



The Pipeline

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THE INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY

INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY is a non-profit corporation comprised of people who share a particular appreciation and fondness for lilacs. By exchange of knowledge, experience and facts gained by members, it is helping to promote, educate and broaden public understanding and awareness of lilacs.

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Lilac Species for Landscape Planting (December 1938)

Useful Lilacs Besides Syringa Vulgaris Which Are Worthy of a Place in the Garden - By Donald Wyman.

Lists have been given of the "best" vulgaris, but little mention has been made of several species which are prominent in landscape planting and of some rare species with which the nurseryman should be more familiar. This discussion will deal primarily with these species, and a few of their varieties, for the story of the lilac is certainly not complete without including them.

Several of the species of syringa are common in landscape work, having been used for many years in this country. For instance, *Syringa persica* is widely planted and can be termed the daintiest of all the lilacs, because of its finely divided leaves and small flower clusters. Normally the flowers are pale lilac, but there is a white-flowered variety. The Persian lilac originally came from China, not from Persia, where it was first found and described. For at least 300 years it has been grown in Europe, and for centuries before it had been in cultivation in Persia and India.

The Chinese lilac is one of the best of all the lilacs for its profuse bloom. It was the first hybrid lilac, a cross between *S. persica* and *S. vulgaris*, and appeared for the first time in the botanic garden at Rouen, France, in 1777. Formerly called *S. rothomagensis*, it is the most floriferous of the lilacs, having immense clusters of purplish-lilac flowers intermediate in size between those of both parents. It is perfectly hardy, is a rapid grower and always blooms well - something which cannot be said of every lilac. Frequently the branches are so covered with inflorescences that stems two feet long give the appearance of one continuous bloom. These flower clusters are so heavy that the branches bend under their weight. There are several varieties, one with white flowers, var. *alba*, and another with deep pink flowers, var. *Saugeana*.

Another species in the trade, but which might be grown considerably more, is *S. japonica* (*S. amurensis japonica*), the Japanese tree lilac. It is the tallest-growing in the genus and may be considered a small tree even in this country. In the forests of Japan it is a standard forest tree, greatly valued for its timber. It was first grown in this country in the Harvard botanic garden in 1870 and was first introduced into cultivation by the Arnold Arboretum. It has large creamy-white flower clusters, which appear in late June or early July - the last of the lilacs to bloom. The panicles are from six to twelve inches long. These flowers are not fragrant and only slightly disagreeable in odor. As a small tree, it is well adapted for use as a specimen. I shall never forget a splendid planting of these at Ithaca, N.Y., along a short narrow canal. The trees did splendidly, and when they were in bloom their reflection in the water of the canal was exquisite.

The last of the species common in the trade is *S. villosa*, the late lilac. It is valued for its dense, vigorous growth and for its late flowers, which, in the vicinity of Boston, appear in mid-June, halfway between those of *S. vulgaris* and those of *S. japonica*. The flowers are whitish to pale pink. Unfortunately, they are not fragrant, for they have the odor of the privet flowers. The plant is hardy and is a close relative of *S. Josikaea*, which is similar except for the fact that its leaves are considerably more glossy. For this reason, *S. Josikaea* makes a better specimen plant than *S. villosa*. At the experimental farm at Ottawa, Canada, both *S. Josikaea* and *S. villosa* are in tall clipped hedges, but the latter is not so attractive as *S. Josikaea* because of its lusterless foliage.

A hybrid between these two is *S. Henryi*, of which *Lutec* is the most outstanding variety. The flowers of this variety are similar in every way to those of *S. villosa* except that the panicle is larger and more loose and a pale lilac color. Some nurserymen are using this splendid ornamental

variety successfully in the propagation of other lilac species and varieties by using small parts of the roots as understock in root grafting.

One of the species which deserves far greater use than it enjoys at present is *S. pubescens*. This is the most fragrant of the lilacs, and although its flower clusters are not particularly prominent nor conspicuously colored (a pale lilac often fading to whitish), it is an asset to any collection of lilacs. The clusters are rather loose and, of course, not particularly fragrant when wet, although when dry they give off a richly fragrant odor. This lilac does not have to be given prominence in the garden, but it can be planted at the rear of the shrub collection, for when its flowers are in bloom they will add much fragrance to any garden.

