



Lilacs can be arranged in a vase by themselves or mixed with other spring flowers, but keeping it simple will give you the best floral display.

Following these suggestions should give the home gardener an idea of what types of lilacs to incorporate into their landscape and how to maintain them.



**For more information
visit the Master Gardener
Diagnostic Clinic
May through September
Tuesdays 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.**

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Lilacs

For Kittitas County



The most commonly grown lilac is *Syringa vulgaris* or **French lilac** (also called common lilac), which is a spreading shrub or small tree, growing up to 22 feet tall. Flowers are fragrant, either single or double, borne in tightly packed 8” panicles that are produced in late spring and early summer. Purple flowered varieties include the following:

- ~ ‘**Albert F. Holden**’ - dark violet flowers
- ~ ‘**Alphonse Lavallee**’ - lilac-blue flowers
- ~ ‘**Decaisne**’ - light purple flowers
- ~ ‘**Lavender Lady**’ - lavender flowers

Other varieties in this group to consider are:

- ~ ‘**Ami Schott**’ - double, cobalt blue flowers
- ~ ‘**Miss Ellen Willmott**’ - double creamy white flowers
- ~ ‘**Montaigne**’ - double, pale pink flowers
- ~ ‘**Mrs. Edward Harding**’ - double, purple-red flowers
- ~ ‘**President Lincoln**’ - single, deep blue flowers
- ~ ‘**Sylvan Beauty**’ - rose lavender flowers
- ~ ‘**Wedgewood Blue**’ - single, pale blue flowers
- ~ ‘**White Angel**’ - white flowers



Nothing marks the arrival of spring and early summer more gracefully than lilacs, with their richly scented flowers. This common garden shrub is easy to grow, is very hardy, and comes in a wide array of varieties and colors. A perfect garden shrub for our tough climate.

Another type of lilac that should be considered for our area because of its extreme hardiness is *Syringa x persica* or **Persian lilac**. This lilac is hard to USDA Zone 3 (-40° F.) and is described as being compact and bushy, growing to 6’ tall. It has gracefully arching branches bearing fragrant pale violet flowers. This would be a good choice for the small yard or garden.

For gardeners looking for a large, tree-like, lilac, consider planting *Syringa reticulata* or **Japanese tree lilac**, which becomes quite large, growing to 30’ tall. This is described as being an upright tree or shrub with smooth bark, bearing clusters of showy, creamy white flowers in early to midsummer. This lilac is also very hardy.

General Care and Maintenance

Lilacs are not demanding plants, requiring fertile, neutral to slightly alkaline soil. Grow lilacs in full sun for better bloom and vigor. Regular watering and fertilization is also helpful. After lilacs have bloomed, dead head (pick off) spent blooms, just above points where flower buds are forming, which will provide next year’s bloom. As lilacs mature, prune out older stems to help maintain young, vigorous growth.

Lilac Pests and Diseases

Insect pests include caterpillars, leaf miner, scale, and stem borers. Common diseases are anthracnose, bacterial leaf spot, root knot nematodes, powdery mildew and verticillium wilt. Proper watering, pruning, and fertilizing will help minimize insect and disease problems from occurring. When problems do arise contact your local Master Gardener program for advice on controlling pests.

Lilacs as Cut-Flowers

Using a sharp pair of by-pass pruners, cut lilac blooms in the late afternoon or early evening and immediately place in water. After cutting lilac flowers, strip branches of lower leaves and re-cut flowers under water, removing about 1” of stem. This is to help remove any air bubbles that may have formed in the stem, when lilacs were initially cut.

Place the branches of flowers in warm (100°F.) water, which has floral preservative added, to help prolong the freshness of your flowers. If you don’t have any floral preservative available, you can make your own using 1 tablespoon vinegar and 1 tablespoon sugar to 1 gallon of water or you can use equal parts of lemon-like soda (not diet) to equal parts water.

Make sure that vases or containers used to hold flowers, have been disinfected with a 10 percent bleach solution, using 1 part bleach to 9 parts water. Rinse vases and containers after sterilizing with the bleach and water. Replace water in container every 2 to 3 days.