

Plant More Lilacs

We are encouraging the citizens and businesses of the Taos area to plant more lilacs. We are hopeful that our festival will grow into a regional attraction drawing people from the surrounding states to visit Taos in the spring to see our beautiful lilacs. We especially encourage homeowners and businesses that are on major thoroughfares to plant lilacs.

Lilacs may be planted at any time of the year. Local garden centers including Rio Grande Ace Hardware and Petree's are well stocked with different varieties and sizes of lilacs. If we all plant lilacs now, it will not be long before we have mature lilac bushes all over town!

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Join us on August 3rd for our Garden and Home Tour

LILAC BASICS: USEFUL INFORMATION & VERY BASIC GROWING TIPS



TAOS LILAC FESTIVAL

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LILAC RECIPES: YES LILACS BLOSSOMS ARE EDIBLE!

LILAC SIMPLE SYRUP



- 1 cup water
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup lilac flower buds

Heat 1 cup of water and 1 cup of sugar until sugar is dissolved. Add 1 cup of lilac flowers and allow to simmer on low heat for 10 minutes. If desired, add a few blueberries for color or use food coloring. Drain syrup into a sealable glass jar - through a filter to remove the flowers. Let it cool, and then put in the fridge. Add syrup to tea, cocktails, or use as a syrup.

LILAC ALMOND SCONES

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 3 cups flour, all-purpose | 12 T unsalted chilled butter |
| 1/3 cup sugar | 1 cup shaken buttermilk |
| 2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder | 1 t vanilla extract |
| 1/2 teaspoon baking soda | 1/2 cup toasted chopped almonds |
| 1 teaspoon salt | 1 cup lilac flowers (no stems) |

Pre-heat the oven to 425 degrees. In a large mixing bowl, combine the flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Whisk the ingredients together. Cut the chilled butter into small cubes and toss into the dry mixture. Using your fingers and hands, work the butter into the flour mixture, until pea-sized lumps of butter are present. Add the buttermilk, vanilla extract, almonds, and lilac blossoms. Fold together in the bowl. I kneaded the dough by hand, making sure to not over-work. Gather and roll the dough into a ball. Lightly flour the ball of dough and flatten it out, by hand, into a 1/2 inch thick disk. Cut the dough into triangles and place onto a greased baking sheet. Lightly dust with raw sugar. I greased my sheet with butter. Bake 12 to 16 minutes, until desired level of toastiness.

SELECTING LILACS BY COLOR AND BLOOM SEASONS

BLOOMING SEASONS

Lilacs will bloom for about two weeks. If you can plant more than one plant, you can have up to six weeks of bloom by planting different species.*

Early (early May): *S. x hyacinthiflora*, *S. oblata*, *S. pinnatiflora*, *S. vulgaris* 'Rhodopea'

Midseason (mid-May): *S. x chinensis*, *S. meyeri*, *S. x persica*, *S. pubescens*,
S. vulgaris

Late (late May to early June): *S. emodi*, *S. x henryi*, *S. x josiflexa*,
S. komarowii, *S. x nanceiana*, *S. x prestoniae*, *S. reflexa*, *S. sweginzowii*,
S. tomentella, *S. wolfu*, *S. yunnanensis*

Very Late (June): *s. reticulata*

*from Lilacs for the Garden by Jennifer Bennett, Firefly Books 2002

SHADES OF COLOR

There are seven color classifications for lilacs, from white to purple. Below are popular and locally available species listed by color classification.

White/class I: Mme Lemoine

Violet/Class II: *S. xhyacinthiflora* 'Pocahontas', *S. pubescens* subsp. *patula* 'Miss Kim'

Blue/Class III: 'Président Grévy', 'President Lincoln'

Lilac/Class IV: none available locally

Pink/Class V: 'Katherine Havemeyer', 'James Macfarlane', 'Miss Canada'

Magenta/Class VI: none available locally

Purple/Class VII: 'Charles Joly', *S. xprestoniae* 'Donald Wyman'

Striped: 'Sensation' deep purple florets edged in white

HISTORY OF LILACS IN TAOS

In Spring, purple lilacs bloom all over the Taos valley, usually nestled up against an adobe gate or border. Their sweet fragrance wafting out on the breeze is a sure sign we'll all be living outside again after a long winter.

Lilacs are said to have arrived in Santa Fe from France, lovingly transplanted by the famous Bishop Jean Baptiste Lamy who arrived in 1851. Lamy's struggles with Taos' own Padre Antonio Jose Martinez meant that he did not visit this far flung and unruly parish so it seems unlikely that the Bishop's lilacs made their way to Taos in those early days.