Syringa Prestoniae is a species with which American nurserymen should become more familiar, now that it has proved itself of considerable value. The first crosses were made by Miss Isabella Preston, of the experimental farm, Ottawa, Canada, about seventeen years ago. *Syringa Prestoniae* is a cross between *S. villosa* and *S. reflexa* and blooms a week or so after the regular *S. vulgaris* varieties fade. Some of the flower clusters are almost a foot in length. Certain seedlings have flower clusters that are rather loose, while other seedlings have clusters that are tight and compact, depending on the variety. Some are a dark reddish pink, as is the variety Elinor, while others are a considerably lighter pink. The pink color, of course, comes from the splendid pink color of the *S. reflexa* blooms. A large number of seedlings originated from the first cross, and Miss Preston has given them the names of Shakespeare's heroines. Unfortunately, the flowers are not fragrant, but because of their conspicuous pink flower clusters in June, at a time when no other pink-flowering lilacs are in bloom, they should be used a great deal more in the northern United States at least. Although it is difficult to pick the most

outstanding varieties in such a group, I made the following selections last June when I carefully inspected all the mature bushes in Ottawa: *Audrey*, *Ursula*, *Desdemona*, *Octavia*, *Isabella*, *Alice*, *Jessica*. F.L. Skinner, at Dropmore, Manitoba, Canada, has also been outstanding in making some lilac crosses. He, too, crossed *S. villosa* and *S. reflexa* and from the resulting seedlings selected among others, one with dark rose flowers and named it *Hiawatha*. Another cross using *S. vulgaris* X *S. oblata dilatata* resulted in several good flowering seedlings among which are *Assessippi* and *Pocahontas*, a deep purple. Let us hope that American nurserymen will soon begin to realize the potential value of these plants so that they will eventually be made available in this country.

Syringa oblata and its varieties have three qualifications which merit their use in the garden. They are the first of the lilacs to bloom; they are the only lilacs the foliage of which turns a good red color in the fall; their leaves are usually not disfigured by mildew in the late summer, as are those of most other lilacs. Three varieties are in cultivation, *affinis* (white flowers, commonly cultivated in Chinese gardens); *Giraldii* (lilac-colored flowers, loose, open clusters); *dilatata* (lilac-pink flowers, perhaps the best of the three). Because their flowers open so early, the flower buds are sometimes nipped by late freezes in the north, but, nevertheless, they are good plants for early bloom, usually flowering a week earlier than *S. vulgaris* varieties.

The littleleaf lilac, *S. microphylla*, is the lowest of the lilacs. One of the plants at the Arnold Arboretum is 22 years old and still only about five feet tall, although it is over twice this in width. It is valued for its low, wide-growing habit and its free-blooming qualities. The fragrant flowers, lavender to pink in color, appear in small clusters, sometimes resembling the blooms of *S. pubescens* in everything but degree of fragrance. Its unique habit of

blooming a second time in the autumn is interesting, but usually only a few flower clusters open at that time. Because of its low, squatting habit of growth, it can fill a place in the garden which no other lilac can. It blooms about the same time as the *S. vulgaris* varieties.

Syringa reflexa has the most graceful flower clusters of any lilac. The flowers are borne in long, nodding clusters, and for this reason it is called the nodding lilac. Its flowers are colored a deep pink to a rich red, and from the standpoint of blooms alone, the plant is quite outstanding. It blooms about the same time as *S. villosa*, and flower buds are conspicuously red for some time before they open. It was introduced into cultivation in this country by the Arnold Arboretum in 1901, but apparently it is more difficult to grow properly than most of the other lilacs. The specimens in the arboretum bloom well only occasionally, and from our experience with this species in the arboretum it is not so desirable a specimen as many of the other lilacs. It is being used in hybridizing with some of the later-blooming species, particularly *S. villosa*, and is responsible for the beautiful pink colors in the *S. Prestoniae* seedlings.

There are other lilac species which are noted from time to time in horticultural literature, but which do not have sufficient ornamental characteristics to warrant their general use in landscape planting. *Syringa tomentella* and *S. Sweginzowii* are somewhat similar and valued chiefly because their large flower clusters open about the same time as those of *S. villosa*. *Syringa Komarowii*, *S. emodi*, *S. hyacinthiflora*, *S. pinnatifolia* and *S. yunnanensis* are some of the species with little, if any, ornamental value. All of these are growing in the collections at the Arnold Arboretum, but when the characteristics of the other species are considered, these do not have sufficient value to warrant their being grown extensively for ornamental purposes.

These, then, are some of the lilac species which aid in making this group of flowering shrubs of ornamental interest for about eight weeks during the spring and early summer. Because they are of ornamental value only while in flower, having no decorative fruits, no outstanding autumn color, nor even an attractive form in the winter, we should not let our enthusiasm for their flowers run away with good judgment in growing them. A small selection of the best is to be highly advocated. With 150 varieties of *S. vulgaris* alone being grown today in American nurseries, there is ample opportunity for intelligent reduction in the number grown, for in a group of plants like the lilacs, which have a comparatively small color range, at best, there are certainly not 150 individual *S. vulgaris* varieties of outstanding merit.

Editors note:

Please keep in mind that the foregoing article was published in 1938 and reflects a sentiment much as that often voiced at our recent conferences concerning the *vulgaris* hybrids. Yet there is a wealth of material to be considered in the species, both as set forth by the author and as subject for the hybridizer.

