

**Intro:**

The Lilac Project uses a lovely combination of Watercolors to capture this stunning and romantic plant. Use the following colors to create your own painting of a favorite springtime floral.

Cobalt Violet is sweet lavender. It has a nice vibrancy but can also be used in subtle applications. Granulation and a light-filled transparency are the hallmarks of this soft color.

Viridian is a very versatile and transparent green. It is popular on many painters' palettes for the clean quality it adds to mixtures. This emerald hue color has a gem-like clarity and soft granulation.

Quinacridone Gold is an essential pigment for many watercolorists. This paint is very saturated with a transparent, amber-colored hue. It brings a warm quality to paintings and is wonderful for glazes and washes.

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To begin the lilac painting we'll create a nice deep purple to give structure to our blooms. First add plenty of water to the cobalt violet. Once you have a paint that is nice and flowing, move some of the cobalt violet to an empty well on your palette. Into the violet add a small touch of viridian paint. You can see that the resulting mixture is a nice, rich violet. If you like, test this mixture on a scrap piece of paper to make sure it is a shade you like.

Use this darker tone in the background areas of the painting. There are numerous small blossoms on the lilac and you want to use this dark purple to paint in the areas around these individual flowers. A round watercolor brush with a pointed tip is an ideal choice to work around all these small areas. Also, if you keep the brush filled with paint you can move around the flower areas to fill in all the spaces. For this part of the painting, feel free to loosen up a little. If you accidentally color in some of the petals of the flowers that is okay. We'll come in later with a lighter shade of violet to bring out some of the individual flowers and even out the application of color.

As you work around these areas, be sure to keep adding more paint and water as you need it. If your brush becomes dry, or there is not enough paint, you'll find it may become difficult to keep the paint moving.

Moving on to the next flower, we'll repeat the same technique to fill in the dark areas around the blooms. By creating these deeper areas of color, we're setting the stage for a nice contrast between the dark, center areas of the flower and all of the light and delicate blossoms we'll add later.

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As this dark shade begins to dry, you can see the pigment beginning to settle into the paper. Because we're working with granulating pigments, you will start to see the paint creating some areas of light and dark as it falls into the texture of the paper. The paper that we're working on is cold pressed, this means the surface has a medium texture. Cold pressed paper is a standard paper for watercolor and we're really looking to get some of that granulation in the painting for a more interesting look. If you add plenty of water to your paint, you will get more granulation. You can see that this painting has a lot of water still, because the areas I am working on are shiny.

Once this background mixture of viridian and cobalt violet is painted in, we need to let that area dry. While we're waiting, let's begin working on the leaves and stems.

For the foliage of this plant, start by moving some viridian to an empty well on your palette. This shade of green is very lovely, it had a very clear emerald tone. Although it is a beautiful color, we need to create a mixture for a green that will give us natural looking foliage.

To the viridian, add some Quinacridone Gold. This mixture will give us a nice, deep green. You may want to test this color on a piece of paper to make sure it is a rich and vibrant green. This green is a bit too deep so by adding a little more Quinacridone Gold I've made a dark green that has just a bit more warmth in its tone.

Using this dark color, paint in the undersides of the leaves. Following your line drawing, you'll see some areas where the leaf folds over and you see the bottom. Just use your brush to trace around these areas and fill in with your deep green.

The mixture we're working with is almost like the color sap green. It is very vibrant and, as it dries, it will give you a subtle granulation on the page.

Next, using the same shade, paint in the stems of the lilacs. Keep a good amount of paint on your brush and make a slow, gentle stroke to color these in. Also, at this time, we'll paint the stems that lead to the leaves. Finally, paint in some stems in and around the blossoms.

Now that the initial dark areas of the painting are blocked in it is time to let this painting dry. You can take a break or even use the low setting on a hair drier to speed things up – just be careful not to disturb the paint.

Now that this painting is dry, we'll start working on the blossoms. For this step, add some water to the cobalt violet. I like to get this paint nice and wet so it is easy to fill the blossoms in. Load up your brush with color and fill in all the petals of each blossom.

You can see there is a lot of variation in the colors – there are some areas of deep purple and these light blossoms that are filled with delicate lavender. The granulation of the paint all shows up and you might see some of that viridian or even a deep greenish gray in your lilac depending on how you applied your paint.

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Add a bit more water to your mixture as you move down the flower, this will give you some lighter petals in the center of the bloom. These very light areas will look like they are highlighted by the sun as they dry.

In some areas it is okay if you gently paint over the background layer. If the background is fully dry, it will stay put and your second layer of color will add even more depth and pigment.

At the sides of the flower, make sure to paint some of the blossoms as they stick out away from the white background. You'll see contrast between the light flowers and the darker background and, additionally, you'll get some nice contrast between the light petals and even lighter background.

Continue to keep a nice wet mixture of paint on your brush, if the paint feels sticky or dry don't be afraid to add some more water to keep things moving.

Where the two flowers meet, just continue on with these nice little strokes of paint. Alternate areas where you use more pigment, then add water to create the lighter highlights on the lilac. As you can see, most of the flowers actually touch each other, so as you paint you can focus on filling in the light areas by moving your brush through the painting and then adding some final touch-ups at the end.

Now that we have finished painting the last few lavender blossoms with the cobalt violet, it is time to transition into finishing up the foliage of the lilac. Starting with the dark green mixture we used earlier, let's add some clean water to the green to lighten it up. I'm also adding a bit more Quinacridone Gold to give the paint some additional brightness and warmth. I'm testing this color on a sheet of paper to make sure it is lighter than what we used for the underside of the leaves.

I'm beginning by working this light color into the very back leaf, painting around the stems that we colored in earlier. I'm also moving this paint right into the top of this other leaf. Later we'll come back in with some layers of paint to differentiate these leaves from each other. For now, just block in the light green to give a base note to the leaves.

Using this same color, fill in the other two leaves on the line drawing. You can see that there is a large variation in tone between our two greens. This is achieved mainly by adding more water to the mixture. The Quinacridone Gold we added is giving this a little bit of brightness.

Now that the leaves are painted in, I'm adding more viridian to the mixture to deepen it slightly. To add some interest to the foliage, I'm dropping in small amounts of paint by touching my brush down in areas along the bottom of the leaf. The wet paint will mingle with the wet background color and you will see granulation. I'm also using some of this darker shade as a glaze over the bottom of the leaves for continuity.

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Next, I'm adding some areas of Quinacridone Gold as well, mixing the colors together and so that the leaves do not look so flat.

We'll need to let the painting dry again before we add the final details.

Now that this area of the painting where the leaves overlap is dry, we'll add a small detail so that the top leaf seems to be in the foreground of the painting. To do this, I am using the dark green mixture and putting a small amount on the brush. Come in and apply a light glaze of color to the back leaf, working around the base of the upper leaf. Start out with a lighter shade and add more paint as needed. Continue the color around the stems and around the top edge of the leaf.

Finally, for balance, add a dark glaze to the bottom of your other leaves and use clear water to blend.

Enjoy using these sweet yet complex colors to create brilliant lilacs. These light-filled watercolors are a perfect addition to a flower lovers' palette.