

Lilacs – The Variety Pack (Part 2)

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With lilacs we clump them into four different categories: early flowering, midseason flowering, late-season flowering, and tree lilacs. For the landscape setting, you can either stay with one category for all your lilacs or you can go for the whole variety pack so you have the fragrance of lilacs all spring and part of the summer. Now, this is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to lilac varieties so if nothing here catches your fancy, just Google 'lilac varieties or cultivars' and you will get more than 2,000 options!

Early Flowering Lilacs

These are the lilacs that will start to bloom in early May and continue into Mother's Day Weekend. Reaching heights of 7 -12 feet with a spread of 8 -10 feet when mature, these varieties will sucker. Most of these cultivars are resistant to powdery mildew and for pruning the best thing to do is to prune out 1/3 of the largest branches at the base to prevent lilac borer from attacking it. Some of the cultivars include 'Mount Baker' which will have a white flower, 'Vesper Song' that has a violet flower and in the fall the leaves will turn a burgundy color, 'Blanche Sweet' that is blue with a wisp of pink mixed in, and 'Royal Purple' that has a dark purple color to the flowers. Another variety that blooms early is called the 'Bloomerang' and it will bloom in late April/early May and it keeps on blooming throughout the growing season once it gets established. It comes in a variety of colors, heights, and fragrance intensities.

Midseason Flowering Lilacs

Flowering mid to late May, you get more height options from these varieties from 4 feet tall all the way up to 16 feet and just about the same in regards to the spread of the shrubs. Also, these lilacs tend to be resistant to powdery mildew and can tolerate heat better than the early flowering lilacs. You can expect to find varieties such as 'Broadleaf Lilac-Betsy Ross' that will have white flowers, 'Chinese

Lilac – Saugeana’ that will have pink to purple flowers on the same shrub, ‘Julian Lilac – Karen’ with white flowers that sometimes will have pale pink flowers that fade to white, ‘Daphne or Little Leaf Lilac’ that has very fragrant flowers that are a deep pink and will sometime re-bloom in the summer. Also in this group is the ‘Common Lilac’ and this lilac can have flower colors anywhere from white, violet, blue, and of course lilac. Cultivars of the ‘Common Lilac’ that are resistant to powdery mildew include ‘Avalanche’ that has white flowers, ‘President Lincoln’ that grows blue flowers, and ‘Michael Buchner’ that sprouts lilac to violet flowers.

Midseason Flowering Lilacs

This group will flower late May into mid-June. For the most part these varieties are not susceptible to powdery mildew, but some may not be as fragrant as others. They will grow anywhere from 5 – 15 feet tall and just as wide. Some cultivars include ‘Josiflexa Lilac – Royalty’ that is blessed with purple flowers, ‘Preston Lilac – Donald Wyman’ that has little fragrance and is anywhere from light purple to a deep purple, and ‘Red Pixie’ that is a non-suckering lilac with red to pink flowers.

Tree Lilacs

As the name entails, this is not a shrub lilac, but a fully upright tree. They grow anywhere from 15 – 30 feet tall and will have a canopy spread of 10 – 20 feet wide. Usually they start to bloom mid to late June and their flowers can be from white to yellow, to lilac. The two most common types are Japanese Tree Lilac and Peking Lilac and this is due to the fact they both tolerate urban conditions such as salt in the winter and the heat coming off the sidewalks in the summer. Some cultivars include ‘Peking Lilac – Summer Charm’ that has a nice upright form and white flowers, ‘Japanese Tree Lilac – China Gold’ with white flowers, and ‘Japanese Tree Lilac-Ivory Silk’ that starts producing white flowers at a young age and is a fast grower.

I would like to hear back from you, the readers, to hear if you have tried these varieties/cultivars or others and what success you have had with them. You can send me an email at pbergstrom@lenrd.org.



Korean Lilac Tree. Photo Courtesy of www.brighterblooms.com



Miss Canada Lilac. Photo Courtesy of www.monrovia.com



French Lilac. Photo Courtesy of www.davesgarden.com