EXPLORE
the Lilac Collection

The lilac collection at the Arnold Arboretum is famous for its display of blossoms that delight spring visitors with both sights and scents. Within the collection is a wide variety of leaf shape, flower color, form, and fragrance. Plants in the lilac collection are in bloom from approximately late April until early June.

Numbers on the map (see back) correspond to plants that are included in our self-guided lilac tour. These plants are marked with signs. While exploring, please remember that the Arboretum’s plants are part of a special collection; please do not pick flowers, leaves, or fruits, and do not climb trees.

What shape is a lilac leaf?

We often think of a lilac leaf as being heart-shaped, but not all lilac leaves are the same.

Compare these plants:

- 8 ‘Hulda’ (common lilac)
- 18 ‘Kabul’ (cut-leaf or fern-leaf lilac)

How many different colors of lilac flowers can you find?

Not all lilacs are purple. Throughout the collection, notice the variety of colors, including white, pink, light purple, dark purple, and blue-purple.

Compare these plants:

- 9 ‘Bailbelle’ Tinkerbelle™ (notice the dark pink buds that open to lighter pink blossoms)
- 13 ‘Atheline Wilber’ (notice the dark rose colored buds that open to pale purple blossoms)

Are the flowers open or closed?

Observe difference between a flower bud and an open blossom.

Compare these plants:

- 9 ‘Bailbelle’ Tinkerbelle™ (notice the dark pink buds that open to lighter pink blossoms)
- 13 ‘Atheline Wilber’ (notice the dark rose colored buds that open to pale purple blossoms)
How many petals does a lilac flower have?

Most lilacs have flowers with four petals; these lilacs are said to have a single flower form. Other lilacs have eight or more petals and are said to have a double flower form.

Compare these plants:

1. ‘St. Margaret’
   (double flower form)
2. ‘Palibin’
   (single flower form)

Letterboxing

Letterboxing is a fun way to explore lilacs at the Arboretum. For more information, go to www.letterboxing.org.

To find the letterbox, follow these directions:

• Walk up Beech Path past the bench and trash can until you reach the large evergreen bigcone dragon spruce on your right.
• Go to the back of the tree and, facing uphill, walk 88 steps to the huge European beech (keep the silverbell to your right and the weeping beech to your left).
• Continue walking in the same direction, when out from the canopy, locate the tree with the biggest trunk, it is a black oak. Walk 48 steps to the tree.
• Take the path on your left through the woods and up the hill.
• The path comes to fork, the lower path follows a stone wall, the upper path follows a wooden fence with a row of lilacs along it.
• Follow the lilacs to the end of the row search for the letterbox on the ground here.