



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.

Articles printed in this publication are the views and opinions of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the editor or the *International Lilac Society*.

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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.

Forty Dark-Toned Lilacs Mostly with
Large and Sometimes Doubled Florets

By Robert B. Clark, Meredith, New Hampshire

Purplish or reddish-purple lilacs are distinctive and highly prized and have been grown in gardens for almost three hundred years. I should like to consider forty notable cultivars over the past one hundred - fifty years, listing sixteen contemporary varieties of the past fifty years, that is, since the McKelvey monograph appeared in 1928, entitled simply "The Lilac". Of the many colours in lilacs -- blue, false blue, lilac, pink, even white -- the dark-toned ones constitute those most sought after by gardeners and are usually considered the acme of perfection among lilac breeders. Dr. Owen M. Rogers (1976) lists some 218 red-purple or purplish-red cultivars, over 36%, among 600 common lilacs. For best viewing the dark-toned lilacs must be seen at close range and in strong light, because in the evening they fast fade into shadows. Still they are the most popular lilacs today.

Early on the common lilac was classified according to colour. The wild lilac of the Balkans is, in Amy Lowell's words, "false blue", or in Latin coerulea, which is to say "sky blue". Under cultivation, however, in time this common lilac began to show variations from the normal in floret colour, among other characters, first to white, alba, noted in 1613, and then also to purple, purpurea, in 1683. This paper will focus on the purplish-coloured lilacs. In a catalogue of plants of the Edinburgh Physic Garden, James Sutherland mentioned for the first time a lilac with deep purple flowers. Philip Miller (1768) regarded "this lilac the most beautiful of the three", that is, the common lilac and its white variety. He went on to say that "the

purple, or Scotch Lilac, has its branches yet more diffuse... (the flowers) larger and fairer", concluding that this lilac is rarer and making a much finer appearance.

Susan Delano McKelvey, in her study of the lilacs in the 1920s, adopted as her standard the Ridgeway colour classification. Although this system does not adapt well to floral colours, never the less it was at that time the best available. Mrs. McKelvey took pains under uniform conditions to compare the several floral parts with the Ridgeway samples. I shall use only her values for the inside of the freshly unfolded florets. She refers all dark-toned purple or red lilacs to five Ridgeway categories further subdivided into nine groups. Cultivars with large florets are indicated by an asterisk (*), those with medium-sized florets (m).

Ridgeway XII

Dahlia Purple

* Vesuve, Lemoine 1916

Ridgeway XXV

Mathew's Purple

Professor Sargent, Spaeth 1888

* Massena, Lemoine 1923

Ridgeway XXVI

Dull Magenta Purple

m Charles X, Audibert 1831

* Negro, Lemoine 1899

* Volcan, Lemoine 1899

Dull Dark Purple

- Andenken an Ludwig Spaeth, Spaeth 1883
* Pasteur, Lemoine 1903
* Edmond Boissier, Lemoine 1906
* Tombouctou, Lemoine 1910
* Monge, Lemoine 1913
* Diderot, Lemoine 1915
* Turenne, Lemoine 1916

Schoenfeld's Purple

Aline Mocqueris, Dauvesse 1872

Auricula Purple

- * Charles Joly, Lemoine 1896
Mons. J. de Messemaeker, Stepman-de Messemaeker 1908
Adelaide Dunbar, Dunbar 1917

Ridgeway XXXVII

Light Perilla Purple

m L'Oncle Tom, Lemoine 1903

Bishop's Purple

- m Rouge de Trianon, Briot 1858
* Laplace, Lemoine 1913
* Mrs. W.E. Marshall, Havermeyer 1924

Ridgeway XXXVIII

Eupatorium Purple

- Goliath, van Houtte 1869
* Reaumur, Lemoine 1904
Mrs. Edward Harding, Lemoine 1922

Eight cultivars in the preceding list are no longer available. Three nineteenth-century cultivars, however, are offered by many nurseries even today. These are 'Andenken an Ludwig Spaeth' and 'Charles Joly' (each by 100 nurseries) and 'Charles X' (by 30).

