

May Flowers - Lilacs - In bloom now

Remember the saying April Showers bring May flowers. We really needed the April Showers we got and could still use some more rain. Hopefully, you enjoy seeing the colors bursting forth all around us outside. Dogwoods are blooming and lilacs have just started blooming as I write this article.

It's the time of year when noses and eyes are directed to the beauty and fragrance of certain plants. A genus of plants well known for both is *Syringa*, known commonly as lilac. Lilacs offer gardeners a large variety of plant shapes, sizes, and flower colors. The parade of lilac flowers begins in late April and early May and continues through mid-June. Hybridizers have worked extensively with the common lilac resulting in over 1000 different varieties. Some lilac species to look for include:

Syringa meyeri, Meyer Lilac, grows 4 to 8 feet tall, and 6 to 12 feet wide forming a dense, broad-mounded shrub. Flowers are violet purple in color and occur on panicles 4 inches long and 2 1/2 inches wide. They emerge before plants are fully leafed out, usually early to mid-May. This species is not affected by powdery mildew as are many other species.

Syringa microphylla is commonly known as the little leaf lilac. The foliage is about 1/4 the size of the common lilac, medium green in color above, grayish green and pubescent beneath. The plant grows 6 feet tall and 9 to 12 feet wide. Flowers are rosy lilac in color. The panicles are just 1 1/2 to 2 1/2 inches long and appear in late May to early June. The variety 'Superba' has single deep pink flowers.

Syringa patula, the Manchurian lilac, has an upright form and grows 9 feet tall. The flower panicles often occur in pairs from the terminal buds of last year's growth. They are 4 to 6 inches long with lilac purple flowers and appear in late May to June. The commonly available variety, 'Miss Kim', grows 5 to 6 feet tall (sometimes taller) and 4 to 5 feet wide.

Syringa reticulata, the Japanese tree lilac, grows 20 to 30 feet tall with a spread of 15 to 25 feet forming an oval to rounded-shaped small tree. The large, fragrant white flower panicles appear in early to mid-June. 'Ivory Silk' is an excellent cultivar that flowers well when young and has a more compact growth habit. Additional varieties include 'Chantilly Lace', 'Regent', and 'Summer Snow'. A related species, *Syringa pekinensis*, the Pekin lilac, is a smaller tree, growing just 15 to 20 feet tall. It is often multi-stemmed and finer in texture than the Japanese tree lilac. The flowers are creamy white on 3 to 6 inch long panicles in late May to June.

Syringa villosa, the late lilac, grows 6 to 10 feet tall and 4 to 10 feet wide providing a dense plant for the shrub border. The rosy lilac to white flowers appear in mid to late May sometimes continuing into June. The flower panicles are 3 to 7 inches long. Crosses between *S. villosa* and *S. reflexa* have resulted in the well known Preston lilacs. Nodding lilac, *Syringa reflexa*, grows 10 to 12 feet tall and wide. The purplish pink flowers are produced on 4 to 10 inch long panicles. This species is not fragrant and is hardy for growing zones 5 to 7.

The common lilac, *Syringa vulgaris*, grows 10 to 15 feet in height with a spread of 6 to 12 feet. The flowers are extremely fragrant and appear in early to mid-May on panicles originating in pairs from the terminal buds. Numerous varieties are available with white, violet, blue, lilac, pink, and magenta flowers. Varieties are available with single and double flowers. The Chinese lilac, *S. x chinensis*, is a hybrid between *S. x persica* and *S. vulgaris*. This shrub is round-topped with arching branches. It flowers more profusely than the common lilac and grows 8 to 15 feet tall with a similar spread. Flowers are purple lilac in color and appear in mid-May. *Syringa x hyacinthiflora* is a cross between *S. oblata* and *S. vulgaris*. These hybrids are extremely hardy and flower before the common lilac hybrids.

The cutleaf lilac, *Syringa laciniata*, has a low, dense, mounded form. Plants grow 6 to 8 feet tall and wide. The flowers are pale lilac in color and appear all along the stems. They occur in May. The foliage is lacy and fine-textured.