Almost certainly, lilacs were brought here by some of the other American and European citizens who moved here around 1900 and after. In the letters of one Presbyterian missionary, Alice Hyson, who lived and taught in Ranchos de Taos for 35 years, she spoke of the barren treeless landscape she encountered when she arrived in the 1870s. Every year when she returned home for a visit to Pennsylvania she returned with trees and seeds but as her primary interest was in helping people feed themselves, lilacs may not have been among them.

With the founding of the Taos Society of Artists in 1912 flower gardens sprung up around the valley.



The most famous of these was the garden at the E.I. Couse house in the heart of Taos. Virginia Leavitt, Couse's granddaughter, said her ancestors moved to Taos in 1902 and that her grandmother, Virginia, began a garden right away, writing to her sister in Washington State in 1906 asking for Virginia Creeper cuttings. Leavitt has records of peonies and barberry bushes but none for lilacs.

"The Couse garden was called the Mother Garden because so many other flower gardens got their start from this one. I'm sure Virginia planted lilacs," Leavitt said, "we still have some old ones here, I just don't know what year she planted them."

Her best guess about the origin of lilac bushes in town was the famous Lilac Garden in front of the imposing hacienda built in the 1890s by the infamous Arthur Manby. The garden occupied the area where now a municipal parking lot stands, in front of the Taos Community Auditorium which used to be Manby's home. Manby, an Englishman, resorted to a number of crooked and dishonest means to gain as much land as possible in the area and made many enemies in the process. When his body was discovered one day without a head, nobody was too surprised.

Leavitt has a 1917 photograph of her grandparents enjoying a garden party with some of Manby's tenants at the time, artist Julius Rolshoven and his wife Harriet. They all are found in Manby's Lilac Garden. The bushes, Leavitt said, are mature so had to have been planted at least a few years earlier.

"Manby probably planted that garden," Leavitt said. "It would have been very likely for him, he was English."

TEN TIPS FOR THRIVING LILACS

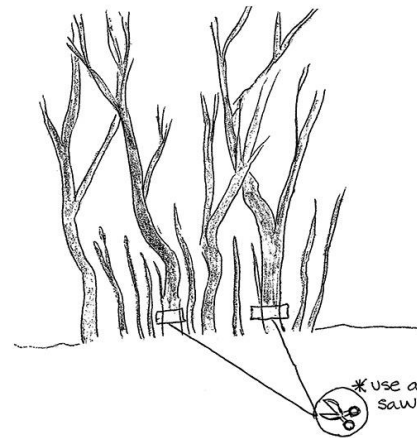
1. Have you chosen well? Check the USDA zone map at www.planthardiness.ars.usda.gov to see if lilacs will thrive in your area. Lilacs grow well in Zones 2 through 7. Consult local experts for warmer zones.
2. Disease and pest problems cause a lilac not to bloom. Choose resistant species.
3. Lilacs need at least 6 hours of sun a day.
4. Lilacs must have well drained soil.
5. Prune yearly right after the blooms are finished.
6. Fertilize lightly after blooming or not at all. Use a low-nitrogen, high phosphate fertilizer.
7. Most lilacs are drought resistant, not drought proof. Even older plants need some watering.
8. Don't damage the roots. This can cause the plant not to bloom.
9. Does your older lilac need renewing? Common lilacs need 1/3 to 1/4 of the old stalks (canes) pruned at the base every year.
10. Be patient! Many lilacs don't bloom for the first several years. Most common lilacs bloom best every other year.

Need more information? Contact your county agricultural center, arboretum or one of our local garden centers and nurseries. Additional useful information at www.gardenersnet.com, www.learn2grow.com and www.growbeautifully.monrovia.com.

LILAC PRUNING TIPS

When: Prune after flowering is complete, usually in June for common lilacs.

How: Remove 1/3 of the largest and oldest trunks. Cut the trunk close to the ground. Make at least one preliminary cut in the trunk at the half-way point in order to make the final cut easier to manage. It is not necessary to prune lilacs every year. Ask "What does this lilac need to improve its appearance and performance?" Recommended tools: folding saw and/or SHARP loppers.



Don't: Remove or cut back the new growth or shoots. These are the future of the lilac. They are not "suckers".

Flowers: Removing the spent flowers is often recommended. The result is a more attractive shrub while in bloom the following year.

Fertilize: Fertilize the lilac if it is not blooming well. Use a balanced fertilizer such as 2-2-2 or a 3-3-3. Avoid a fertilizer that simply pushes flower production such as a 0-45-0. Fertilize in June after flowering to support the development of next year's flowers. Fertilizing in the spring will not affect the flowering in the same year.