



# Lilac Newsletter

Vol. V, No. 11, November, 1979

INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY

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

This publication, *LILAC NEWSLETTER* (formerly *THE PIPELINE*) is issued monthly. Back copies are available by writing to the International Lilac Society, c/o Mr. Charles Holetich, Royal Botanical Gardens, Box 399, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, L8N 3H8. Please send 50 cents for each copy requested.

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**MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION**

	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	
Single annual .....	\$ 5.00	\$ 7.50	U.S.
Family .....	7.50	10.00	
Sustaining .....	10.00	15.00	
Institutional/Commercial .....	15.00	20.00	
Life .....	100.00	150.00	

\*Mail membership dues to I.L.S. Secretary.

"A Member Writes"

If you've ever toured Wyo. (high country) you might wonder if anything worthwhile ever grows out here. However, along with many years of 'general farming' here on the plains we finally settled-in as wheat farmers. Right along with the other associated challenges of this somewhat rough country we have attempted to broaden our contribution in testing and growing many sorts of plants both for economic purposes as well as ornamental use. My husband and I have to a great degree shared our plant growing experience, yet in many respects we've each branched out into individual likes and dislikes - he has planted a goodly number of fruit trees, and in recent years has been establishing many of the 'Antique' selections of apples. During these same years I have searched row upon row of seedling apples and in my opinion have selected several that will do justice right alongside some of the best that the trade has to offer. Some of my seedlings have borne fruit in as little as 3½ yrs. from seed while some few have taken as long as 7 yrs. to set their first fruit. We presently have more than 1,600 variations of Tulips, twenty-three named forms of Flowering Crabapples which compliment our Lilacs and Tulips when in bloom - that is when we hold our "Tulip Time in the Rockies" - 1979 was the 28th such festivity that the Pioneer Garden Club has held right here on our farm where we have a two story (36' x 52') barn complete with dining facilities, a floral display which is attended by many many people from miles around. Additional items which we have found of great interest to beautify our landscape are Daffodils, Iris, Lilies, Rock Plants, etc..

After reading the Lilac Newsletter which arrived this A.M. I decided to write and seek help, explore if you will, the possibility of exchanging or buying Lilac plants - many that seem to have glowing descriptions don't seem to be available, then on at least a few occasions I have received some plants that have not been correctly identified. We find that the double forms hold their color qualities much longer in our cold winds of spring and really enjoy our hedge of 'Mme. Lemoine' which is an excellent performer for us. Our 'President Lincoln' seemed almost bluer than usual in this past wet spring. 'Lucie Baltet' was really pinker than usual for four long weeks. 'Monge', 'Leon Simon', 'Michel Buchner', 'Victorie', 'Viviand Morel',

'Katherine Havemeyer' and 'Pink Lace' were all long lasting in '79 right along with 'Leon Gambetta', 'Montaigne' and 'Caroline Mae' (syn. 'Caroline Mae Nelson').

I have an excellent opportunity to broadcast the word as-it-were in this area, in that I conduct a Horticultural Radio Program on a regular basis and really stress the outstanding qualities, hardiness etc. of the many things that we are growing.

Presently we have on our list of "Lilacs Wanted", 'Decaisne', 'Mme. Florent Stepmann' for singles, and 'Marechal Lannes', 'Henri Martin' and 'Victor Lemoine' of the double Flowering forms. We'd also like to secure a true plant of 'Edith Cavell' - we purchased this selection one time and it turned out to be sky blue when it bloomed.

We have unlimited room for adding to our plantings and as a sort of carry-over from my husbands years of trials with the new wheat strains as they were offered, I too make every effort to keep day to day records of individual plant behavior and performance.

