

Growing Lilacs from Seeds

- Soak the lilac seeds in a shallow bowl full of tap water for one full day to soften the hull and hydrate the embryo. Drain the seeds on a sheet of paper for five to 10 minutes the following day.
- Pour 1 cup of lightly moistened perlite into a sealable storage bag. Press the soaked lilac seeds into the perlite until they are completely covered. Seal the bag and place it inside the vegetable drawer of a refrigerator.
- Chill the lilac seeds for two months to imitate winter conditions, a process called stratification. Spritz the perlite with a water-filled spray bottle or atomizer whenever it feels dry. Do not allow it to dry out completely.
- Prepare growing containers before removing the lilac seeds from cold storage. Fill 4-inch pots with a mixture of equal parts seed compost, horticultural grit and perlite.
- Sow one lilac seed in each container at a 1/4-inch depth. Spread a very thin layer of horticultural grit over the compost mixture to insulate it. Drizzle water onto the mix until it feels very moist at a depth of 1 inch.
- Place the containers inside an insulated cold frame or indoors near a bright window. Warm the pots with a propagation mat set to 70 F. Maintain constant moisture in the top inch of soil. Do not let the lilac seeds dry out during the germination process.
- Watch for the first sprouts in approximately one month. Leave the propagation mat in place for two more weeks, then remove it. Grow the lilacs in the cold frame until spring. Move them to a lightly shaded spot outdoors after the last frost.
- Transplant the lilac seedlings into larger containers once roots appear near the drainage holes at the bottom of their original containers. Use a mildly alkaline potting soil mixture for the best results.
- Grow the lilacs under light shade with 1 inch of water per week until mid-autumn. Transplant them into a permanent bed with moist, fertile soil and partial sun exposure. Space shrubs at least 10 feet apart.