

## *Syringa vulgaris* common lilac



USDA-NRCS PLANTS Database / Herman, D.E.

Lilacs have been chosen because they are early spring time bloomers - they are among the first plants to grow leaves and flowers in the spring. There is a historic 50+ year dataset containing lilac observations used to better understand the onset of spring across the country. By taking note of where and when this happens, citizen scientists help to continue to build an important record. The USA National Phenology Network needs citizen scientists to document spring's arrival across the country. You can help by joining the project Track a Lilac with *Nature's Notebook*.

Your observations of common lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*) can enhance the decades of lilac phenology observations that have been collected across the United States. Comparing the phenology of these species with that of cloned plants enhances our understanding of genetic and environmental influences on the plants.

Tracking a common lilac is easy—you can observe a plant that is already thriving in your yard.



L. Barnett



Marechal Foch

Common lilacs are flowering shrubs found across most of the United States. They have green leaves and when in bloom, flowers that are light purple or pail violet in color. Mature size can be up to 20 feet in height. Typically lilacs bloom in late spring. Be aware there is variation from individual to individual within a species, so your plant may not look exactly like the ones pictured. If you are uncertain whether or not a phenophase is occurring, report a “?” for its status until it becomes clear what you are observing after subsequent visits.

*Nature's Notebook*  
Phenophase Photo Guide  
*Syringa vulgaris*  
common lilac



MD Schwartz

**Breaking leaf buds**

In at least 3 locations on the plant, a breaking leaf bud is visible. A leaf bud is considered "breaking" once the widest part of the newly emerging leaf has grown beyond the ends of its opening winter bud scales, but before it has fully emerged to expose the leaf stalk (petiole) or leaf base. The leaf is distinguished by its prominent midrib and veins.



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**Open Flowers**

For the whole plant, at least half (50%) of the flower clusters have at least one open fresh flower. The lilac flower cluster is a grouping of many, small individual flowers.



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**Full Flowering**

For the whole plant, virtually all (95-100%) of the flower clusters no longer have any unopened flowers, but many of the flowers are still fresh and have not withered.

**Phenophases not pictured:** All leaf buds broken, End of flowering