

Planting Lilacs Ever since I was a little girl, I have loved lilacs. Just the mention of them brings back fond memories of walking with my grandmother and mother back to the edge of my grandparent's property to select handfuls of these delightful flowers for adorning our houses with their lovely beauty.

![alt](images/stories/blog/dec09-august 2010 014 copy.jpg) After returning with buckets filled to the brim and hands overflowing with blossoms, my grandmother and mother would select several different sized vases for displaying these newly acquired treasures, which we then lovingly placed throughout the house for everyone to enjoy. Our portion of the sprays of blossoms remained in the bucket of water for their final journey to our own home.

Besides these cherished memories, my adoration for lilacs stems from their remarkably sturdy spears of bountiful flowers and the sumptuous fragrance that deeply perfumes the air that wafts through the house. To me, there is nothing sweeter! And so after the quiet winter snow bids farewell, I thank God for blessing us with the lilacs lovely welcome to spring.

With such a gracious invitation to enjoy this precious season, I think everyone should find a place for this spring production. Besides, the fact that there are so many different varieties and hues to choose from, simplifies finding one to adore.

PLANTING

Before searching for your favorite variety, select a spot in your yard, which receives at least 6 hours of direct sun and one which has good drainage. Although my mother loves lilacs, she is not particularly fond of the bush itself, so places them out of the line of our well-beaten paths. That way we can enjoy the blossoms but don't have to eye the bush each day of the year.

![alt](images/stories/blog/dec09-august 2010 015 copy.jpg) Prior to planting, soak the root ball in a bucket of water, 10 to 15 minutes before placing in soil. While soaking, dig a hole slightly bigger than the root ball. Into this hole, work in rich compost and a suitable fertilizer. Place in depression and cover root ball with soil. Once covered, thoroughly soak ground and then cover with mulch. Continue to keep moist the first week and then water accordingly until established.

To encourage flower production, fertilize prior to blooming, and then right after the blooming season ends, as this helps the bush set next year's flowers. And since the most luscious blossoms come from vigorous young wood, it is supposedly important to prune occasionally.

So, once your bush reaches a height of 6-8 feet, you should consider pruning. This should be done in the winter when the bush is dormant. Begin by removing all dead and broken branches. Cut back all branches that exceed the height of the majority of the other branches. Then thin out, keeping only those which look the strongest. On an older bush, you can actually cut back a third of the bush. However, I must say that my grandparents and parent's lilac bushes, which have reached heights of 12 feet or more, were never pruned and still produce lush blossoms each year.

Once the first blooms appear, keep cutting blossoms for bouquets as this prolongs the production of flowers. It is also important to dead head by cutting the exhausted head right below the blossom. Before placing in vases, smash the woody end of each stem and then plunge into water.

Even with Alzheimer's, my grandmother still enjoys accompanying my mother and me as we trek to my grandparents lilac bushes to load up on these splendid flowers. So I hope that you take the time this year to plant a lilac so you can begin to make your own family memories. Happy Planting.