

# Buddleia

## Species Description

**Scientific name:** *Buddleja davidii*

**AKA:** Buddleja, Butterfly Bush

**Native to:** Central and South-western China

**Habitat:** Grows in a wide diversity of habitats, but most commonly found along riversides and urban infrastructure e.g. buildings, railroad tracks, etc.

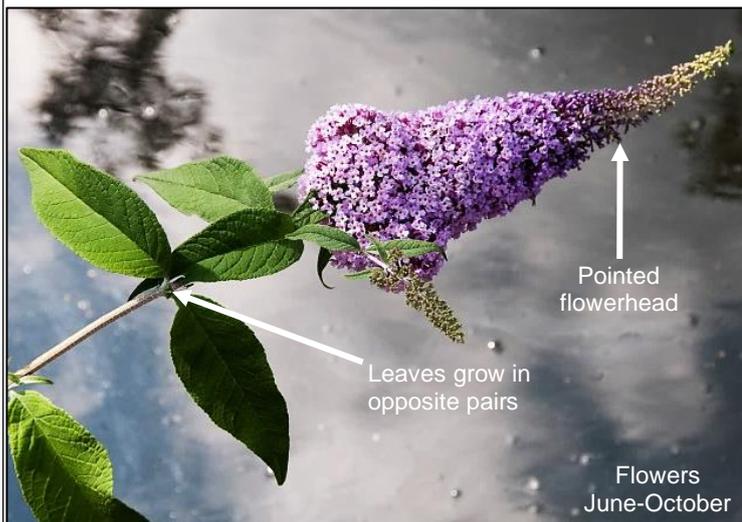
Buddleia is an evergreen perennial shrub growing to a maximum height of five metres. Introduced into UK cultivation in 1896 as an attractive ornamental due to its many small, densely packed lilac/purple flowers, it has since become a favourite among gardeners, horticulturalists and public officials owing to its strongly sweet-scented flowers and its popularity with butterflies.

The plants' benefits for invertebrates (particularly butterflies) are notable, although its wider effects on both society and the environment should not be overlooked. The most prominent environmental impact is its ability to outcompete all native vegetation in a given locale, often resulting in monotypic stands that contain little (if any) floral diversity. Economic and social costs of Buddleia include the extensive damage inflicted to historic buildings as caused by the plants' capacity for growing in crevices and weakening the stonework. Railway tracks are also threatened by the shrubs' encroaching tendencies.

With few natural controls in the UK, and an ability to produce three million seeds per year, Buddleia can rapidly spread throughout the countryside, including areas of significant ecological importance. These incursions lower both the human amenity and wildlife values of invaded areas by outcompeting, and potentially eradicating, native fauna and flora, drastically reducing the overall biodiversity.



## Key ID Features



# Identification throughout the Year

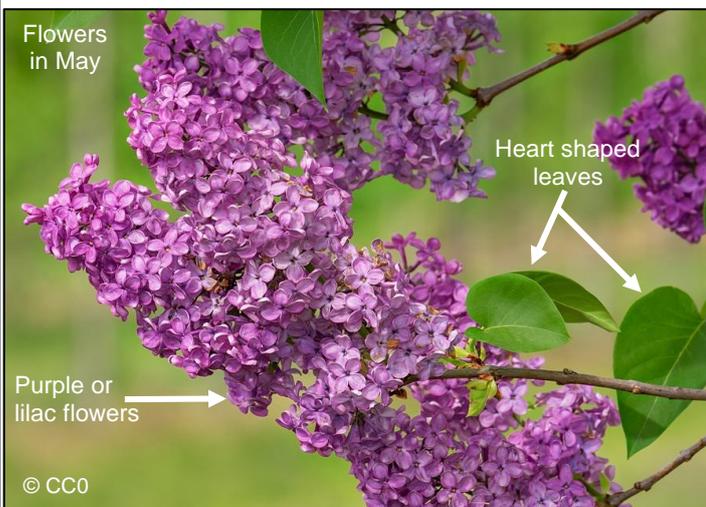
Buddleia is readily identified throughout the year, yet is most easily recognisable between June and October when in flower. During this period, it is a favourite among butterflies and other pollinating insects and can often be seen hosting swarms of these invertebrates. From September to December the plant fruits, with the flowerhead appearing as a mass of seed pods. The bark has a distinctive ridged texture year-round.



## Similar Species

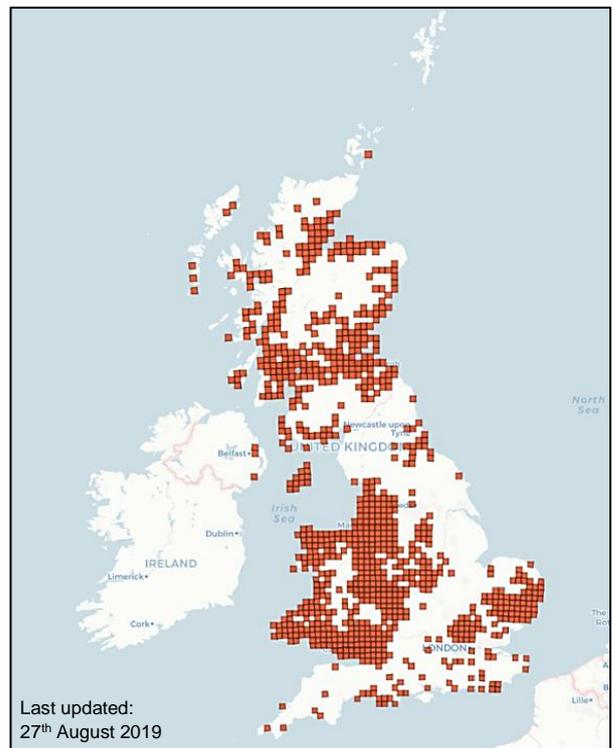
Lilac (*Syringa vulgaris*)  
**[Non-native]**

Within the UK there are few plants which could be confused with Buddleia. The Lilac Tree however is an exception, as its flowers are similar in both appearance and colour. The most distinguishing characteristic of the lilac tree is its heart shaped leaves which are both smaller and rounder compared to those of Buddleia. Further differences include the Lilac Tree growing to a taller height of seven metres and an earlier flowering period, typically lasting throughout May.



## Distribution

Buddleia is a common plant found throughout the UK and although it appears largely absent in the eastern and southwestern counties, it is likely underreported.



## References and Further Reading:

Global Invasive Species Database (2018) *Species profile: Buddleja davidii*. Available at: <http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/species.php?sc=650> (Accessed: 05<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

Squirrell, J. (2016) *Buddleia, Buddleja davidii*. Available at: <http://www.nonnativespecies.org/factsheet/downloadFactsheet.cfm?speciesId=581> (Accessed: 05<sup>th</sup> May 2019).

Streeter, D. (2009) *Collins flower guide : the most complete guide to the flowers of Britain & Europe*. London: Collins.