



Lilac Newsletter

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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.

President: Dr. Owen M. Rogers,
University of New Hampshire, Dept. of Plant Science,
Nesmith Hall, Durham, N.H. 03824.

Secretary: Walter W. Oakes*
Box 315, Rumford, Maine, 04276

Treasurer: Mrs. Marie Chaykowski
4041 Winchell Road, Mantua, Ohio, 44255

Editor: Walter E. Eickhorst
129 West Franklin St., Naperville, Illinois. 60540

INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY,
William A. Utley, Ex. Vice-Pres.,
Grape Hill Farm, Devereaux Rd., Clyde, NY 14433.

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

A MEMBER WRITES

Our editor wishes to experiment with a new format for the Lilac NEWSLETTER and has asked me to provide the initial copy (he could have made a wiser selection), so I hope that you will bear with me.

I was born June 30, 1900 in Sinnemahoning (Indian name), Cameron County, Penna., on the west branch of the Susquehanna River. Victoria Claflin Woodhull, the first woman candidate for President of the U.S. and her sister Tenne Claflin were born there in the 1830s, and lived there for 5 years. Victoria was nominated by the National Women's Suffrage Ass'n in 1872, but adopted a platform of radical reform, free love and utopian schemes for world government. Needless to say, Ulysses S. Grant was elected. The two sisters cut quite a figure in N.Y. City through a close friendship with the aging tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt who had a weakness for beautiful women.

Sinnemahoning had two dynamite plants, one of which was a successful bidder on the 25 million lb. contract for the building of the Panama Canal - every pound of dynamite used in the construction of the canal was manufactured right in the community of Sinnemahoning. The explosive was shipped to Panama by rail and boat in 15 carloads of 80,000 lbs. each. I can testify to the fact that the town breathed a bit easier when each shipment of almost a million pounds left the community. Please pardon my bragging, but I am proud of the old home town. In my late teen-years I worked at both dynamite plants as well as various jobs on the Penn. R.R., and night ticket agent at Renovo for 8 months during World War I. I moved to Williamsport in 1920 and worked for a hardware firm there until 1943, at which time I was appointed Supt. of our County Home and served there until I retired in Nov. of 1962. My duties there included transporting mentally deficient children to an institution down near Kennett Square, Penna. My wife and I always took advantage of the opportunity and visited Longwood Gardens when on those trips, often six or eight times a year. It was during these visits that my interest in woody plants was aroused, but the growth of my hobby could not start until the purchase of our present location (11 acres) here a Muncy in 1950.

I had heard of Mrs. Duncan at the Elan Memorial Park near Bloomsberg, Penna. having a lilac planting of over 500 selections and offering plants for sale - this was only a 35 mile drive so I could easily visit the collection at bloom time, tag those that I considered choice forms, then return to dig them in the fall. These were all good sized (4 - 5 ft.) plants and I only lost one in the moving of approximately 40 plants from this source.

Dr. John Wister was a tremendous guiding influence in the building of my present collection (which consists of approximately 150 species and cultivars) by his sending me sized suckers, many of which were his favorites taken from his collection at Swarthmore. His generous advice concerning outstanding selections which I might obtain from various nurseries was also much appreciated. To Mr. Wister goes my deep gratitude and thanks for his help and council during these last twenty-five years. We felt most honored when he and Mrs. Wister visited our planting at blooming time in May of 1973. We were also very pleased to have Walter Oakes visit the collection during the late summer of that same year and for the advice and fine plants which he contributed to our planting (many thanks, Walt).

When planting my lilacs I like to mix in with the top soil, one-half by volume of No. 2 limestone. I like the small stone better than the ground lime - it tends to break down more slowly and is thus available to the plant for a longer period of time. Until this year my wife, granddaughter and I always cut off all the spent blooms. Sometimes it took us a month or more, but since the plants have grown so large and the blooms having increased accordingly, we cannot cope with the task any longer. This spring (1978) the professor at the Williamsport Community College Agriculture Dept. promised to bring 30 - 40 students over when classes started in September and remove the old blooms and seed pods, but the offer failed to materialize, so the collection looks pretty shaggy at the moment. I have also started a schedule of thinning the patch by cutting down twenty of the tall growers to two feet and they seem to be filling out very nicely. We also cut several plants right back to the ground, but these are not responding to the more severe treatment, so I cannot recommend this practice. We intend to rejuvenate about that many each year until the entire collection is done over - will probably lose

some, but do not want them to get so tall that you have to have a ladder to see the bloom (as John Wister once remarked).

