



# Lilac Newsletter

Vol. VII, No. 10, October, 1981

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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#### MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION

|                                | <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.

The following is a news article that appeared in the Greeley, Colorado Daily Tribune on August 18, 1981. On his return home from the I.L.S. meeting in Des Moines, Louis Erikson stopped off in Greeley where he observed the lilacs growing there.

Being a true lilac fan he wrote of his observations to Greeley. This news article which resulted is a good example of what members can do to publicize lilacs.

CALIFORNIAN SAYS MANY LILAC TYPES SUITABLE FOR HERE

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What do lilacs and the old adage "variety is the spice of life" have in common?

Plenty, says Louis C. Erickson, former director of the University of California Botanic Gardens at Riverside. After a recent visit to Greeley, Erickson said he was "amazed at the great number of lilac bushes growing in back yards." However, he found the variety of bushes disappointing.

"Most of the plants seemed to be of a single pale-colored cultivar," said the recently retired director. "I thought, 'What a shame - they could have more colors.'" he related.

Erickson says the warm California climate limits the types of lilacs that can be grown in this area, but he maintains that Greeley is an ideal place to grow an array of lilacs.

With a little effort, Erickson says, Greeley residents could also enjoy a host of multipetaled white, pink and lavender flowers that would grow well in northern Colorado.

He says there are hundreds of lilac varieties gardeners can choose from, yet he noticed only six to eight types during his Greeley visit. Erickson, who has experimented for more than six years with different kinds of lilacs, says many of the varieties are not available in stores. However, they can be acquired from other enthusiasts.

He obtains information on these varieties through the International Lilac Society and enjoys interacting with those who share his interest. Erickson says the organization could also benefit Greeley growers - no area residents were listed as members by the club.

"People who enjoy lilacs should look into this society to become acquainted with lilacs and obtain information about the different varieties," he suggests.

Greeley gardeners who would like more information about the organization may contact its president, Dr. Owen M. Rogers, University of New Hampshire, Department of Plant Science, Nesmith Hall, Durham, N.H., 03824.

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"START NOW TO PLAN YOUR NEXT SEASON'S  
VACATION AROUND A STOP FOR THE I.L.S. ANNUAL  
CONVENTION IN OTTAWA, CANADA, MAY 27 - 29,  
1982."

REMINDERS FROM PAST NEWSLETTER ISSUES

by Mary Smith

From a reprint of 'Gardening with Lilacs'  
by Louis Fischer of Hastings, Minn.

..."For best results secure plants that are sturdy and young, preferably not over four feet tall. Such plants usually suffer very little setback in transplanting and recover quickly to make a normal growth. Large bushes suffer considerably in the transplant and are not quick to re-establish themselves in their new location. The result is that growth is stunted and it will take several years before normal growth is started again.

...Lilacs can be planted either in early spring or in the fall. As they start their bud and leaf growth so early in the spring it is preferable to plant in the fall as soon as they become dormant. Mulching the lilacs the first winter is desirable. If you want to plant in the spring be sure it is done early so as not to risk the possibility of checking plant growth after it has started."

From 'Enjoy Your Lilacs' (a reprint) by  
Roy S. Leighton.

..."Don't be frightened by pests that may infest your lilacs just keep awake...Scale. Infestation may occur as with many fruit trees. These may be killed by a dormant oil spray or lime and sulphur...Lilac Borer. A clear winged, wasp-like moth. Pupation takes place in spring, usually in May. Deposits eggs on roughened bark. The larvae on hatching enter the bark and

and feed on the inner sap wood, tunneling under the bark and sometimes nearly or completely girdling the limb. This cuts off the flow of sap, causing wilting of the foliage.

Infestation may be detected by a wet foamy deposit, at point of entry and later by a deposit of chewings like sawdust. Dig out with a wire or knife, or insert a small piece of cotton into the hole, soaked in carbon bisulphide. Then stop up the hole with grafting wax which is better than any other material."

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BITS OF WIT

Tact is the art of making a point without making an enemy.

Loneliness is a prison that opens only from the inside.

The trouble with political jokes is that they often get elected to office.

I'm not fat - I,m just too short for my height.

FROM CASPER, WYOMING A MEMBER WRITES

We joined the International Lilac Society to have access to information about lilacs as well as help for finding available sources around our vicinity to purchase plants. We have not been successful with the latter.

We obtained our first information on varieties to select from LILACS FOR AMERICA, a 1953 survey of The American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta.

My husband and I love lilacs and made our choices from the 100 best loved varieties.

We planted our first choices about 16 years ago and they have survived our harsh winters quite well. Twelve of them were from Upton Nursery in Goodrich, MI: 'Belle De Nancy', 'Buffon', 'Charles Joly', 'Congo', 'Decaisne', 'Ellen Willmott', 'Glory', 'Jewel', 'Marechal Lannes', 'Mme. Antoine Buchner', 'Mme. F. Morel', and 'Monge'.

We have a heavy clay soil with considerable alkaline but as long as we water enough and fertilize some we have a pretty nice blooming season.

We have had very good luck with 'Monge' and 'Marchal Lannes', my husband's favorites and with 'Buffon', 'Decaisne', and 'Mme. Antione Buchner', my favorites.

We have found 'Congo', 'Mme. F. Morel', 'Glory' and 'Belle De Nancy' do not do as well as the others. They seem to sucker heavily and the blossoms seem smaller. They are in partial shade which might account for this.

We enjoy our Newsletter and all the lilac bulletins very much. We would like to visit more gardens during blooming time.

Mrs. Lyle J. Slensker.

TRY SOME LILAC SPECIES

by John C. Wister, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society

The common lilac, Syringa vulgaris, and its hundreds of forms and hybrids have always been garden favorites. Their beauty and fragrance has led horticulturists to expect too much from the approximately 20 late-blooming lilac species which have only comparatively recently been introduced into gardens. As a result, there has been rather severe criticism of them as a whole.

