



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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	<u>1980 (\$ US)</u>
Single annual	7.50
Family	10.00
Sustaining	15.00
Institutional/Commercial	20.00
Life	150.00

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

"A Member Writes"

The never fail beauty of the lilac shines again - this time on a sunny slope along the Highway at the edge of Grand Junction, Colorado where the Women's Garden Club of that community have taken upon themselves the project of improving the landscape.

A few years ago the site was selected and priorities were set. The location was one of persistent seepage and an abundance of cattails, so first things first being the attitude, the surplus water had to be channelled from the area and the rushes had to go. Once these two chores were accomplished the anticipated spot of beauty was planted to grass and no less than seventy-five lilacs which have thrived and now provide that envisioned display of floral magnificance. The area is not a public park, but rather a sort of wayside 'beauty spa' out there on the slope along the street for all that pass to enjoy.

Good sledding slopes in the immediate area are not readily available to the younger set, so, this now semi-cleared spot quickly attracted the 'small-fry' as a place for sledding etc... Needless to say the first couple of winters have seen a few of the lilacs fall victim to the 'American Flier' and other devices employed by the youngsters in their favorite winter pastime. So, the efforts of the Garden Club have been adjusted to permit the two-fold use of the site - beauty in the spring for the passer-by, and juvenile appreciation during the winter months.

Mrs. Shirley Brueggeman
Loma, Colo.

Editors Note:

ILS wishes to take this opportunity to salute the Women's Garden Club of Grand Junction for furthering a public display of the lilac, and join the local children saying Thank You for providing the off-the-street spot for sledding, tubing etc... A portion of the hillside has now been set aside strictly for the accommodation of the 'Little Guys', and that ain't all bad either.

This is an ongoing effort which has suffered some minor losses account of the dual site use, so, a limited number of additional small plants are needed. Contributions of rooted suckers will be greatly appreciated.

* * *

LILACS AT NIGHT

Lilacs at night are quiet
As the breath of silken sails.
All the scents are sweeter
With the notes of nightingales.

Now our winter's past, the
Valley lilies in the grass.
Bluets in the pastures
More flowers, follow after.

My old house guarded by lilacs
Stands silent in the shade.
Coming down the pathway
They smile and say goodday.

Cora Lindsey Lyden

* * *

PUBLICATION REQUEST

"Lilacs for America" (1942) - a recent request has come to my attention for both the 1942 & 1953 issues of this survey which was conducted by Dr. John C. Wister and the more recent revised issue has been forwarded. However, the original effort appears to be no longer available and I wish to beg your indulgence if you have either an extra copy, or, if you have a copy which you no longer have use for. These materials are being asked for by one of the more prominent horticultural institutions in middle Europe. If you can help, please send the copy to me and I'll see that it is forwarded in the name of IIS.

Editor

THE SPECIES OF LILAC

Mrs. F. B. Eylar

*(reprint)

The species lilacs are handsome shrubs or small trees confined principally to Asia. All are continental except two, Syringa reticulata and S. velutina. None are found in the New World. Twenty-eight species are now recognized with perhaps half a dozen of them still not in cultivation.

In central and southeastern Europe are found S. Josikaea and S. vulgaris (our common lilac). S. Josikaea, the Hungarian lilac, was discovered by Baroness von Josika on her estate in Transylvania and brought to the attention of horticulturists in 1830. Later it was found to be native to several other southeastern countries of Europe. It grows into a large, well-rounded bush clothed with dark green leaves, rather small, blunt and deeply veined. Every terminal growth from the ground up is covered with small clusters of rich violet flowers. A very handsome specimen when given plenty of room, coming into bloom just as the vulgaris varieties are waning. S. vulgaris appears to have two distinct forms. The one known to most of us as the common Lilac goes back centuries with the exact date unknown, but it was taken from Constantinople, probably to Vienna, about 1563, and in 1629 both the white and lilac-colored forms were cultivated in England. About 1841 the

*The following dissertation is one of several papers concerning lilacs which appeared as a Lilac Symposium in the Arboretum Bulletin, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash.. This particular expression appeared in Vol. XIV, No. 2 (Spring 1951) and is herein reprinted with the express permission of the Editor of that publication. The only changes being herein made are those involving the updating of certain Nomenclature in accordance with the Int'l Code concerning such.

