



**Fargo**  
Count the day lost you don't learn something new, as the old saying goes, and today's a good day because I learned something new. I didn't know lilacs are edible.

Fresh, fragrant lilac flowers can be used in recipes to flavor ice cream, custard, cookies, cake, lemonade and a wide assortment of delicacies. Lilac blossoms will be especially welcome this spring after the region's winter of eternity, and I'll be sure to taste-test some when they bloom.

Flavor isn't the reason, though, that the National Garden Bureau declared 2022 the "Year of the Lilac." The shrub received the distinction because "Lilacs are among the most carefree spring-flowering, multi-stemmed shrubs, well-loved



**DON KINZLER**  
*Growing Together*

**Binnerstam / Getty Images / iStockphoto**  
**Above:** There's a reason that lilacs have been so popular over the years.

for their toughness, reliability and fragrance," as described by the Bureau.

In the Upper Midwest, the lilac needs no introduction. No homestead in pioneer days was complete without lilacs in the yard, and many can still be seen, often outlasting both buildings and residents.

Their fragrance usually takes our memory back to some previous place and time, but lilacs are more than nostalgia. These winter-tough shrubs are enjoying a well-deserved resurgence in popularity.

Lilacs aren't native to North America, but they thrive in the Upper Midwest, having originated in similar climates in Eastern Europe and Western Asia. Colonists brought them to America in the 1600s and Presidents Washington and Jefferson both had lilacs in their landscapes.

When most of us think lilacs, we picture the old-fashioned lavender kind, but there are many other types, shapes and sizes. The assortment provides great options for any landscape. Lilacs are well-adapted and winter-hardy for the entire Upper Midwest.

**Types**

► **Common Lilac, *Syringa vulgaris*:** The old-fashioned, highly fragrant lilac, blooming in either lavender or white, grows to a height of 12 to 16 feet. The generous suckers produced at the lilac's base are an advantage if a wide, screening-type planting is desired.

► **Hybrids of Common Lilac:** Often termed French hybrids, there are over 600 cultivars in a variety of color shades and flower variations. Most reach a height of around 8 to 12 feet, and usually don't produce spreading suckers like the common lilac parent.

► **Preston Canadian Hybrids:** Miss Canada is the most popular cultivar, blooming rosy pink about two weeks later than common lilacs, with a non-suckering habit.

► **Japanese Tree Lilac:** A tree-type lilac with either a single trunk or multiple stems, the large clusters of creamy white flowers bloom in late June. Developed by North Dakota State University, the cultivar Summer Flare is a beautiful 30-foot-high tree perfect for yards, boulevards and public grounds.

► **Dwarf Korean Lilac:** Growing 6 to 8 feet high and wide, lavender flowers are formed in small clusters that attract butterflies. They're sometimes grown on a "standard," which forms a rounded shrub atop a single trunk growing to about 8 feet high. Dwarf Korean Lilac often produces a few blooms in late summer.

► **Small Lilacs:** Growing 3 to 6 feet high, depending on the cultivar, these small-stature lilacs fit well into smaller landscapes. Included are cultivars like Baby Kim, Little Lady, Pearl Potion, Pinktini, Sugar Plum Fairy and Tinkerbelle.

► **Reblooming Lilacs:** Cultivars that bloom heavily in spring with repeat flowering in late summer include Bloomerang Dark Purple, Bloomerang Pink Perfume and Bloomerang Dwarf Purple. Repeat bloom isn't always



**Roxana\_ro / Getty Images / iStockphoto**  
Though they're not native to the Upper Midwest, lilacs do well here.

**LILAC:** Page 10

Beginning the last act is unsettling and exhilarating

**I**t happened in Breckenridge, Colorado. I went to bed at 69 years old. I woke up 70 years old. I was tagging along, last minute, on a three-day trip with my son. He



**MARY MCGRATH**

was signing on a house he and his family were moving into at the end of the month. No fanfare, no balloons, no cake and ice cream — just the normal movement of day into night into day. The morning of my birthday we went to a local Breckenridge breakfast place. My son mentioned to our

waitress it was my birthday. She returned to our table delivering an enormous warm cinnamon roll with melting white frosting running onto the plate. I received texts, emails, phone calls and arrived home to cards acknowledging my birthday. Our five adult children planned a joint 70th birthday party for

my husband and I later in the year. I didn't feel any different than I did at 69. National Baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Satchel Paige's words come to mind: "How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were?" But I did know. The arrival of 70 placed me at the

beginning of the decade called "mid-life" of old age. A Nov. 18, 2018, New York Times Magazine article, "The future of aging just might be in Margaritaville," says: "If you make it to your 65th birthday in the U.S. today, you can expect 20 more years and you have a good chance at 30." Generally speaking,

this is good news. And yet, my same-age friends and I nervously laugh about how in 20 years, if we make it, we'll be 90 years old. Those of us arriving at and approaching 70 are front-end baby boomers, born after World War II, from 1946 to 1964.

**ACT:** Page 10