

Lilacs (*Syringa* species) belong to the Oleaceae (olive) family from Eurasia. They range from low shrubs to small trees. They like full sun, average to well-drained soil and close to neutral pH. Lilacs seem to thrive on neglect, but summer watering and a flower or all purpose fertilizer will help them provide armloads of fragrant flowers for generations.

Syringa vulgaris (French or common lilac) is the shining star of the lilac family. It is grown for its incomparable fragrance and fine color range. Each named variety has its own distinctive fragrance. One is not necessarily better than the other, a lot like roses. One interesting phenomenon that we have observed here and at other nurseries is that not all varieties bloom true to color their first year. Common lilac is extremely cold-hardy, easily tolerating temperatures down to -25°F.

Lilacs have few pests. The most serious is probably the leaf miner. The larvae of this insect riddle the leaves with tunnels, eventually killing the leaves. If you see leaves with white or transparent areas between the veins, remove the affected leaves. This is usually adequate; if you feel you need a chemical control, talk to a Sky nursery associate for recommendations.

The other problem here in the Northwest is lilac blight or *Pseudomonas syringae*. Blackened or scorched leaves can occur in June and July. Prune out affected twigs; clean shears with a 70% alcohol solution between cuts. Prune only when the plant is completely dry. Use a copper based spray in the spring—spray two to three times seven to ten days apart when the foliage first emerges.

You may see powdery mildew on the leaves toward the end of the season. It is usually not harmful to the plant. However, if it is unsightly you can use Bonide Remedy to control it.

Should a lilac need pruning, do it just after the flowering period, usually in May or June. Cut out weak or damaged canes. (Note: pruning reblooming lilacs will reduce the fall bloom.)

Given ample sun and a little care, lilacs will reward even the most novice of gardeners with a bouquet of flowers that will leave you wanting to put in even more lilacs!

FRENCH LILACS & FULL SIZE HYBRID LILACS

Beauty of Moscow (Krasavitsa Moskovy) Height 8-12 feet—spread 6-8 feet. Bicolor: deep pink buds, pale pink to white petals. Very full, fragrant flowers; long blooming period.

Belle de Nancy Height and spread 6-12 feet. Double pinkish purple flowers.

Betsy Ross Height 8-10 feet—spread 4-6 feet. Fragrant single white flowers.

Charles Joly Height and spread 6-12 feet. Fragrant double magenta flowers.

Katherine Havemeyer. Medium growing vase-like shrub. Height 8-12 feet—spread 8-12 feet. Hardy to -30° F. Double pink flowers, very fragrant.

Lavender Lady Height 8-12 feet—spread 6 feet. Fragrant single lavender flowers.

Ludwig Spaeth Height and spread 6-12 feet. Very fragrant single purple flowers.

Monge Height 10-15 feet—spread 6-8 feet. Deep purple flowers. Tolerant of wet climates.

Old Glory Height 8-11 feet—spread 10-12 feet. Fragrant lavender purple flowers. Some resistance to powdery mildew.

Pocahontas Height 12-15 feet—spread 10-12 feet. Maroon buds; fragrant single violet flowers.

Sensation Height 8-10 feet—spread 4-8 feet. Wine-red flowers with white picotee edge!

Yankee Doodle Height 10-12 feet—spread 6-8 feet. Hardy to -20° F. Single, very dark purple.

DWARF/COMPACT LILACS

Dwarf Korean Lilac (Syringa meyeri 'Palibin') Height 3-4 feet. Lavender flowers.

Miss Kim Height 2-3 feet—spread 3-4 feet. Deep purple buds open to ice blue flower; some fragrance.

REBLOOMING DWARF/COMPACT LILACS

Bloomerang® Dark Purple Height 4-6 feet—spread 5-6 feet. Single dark reddish-purple flowers, fragrant.

Bloomerang® Dwarf Pink Dwarf variety stays about 3 feet high and wide. Single pink flowers, very fragrant.