

Butterfly bush

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Species Description

Scientific name: *Buddleja davidii*

AKA: Buddleia, Summer lilac, Orange eye, *Buddleja variabilis* Hemsley

Native to: China

Habitat: Common in riparian and transport corridors, quarries, urban waste grounds, abandoned cultivated areas and also gardens.

Buddleja davidii is a large shrub between 1 – 5m in height with widely spreading branches. It is semi deciduous, leaves are shed in the autumn and immediately replaced with a set of new, smaller leaves that persist until the following spring. It has distinctive lilac-purple flowers densely arranged along an inflorescence up to 35 cm long.

Descriptions of *B. davidii* may vary slightly depending on environment. There are 7 subspecies and 90 cultivars of *B. davidii*. It tolerates a wide range of physical conditions, establishing in both natural and disturbed areas.

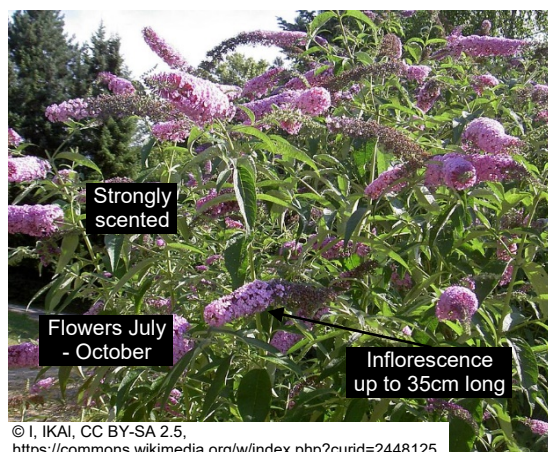
Originally introduced as an ornamental garden plant, it is still widely available in nurseries and garden centres. Due to an enormous production of small seeds (up to several millions per plant) which can easily be transported by wind and water, *B. davidii* is found growing in many habitats, including cracks in buildings several floors high.

B. davidii can form thickets and quickly cover open ground, out-competing native plants and reducing biodiversity. Monospecific stands can also impede access.



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Key ID Features



Strongly
scented

Flowers July
- October

Inflorescence
up to 35cm long

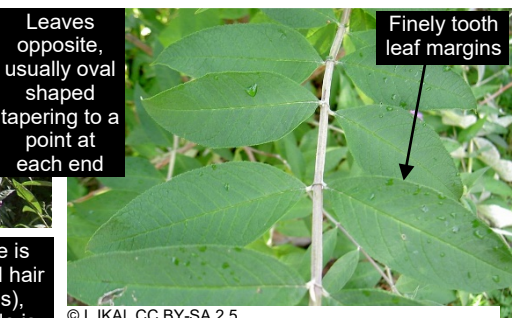
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Dense
inflorescence



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Leaves
opposite,
usually oval
shaped
tapering to a
point at each
end



Finely tooth
leaf margins

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'White profusion' (cultivar) may also be
found in growing in the wild



Yellow
centre

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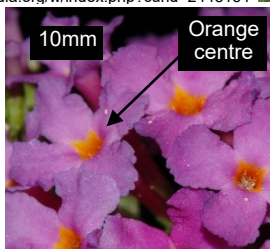
Seed heads

Upper surface is
dark green and hair
free (glabrous),
while underside is
white and has
downy hairs
(tomentose)

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10mm

Orange
centre

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Report any sightings via; CEDaR Online Recording - <https://www2.habitas.org.uk/records/ISI>,
iRecord app or Invasive Species Ireland website - <http://invasivespeciesireland.com/report-sighting>

Due to the quantity of easily dispersed seed, Butterfly bush can become established in both natural and man-made habitats, which can impact structural integrity.

Seeds are small and long winged at both ends.



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Forms thickets, reducing biodiversity

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Adjacent to railway bridge

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Commonly found on railways

© Drow male, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=72710442>



Commonly found on wasteland

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Growing in small crack on abandoned buildings

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Similar Species

Common lilac
Invasive non-native
(*Syringa vulgaris*)



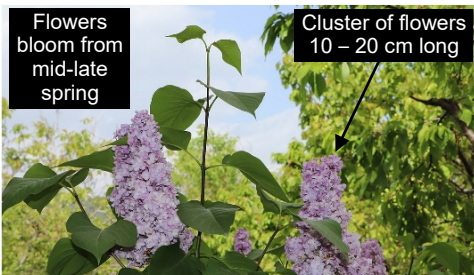
With over 2000 cultivars, appearance and description may vary significantly

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4 lobed tubular flowers

Flowers bloom from mid-late spring



Cluster of flowers 10 – 20 cm long

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Ceanothus 'Skylark'
Non-native
(*Ceanothus thyrsiflorus*)



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Mophead hydrangea
Non-native
(*Hydrangea macrophylla*)



'Mop head' like flower clusters

Ovate, toothed leaves, do not come to a point at both ends

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Colour of flower can be pink or blue, depending on soil composition

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Finely toothed, glossy dark green leaves

Clusters of deep blue flowers

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References and further reading:

CABI *Buddleja davidii* (Butterfly bush) datasheet - available at

<https://www.cabi.org/isc/datasheet/10314>

Ebeling, S.K., Hensen, I. and Auge, H. (2008), The invasive shrub *Buddleja davidii* performs better in its introduced range. Diversity and Distributions, 14: 225-233. doi:[10.1111/j.1472-4642.2007.00422.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1472-4642.2007.00422.x)

Global Invasive Species Database (GISD) 2015. Species profile *Buddleja davidii*. Available from: <http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/species.php?sc=650>