

Overview

The heady fragrance of lilacs is a wonderful signal that Spring is in the air. Most species are native to Asia in the vast reaches of China, while two are from Europe, primarily from the Balkans. A member of the Olive family, we can thank the early colonists for bringing the common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*) to our shores. Extremely hardy, they thrive in cold climates. Their propensity for cold serves as a trigger for flowering.

Known as the "Queen of Shrubs," lilacs offer a stunning palette of colors from shades of purple and blue to magenta, pink and white. A range of bloom times, plant size and intensity of fragrance make them a welcome addition to any garden. Birds and butterflies are attracted to the flowers.

The needs of lilacs are few; at least 6 hours of sunlight, good drainage, and air circulation. They thrive in fertile, humus-rich, neutral to alkaline soil. Deadheading spent flowers will increase blooms in the following year. Keeping grass and weeds from growing around plants also improves flowering.

Lilacs are identified by both their flowering and foliage characteristics: flower color and type, whether single or double floret; fragrance; shape/height of plant; leaf shape, size, and color; and suckering (a plant's tendency to send up shoots around the perimeter of its original base).



The breath of the enchanted wind mingles the fresh scent of the lilacs with the fragrance of the past." — Marcel Proust

Fun Facts

The Latin name for lilac, *Syringa*, comes from the Greek word "syrinx," a "pipe," and refers to the hollow stems. Ancient Greek doctors used lilac stems to inject medicine into their patients.

The Persians cultivated a lilac native to western China, possibly since the 1200's A.D.

Lilacs were grown in the gardens of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson.

A Japanese tree lilac can reach the height of 25 feet and a width of 20 feet.

Some lilac varieties can survive winter temperatures of -60°F.

A single lilac plant can live over a hundred years.

If you spot a random stand of lilacs in the middle of nowhere along a country road, it may have been the site of an old home or farm.

A French nurseryman Victor Lemoine (1823 – 1911), and his descendants were instrumental in breeding 214 new cultivars of lilac, known today as the French hybrids.

Highland Park in Rochester, NY has the largest collection of lilacs in the US. Begun in 1892 by horticulturist John Dunbar with 20 varieties, today the park has over 500 varieties.

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Compilation by
Clelia De Souter & Joan Scott-Miller

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05/25

Laurelwood Lilacs



'Maiden's Blush'

Friends of
Laurelwood Arboretum
Connecting People with Nature

725 Pines Lake Drive West
Wayne, New Jersey 07470
973-831-5675
www.laurelwoodarboretum.org

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When choosing a lilac for your own garden, you may wish to consider flower color, habit, size, fragrance, and bloom time. Enjoy the lilacs of Laurelwood and get some inspiration!

A guide to Laurelwood's Lilacs

Species name is followed by hybridizer and date of introduction.

Lilac Walk

Specimens are numbered beginning from the north end of the Walk and are labelled for easy identification.

1. 'Maiden's Blush' (single, pink floret); 10 - 12 ft.; wonderfully fragrant; early blooming; exceptionally hardy.
S. x hyacinthiflora – Skinner 1966

2. Persian Lilac (single, lilac floret); 4 - 8 ft.; richly fragrant; very showy; compact; excellent foundation plant.
S. persica – origin unknown

3. 'Miss Kim' (single, violet floret); 5 - 7 ft.; sweetly fragrant; leaves turn burgundy in fall; ideal for small gardens.
S. pubescens subsp. Patula - Yeager 1954

4. 'Andenken an Ludwig Spath' (single, purple floret); 10 - 12 ft.; amazingly fragrant; an old heirloom variety.
S. vulgaris - Spath 1883

5. 'Monge' (single, purple floret); 10 - 12 ft.; great as cut flowers.
S. vulgaris - Lemoine 1913

6. 'Betsy Ross' (single, white floret); 8 - 12 ft.; early flowering; leaves turn wine-red in fall; first lilac cultivar to be released by the U.S. National Arboretum.
S. oblata x *S. vulgaris* - Egolf 2000

7. 'James MacFarlane' (single, pink floret); 8 - 12 ft.; lightly scented; late-flowering.
S. x josiflexa - Yeager 1959

8. 'Madame Lemoine' (double white floret); 8 -10 ft; named in honor of Marie Louise, wife of hybridizer Victor Lemoine. Marie was his tireless assistant who did the delicate work of pollinating the tiny lilac flowers when his eyesight and fine motor skills began failing.
S. vulgaris - Lemoine 1890

9. 'Krasavita Moskvyy' (double, white floret); 8 -12 ft; noted for its unique color; highly fragrant.
S. vulgaris - Kolesnikow 1947

10. 'Miss Canada' (single, pink floret); 6 - 9 ft.; late-flowering; suitable for warmer climates.
S. x josiflexa 'Redwine' x *S. prestoniae* 'Hiawatha' – Cumming 1967

11. 'Miss Ellen Willmott' (double, white floret); 8 - 12 ft.; very dependable bloomer; strongly fragrant.
S. vulgaris - Lemoine 1903

12. 'President Lincoln' (single, blue floret); 8 - 10 ft.; heady fragrance; fast growing; named in honor of President Abraham Lincoln while recalling a line from Walt Whitman's elegy of 1865, "When lilacs last in the dooryard bloomed..."
S. vulgaris - Dunbar 1916

13. 'Primrose' (single, white floret); 10 - 12 ft; noted for its unique creamy yellow color upon aging.
S. vulgaris - Maarse 1949

14. 'Old Glory' (single, purple floret); 8–10 ft.; early blooming; opening from abundant reddish-purple buds; captivating scent.
S. x hyacinthiflora - Egolf 2006

15. 'Pocahontas' (single, violet floret); 10 - 12 ft.; early blooming; leaves turn bronzy red in fall.
S. x hyacinthiflora - Skinner 1935

16. 'Palibin' (single, violet floret); 4 - 5 ft.; although native to China, it is known as dwarf Korean lilac; sweetly fragrant; leaves turn reddish bronze color in fall; ideal for small gardens.
S. meyeri - origin unknown pre-1920

17. 'Sensation' (single, purple floret); 8 - 15 ft.; mid-season bloomer that has a distinctive candy stripe margin on each petal.
S. vulgaris - Maarse 1938

18. 'Donald Wyman' (single, violet floret); 6 - 10 ft.; lightly fragrant; late blooming.
S. x prestoniae - Skinner 1944

19. 'Scentara' (double, blue floret); 6 - 8 ft.; early blooming; abundant blossoms; superb fragrance.
S. hyacinthiflora – origin unknown

20. Japanese tree lilac; 20 - 30 ft.; musky-scented; tolerant of urban conditions and winter salt; reddish-brown exfoliating bark.
S. reticulata – origin unknown

Home Hill

1. *S. laciniata* (single, violet floret); 6 - 10 ft.; a cut leaf lilac; early blooming; very heat tolerant; native to Turkestan, China.
S. vulgaris x *S. protolaciniata* - Miller 1768

2. 'Superba' (single, pink floret); 5 - 7 ft.; known as Littleleaf lilac; highly fragrant; native to China and Korea.
S. pubescens subsp. Microphylla - Cassegrain 1933