Editor

other form was reported from west Roumania and subsequently found on the mountains in Bulgaria. In 1905 Mons. Maurice de Vilmorin received seeds collected from the wild plants in Bulgaria which he divided with the Arnold Arboretum, where the plants from these seeds are still growing. Similar in most respects to the first form but blooms are sparser and much inferior. Principally a collector's item on account of the historical significance. S. vulgaris has some five or six varieties varying in shades of lilac to white. A tall, rangy plant, very slow coming into bloom and superseded by its handsome varieties.

S. emodi and S. afghanica occur on the Himalaya, the latter being little known and found in the arid slopes and valleys of Afghanistan. E. H. Wilson states that it so resembles the entire leaved Persian lilac that it might be a natural condition of it, with thicker leaves induced by the drier conditions. S. emodi is more widely distributed along the mountain range and is a woodland plant enjoying cool forest glades and margins of woodland streams. The western world first learned of it in 1831 through the East India traders. It is a late bloomer, making rather an upright shrub with light bark oddly streaked with white. The leaves are large and long, of rather pale green, the flowers a greenish-white with conspicuous yellow anthers borne on upright leafy shoots in dense stubby clusters. Not as pleasing as many other species.

In central and western China, lilacs are found frequently by the sides of streams, in thickets and woodlands, always in regions where they enjoy an abundance of moisture. Under such conditions S. julianae, introduced with S. reflexa in 1901, occurs on the mountains of Hupeh and eastern Szechuan. Farther west, S. Komarowi and S. tomentella are locally quite common shrubs and delight in upland thickets. S. Komarowi, introduced in 1910, resembles S. reflexa and enjoys the same woodland moisture. It has the brightest pink flowers of all lilacs, closely packed into a rather stubby truss, slightly pendulous but not as drooping as S. reflexa. Some authorities feel it might possibly be an extreme form of the latter. It is a late bloomer. S. julianae is a dainty little bush with small leaves on rather twiggy branches. The tiny little buds open into

two-toned stars, darker on the outside. An exquisite spray of flowers not at all like most lilacs. Not as easy a grower as some of the other species but one of the loveliest.

S. reflexa is a sturdy, medium-size bush with large, heavily veined leaves, coral pink flowers rather crowded into a drooping or nodding panicle. A white-flowered form was found in 1940 which has much lighter green leaves such as are found in many white-flowered shrubs. Not as showy as the coral pink one but the two forms are handsome specimens worthy of a choice spot in any garden. S. tomentella is a narrow-based bush spread out into a broad shrub, covered with large trusses of rosy lilac flowers formed on the many branchlets.

On the uplands around Sungpanting, a dry region, S. Sweginzowii occurs but is not common; it was discovered about 1894 and introduced by E. H. Wilson. Coming from the Tibetan borderlands it is very hardy. An improved form was introduced in 1915 by V. Lemoine. S. Sweginzowii is an extremely late bloomer and to me one of the loveliest of all lilac species. A dainty open bush with small leaves and large frothy sprays of very pale blush-white, tiny star-like flowers on reddish stems, giving the effect of a lovely soft pink. A rarely beautiful plant.

The Yunnan species, S. pinetorum, Wardii, and rugulosa enjoy the rather arid conditions of the above species, while S. yunnanensis is a woodland plant. It somewhat resembles S. Sweginzowii but is less attractive. The flowers are darker, of a pale rosy purple, and the shrub is more slender and graceful.

In southwestern Kansu and the arid valleys of northwestern Szechuan, S. Potanini has its home. Discovered in 1893 by Potanin and introduced into cultivation by E. H. Wilson in 1905.

S. microphylla is widely distributed in the Chinese province of Shensi, in adjacent Kansu and Honan, apparently keeping to the valley of the Yellow River. Wm. Purdom sent seeds to Messrs. Veitch in 1910, from whom Arnold Arboretum received plants in 1913. S. microphylla and S. Potanini are quite similar, both being very twiggy small bushes, rather reminiscent of a Spiraea in growth habit. The twiggy terminals

are completely covered over the entire bushes with tiny bright pink flowers.