Of these three cultivars the standard purple lilac seems to be 'Charles Joly' whose thyrses are a pair of erect slender dark-toned candles, 6-8 inches tall, consisting of medium-sized double florets. This cultivar is one of Victor Lemoine's earliest double lilacs. John Dunbar's 'Adelaide Dunbar' introduced nineteen years later is a slight improvement and is currently available through six nurseries. Whether or not Professor A.F. Yeager's 'Anne Tighe' of 1945 is a further improvement, I cannot off-hand say. It seems to me that critical study is needed if taste in lilacs is to be advanced.

Since McKelvey's comprehensive study in 1928 no uniform comparison of lilac colours have been published. Consequently, and quite arbitrarily, I make bold to list sixteen contemporary cultivars which, if you should find them offered, would in my opinion be worthy replacements to certain cultivars of the first list whose flower colours are accurately indicated.

- 'Hugo de Vries', K. Keesen, Jr. 1927
- 'Prodige', Lemoine 1928
- 'Sensation', D. Eveleense Maarse, Sr., 1938
- ' Sarah Sands', Havermeyer 1943
- 'Anne Tighe', Professor A.F. Yeager 1945
- 'Kingsville', Brand Peony Farm c. 1953
- 'Diane', Dr. Caspar I. Nelson c. 1953
- 'A.M. Brand', Brand Peony Farm c. 1953
- 'Bonnie S. Polin', Polin c. 1953
- ' Woodland Violet', Henry Sass c. 1953

- * 'Frank Paterson', Paterson 1961
- 'Chris', Ken Berdeen 1963
- 'Znanya Lenyna', Kolesnikov 1963
- 'Edith Braun', Dr. John Rankin 1968
- * 'Agincourt Beauty', Slater 1970
- 'Bishop Bernard McQuaid', Richard A. Fenicchia 1972

* * *

ELECTION OF I.L.S. DIRECTORS

It is that time of the year when the Members of the I.L.S. should start considering whom they would like to nominate to the Board of Directors. The Nominating committee would appreciate suggestions of members that might be considered for nomination.

Please send your suggestions to:

Max Peterson, Chairman
Nominating Committee
R.R. 1, Box 273
Ogallala, Nebraska
U.S.A. 69153

To be assured of consideration, your suggestions should be received before February 1, 1918.

Following is a list of Directors currently serving:

Elected 1978
(For 3 Year Term)

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(For 3 Year Term)

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(For 3 Year Term)

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John Carvill
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For the Nomination Committee
Max Peterson
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LILAC TIME IN UKIAH

* by Fae Baker, Ukiah Garden Club

Lilacs! Mere mention of the word will stop any Ukiah garden lover in this Mendocino County seat, and set him to musing on the good fortune in having this lovely bloom as the official flower of the city. As a veritable haze of delicate lilac tint settles over the gardens of Ukiah this spring, lovers of lilacs are proud to accent their city flower as central theme in innumerable flower arrangements as fitting prelude to the city's annual flower show.

To the great pioneer horticulturist and naturalist of the West, Carl Purdy, goes credit for the inspiration which has made the lilac the choice of this community as its official flower. Years of culture and work with lilacs at The Terraces, the world famous Purdy garden high on the mountainside overlooking Ukiah Valley from the east, convinced Mr. Purdy that here, more than any place in the world, the lilac would flourish and achieve heights in beauty of blooms as yet unknown.

It was an easy choice for him to make early in the 20's, when the Ukiah Chamber of Commerce asked his opinion of the choice of a flower as the official floral emblem of the city. His recommendation of Lilacs brought about the purchase by the Chamber of Commerce of 150 hybrid lilacs, which were presented to local gardeners for inclusion in their gardens.

* Reprint This article was first published in GOLDEN GARDENS, An All California Garden Magazine, Vol. 19, No. 4, February 1955 and is herein reprinted with the express permission of the Assistant Editor of that publication.

Today some of the second story height lilac "trees" one finds so often in this valley proudly bring forth their bloom even as they have done each of the 30-odd years past since they were mere slips set out from the Chamber of Commerce importation.

