

# Willowwood Arboretum

## Lilac Tour



The Willowwood Foundation

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### A Quick Guide to Lilac Identification

There are over 200 lilacs growing on display at the Willowwood Arboretum. This tour booklet can be used as a guide to learn more about some of the shrub and tree lilacs growing here. Like all the plant specimens in the gardens, identification tags with plant information are hanging on each plant.

#### #1 *Syringa x prestoniae* 'Francisca' Preston Lilac

Flower: Single, deep purple color; highly fragrant; Late blooming

Size: 8-12' tall, upright and round form

Leaves: 6" long, oval dark green

#### #2 *Syringa vulgaris* 'Alba' Common Lilac

Flower: Lilac to purple flowers in straight species. White blooms in cultivar 'Alba'. Each bloom up to 1/3" on 6-8" long panicles and highly fragrant

Size: Large upright multi-stemmed shrub growing up to 16' tall and 12' wide. Cultivar has white blooms instead of lilac-purple

Leaves: 2-5" long heart-shaped leaves, dark gray green to blue green and smooth

#### #3 *Syringa x henryi* Henry's Lilac

Flower: Large fragrant light purple to lilac-pink Flowers; late blooming

Size: Upright vigorous shrub

Leaves: Lance shaped dark green leaves

#### #4 *Syringa reticulata* subsp. *pekinensis* Chinese Tree Lilac

Flower: Showy, yellowish white flowers on panicles up to 12" long; privet-like fragrance; late blooming

Size: Large shrub to small tree growing up to 20' tall and 20' wide with an oval crown

Leaves: 2-4" long ovate dark green leaves above, paler green beneath

#### #5 *Syringa x chinensis* 'Alba' Chinese Lilac

Flower: Cultivar has white-pink fragrant flowers on 6" long panicles rather than purple flowers

Size: Broad, rounded shape growing 8-12' tall and wide

Leaves: Dark green glabrous leaves up to 3" long on graceful arching branches

#### #6 *Syringa x hyacinthiflora* 'Lamartine' Early Flowering Lilac

Flower: Pink, single flowers; early blooming; sweet fragrance

Size: 6-12' tall and wide

Leaves: Heart shaped leaves; resistant to powdery mildew

#### #7 *Syringa meyeri* 'Palibin' Meyer Lilac

Flower: Fragrant pale pink flowers bloom in small dense clusters on 3-4" long panicles

