

Syringa reticulata - Japanese Tree Lilac (*Oleaceae*)

Syringa reticulata is a tree form Lilac with showy, early June, creamy-white inflorescences. Japanese Tree Lilac is properly used as a specimen, entranceway, or street tree without powdery mildew on its foliage.

Form



FEATURES

- medium-sized ornamental tree or very large ornamental shrub
- maturing at about 25' tall x 20' wide, although larger under optimum conditions
- upright oval growth habit, becoming more rounded with age
- medium growth rate

Culture

- full sun to partial sun
- best performance occurs in full sun in a moist, well-drained soil of average fertility, but it is highly adaptable to poor soils, compacted soils, various soil pHs, and drought
- propagated by rooted stem cuttings, grafting cultivars onto rootstock, or seeds
- no diseases and pests of ornamental significance (including resistance to powdery mildew, borers, and scales)
- commonly available in the trade

Foliage

- medium to dark green, opposite, ovate, with an acute apex and dull shiny upper surface, and a subtle reticulate branching pattern of the leaf veins near the leaf margin
- autumn color is faded green to yellowish green-brown, and ornamentally poor

Flowers

- appear in early June
- creamy-white to light-yellow
- attractive and fine-textured 10-12" long pyramidal inflorescences, held well above the fully expanded foliage
- fragrant to malodorous, depending on personal preferences (contrasts with the popular sweet smell of other lilacs)

Fruits

- immature fruits are lime-green, transitioning to yellowish green or light brown in autumn, noticeable against the darker green foliage but not ornamentally attractive
- winter persistent, brown, ellipsoid, dehiscent capsules occur on large fruiting stalks, with the stalk often persisting into the following spring

Twigs

- light brown and stout on young winter stems, becoming shiny gray and lenticel-streaked but remaining smooth on young branches, and very much

like the branches of Oriental Cherry (*Prunus serrulata*)

-stems are constantly forking in a dichotomous pattern, usually topped by twin terminal buds at the end of the growing season

-floral buds are slightly larger than vegetative buds

Trunk

-tree form may be either multi-trunked, or single-trunked and limbed up, while the shrub form is multi-trunked and branching widely at its base

-mature trunks are gray, very cherry-like, remaining smooth for a long time with horizontal lenticels, then eventually transitioning to bark with plates and fissures

USAGE

Function

-shrub form may be utilized in borders, rows, group plantings, or as deciduous screens

-tree form is found at entranceways, spacious foundations, large raised planters, as a lawn specimen, or as a street tree

Texture

-medium texture in foliage and when bare

-thick density in foliage and when bare (trees have an open to average density when they are young)

Assets

-large, showy, creamy-white inflorescences in early June

-shrub form and tree form selections (with the single-leader tree form being quite stately, especially when in flower)

-virtually disease- and pest-free, with no powdery mildew on the foliage

Liabilities

-inflorescences are considered by most to be unpleasantly fragrant

-poor autumn color

Habitat

-Zones 3 to 7

-Native to Japan

SELECTIONS

Alternates

-trees with showy late spring or early summer inflorescences (*Koelreuteria paniculata*, *Magnolia grandiflora*, *Magnolia virginiana*, etc.)

-good ornamental street trees (all must be tree form) (*Acer campestre*, *Amelanchier*, *Cornus racemosa*, *Crataegus x lavalleyi*, *Koelreuteria paniculata*, *Malus*, *Pyrus calleryana*, *Viburnum lentago*, etc.)

Cultivars – Variants – Related species

-*Syringa reticulata* 'Ivory Silk' - usually flowers lightly at 5' tall and profusely at 10' tall, with about the same mature height and width as the straight species, may be grafted onto species rootstock and usually pruned to a single leader, for a stately street tree or specimen growth habit; the cultivar of choice