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More on Cut Flower behavior and observation:

Subjects: Syringa villosa and Preston hybrids;
cut and plunge stems and foliage up
to the blooms in water as hot as one
can stand on the flesh (of the hand).
Leave overnight and arrange the next
morning.

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Happy Koreans

- Mr. P.B. Hodgdon, Hamesbest Nursery, Randolph Center, Vt., responds that after seven years he has established the *Dwarf Korean Lilac* and while it does tend to suffer slightly (mostly from late spring frost), it still puts on a very good display of bloom.

Referring back to the item by Susan Weber (July issue) one might very well conclude that site is a possible reflection factor in this most trying climate of Vermont. For many tender plants a south foundation exposure would not be considered the most ideal - alternate freezing and thawing during late winter months (wks.) is extremely detrimental to many of the European and Asiatic introductions. Just as often as not these materials will respond much better if the planting site is sheltered in some manner to hold the frost in the ground as late into the spring as possible - mulching after the frost is well set often helps.

"PIPELINE" !! Is it time for change ??

A suggestion has been made and the thinking seems to be valid - how does the name of our publication relate to our image ? The newsletter name PIPELINE was 'hatched' (as it were) at a moment when it was very obvious that the society was in dire need of organizational communication - a pipeline being a means through which the product flows - in this instance of I.L.S. it was the written message. Has the primary effort at this point served its purpose ? Yes, it would appear so in that a suggestion to adopt a more meaningful title for our publication has come forth. PIPELINE has clicked, but at least one reader (maybe others) seems to feel that our efforts should be reflected by a title that can be more readily filed and truly identify with our purpose.

So, if your cooped-up thinking might parallel something like THE LILAC, LILAC NEWSLETTER or (?), let's hear it. If a change will improve the I.L.S. image then the mailbox is the answer - we'll put your thoughts in the hopper and go with your wishes. It would seem to your editor that the word LILAC should be a part of whatever we might select (if we're going to make a change).

Ed.

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Over the July 4th weekend, Dr. Joel Margaretten of Leona Valley, Calif. flew up to Monterey then drove to Corallitoes for the specific purpose of completing his obligated mission of delivery and presenting (well pictured in local newspaper) the AWARD OF MERIT which had been granted to Dr. Walter Lammerts of Watsonville, Calif. at the Annual Meeting in Amherst, Mass. last May. Dr. Lammerts (now retired) over the years has distinguished himself through

his hybridizing work with roses - having introduced such looked upon favorites as 'Chrysler', 'Imperial', 'Bewitched' and many others still found in gardens wherever roses are grown. Roses however, were not his only floral interests, judged a wide spectrum of the bloom display and frequently made crosses which eventually were made available to avid gardeners throughout N. America.

Oh yes, the AWARD - that of course which Dr. Margaretten presented; that was to bring distinction to Dr. Lammerts for his untiring efforts in his breeding program dating back to 1941, at a time when he struggled to improve the lot of the Lilac in the warm winter climate of California (and similar areas), where temperatures seldom drop sufficiently low to induce proper dormancy requirements necessary to bring the plants into bloom the following spring. Dr. Lammerts efforts indeed did not go unrewarded, for in 1954 his first find 'Lavender Lady' was issued a Plant Patent and offered to the trade. Others which followed during the mid and late 1950's were 'Sierra Snow', 'Old Lace', 'Big Blue', 'Heather Haze' and 'Sweet Charity'.

Keep in mind that while Dr. Lammerts' rather limited introductions in the field of Lilacs may or may not satisfy the critic in the wide color range choice, his efforts did indeed open the door for still greater input within this category of materials for the warm-winter/dry-summer (normally) areas.

Our hardy congratulations to Dr. Lammerts for his contributions, especially in the world of Lilacs, and "thanks much" to Dr. Margaretten for travelling where the Awards Committee could not reach - in this regard I speak for the entire membership of I.L.S.

Ed.

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Bickelhaupts Honored

Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Bickelhaupt received the "Friend of Education Award" presented by the Clinton Education Association (CEA) for their contribution to education in Clinton schools. The Bickelhaupts are the co-directors of the Bickelhaupt Arboretum, 340 South 14th Street.

Lou F. Knockel, horticulturist at the arboretum, has conducted nature study presentations in all first and fifth grades in Clinton County public and parochial schools. His classroom visitations now number in the hundreds. The first grade program centers on discussions of wild flowers, Iowa birds, trees and their care and poisonous plants. Fifth graders learn about the parts of flowers and trees and receive tours of the arboretum, where discussion centers on the several varieties of plants grown on the grounds. First graders also may tour the arboretum, if the teacher elects.

The Bickelhaupt Arboretum has a representative lilac collection of 38 taxa (1976).

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