

PLANTING YOUR LILAC

LOMBARD GARDEN CLUB'S LILACS

Our lilacs were shipped to us bare root and dormant. They have spent the winter in a temperature-controlled environment and shipped at the ideal time for spring planting. They have been planted in pots that will allow the roots to become established. To help your new lilac do its best, we recommend that you leave it in the pot until at least the fall of this year. If you choose to plant your lilac right away, try to retain as much soil as possible around the roots. To enable even more root development, you can leave it in the pot through next winter if you pack straw around the pot and the very base of the bush. A better overwintering idea may be to choose a site where you might like to permanently plant it, but for this first year, simply dig the hole and plant pot and all. It is very important that you check the soil a few inches down to determine if it needs watering as it will have a tendency to dry out quicker in the pot than in the ground. The plant will have developed a better root system by the following spring, at which time you will remove it from the pot and plant it in its permanent location.

WHEN TO PLANT

Lilacs can be planted in the spring or fall, but fall-planted lilacs actually have a larger advantage of being able to set out roots before the next summer's heat.

WHERE TO PLANT

The location for planting your lilac should be chosen with care. Integrate the lilac with other garden plants. You may want to plant according to prevailing winds to make best use of fragrance. Make good use of available sunlight; try a south or westerly spot out of the way of doors or windows. Avoid planting along walls or among large trees (or trees which will grow tall). Use complementary shrubs, plants, or other garden outcroppings to enhance the appearance before and after bloom. Lilac spacing should be a minimum of six feet apart, ten feet is better. Choose a planting site that will allow plenty of room for growth because, while most common cultivars average 8-10' in width, some can reach a width of 20 feet. Crowding invites sky-reaching and requires more frequent and drastic pruning.

Light. Although they tolerate some shade, lilacs will flower and flourish best in full sunlight. Lilacs require six hours of direct, daily sunlight, some say a minimum of four hours. The amount of sunlight dictates the appearance, color, and quantity of bloom. Too much sunlight is better than not enough. When there is a lack of light lilacs will either flower very little or not at all. This is one of the biggest problems gardeners encounter.

Drainage. Lilacs do not thrive in soggy soil. The roots will rot and cause the leaves to become smaller over a period of a few years. The plant will eventually die. A site with well-drained topsoil is ideal, yet soil can be amended to improve drainage, water retention and nutrient availability. Good drainage is characterized by the soil's ability to retain sufficient moisture to nourish the root system while still being able to drain off excess moisture. Plant your lilac in a mound to create a better drainage. Keep in mind that lilacs are able to survive cold winters and generally grow better in slightly alkaline soil and in full sun.

HOW TO PLANT

Planting procedures for lilacs are no different than those for many other plants. Dig a hole the same depth as the root ball but wider, generous enough to easily accommodate the lilac root system and straighten the plant. Avoid planting your lilac too deep; position the top of the soil ball level with the surface of the hole, same as it was in the pot. If the lilac is bare-root, the top layer of roots should be a few inches below the surface. Mix organic or granular fertilizer (bone-meal or ground limestone may also be added to reduce the acidity of the soil), along with peat moss and compost, into the soil at the bottom of the hole and into the soil to be used to backfill the hole around the roots of the plant. Work in the soil well around the root area to clear away air pockets and shift the plant to its best, upright position in the hole. When back filling, it is important to water well, but do not flood, and avoid compacting the soil around the root system. The idea is to remove air pockets and make sure the soil settles around the root system.

If the only available site is always moist or collects rain water that remains for extended periods, lilacs should be mound-planted to create better drainage. This is a more involved, but successful planting solution. The mound can be 12-15" high and three feet around.

