

Lilac Care & Pruning

For your lilac, select a site that receives 6 to 8 hours of direct sunlight and has good air circulation. Keep in mind that most lilacs grow 8 to 12 feet high and wide, so choose an area that will allow it to grow. Crowding requires frequent and drastic pruning.

The soil should be well-drained and slightly alkaline. You may want to add a handful of lime to the soil around your lilac every year or two. Use a 5-10-5 fertilizer in early spring - do not fertilize the first year of planting. A few inches of mulch placed around the base of the plants will help conserve moisture, control weeds, and maintain temperature. Keep the mulch 3 to 6 inches away from the trunk of the plant.

If your lilac doesn't flower, it may be due to several causes: insufficient sunlight, too much nitrogen in the soil, pruning at the incorrect time.

Lilacs should be pruned after they bloom. This is also the time to shape the plant and to remove any dead or damaged branches. For abundant flowering, cut off all spent blossoms each year and prune the flowering stem back to a set of leaves. Regularly remove suckers that are growing from the base of the plant.

If you have an old lilac that has been neglected for years, you can rejuvenate it by pruning. There are two ways to renew an overgrown lilac. One method is to cut the entire plant back to within 6 to 8 inches of the ground in March or early April. A large number of shoots will develop during the year. In late winter of the next year, select and retain several strong shoots to form the shrub framework and cut all other shoots to the ground.

The second method is to cut the shrub back over a three year period. Remove one-third of the large, old stems at ground level in late winter. The following year, prune out one-half of the remaining stems and some of the new growth. Finally, remove all of the remaining old wood in the winter of the third year. Additional thinning of the new shoots should also be done. When properly pruned, an old lilac can be transformed into an attractive shrub. Pruning should be a regular part of the maintenance of your lilacs.

Johnson's carries many varieties of lilacs, both old-fashioned and new hybrids:

Donald Wyman - deep pink to red

Ludwig Spaeth - reddish-purple

Michel Buchner - lilac double

Miss Kim - lavender to ice blue

Tinkerbelle - cherry red buds, pink flowers

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WASHINGTON, DC
4200 Wisconsin Ave, NW
at Van Ness St

KENSINGTON, MD
10313 Kensington Pkwy
next to the Post Office

OLNEY, MD
5011 Olney-Laytonsville Rd
Rt 108 and Zion Rd

