blooms; mildew resistant.
Persian Lilac ( <i>S. X persica</i> )	Small cluster of lilac colored, sweetly scented flowers; nice compact habit to 5-6'.
Prairie Petite	Dwarf, fragrant light pink flowers fading to lavender.
Purple Giant ( <i>S. X chinensis</i> )	Abundant deep purple flowers; vigorous grower; excellent for hedges.
Tinkerbelle	Dense and compact, wine red buds open to deep pink fragrant blooms in mid-May.