Mrs. Lowell A. Storm  
Chugwater, Wyoming

Editors note:-

As you the reader might conclude, in the area of Chugwater, Wyo. Mr. and Mrs. Storm maintain not only a spot of beauty in an otherwise somewhat bleak countryside, but they also offer a first hand research facility and impart untold quantities of practical knowledge. It is obvious that the Storms are people that are driven to "do more" than plant, sit back and enjoy the beauty of their labors, they beckon the multitudes to come, share and enjoy with them. They are not only highly qualified Judges in many facets of horticulture, in several instances they are indeed Certified - they hold memberships in many many plant societies and actively participate in as many such endeavors as time will allow. To read between the lines of the recent letter received from Mrs. Storm one might easily get the opinion that out in that wide-open (often wind-swept) country they are given more than the normal twenty-four hours per day to accomplish and give so very much, yet Mrs. Storm seemingly apologizes for a lack of knowledge, particularly in the field of lilacs. My

rather brief association with ILS has afforded me the opportunity of a cross-section appraisal and I know that herein I speak for many of the membership when I admit that a lot of us are "wanting" for lilac knowledge.

So, "A Member Writes" and speaks out, and is asking for assistance - the Lilac Society membership being a compassionate group of unselfish individuals seeking to improve the American landscape through the use of lilacs, then here is an opportunity to come forward and share that which you too enjoy. A single sucker with a good compliment of roots will go a long way and spread a lot of ILS philosophy if you'll but heed this call from the "High Country".

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BITS OF WIT!!

Don't waste time envying the other fellow. Get busy yourself.

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Over self-confidence indicates inefficiency. Either one will get you in bad.

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The right road may be rough and steep, but the vision from the summit is worth all the effort.

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Work, wait and win.

\*\*\*

Master concentration and you can master anything.

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INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY

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WINTER CARE OF LILACS

The Leightons-Roy S. and Gladys M

\*(reprint)

Just about the time that the vigorous spring and summer growing seasons come to a close and you have anticipated getting out of your garden clothes to enjoy relaxation indoors, someone should begin expounding upon the desirability of releasing still more of your energy *now* to do that which usually is let go until next spring. Just to demonstrate what we mean, suppose that we pick up our notebook and journey over to where we have our planting of lilacs. Yes, they seem to be entering into their dormant season and this is good because only nature knows when they will again awaken next spring to display their brilliance and fragrance. It is *now*, not next spring, when we can care for them best. For remember, they are among the first to awaken from winter dormancy and their growth and development is very fast. Lilacs in our climate

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\*The following dissertation appeared in The Arboretum Bulletin, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash. (Sept. 1944) and is herein reprinted with the express permission of the Editor of that publication.

Editor

often start to show flowering bud color in January and February, two of our coldest months.

*How Did Your Lilacs Do Last Season?*

First, let's check back in our minds to determine how well they did for us last season. You may find it easiest to compare with these ten points:

1. Was your bush too thick and woody?
2. Did it root-sucker badly?
3. Were the blooms small and stunted?
4. Did the plant maintain a good, healthy, dark green color all through the growing season?
5. Did the leaves drop long before the end of the summer season?
6. Were the leaves affected with disease?
7. Does the ground around the bushes get hard and dry out easily during the heat of the summer?
8. Are adjoining shrubs or trees beginning to shade your lilacs?
9. Is the plant rejuvenating itself with new, young wood from the roots?
10. Have you cut off last season's faded blooms?

We now have enough to get started on. Let's take up these above points one at a time.

1. *Was Your Bush Too Thick and Woody?*

If you have neglected pruning for some time the plant may show a bunched, crowded branch effect that is undesirable because, if the crown is not kept open and airy, the interior limbs will not develop properly, which will not only make your bush unsightly, but will also serve as a source of infection from disease. A consistent, yearly thinning-out is very much recommended, although heavy pruning is not advised. If your bush has not been handled this way each year in the past it will, of course, be necessary to prune heavily. This is best done by cutting the limbs out about a foot from the ground and then lifting out the entire branch. New growth will start at this point. If yearly thinning out is done, such major

operations are not often necessary except to cut out dead limbs or to keep the lilac within a certain limited area.

