



*Gardeners Helping Gardeners Succeed*

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# All About Lilacs

Lilacs (*Syringa*) with about 20 species and hundreds of cultivars, are hardy (USDA Zones 3-7), colorful and fragrant spring blooming shrubs. Lilacs prefer full sun and well-drained, nearly neutral to slightly alkaline (pH 7.5) soils. Most lilacs require pronounced winter chilling period to bloom best. **All are deer resistant.** Native to eastern Europe, the common lilac was introduced to western Europe before 1600 and likely to North America from there. It wasn't until the 1800s that named cultivars were bred.

## French Hybrids

The best-known lilacs, *Syringa vulgaris* (common lilac), with hundreds of cultivars, developed in France around 1900, hence the term "French hybrid". They are a classic tradition within the landscape accompanying other plants and serving many purposes, whether screening as a hedge, providing shade for a patio, or as an accent of color and fragrance.

## Canadian Hybrids

The Preston Lilacs (*Syringa x prestoniae*) are a result of crosses and offer the gardener leaves, flowers & fragrance that are different than *Syringa vulgaris*. They are extremely hardy, bloom slightly later and **flower on the current season's growth rather than last season's wood.**

## Japanese Tree Lilac (*Syringa reticulata*)

Tree lilacs have attractive bark that is reminiscent of cherry bark. They have ivory blossoms that have a sweet smell. Possibly the most trouble-free lilac, excellent specimen tree, street tree, good in groups or near large buildings.

## Pruning & Fertilization

Prune lilacs annually just after flowering in the spring. Avoid pruning later in the season because next year's flowers are formed on the plant this year. To encourage vigorous growth, enhance flowering and maintain shape, remove dead, damaged, diseased, thin, and unproductive branches and suckers. Extremely overgrown shrubs can be rejuvenated by severely cutting them back within a foot from the ground.

Fertilize in the spring before bloom with *Dr. Earth All Purpose Fertilizer* or any bud & bloom formula.

## Pests & Disease

Lilacs pests include root weevils. Weevils cause damage to foliage by eating notches in the leaf margins. They emerge from the soil and are active at night. There are many methods to controlling the pest, such as placing nematodes in the soil to prey on the weevils, using *Bayer Power Force* on contact at night when present, and/or applying *Bayer Complete Insect Killer* as a systemic. Lilacs are also subject to powdery mildew & leaf spot. Spray with any fungicide.