

## **Lilacs in Southeastern Virginia. Is it Possible?** by Connie Austin Smith

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They say that aromas can bring back memories. I grew up in upstate New York and the smell of Lilacs takes me back to my childhood and the long dark, cold winter days giving way to warm rays of sunshine and renewed life. We had a large lilac near our house and I always think about it when spring finally comes to Southeastern Virginia. I miss that smell.

Lilacs are Hardy to zone 7 and are challenging to grow in our area. They grow best in cooler climates that suffer those long, dark, cold winter days. But, thankfully new cultivars have been developed that may survive and may thrive in our hot, humid climate.

If you are interested in trying your luck at growing a Lilac, consider the following varieties:

### **Angel White -**

Clusters of fragrant pure white flowers. Blooms mid-May. Fast growing. It reaches 12 ft. tall, 10 ft. wide.

### **Lavender Lady -**

Clusters of fragrant lavender flowers Blooms mid-May. Tolerates mild, periodic drought when established. Fast growing. Reaches 12 ft. tall, 6 ft. wide.

### **Blue Skies -**

Clusters of fragrant light lavender-blue flowers Blooms mid-May. Bright green foliage throughout the summer. Fast growing. Reaches 10 ft. tall, 6 ft. wide.

### **Old Glory -**

Newer variety. Grows well even in the heat and humidity of the Mid-Atlantic and southern areas. Disease tolerant foliage. Purple-blue flowers. Fast growing. Reaches 8 to 11 ft. tall, 10 to 12 ft. wide.

### **Chinese Lilac -**

Blooms mid-season. Fragrant, lilac-pink flowers. Deep green refined foliage. Less susceptible to mildew. Moderate growing. Reaches 10 to 12 ft. tall and wide.

### **Miss Kim Korean Lilac -**

Compact, late bloomer. Fragrant. Lavender-blue flowers. Burgundy tinged fall foliage. Powdery mildew resistance. Slow growing. Reaches 6 to 8 ft. tall and wide, or more with age.

Some other varieties to consider that has had success in warmer climates: **Betsy Ross, 'Assessippi', Cheyanne, Red Pixie**

### **Caring for a Lilac:**

Partial to full sun - 6 hours of sunlight per day.

Avoid over-crowding, Needs air circulation or powdery mildew may set in.

Prune right after bloom (and no later than June).

Until established, water regularly to keep the soil moist but not soggy

After third season of growth, hold off watering starting in late September to induce winter dormancy;  
begin watering late February. Year-round watering can prohibit dormancy.

Fertilize in late winter with an organic balanced 10-10-10 food.

### **References:**

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