It is to be remembered that pruning induces new growth and it is upon this new growth that the blooms will appear. To prune best is to do so when your lilac is dormant or without any leaves so that you can see what you are cutting out.

Then, too, the pruning is being done when the sap is flowing downward and painting over the cuts is not as necessary as it is when the operation is done in the spring season. Also, experience has shown that when pruning is done in the spring, it is difficult to do it without knocking off too many flower buds. This is another advantage of pruning at the proper time of year.

### 2. *Did It Root-Sucker Badly?*

Almost all own-rooted stock will have the tendency—some varieties much more than others. This is not to be interpreted as a point in favor of grafted plants, which seldom send up lilac suckers, since every one of the suckers from plants on their own roots is true to the parent type. Actually this affords an excellent means of keeping your bush rejuvenated with young, healthy wood. Without new young growth the lilac bush will slowly dwindle away over a period of years.

The easiest time to desucker is in the spring when the new shoots are tender. This may be done with a sharp knife, making the cut below the ground level. If you did not take care of this detail last spring, you will find that the sucker shoots are hard, mature wood by now, which makes their removal a little more difficult. Pruning shears, however, will do the trick, again cutting below the ground level.

It is best to remove all but the three or four closest to the trunk. To be persistent in removing surplus sucker shoots cannot be over-emphasized. When done consistently, it takes but little time.

### 3. *Were the Blooms Small and Stunted?*

This is usually caused by leaving too much wood in the crown with the result that you have gained in quantity at a sacrifice in quality. Following the suggestions in No. 1 will force more vigor into the flowering buds for next spring season. When the shrubs have grown tall, avoid lopping off the

ends of the branches to reduce their over-all size as this only removes the flower buds and defeats your purpose by producing more growth for next year at the point of each cut. As suggested above, thin out by removing whole sections. Both you and the plant will be better pleased with the results. The "thin-out method" of pruning will also tend to keep the plant blooming all over from top to bottom rather than just at the top, or just at the bottom or side, as many times is the case.

Remember, never fear severe pruning on "own rooted" stock whereas you must never cut out the center trunk of a grafted bush lest you soon find the bush fading badly with nothing left for use in rejuvenating it.

4. *Did the Plant Maintain a Good, Healthy, Dark Green Color All Through the Growing Season?*

This is the best test of a vigorous, healthy lilac. Yellow leaves will always signify soil depletion. Lilac bushes are heavy feeders and now is the best time to fertilize. Their requirements are little, but proper yearly fertilizing is both beneficial and necessary for a healthy bush, free from disease.

If your soil is too acid, work in a little hydrated lime, but do not overdo it or your plant will show a stunted leaf and blossom. If in doubt, a simple test will show the pH of the soil; 7.0 to 7.5 is about right.

We prefer to mulch our plants with a good barnyard fertilizer at this time of the year in order that it may leach into the soil all winter and be well broken down and ready to be turned under in the early spring months. It will make little difference whether it is well rotted or not because the winter rains will eliminate any danger of burning. Straw, sawdust or peat as a barnyard fertilizer base is to be recommended. In the early spring months, just as growth is commencing, a complete commercial fertilizer may be used. Select one that has a high phosphorus content in relation to nitrogen, which can easily induce too much wood. A proper balance would be:

4% Nitrogen  
16% Potash  
40% Phosphoric acid

5. *Did the Leaves Drop Long Before the End of the Summer Season?*

The only reason for premature dropping of leaves is insufficient moisture. If this is the case, the bush is forced into a dormant condition that much faster in order to save itself. Such a condition can be harmful if it occurs before the new flower buds have been formed. If the growing season is dry, liberal watering will be necessary in order that the many surface roots may obtain enough moisture from the soil about the plant. The common mistake is to forget about this point when the summer dry months are at hand. Frequently a section of the bush will dry up, necessitating complete removal later.

