



Your Full Service Nursery & Landscape Center
Since 1987
3166 Willow Creek Road, Prescott
www.mortimer-nursery.com
776-8000 / info@mortimer-nursery.com

Lovely Lilacs

Lilacs (*Syringa* sp.) have long been a favored shrub for their colorful and unforgettably fragrant spring blooms. Lilac lovers are eagerly anticipating the sweet aroma that will soon be wafting in their open windows.

Although the term “low-maintenance” is becoming overused in the horticultural world, lilacs truly are a low-maintenance shrub. Their cultural demands are few: although they will grow in almost any soil, even clay, they perform best in slightly alkaline, well-draining soils where their roots will not sit in water; with our infertile soils adding compost and starter fertilizer at planting helps lilacs settle in; once established, only moderate watering is required – infrequent but deep watering during the growing season is best.

Pruning is straightforward – lilacs bloom on old wood so prune immediately after blooming. Once a year cut out a few of the largest, oldest branches to allow new shoots room to grow. This yearly pruning will also help keep blooms at nose level so you can easily stop and smell the flowers. If you have time and would like to ensure good flower production each year, you can cut back spent blossoms, however, this is not necessary – lilacs will still produce flowers but they may alternate heavy bloom years with lighter bloom years.

In late fall or early winter, give your lilacs a low nitrogen winterizer fertilizer to promote root growth. In winter water lilacs once or twice a month on warm afternoons.

With that minimal care your lilacs will grow and welcome spring for years to come.

Most lilac varieties in cultivation are hybrids of common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*). These varieties are referred to as French Hybrids because it was French nurserymen, led by the Lemoine family in the 1870s, who commonly grew and hybridized *S. vulgaris*. Common lilac forms a thick hedge by sending out suckers but the French Hybrids do not sucker as rampantly.

Preston lilacs (*Syringa* x *prestoniae*) are a tough lot, having been bred in Canada for cold hardiness. The different varieties typically grow to 10 – 12' but do not sucker.

Hyacinthiflora lilacs (*S. vulgaris* x *S. oblata*) are generally vigorous growers to 10' – 12' with some dwarf varieties.

Korean Lilac (*S. x patula*) is unique among lilacs – providing not only incredible fragrance but also burgundy foliage in fall.

You can extend your lilac bloom season by planting a mixture of the above species. Hyacinthifloras are first to bloom in spring, followed about 10 days later by French Hybrids with the latest blooms on Preston and Korean Lilacs.

If all this has made you crave a few lilacs in your yard, check out the varieties ready to bloom at Mortimer Nursery:

'Pocahontas' (*S. hyacinthiflora*): deep maroon-purple buds open to single, deep violet blooms; grows 10' x 10'

'Charles Joly' (*S. vulgaris*): prized for deep wine-red double flowers; grows 10' x 6'

'Lavender Lady' (*S. vulgaris*): single, fragrant lavender flowers produced without requiring winter chill; grows 12' x 6'

'Sensation' (*S. vulgaris*): distinctive purple blooms edged in white and very fragrant; grows 10' x 6'

'Miss Kim' (*S. patula*): desired for deep purple buds that open to icy blue and extremely fragrant blooms; burgundy fall foliage; grows 8' x 8'

Plant a few lilacs and you'll be rewarded year after year with the lovely fragrance of their spring blooms!