By comparison, however, with recorded ages of lilacs in famous Eastern gardens, our Ukiah lilacs are mere youngsters. The great lilac gardens on the Governor Benning Wentworth estate, at Portsmouth, N.H., are now more than 300 years old, and still put forth radiant bloom each spring.

When lilacs are discussed here in Ukiah, thoughts turn instantly to Mrs. J.Q. White, long recognized as the most ardent lilac enthusiast in the valley. In her years of culture and study of this flower, Mrs. White has made frequent trips to the eastern coast to visit famous lilac gardens, and her library here at her beautiful home in Ukiah represents one of the most complete collections in the west of books on this flower.

Mere whisper of the word "lilac" at Mrs. White's door is password sufficient to warrant welcome to anyone, and she will proudly show a visitor her own lilac gardens and also her fine library on the subject.

Most highly prized book in her collection is "The Lilac", by Susan Delano McKelvey, published in 1930, and now out of print. Even at the time of publication, this excellent volume sold for \$25.00 "Lilac Culture" by John Wister, also published in 1930, is another prized book on lilacs to which Mrs. White turns frequently. It was published by the Orange Judd concern in London, and provides the reader an excellent means of rating and charting all lilacs, both as to color, quality, adaptability and comparisons.

"Lilacs for America", the official report in 1941, revised in 1943, is the work of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboretums, and is another favorite in Mrs. White's library.

Because of Mrs. White's exhaustive study of her favorite bloom, Ukiah lilac lovers have learned many delightful bits of sentiment and tradition. They know that the lilac is supposed to bring good luck. They have been told that it can even foretell the state of true love: this latter ability possible only if one can find the occasional rare five-petal blossom (most lilac single blossoms are four-petaled). The five-petaled bloom must be swallowed, and if this is accomplished without choking, the fates portend that "he loves me," but woe to the high hopes for the romance if the five petals bring about a choking spell.

Mrs. White has collaborated with Mrs. Mona Stipp, well known Ukiah garden columnist, in the writing of a delightful small brochure, "Lilacs, Ukiah's City Flower," which represented the service project of the Ukiah Kismos Club several years back. Chatty briefs therein suggest that lilacs be planted in the fall or early spring, in a sunny spot, with plenty of room— as much as eight feet clearance. They must have perfect drainage, the writers state, adding that lilacs resent "wet feet".

The planting should be in a hole as large as a bushel basket, the hole filled with one-third good top soil, packed tight, as a bucket of water is added. Place the plant with roots well spread, and its crown four to six inches below ground's surface, fill with loosely packed soil, and water. Fertilize with bone meal and add lime to acid soils. A winter dressing of well rotted manure is recommended and the new plant should be well watered in its first year.

Mrs. White and Mrs. Stipp add a timely hint on cutting of lilacs. They promise that the cut bloom will pay rich dividends with longer fresh appearance if the lilac is cut either in the evening or very early morning. Bruise the stems under water, remove as many leaves as possible, and let stand in deep water overnight before beginning to arrange them.

IN MEMORIAM

Our Lord recalled his servant, Bernard Harkness, September 18th, in his 74th year. Besides Mabel, his wife, and Audrey Harkness O'Connor, his sister, he leaves the International Lilac Society richer for his devotion and humbleness. His earthly days were marked by simplicity even though people, places and plants abounded in rich associations.

Bernard could hobnob with the horticultural and botanical elite yet remain unassuming. Localities both near and far where grew the humblest herbs were his haunts. Plants he knew at first hand from collecting seeds and scions in remote mountain or familiar backyard. He raised the tender seedlings and hoed the garden row, and then he wrote lovingly of their virtues. His was a working library which he mined assiduously in pursuit of his writing projects.

This love of plants brought recognition from various plant societies and institutions. He served them faithfully and with distinction in capacity of committee chairmanship, board member, and often president. Bernard served I.L.S. as its second president (1972-1973) following which he was elected to honorary board membership for life. His administration was notable for the formation several standing committees. His policies were wise and far-reaching. Although in recent years he was unable to participate actively in I.L.S. gatherings, he nevertheless took keen interest in its affairs.