It's difficult to select a "Top Ten" (or more), but among them would have to be, 'Maud Notcutt', 'Mont Blanc', 'Cavour', 'Violleta', 'Mrs. W.E. Marshall', 'Capitaine Baltet', 'Lucie Baltet', 'Ami Schott', 'Priscilla', 'Annabel', 'Glory', 'Leon Gambetta' and 'Ruhm von Horstenstein'. And here is one that I rarely see mentioned (never in the NEWSLETTER), 'Mme. Amelie Duprat' - it is one of my best - a nice rounded plant, slow grower, always covered with bloom, have never pruned it, now 15 years old and just 7½ - 8 ft. tall. I like 'Annabel' for its outstanding bloom quality, but it is a fast grower and requires too much pruning. My plants are plagued by borers and I have lost several specimens to this problem; scale is also a nuisance.

In addition to the lilacs I have over the years planted many other woody materials, almost anything that looked and read good in the various nursery catalogs, never giving any thought to getting old and how I was going to take care of all this in the light of age. Well, it has been my misfortune to suffer physical changes, deteriorations, etc. that have put me in this very position and I now find myself struggling along with a lot of help from my son-in-law. We have over 80 Flowering Crabs, 20 Japanese Cherries, 25 pink and white Flowering Dogwoods, 8 Redbud (plus 2 or the very rare white flowered form), Hawthorns, Star Magnolia, Dr. Merrill Magnolia, Saucer Magnolias, 5 Korean Mountain Ash (plus as many additional vars. of Mt. Ash) and a Dawn Redwood (35 ft.). One of the nicest trees we have is the Bradford Pear which is a selection of the Asiatic species Pyrus calleryana. It is (so far as I know) free of disease and insect problems, white-flowering in spring, with glossy green leaves all summer turning maroon and orange in fall - this very fine selection retains its foliage until quite late into the fall season (Nov. 15 here). We also have 6 white Fringetrees in our grounds.

My Rhododendron dell comprises approximately 60 plants - a long row of 10 ft. 'Roseum Pink' makes up the largest single group. They have proven to be the most hardy and reliable bloomers. Near the highway I have large plantings of the Gable Hardy Azaleas.

Mixed in among all these are 15 - 20 ft. Colorado Concolor Firs and miscellaneous flowering trees. Also among my Ericaceous materials there are between 40 & 50 deciduous Azaleas: Exburys, Ilams, Knapp Hill, R. molle, etc... Guess you might say that we have a mini-Arboretum. Back in 1950 I had no intention of planting all of these things, but when anything sounded good in the nursery catalog my resistance melted and the orders would go into the mail.

The spring of 1977 was our best bloom display thus far except for the Dogwoods on which all the buds froze (couldn't take the 20-below temperatures of that winter), but the crabs, azaleas and lilacs all put on a great display that attracted the TV camera from Channel 16 in Wilkes-Barre on Friday, April 29. We were on their 6 & 11 p.m. telecasts and the following Saturday and Sunday we had over 300 visitors, many having travelled 50 miles or more.

Mrs. Lupold and I attended the 1972 meeting of the Lilac Society in Rochester, but since that time we have been unable to attend due to my having to give up driving. I miss these very informative meetings, and above all I miss the fellowship.

I would most certainly be remiss if I failed to wish the International Lilac Society a long and successful future.

Donald M. Lupold
R.D. 2 - Muncy, Penna.

Editors Note:

In an attempt to gain a bit of personal insight of some of our ILS members I asked Don to prepare the foregoing autobiography relating particularly to his concern with ILS. I feel that this sort of story provides a most interesting sidelight to the more in depth study of the lilac, providing as it does that touch of individual expertise and candour from which perfection is ultimately born. Cultural practices and behavioral patterns are thus eventually established, giving us a more sound foundation upon which to build a more meaningful Society.

From time to time I will be seeking out additional writings from rather widely separated locations in an effort to make the NEWSLETTER your publication. Opinions are here with solicited, be they constructive or derogative makes little difference so long as we can blend your thoughts into eventual growth.

