

California Lilac (Ceanothus)

Care Guide for BC

HOW TO PLANT, GROW & CARE FOR CEANOTHUS

Ceanothus, commonly known as California Lilac, is a beautiful flowering shrub prized for its vibrant blue blooms and glossy evergreen foliage. Blooming in spring and early summer, ceanothus attracts bees and other pollinators while adding colour and structure to the garden.

These fast-growing shrubs thrive in sunny locations with excellent drainage and are especially well suited to mild coastal climates. We do not recommend growing California Lilacs in the Okanagan where winter conditions tend to be too harsh for successful growing.

Evergreen California Lilac

- Glossy dark green foliage year-round
- Intense blue spring flowers
- Best suited to mild coastal climates

Examples include:

- Ceanothus 'Concha'
- Ceanothus 'Victoria'

HOW TO PLANT CALIFORNIA LILAC

Ceanothus thrive when planted in the right location with excellent drainage.

Sun Requirements

- Full sun (minimum 6 hours daily)
- Best flowering occurs in bright, open locations

Soil Requirements

California Lilac prefer:

- Well-drained soil
- Moderate to low soil fertility
- Neutral to slightly acidic soil

Avoid heavy clay soils or areas that remain wet during winter.

Planting Steps

1. Dig a hole twice as wide as the root ball
2. Loosen surrounding soil to improve drainage.
3. Plant at the same depth as the nursery container
4. Water thoroughly with Gardenworks Transplanting Fertilizer 5-15-5 after planting to encourage strong root development
5. Apply mulch, keeping it away from the stems

Avoid disturbing roots once established.

WATERING CALIFORNIA LILAC

Ceanothus are relatively drought tolerant once established.

- Water regularly during the first growing season
- After establishment, water occasionally during prolonged dry periods
- Avoid overwatering or soggy soil

Too much moisture is one of the most common causes of plant failure.

FERTILIZING CALIFORNIA LILAC

Ceanothus typically require little feeding.

- Apply compost lightly in spring if soil is poor
- Avoid heavy fertilizers
- Excess nitrogen can reduce flowering

These plants often perform best in moderately low fertility soils.

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PRUNING CALIFORNIA LILAC

Ceanothus require minimal pruning.

- Prune immediately after flowering
- Remove dead or damaged branches
- Light shaping only

Avoid heavy pruning into older woody stems, as regrowth may be poor.

GROWING CALIFORNIA LILAC (CEANOTHUS) IN SOUTH COASTAL BC

South Coastal BC offers excellent growing conditions for many ceanothus varieties.

Climate Advantages

- Mild winters
- Moderate summer temperatures
- Coastal influence

Evergreen ceanothus varieties perform particularly well in coastal gardens.

Coastal Considerations

- Ensure excellent drainage
- Protect from strong winter winds
- Plant in sunny, sheltered locations

Avoid overly wet winter soils.

SEASONAL CALIFORNIA LILAC (CEANOTHUS) CARE CALENDAR

Early Spring

- Light pruning if needed
- Inspect for winter damage

Late Spring

- Enjoy flowering
- Prune lightly after bloom

Summer

- Water during prolonged drought
- Maintain mulch

Fall

- Avoid heavy pruning
- Ensure drainage before winter rains

Winter

- Protect from extreme cold inland

CEANOTHUS FAQs

Do California Lilacs (Ceanothus) grow well in BC?

Yes, especially in South Coastal BC where the mild climate suits evergreen varieties.

Are ceanothus drought tolerant?

Yes. Once established they require little supplemental watering.

When should ceanothus be pruned?

Immediately after flowering.