

L

ilac Collection

The genus name for lilac is *Syringa*. *Syringa* is derived from the Greek word *syrix*, meaning 'hollow stem'. The use of lilac wood to construct high quality smoking pipes, gave the tree its original name of Pipe tree. The common name lilac originates from the Persian 'Lilak' or 'Lilaf', meaning bluish.

Today, lilacs come in 8 colors: white, violet, blue, lilac, pink, magenta, purple, and yellow. They range in size from 5 foot shrubs to small trees. While people tend to associate lilacs with mid-May, there are enough cultivars available today that the lilac enthusiast can find suitable plant material to bloom before mid-May and also well into June.

In 1980 the Lilac collection was renovated due to the poorly drained clay soil. All the lilacs were planted in raised beds in order to provide proper drainage and to illustrate bed plantings to the visitor.

Lilacs within the Main Display represent the work of many historic and contemporary lilac hybridizers and ten of the twenty-three recognized species of lilac. Of these twenty-three species, only two lilac species are native to Europe; the common lilac, *Syringa vulgaris*, native to Bulgaria and Greece, and, the Hungarian lilac, *Syringa josikaea*. The remaining species come from Asia, mainly China.

The last lilacs to flower are the very hardy tree lilacs, including the Peking lilac, *Syringa pekinensis*, and Japanese tree lilac, *Syringa reticulata*. Their showy, ivory-white panicles grace the garden in June. The 6-12 inch flowers are more pungent and spicy than the traditional sweet-smelling lilacs. If the flowers are allowed to form seedheads they will serve as a nice ornamental feature throughout the summer and early fall. Similar to cherry bark in texture and color, the bark of tree lilacs is also very appealing. On young trees it is a shiny, reddish-brown with prominent, horizontal lenticels. The bark turns gray and scaly on older trees. An excellent street and specimen tree, tree lilacs tolerate city conditions, especially the cultivar *Syringa reticulata* 'Ivory Silk'.

Lilacs perform best in garden soil with excellent drainage, nearly neutral pH and plenty of organic matter. In order to insure proper drainage in clay soil, planting in a raised bed or on a hillside is best. The best growth and flowering will result when lilacs receive at least six hours of full sun per day and when spaced far enough apart to allow for good air circulation. Removal of spent flowers (deadheading) improves appearance and promotes the production of flower buds for next year.

Lilacs are extremely versatile plants. Due to their wealth of flowers they make striking specimen plants yet also look breathtaking planted in mass or with other spring-flowering plants.

Found within the Lilac Collection are:

- Introductions by the Lemoine nursery, which produced the fragrant, double flowering French lilacs.
- John Dunbar's introductions from Highland Park, in Rochester, New York, including dedications to President Lincoln and Union Generals Grant, Sherman, and Sheridan.
- Hybrids by Walter Clarke and Dr. Frank Skinner, who concentrated on the early flowering hyacinth lilac introductions.
- Cultivars from Leonid Kolesnikov, whose spectacular introductions from Russia have only recently become available in the United States.
- Contemporary introductions, including the works of Dr. John Rankin of Elyria and Fr. John Fiala of Falconskeeps, in Medina, who introduced seventy-eight cultivars in many colors besides lilac.
- Isabella Preston's late-flowering 12 foot tall lilacs, which are spice scented with pink or lavender flowers.

Viburnum Collection

As a group, viburnums are some of the most versatile, beautiful, dependable, pest and disease free landscape plants the homeowner can grow. They are considered three-season landscape plants because of their showy blooms, heavy fruit set and rich fall color. Most viburnums bloom in May. Flower color ranges from white to creamy white to pink. Flower clusters range in shape from flat, to hemispherical to round.

Viburnums, especially the native species, are among the best plants the homeowner can use to attract wildlife. Depending upon the species, fruit set can occur from early summer through late fall. The clustered berries ripen to various shades of blue, black, pink, red, orange, and yellow. The average viburnum is eight feet high, although there are some dwarf and small tree varieties.