6. *Were the Leaves Affected With Disease?*

A healthy lilac bush generally is little affected with disease, and the best cure for disease is to keep the shrubs healthy at all times. Why not apply a dormant spray now to avoid spring spraying with the risk of not being able to use a strong enough solution to be effective without burning flower and leaf buds which expand so rapidly, so early? Also, it will enable you to get one more job out of the way before next spring.

If you have been using a lime and sulphur spray, try changing to a good dormant oil spray or vice versa. In this way, one is sure to cover the few pests and diseases that are common to the lilac.

Should your plants have been infested this year with disease, be sure to rake up the leaves from around the base and destroy them by burning. This is most important.

7. *Does the Ground Around the Bushes Get Hard and Dry Out Easily During the Heat of the Summer?*

The ground about the base of your lilac should be kept open and friable at all times. If it cakes, it will burn out easily and seal off normal moisture absorption from both above and below the surface. This will be overcome to a great extent by yearly winter mulching with a good barnyard fertilizer. Water will then be retained instead of running off or away from the roots. Soils thus lightened and made mellow are much easier to work without doing harm to the tender surface roots.

Then, too, watering will do good for it will be retained as a storage for surface roots.

8. *Are Adjoining Shrubs or Trees Beginning to Shade Your Lilacs?*

When lilacs are used in a foundation planting, it becomes a race of survival of the fittest with adjoining bushes and trees. Generally, lilacs will hold their own against almost any aggressor with the exception of already established large shrubs and trees. In this event, it will be well for us to thin out or transplant any tree or bush that will provide too much shade; for lilacs will cease to blossom freely when they become shaded - or else their bloom will be to the top, or sunny side of the bush only, thus losing their natural beauty.

9. *Is the Plant Rejuvenating Itself With New Young Wood from the Roots?*

As mentioned above, it is extremely important to keep new wood developing on lilacs in order to insure the next season's growth. Where certain varieties fail to produce young growths, we must watch carefully over our pruning lest we undo in a few moments that which has taken months to produce.

10. *Have You Cut Off Last Season's Faded Blossoms?*

Now is the time when all of last year's faded blossoms must be removed, as lilacs do not shed their dead blossoms, so to speak, as many other plants do. It is needless to say that the gayety of next spring's display will be greatly marred if black, dried-up blossoms are still visible. Likewise, valuable stored-up energy has had to be released for the formation of seeds which have never been used.

In pruning out any faded blossoms be sure to cut away only the dried blossoms and not the new growth which has formed just below the truss, for it is on the laterals of this new wood that the flower buds for next year will appear.

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'IVORY SILK' LILAC

Dr. Wilbert G. Ronald  
Morden Research Station  
Morden, Manitoba

\*(reprint)

Japanese tree lilac, a native to northern Japan and north-east Asia, is recognized as one of the hardiest of lilac species. Most commonly this species is grown as a multi-stemmed large shrub, however, it can also be trained to give an attractive small tree. This is one of the latest flowering lilacs; its creamy white flowers are usually seen in late June or early July. It is relatively free of pests and diseases. Propagation has primarily been from seed due to the lack of superior clonal selections.



'Ivory Silk', a 1972 Sheridan Nursery introduction, is one of the few named tree lilacs. Tested at Morden since 1971, this selection has proven well adapted and has grown into a shapely small tree with straight trunk and sturdy crown (photo). One important

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\*The above article first appeared in Landscape/Paysage Canada, June 1979 and is herein reprinted with the generous permission of the author, Dr. Wilbert G. Ronald, Research Scientist Ornamentals Program, MORDEN RESEARCH STATION, Morden, Manitoba.

advantage to Ivory Silk, as compared to seedlings of the species, is the uniformity gained by the use of asexual propagation. This uniformity is highly desirable for landscape applications such as boulevard plantings.

'Ivory Silk' is registered with the Canadian Ornamental Plant Foundation, P.O. Box 725, Durham, Ontario, N0G 1R0. Plants are catalogued by the introducer, Sheridan Nurseries, 700 Evans Avenue, Etobicoke, Ontario, M9C 1A1, to whom further inquiries should be directed.

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