The buds are quite rose-red and it appears as a red flowering bush in that stage. *S. microphylla* is the darker of the two. They have very little of the lilac hue in their flowers and are noticeable bright pink when in full bloom. The large, will-filled sprays make fine cutting material as they keep well when cut. It is not uncommon to have scattered repeat bloom in the fall. They have a rich, spicy fragrance and are prime favorites with all garden visitors.

S. pubescens is a native of the mountains beyond Peking. Seeds were collected by Dr. Bretschneider and sent to Jardin des Plantes in Paris in 1880. It is a small shrub with foamy clusters of fragrant flowers in a lilac-pink shade that cover the bush. Derives its name from the hairy under-surface of the leaves.

S. Meyeri was found in a Chinese garden at Peking about 1908 by F. N. Meyer and has not been reported in a wild state. It bears a profusion of dainty pale violet blossoms in short, stubby clusters; a broad, low-growing shrub with small leaves.

S. villosa is the oldest known of the Chinese lilacs, having been found about the middle of the eighteenth century by Pere d'Incarville in the mountains west of Peking, but was not introduced until about 1882 when seeds were sent to Arnold Arboretum. It makes a tall, vigorous bush blooming very late in the season after the *S. vulgaris* varieties. It is heavily clothed in long, very large leaves, heavily veined. It is completely covered with long terminal sprays in a soft lilac-rose. A handsome bold shrub, requiring plenty of room.

S. x persica, the so-called Persian lilac, is a long-time favorite in Asia. For two centuries or more it was assumed to be a native of Persia and not until 1915 was the true home made known, the mountain slopes of southeastern Kansu. One or two great highways traversed the region which the ancients used to journey across the heart of Asia and it is assumed that the Persian lilac was carried over these highways from Kansu to the flower-loving people to Persia. It is now naturalized on the hillsides in Persia but no botanist has found it there in the wild state. In 1603 the cut-leaved form was known to be in cultivation in gardens in Venice. In 1672

the two forms were separated and given different names. The Persian lilac makes a dense, medium-sized bush of a twiggy nature. Each terminal is covered with rosy lilac sprays and makes a feathery mass of color. There is a lilac-white but no pure white form. *S. laciniata* has distinct, feathery cut leaves adding much to its beauty.

S. oblata, the most widely distributed of the true lilacs in north China, is found from the province of Shensi and northern Hupeh eastward to Korea. The plant which bears the name *oblata* was brought in 1856 from a garden in Shanghai to England by Robert Fortune. Its exact counterpart has not been found in the wild state, but its slightly different variety, *Giraldii*, was discovered in 1891 in the province of Shensi and brought into cultivation before 1903. Lemoine does not consider this a variety of *S. oblata* but probable a geographical variation of *S. vulgaris* as it does not resemble *S. oblata* and is undistinguishable from *S. vulgaris*. The white flowered *Alba*, has been in cultivation in Peking gardens for ages. Seeds were sent to the Jardin des Plantes in 1880 and the plants flowered in 1891. A third variety, *dilatata*, is found in central Korea which was introduced in cultivation in 1917 through seeds sent by E. H. Wilson to the Arnold Arboretum. Two very local species *S. Fauriei* and *S. buxifolia*, are not known in cultivation. *S. oblata* and its varieties are the only species bearing flowers similar to *S. vulgaris*. The variety *dilatata* blooms very early, with small, upright, very open clusters of blush pink flowers and before the blossoms fade the beautiful coppery leaves unfold a charming shrub, but we have found it too early to be frostproof, as it has lost most of the blooms and new growth each year, but perhaps a more sheltered location might be more to its liking.

S. Wolfii is a fairly common plant in the woodlands and forest glades of central and north Korea, and probably occurs in the adjacent forests of Manchuria. It is a hardy late bloomer, bearing lilac-purple blossoms in profusion. The clusters are long and slender on the terminals. The extra-long corolla gives an appearance of myriads of tiny trumpet.

The province of Mupin and the adjacent forested region is the home of the anomaly *S. pinnatifolia*, introduced in 1904 by E. H. Wilson. A beautiful shrub with pinnate foliage

on a larger scale than that of S. laciniata. The clusters of flowers are snow white with conspicuous yellow anthers. A very early bloomer.