They deserve a more fair judgement based on what they are in themselves, rather than on comparisons with some favorite lilac like 'Vestale', 'President lincoln', 'Capitaine Baltet' or 'Andenken an Ludwig Spaeth'. Let us admit, at once, they do not have the fragrance of these varieties or their color range. Well, neither do our forsythias, our spireas, or our deutzias, yet we judge them for their own qualities.

I shall try to judge the late blooming Syringa species in this way.\* Of the 20 or so species about half a dozen are distinct enough and beautiful enough to warrant planting on larger suburban places.

Only one of these, Syringa josikaea, the Hungarian lilac, is European in origin. It is the best known and the longest in cultivation. It is a strong, coarse-growing twiggy shrub to 12 feet or more in height and proportionately broad. It has attractive, rather glossy foliage and it stands pruning and clipping exceptionally

\*Note the word "late". Syringa oblata and its varieties and hybrids are all earlier than the common lilacs; and Syringa persica, its varieties and hybrids which bloom with the common lilacs, will not be considered here.



well, so that it is often used for dense screens or for hedges.

The flowers, which come in early June in the latitude of New York City, a rather deep lilac, or violet lilac in color, are borne freely on attractive spikes. It, like most the others, has to me a rather pleasing fragrance. Though not the fragrance associated with the word "lilac", it is much more like that of various species of privet, Ligustrum, to which the lilacs are closely related. It must be remembered that many people do not care for the over strong odor of some privets. It should be remembered also, that the Hungarian lilac became an established garden favorite very soon after its discovery and introduction by the Baroness Josika in 1830, long before any of the other late-flowered lilacs were known. It is accordingly a much more characteristic inhabitant of old gardens than of new ones.

All the other late-flowering lilacs are from China or nearby Manchuria, Korea and Japan. Syringa villosa was discovered as long ago as 1740 though it was not introduced to gardens until 1882 when the Arnold Arboretum received and distributed plants. It is commonly seen about 10 feet high, rather stiffer and less twiggy than S. josikaea and with much paler flowers, usually on the pinkish side of lilac fading out to whitish.

Syringa sweginzowii, introduced in 1894, is similar in size, but has reddish lilac handsomer flowers.

Distinct from these three is Syringa reflexa, introduced in 1904. As the name indicates, it has flower spikes which droop rather than stand erect. It makes a most graceful shrub and is attractive in the border or as a specimen. Its flowers are on the pinkish side of lilac.

Syringa pubescens may be mentioned here even though its season of bloom overlaps the later common lilacs. It is, therefore, technically a midseason and not a late-blooming lilac. It was introduced by the Arnold Arboretum in 1882, and grows about six feet high, producing pale lavender or lilac flowers. It has been confused with the next species.

Syringa microphylla was introduced in 1910. Its botanical name refers to its small leaves, but much more important to the gardener is the size and shape of the bush. It grows only about six feet high but will spread twice as much. It is both unique and attractive. More important, perhaps, it fits into places where taller plants would be unsuitable. Its pale lilac flowers are earlier than the others in this group, but, even so, distinctly later than the common lilac.

To these six fine shrubs should now be added the tree lilac. Syringa reticulata, distinct not only because it becomes a true tree up to 30 feet or more in height, but also because it is the latest of all to bloom. Its attractive bark is a feature in Winter, its large leaves are beautiful all Summer and its large spikes of white flowers are always a source of amazement to those who think of lilacs only as bushy plants. It was brought from Japan in 1878, and fine specimens are to be seen in many of the older gardens of our Atlantic states. The Amur lilac, of which it is a botanical (not horticultural) variety, and the closely related Pekin lilac, S. pekinensis, are not so tall, showy or important.

These species, it seems to me, are important plants for those who have the needed space. Gardeners, who are botanically inclined, profess to see much virtue in at least 10 others.

The first of these, S. emodi, was introduced from the Himalayas in 1840, and may not be

hardy in the extreme North. The others are "novelties" in the sense that they were brought into our gardens during the first and second decade of the 20th century, and time has not permitted propagation and distribution on an extensive, commercial scale. Therefore, they are not widely known nor, indeed, often seen.

Careful observation of them in the Swarthmore collection during the past 10 years, coupled with fleeting observation on visits to the Arnold Arboretum, to Rochester and other great collections leads me to agree whole heartedly with Dr. Wyman's evaluations of them in his new book, "Shrubs and Vines for American Gardens."

I feel as he does that S. emodi, yunnanensis, wolfii, komarowi, tomentella, julianae, patula (syn velutina), meyeri, potanini, pinetorum and pinnatifolia do not warrant any important place in the gardens of those who plant for distinctness - distinction and beauty however interesting they may be to the collector and the botanist. Most of them are either too close to, or inferior to, those I have mentioned. They do interest me, and I am glad to have them in the Swarthmore collection, but for most garden purposes we do not need them. This is not to condemn them as one prominent writer did some years ago, but rather to realize that most gardeners must limit themselves to a reasonable number of kinds of any one group.

I have dealt with wild species and types only. A few named selections, a little paler, or a little darker than the type, are available in nurseries, but those I have seen have not seemed to me outstanding. New explorations may in time discover superior clones of wild types.

Most promising at the present time are the prospects of hybrids. We have already the hybrids of villosa, josikaea and sweginzowii crossed with reflexa. We have, in fact, too many of them

that are too much alike, but after the best ones are sorted out and recrossed with each other and with other species, no one can tell what startling plants and flowers may be developed.

That, however, is another story. What I have tried to do here is point out a few of the good garden characteristics of a few of the wild species of lilacs.

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