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"LILAC.--- Desirable for its great masses of fine large bunches of bloom. There is the White, the Blue, and the Reddish. It is propagated from *suckers*, of which it sends out too many, and from which it should be kept as clear as possible. It is an ugly shrub when out of bloom. The leaves soon become brown. Therefore, there should be but few Lilacs in a shrubbery."

Paragraph 364 (Chapter VI) of THE AMERICAN GARDENER; or, A TREATISE On the Situation, Soil, Fencing and Laying-Out of Gardens; on the Making and Managing of Hot-Beds and Green-Houses; and on the Propagation and Cultivation of the several sorts of Vegetables, Herbs, Fruits and Flowers. By William Cobbett. 1821.

PLEASE NOTE that the above comments on lilacs were made fifty five years prior to the introduction of the first two cultivars by Victor Lemoine (1823-1911).

Freek Vrugtman

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PROPAGATING FRENCH HYBRID LILACS BY SOFTWOOD CUTTINGS

Roger G. Coggeshall
Cherry Hill Nurseries, Inc.
West Newbury, Massachusetts 01985

Lilacs have been reproduced asexually for centuries. The methods used have varied greatly from continent to continent and from nursery to nursery. Many nurseries prefer to propagate their lilacs by root-grafting onto understocks of Ligustrum, or Fraxinus, while others prefer to propagate them from suckers, or divisions. At Cherry Hill Nurseries, Inc., located in the northeastern corner of Massachusetts, about 4 to 5 miles from the ocean, we have found that a softwood cutting procedure works well.

TIMING

The single most important factor in the success or failure in the rooting of softwood cuttings of French hybrid lilacs, is the time the cutting material is collected. In our latitude this operation begins around May 25 and continues until the end of June. Although development of new growth varies from year to year, best results have been obtained between these dates.

CUTTING SELECTION

Only current season's growth is used. As growth rates vary among cultivars, the length of the cutting wood selected will vary. The collected cutting material is placed in 2 mil poly bags and is placed in a cool cellar to prevent the soft growth from heating in the bags. No additional moisture is added to the bags. An attempt is made to collect just enough cutting material for each day's propagation. We try to work with the freshest material possible.

CUTTING PREPARATION

Following collection, the new softwood cuttings are trimmed to 3 to 4 inches, depending upon the length of the internodes.

The cuttings are stripped of all but two pairs of leaves and the very soft terminal growth is pinched out. Often the cutting material selected is so soft a terminal bud has not formed. In other cases, mainly where the growth is more firm and mature, the terminal bud is left. However, the two small underdeveloped leaves on either side of this terminal bud are removed. The cuttings are now ready for a hormone treatment.

HORMONE TREATMENT

Two hormone concentrations are used; Hormodin #2 and Hormo-Root B. Both are used in powder form, which is sprinkled out onto pieces of paper. Care is taken to see that the basal ends of the cuttings do not get too wet. If they are allowed to get too wet, too much hormone powder will stick to the basal ends and the cuttings will be killed. The hormone powders on the papers must be kept dry from day to day. Great damage can be done to these softwood cuttings by too strong a hormone powder. The growth is so soft it is easily killed by "overdosing". In general, we have found that the white cultivars require the longest time to root (2 to 3 months), while the darker colors are the quickest to root (1 to 2 months).

ROOTING MEDIUM

We have found that the best rooting medium for softwood cuttings of French hybrid lilacs is a 1:1 mixture of sand and perlite. The sand is clean, washed sand, while the perlite is a coarse horticultural grade. The two ingredients are combined thoroughly on a volume basis. Mixing is a messy job due to the dryness of the perlite (a respirator helps); the medium is watered thoroughly for several days prior to sticking. Once the medium is satisfactorily moist the cuttings are stuck approximately 2 inches apart in rows which are approximately 4 inches apart. Great care is taken to see that the cuttings are firmly watered in, which is difficult with this medium, as the perlite tends to "float" to the surface.

PROPAGATING STRUCTURES

One of the reasons for our success in rooting softwood cuttings of lilacs is the structure we root them in. After the cuttings have been stuck, we mist them to prevent wilting. The time clocks are set so that the cuttings receive 6 seconds of mist each 30 seconds.