Syringa x persica, the Persian lilac, is a graceful shrub with upright, arching branches. Plants grow 4 to 8 feet tall and spread 5 to 10 feet. The foliage is bluish green. Flowers are pale lilac in color and fragrant. They appear in mid-May. It is a nice plant, but often severely affected by powdery mildew.

Although lilacs offer just one season of performance, they are still an asset in the landscape. The large shrub types are best used for borders or groupings rather than close to the house. The tree forms are excellent in locations requiring low-growing trees.

Lilac Propagation

It usually takes at least three years before you get blooms on your lilacs. Most people buy lilacs from garden supply stores or catalogs. (Yes, they can be bought on the Internet and shipped.) Most of us buy common varieties of Lilacs as small bushes that are already 2 to 3 feet tall. Two to three years later, you will see your first bloom.

Another popular way to grow new bushes is to take small shoots from an existing plant. Select shoots which are one to two feet tall. Look for good root systems. Dig deeply to extract as much of the root as possible. The main root will be attached to the mother plant. Use clippers to cut it from the main bush. Plant the new shoot in the location you have selected. Add compost to the soil before planting. Plant three to five shoots in each area. Water thoroughly. Like all transplants, the survival rate is higher if transplanted in cooler weather. Keep the soil around your transplant moist, but not water-logged.

You can also grow Lilacs from seed, although this is an exceedingly uncommon approach. At the end of the season, you can harvest the seed from the dead flowers after they have dried, but before they fall out of the seed pods onto the ground. Growing from seed takes time and patience. Most gardeners don't want to wait four to five years to see the first lilac blossoms.

Cultivating Our Mountain Roots is the Theme of the West Virginia Master Gardener Conference

The West Virginia Master Gardener Conference is being held May 1-3 in Morgantown, West Virginia at the Ramada Inn. Cultivating Our Mountain Roots is the theme of this year's conference. Parker Andes is the keynote speaker, a graduate of WVU, he is Director of Horticulture at Biltmore Estate in Ashville, North Carolina. Other sessions cover the following topics: Major Insects of Apple and Peach Trees; The Art of Bonsai; Benefits of Beneficials; Diseases of Apple and Peach Trees; Forgotten Garden Combinations; Flower Farming; Native Plants = Native Butterflies; Tomatoes - Heirloom versus Hybrid; and many more. For more information on the West Virginia Master Gardener Conference please go to the following website: http://www.wvu.edu/~agexten/hortcult/master/2009_MG_Conference_Brochure.pdf

Master Gardeners Volunteer Opportunity May 9, 2009 Heritage Day

Heritage Day will take place in Martinsburg on May 9 and the Master Gardeners will run a garden book and plant sale at Boydville on Queen Street from 10 AM until 4 PM. The books will be sold at bargain prices and heirloom tomatoes and pepper plants are being provided by Master Gardener Angela Faulkner to sell for funds to support master gardener activities. Two hour work shifts are being set up to staff the sale - you can volunteer by calling Louise Finch at 304-264-3748 or by replying to this email. Thank you for supporting our efforts to provide community service.

Master Gardener Events Planned

- The Berkeley/Jefferson Master Gardeners will be holding a plant and book sale at Boydville for Heritage Day on Saturday May 9, 2009 from 10 am to 4 pm. Books will be sold at bargain prices and heirloom tomatoes and pepper plants will be for sale to raise funds to support Master Gardener activities.
- Morgan County Master Gardeners Annual Plant Fair May 8 – 9 The Morgan County Master Gardeners Annual Plant Fair will be held May 8 - 9 starting at 9:00 am both days at the State Park in downtown Berkeley Springs. There will be hundreds of plants for sale a garden education center and a special children's area. If you have questions concerning the Plant Fair call the Morgan County Extension Office at 304-258-8400.

