

Japanese Tree Lilac

(*Syringa reticulata* — includes ‘Ivory Silk,’ ‘Snowdance,’ and other cultivars)






Japanese Tree Lilac is a **hardy, small ornamental tree** popular in Colorado for its **creamy white early-summer flowers, pleasant fragrance**, and **excellent cold tolerance**. It is generally low-maintenance but can experience **scale, borers, leaf spot, blight**, and **environmental stress** in compacted or overly dry sites.



Seasonal Pest & Disease Calendar

Icons: 🌸 Spring | ☀️ Summer | 🍂 Fall | ❄️ Winter

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Scale insects	Insect	Spring crawlers; visible year-round	🌸 ❄️
Lilac borer / clearwing borers	Insect/borer	Late Spring–Summer	🌸 ☀️
Leaf spot (fungal)	Fungus	Spring–Summer	🌸 ☀️
Bacterial blight (cool, wet springs)	Bacteria	Spring	🌸
Powdery mildew	Fungus	Summer–Fall	☀️ 🍂

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Aphids	Insect	Spring–Fall	  
Environmental stress (drought, heat)	Abiotic	Summer–Fall	 

Pest & Disease Guide (Homeowner-Friendly)

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment & Management</u>
Scale Insects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard bumps or cottony masses on twigs • Yellowing leaves • Honeydew & sooty mold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat crawler stage in late spring • Apply dormant oil in late winter • Prune out heavily infested twigs
Lilac Borer (Clearwing Borer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sawdust-like frass at trunk base • Oozing sap • Exit holes • Branch dieback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid trunk injury and drought stress • Deep watering & mulch • Professional preventive sprays during adult flight
Leaf Spot (Fungal)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown or black leaf blotches • Early leaf drop in wet years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rake/remove fallen leaves • Improve airflow (selective pruning) • Fungicides rarely needed
Bacterial Blight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackened young shoots • Brown water-soaked leaf spots • Occurs mainly in cool, wet springs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prune affected shoots 8–12" below symptoms • Sanitize tools • Avoid overhead irrigation
Powdery Mildew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White powder on leaves • Less common than in shrub lilacs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve airflow • Avoid excess shade • Fungicides only if severe

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment & Management</u>
Aphids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticky honeydew • Sooty mold • Distorted new leaves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hose-rinse foliage • Lady beetles help naturally • Systemic treatment if infestation is heavy
Environmental Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaf scorch • Sparse canopy • Reduced flowering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep water every 2–3 weeks • Mulch 2–4" around base • Avoid compacted soils and high-reflective heat sites

When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

When to Worry (action recommended)

- Borer activity (frass, oozing sap, exit holes)
- Progressive dieback from trunk or major limbs
- Severe scale with sticky honeydew and black sooty mold
- Repeated early leaf drop caused by leaf spot or blight
- Dramatic reduction in flowering year after year
- Deep cracks or cankers forming at the trunk

These conditions require **professional evaluation**, especially for borer management.

Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)

- Light powdery mildew
- Minor leaf spotting

- Occasional aphids with light honeydew
- Small amounts of scale on isolated twigs
- Slight scorch in mid-summer heat
- Early fall color during drought years

Japanese Tree Lilac is **one of the most trouble-free ornamental trees** when given good watering and soil conditions.