Size: 4-5' tall and up to 7' wide; upright and sturdy

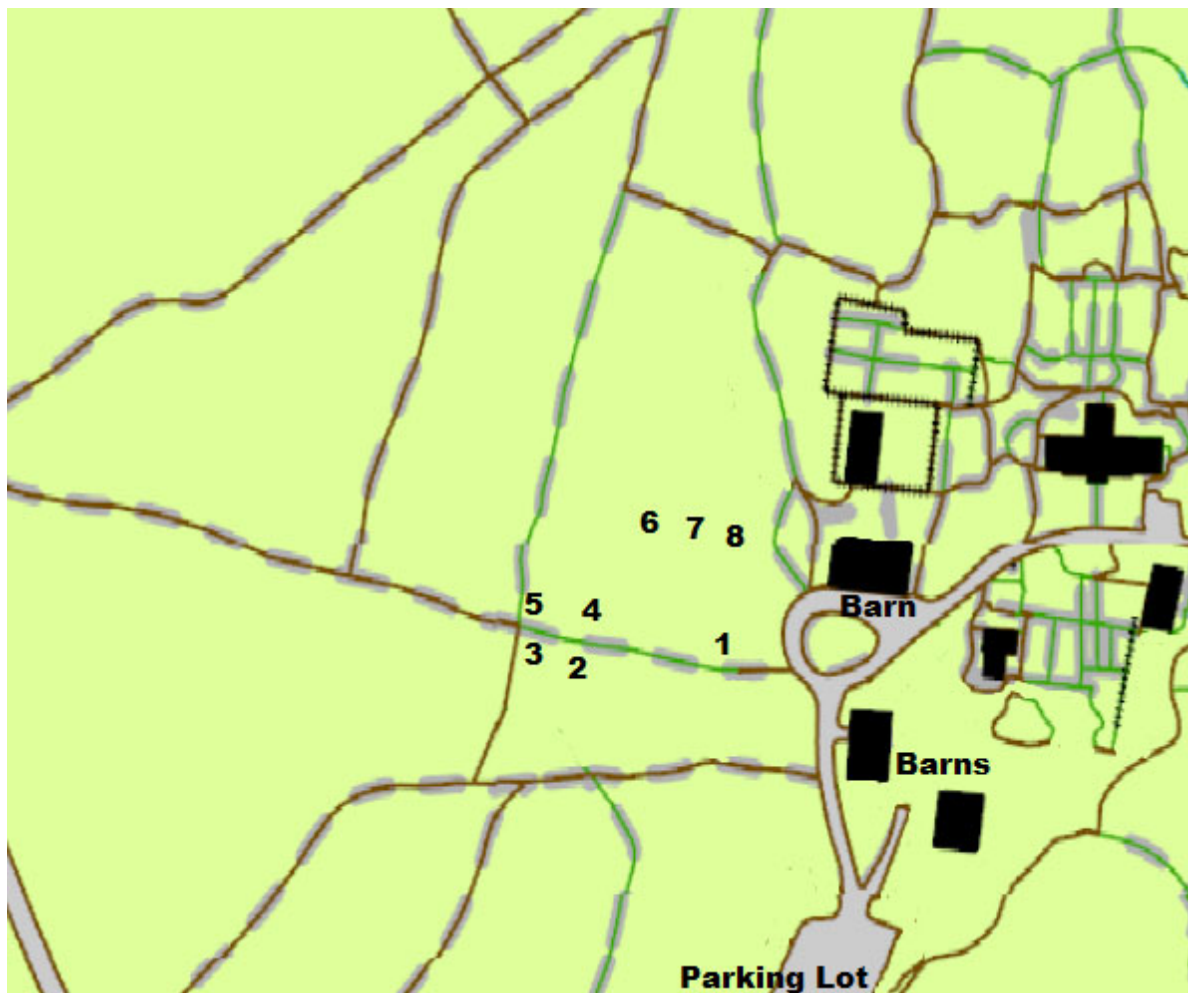
Leaves: 2" long and dark green, smooth above; long soft hairs underneath

#### #8 *Syringa pubescens* subsp. *microphylla* Littleleaf Lilac

Flower: Rosy lilac pink flowers; sweet fragrance; known to bloom twice in one season

Size: Small, dense, spreading shrub grows to 5' tall and up to 12' wide

Leaves: 1/2" – 2 1/2" long; dark green and smooth above; fuzzy beneath



## *Lilacs at the Willowwood Arboretum*

#1. *Syringa x prestoniae* 'Francisca'

#2. *S. vulgaris* 'Alba'

#3. *S. x henryi*

#4. *S. reticulata* subsp. *pekinensis*

#5. *S. x chinensis* 'Alba'

#6. *S. x hyacinthiflora* 'Lamartine'

#7. *S. meyeri* 'Palibin'

#8. *S. pubescens* subsp. *microphylla*

During the spring, the air at the Willowwood Arboretum carries the sweet fragrance of lilacs. Lilacs are in the genus *Syringa*, whose name is derived from a Greek legend in which the nymph Syrinx was pursued by the god Pan. Once Pan captured Syrinx, he turned her into a hollow reed from which he made his first flute. Because young lilacs have hollow stems, scientists term the genus *Syringa*.

The genus contains over 30 deciduous shrubs and small trees that originated in southeast Europe, the Himalayas, and eastern Asia. It is speculated that the French introduced lilacs to America during the early years of colonization.

In addition to having a pleasant scent, lilacs bloom in colors ranging from pink to white to deep purple. There are four basic influences on the color of the flowers. The first is the species of lilac as each has its own spectrum of possible bloom colors. A second factor is the weather, specifically climatic conditions at the time of blooming. Cool damp weather causes colors to be more intense while the hot sun brings out magentas in lilac pigmentation and fades them to lighter colors. Another influence is the soil texture. Lilacs grown in gravelly light soils will have a different hue than plants grown in heavy clay soil. The last influence on color is dependent on the pigments found in the flower petals themselves. Organic compounds known as flavonoids add white and yellow color to lilac flowers and anthocyanins make red, blue, and purple pigments. The more pigments found in the flower petals, the more brilliant the color. A wide variety are planted at Willowwood and this tour highlights a small amount located near the center of the gardens.