WATERING

Water thoroughly around the base of the plant, and then water two or three times a week for the first month, then once every week or two throughout the first year. It is especially important to water your spring-planted lilacs regularly throughout the summer, keeping the leaves pert, not limp. Keep the soil moist, but not muddy or saturated. Spreading a layer of mulch over the soil around the plant will help retain moisture and reduce the need for watering, but be sure to keep the mulch away from the trunk of the plant so that air can circulate around the base of the stem. Piling mulch around the trunk of lilacs, trees and other woody plants in "volcano fashion" invites disease and insects. Additional watering may be necessary during drought years to hold the plant through the heat of the summer. Check the soil a few inches down to determine if a plant needs watering, and keep the soil well watered before the ground freezes in fall. Remember that more plants die from too much water than from not enough water. Please also remember that a lilac takes three to five years to reach full potential color and bloom size. Soil textures and compositions will also play a little on colors. Lilacs planted in warmer climates such as Zones 7 through 9 may expect lighter coloration because of the heat.

FERTILIZING

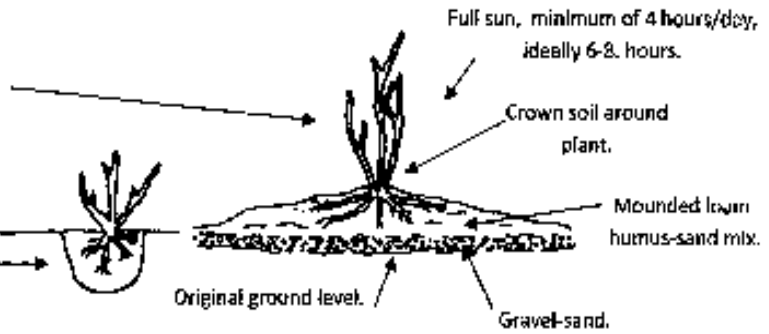
Lilacs prefer a sweet soil (pH 6.0 –7.0), however, most hybridizers advise not to fertilize your lilac during its first year of planting. Refer to "How To Care For Your Lilac" for information about fertilizing established lilacs.

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In Heavy Clay Soils

ALWAYS this kind of planting for heavy clay soils.

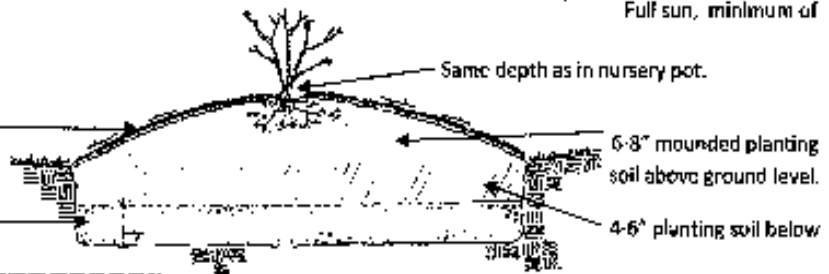
NEVER dig a hole! It becomes a water-casket for the lilac to die in.



In Wet or Soggy Areas

Organic mulch.

4" bed of sand or gravel.



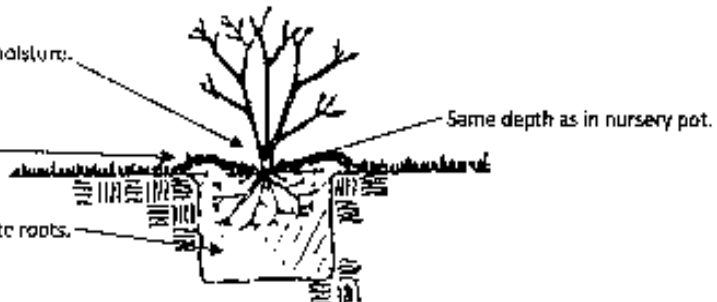
Full sun, minimum of

In Well-drained Areas

Shallow depression to retain moisture.

Organic mulch.

Generous hole to accommodate roots.



Full sun. Minimum of 4 hours/day. Ideally 6-8 hours.

SAND AND GRAVEL + ORGANIC MATTER + GARDEN LOAM + HANDFUL LIME = IDEAL LILAC SOIL