A few species are widely distributed but a great many are very local. The most widely distributed are the tree lilacs. S. reticulata var. mandshurica and S. pekinensis. The former is the first tree lilac introduced into cultivation. It was found by two Russian travelers in 1855 and was sent to St. Petersburg: it is native throughout the greater part of the Korean peninsula, adjacent Manchuria and the region bordering the Amur River to the north. It reappears in the mountains of Japan in the species reticulata. It is abundant in Hokkaido, where trees up to forty-five feet tall are not uncommon. Seeds of this variety were sent to the Massachusetts Agriculture College and Arnold Arboretum in 1876.

S. pekinensis, the third tree lilac, grows wild on the mountains in the vicinity of Peking and westward to the Kansu-Tibetan borderland. They may be grown as trees but more usually are very large shrubs, and are the latest of all lilacs to bloom. They all have creamy white flowers in large foamy sprays of clusters remindful of our native spiraea but not such a deep cream. Their flower clusters are quite different in formation but all have the tiny privet-like blossom. They are considered the most distinctive group of lilac species, of the section Ligustrina, distinguished by the very short corolla tubes.

S. velutina is remarkable as being the only true lilac found outside of continental areas; as the lilac is so widely spread in the Orient it is remarkable that no true lilac grows wild in Japan. It was discovered in the Korean mountains by V. L. Komarov in 1897. A slender, upright growing shrub producing a shower of pale lilac-colored blossoms, resembling S. microphylla but more upright.

The early species have recently been crossed bringing out some very lovely early hybrids. The same has been done with some of the late blooming species, and these resultant hybrids are some of the most beautiful plants we have in our garden. As this article deals with the species only, I must forego the temptation and leave you to speculate and investigate this intriguing subject. * * *

H A P P Y B I R T H D A Y "Jack"

March 19, 1980 marks another milestone in N. American lilac history as we say HAPPY BIRTHDAY to Dr. John C. Wister, truly a "Lilac Warrior", on this, his 93rd. such celebration. May this year bring you a full measure of Comfort and Good Health, as we extend our gratitude for allowing us to share in your most meaningful cake-of-life, and for granting us the privilege to sip the nectar that somehow makes our Society so very special.

While John's horticultural interests have covered an extremely wide range of genera, lilacs are indeed his first love. His untiring efforts and ever encouraging drive for scientific improvement within the genus Syringa has been uppermost in his mind for more than a half-century. John, we (the entire membership of ILS) wish to take this opportunity to express our most affectionate Best Wishes - may this day bring added joy and pleasure in the thought of knowing that your lifelong dreams of better lilacs is at long last on the horizon of tomorrow.

News Worth Noting:

As of Jan. 1980 the fibre of ILS becomes still a bit stronger via the LIFE MEMBERSHIP of Mrs. Cora Lindsey Lyden, Brockton, MA. Mrs. Lyden attended her first Annual Conference in Durham, NH and apparently was duly impressed with our purpose and effort, her musing remark accompanying her remittance was, "doing it this way makes it impossible to forget to pay them." (I like people like that - Editor).

We certainly welcome Mrs. Lyden in this supportive status and trust that she will continue to appreciate our ever growing determination to make our good Society even better.

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News Worth Noting:

During recent weeks ILS has been the recipient of a number of rather generous contributions for specific purposes and projects, these will be assessed and weighed by your Board of Directors at the upcoming Annual Meeting in May. Such individual considerations will indeed do much to expedite the implementation of certain of our more meaningful projects that are awaiting funding. Until more formal expressions of gratitude are forthcoming, our sincere thanks are herewith conveyed.

Editor

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We extend our most sincere sympathy to Fred Van Orden on the loss of his dear wife on January 14, 1980 after a long illness.

Fred is one of our founding members whose help was invaluable in steering the Society through the legalities of incorporation. He was elected our first treasurer and served admirably for some time in that position. The Society voted him the signal honor of Lifetime Membership in recognition of his many services.

His plans for the future are to live in Florida, with a daughter, in the winter and in Long Island in the summer. His many friends may write him at 348 Lake Shore, Massapequa Park, NY 11762. Our best wishes to him for health and happiness as he adjusts to his new lifestyle.

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