



Flowering Shrubs: Lilacs

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Lilacs Often Grow Wild

The lilac is probably the most commonly known of all flowering shrubs in this area. The common lilac known as *Syringa vulgaris* is often found growing wild along field lines and roadsides. Native to the Balkans, it came to Canada with the British who liked to plant it in hedgerows. The beautiful fragrance of a flowering lilac can fill an entire room. Cut when flowers are just opening, smash the ends of the woody stems and put in warm water for a gorgeous display.

Varieties to Plant

Today, lilac comes in many different shades of purple and pink as well as white. Breeding has also introduced different sized and shaped leaves as shown in varieties like Korean or Japanese. They are deciduous woody plants and most are long lived. Lilacs can grow from 3 feet to 30 feet tall and 2 feet to 4 feet wide depending on the variety. Most are zone 2-6, but read your labels as there are many appearing on the market that need a milder winter.

Preferred Conditions

Lilacs prefer full sun, needing at least 6 hours daily but they will take some shade. They like well-drained alkaline soil and can survive in dry conditions although will perform better with regular watering.

Top dressing with compost and fertilizing will help with flower production.

Care and Pruning

Because lilacs bloom in early spring, May into June, they set their buds in summer for the next year. If pruning is needed, it should be done right after flowering and before seed heads form. Many lilacs will reproduce by sending up suckers. These can be cut back just below the earth or left to increase your plant.

You can prune lilacs into a tree shape with a single trunk or leave it in its bush shape.

Problems you Might Encounter

Lilacs can suffer from powdery mildew. To help with this, prune old branches out to aid with air circulation. If you are not getting many flowers, your plant may be getting too much nitrogen. This is especially true if it is planted in or near your lawn which is getting nitrogen from lawn fertilizer.

Add a handful of bone meal each spring to counter this. Pests such as lilac leaf miner and lilac borer can attack your plant, but generally lilacs are pest free.

Learn more about Lilacs [here>](#)