In addition to misting, the cuttings receive additional humidity by covering the propagating structure with 4 mil, clear polyethylene plastic. This creates a very high humidity situation for the cuttings to root in. The plastic covering also causes a buildup of heat on a clear day. When this occurs we ventilate the house to reduce the heat buildup. We try to maintain an air temperature of approximately 100°F.

Root initiation begins with a 10-14 day period under these hot, humid conditions. After rooting, the cuttings are gradually hardened off by reducing the amount of misting until they are watered only as needed by hand (late August).

The cuttings remain in the rooting bench for the entire winter. They freeze solidly in the rooting medium, as there are no heating facilities in the propagating structures.

In the spring the bare-rooted cuttings are lined out in the field. They are planted 10 inches apart in the row, with 30 inches between rows. Their survival in the field depends on rain as we have no irrigation facilities.

At the end of the first season's growth the young plants are trimmed back to a height of 2 to 3 inches above the ground. This induces branching of the second year's growth and we have a well-branched, heavy liner at the end of the second growing season. In mid-September the 2-yr old liners are transplanted; the tops and the roots are pruned back, the plants set 30 inches apart in the row and allowed to grow for another 2 years. At this spacing they develop into well branched, well budded plants for the nursery trade.

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EARLY LILACS IN N. AMERICA

The exact date that lilacs were introduced into the United States is not known, but the apparent earliest known recorded reference places them here by the middle 1650's. The following quote is taken from Julia Berrall's book, "The Garden - An Illustrated History." (Penguin Books, New York, 1978.)

"With a strong tradition of gardening behind them, the Dutch settlers soon started planting a few ornamental flowers, and their eyes were opened to the beauty and interest of native plant materials. From Adriaen van der Donck we have learned the names of some of the most popular flowers and the most common healing herbs. In August 1649 van der Donck had sailed back to Holland as one of a deputation of three carrying a Remonstrance to be presented to the States General. This document censured the West India Company's policy of imposing trade restrictions which 'retarded population and restrained enterprise.' Although the Remonstrance contained information about the physical conditions experienced in the colony, more details were added in the Description of New Netherland (Beschryving van Nieuw-Nederlant) which he wrote during the three years he remained in Holland to press the complaints. One paragraph translated from his book is pertinent:

'The flowers in general which the Netherlanders have introduced there are white and red roses of different kinds; also peonies and hollyhocks, and those other roses of which there were none before in the country, such as eglantine the single-flowered sweetbriar rose, several kinds of carnation, also gilliflowers, different varieties of fine tulips, crown imperials Fritillaria imperialis, white lilies Lilium candidum, the little lily Fritillaria Fritillaria meleagris - the checkered lily or guinea-hen flower, anemones Anemone coronaria; tuberous-rooted, bare dames, violets, marigold, summer-sots, etc. The lilac has also been introduced and there are various indigenous trees that bear handsome flowers which are unknown here. We also find there some flowers of native growth, as for instance,

sunflowers, red and yellow lilies wood lily - Lilium philadelphicum - and meadow or Canada lily - Lilium canadensis, the Martagon lily, morning-stars, white, red, and yellow lady's slippers, a very lovely flower, several species of bellflowers, etc., to which I have not given particular attention, but enthusiasts would hold them in high estimation and make them widely known.'

The lilac in the text is Nagelboomtjes, which literally translated means clove tree. The ordinary lilac (Syringa vulgaris) received this name from the Dutch because every floret is shaped like a clove."

Owen M. Rogers

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NINETY-TWO GOING ON NINETY-THREE-

On behalf of the entire ILS Membership I wish to take this opportunity to wish our founding patriarch, Dr. John Wister a Most Happy Birthday (March 19). If we could somehow, magical though it would have to be, all (the entire Society membership) rally around a big birthday party for "Jack" it would represent the happiest of Birthdays for him - 92 years young, a full life of Horticulture in it's many ramifications, and at long last an International Lilac Society now almost eight years since inception. A dream of many years and now a reality - the route has been sometimes rough and winding, but the pastel tranquillity of the goals set forth by the dedicated founding members are within our grasp, and the hope of yesterday looks now like the success of tomorrow. HAPPY BIRTHDAY John, we mean that, each and every one of us, from the bottom of our hearts. Our wish for you this day is Good Health, Abundance of Comfort, and Godspeed.

Editor

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