Summer Agriculture Institute Registration Now Open

The Ramada Inn and Conference Center in Morgantown will be the location for the 2009 Summer Agriculture Institute, on June 18 & 19. The Institute, sponsored by the West Virginia Farm Bureau Foundation, WVU Extension Service, and WVU Davis College of Agriculture, Forestry and Consumer Sciences, gives teachers the opportunity to receive teaching materials and practical, hands-on

applications for their classrooms; learn about nutrition, technology, and careers in agriculture; and earn graduate or professional credits. Teachers who have attended past Institutes are encouraged to reapply, as most content is new for 2009. The registration deadline for the popular seminar is June 1. Many county Farm Bureaus are offering scholarships to cover or help defray the cost. Interested teachers should contact the West Virginia Farm Bureau at 800-398-4630 x. 306 for more information on scholarships. Graduate and professional credits are available through WVU for an additional fee. Scholarships do not cover the fees for WVU credits. For a registration form and brochure, visit the West Virginia Farm Bureau website at www.wvfarm.org Follow the links from the above mentioned website or see WVU's site at www.caf.wvu.edu/resm/ae/aic/ for information on credits. Representing more than 19,000 members, the West Virginia Farm Bureau was founded in 1919 to provide leadership, education, information, training and economic services to county farm bureaus to enhance the quality of life for its membership.

Berkeley County Youth Fair Dates to remember

- Livestock Exhibitor's meeting Tuesday, May 5th at 7:00 p.m.
- Monday, May 11, 2009 - Livestock Pre Registration Forms are due!! Livestock Pre Registration Forms have been posted to the Berkeley County Youth Fair Association website at www.berkeleycountyyouthfair.org Livestock Pre- Registration Forms must be received by May 11, 2009. Pre-registration forms **will not be accepted after the May 11, 2009** deadline.
- Friday, May 15, 2009 - Market Sheep and Market Goat check in from 6:00 to 8:00 pm
- Saturday, May 16, 2009 Market Hog and Rabbit Check in from 9 am - 12 noon.
- Poultry Blood Testing - Saturday, July 18, 2009 from 9:00 am to 11:00 am.

62nd Annual Berkeley County Youth Fair dates are August 3 - 8, 2009

Western Maryland Pasture-Based Meat Goat Performance Test

The Western Maryland Pasture-Based Meat Goat Performance Test was initiated at the University of Maryland's Western Maryland Research & Education Center (WMREC) in 2006. The purpose of the test is to evaluate the performance of meat goats consuming an all-pasture diet, with natural exposure to internal parasites (worms). This year's test will be conducted from June 6 until October 4. The nomination period is April 1-May 15. Male goats of any breed or breed cross, with or without registration papers (or eligibility), are eligible. A breeder may nominate up to 5 goats, preferably from the same sire. The goats must be born between December 15, 2008, and March 20, 2009, and weigh between 35 and 70 lbs. at the time of delivery to the test site on June 6. The fee for testing a goat is \$85. \$20 is due at the time of nomination. While on test the goats will be evaluated for growth performance (average daily gain), parasite resistance (fecal egg counts), parasite resilience (FAMACHA® eye anemia scores and number of anthelmintic treatments required), carcass traits, reproductive soundness, and structural correctness. A field day and sale will be held at Saturday, October 3 at the nearby Washington County Agricultural Education Center. Bucks meeting minimum standards for growth, parasite resistance, and resilience will be eligible to sell at auction. Consigners to the test may also nominate does to the sale. A nomination form and other pertinent documents may be downloaded from the test's web site at <http://mdgoatetest.blogspot.com> For information about the test and/or to request a nomination packet, contact Susan Schoenian at (301) 432-2767 ext. 343 or sschoen@umd.edu Last year, 84 Kiko, Boer, and crossbred buck kids were nominated for the test. 62 were accepted. 57 finished the test. Ten met the minimum standards for growth, parasite resistance and resilience.

Garden Tips

- Seed summer squash and cucumbers (outdoors)
- Plant fingerling potatoes
- Seed snap beans, head lettuce, leaf lettuce, and winter squash (outdoors)
- Control broadleaf weeds in lawn

Until next time ...Happy Gardening and Farming!