



# Lilac Newsletter

Vol. VIII, No. 4, April, 1982

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

Single annual .....	\$ 7.50
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\*Mail membership dues to I.L.S. Secretary.

THE CASE FOR GRAFTED LILACS

Why has a prejudice arisen over the method of lilac production? Why do so many gardeners want own-root lilacs?

I would not pretend to know the answers to these questions, however, we all know that old habits are hard to change. If we read often enough that own-root plants are preferred, we come to believe it. Consider how long gardeners have been advised that tree wounds must be painted to protect them and to facilitate healing. Now, according to studies conducted by Dr. Alex L. Shigo, tree paint is of no value in helping to heal tree wounds. It does, in fact, do more harm in some cases.

It is taking a long time to spread the word and persuade homeowners to accept this finding. Likewise, we must be patient in teaching how to plant grafted lilacs.

There are those who believe that a major reason standing in the way of the popularity of lilacs is that potential buyers of lilacs have insisted upon lilacs being on their own roots. Rooting lilacs is a long process and a problem for the grower who is trying to keep competitive and stay in business.

Markets for lilacs could be developed, I am told, provided production be expedited, specifically that space and/or time for growing to saleability be limited or reduced. Hybrid tea roses and fruit trees are grafted plants and who complains? Gardeners buy a lot of roses and apple trees.

From an experienced person who has planted many of them comes these suggestions for

successful planting of grafted lilacs:

"Heretofore the bugaboo to widespread planting of French hybrid lilacs has been suckering of the stock (California privet, common or other lilac) and eventual suppression of the desired cultivar. Essentially this is a question of good gardening technique. Suckers, if identified promptly, can be eliminated by pruning, or they can be avoided at planting time by rubbing out the tender buds, while the tops, that is the cultivar shoots, are reduced to a few strong growing points. But gardeners sometimes are unaware of such requirements or remain passively hopeful that such consequences will not occur.

It is incumbent upon the purchaser of lilacs to inspect the dormant bare-rooted stiff gray crowns and find the joint of union beneath which he might find developing shoots or shoot buds. These are the dreaded suckers which spring up giving false promise that the lilac is alive. Rub these off prior to planting. Prune the tops to a few strong buds.

This reduction in size is a vital process which often insures the success of planting even though two or three feet of height must be sacrificed initially. Then as the season advances keep a watch for redevelopment of understock suckers and remove each one promptly.

The above described procedures are required for conventionally grafted lilacs, that is, when the stock is common or Persian lilac or California privet.

Nowadays, lilac propagators are finding substitute species which give a quick boost to the rooting scion before it is removed or it dies during the first year in the nursery row.

Such booster stock plants are other oleaceous species (green ash) or lilacs with readily distinguishable leaves (S. villosa or reticulata) By using such contemporary propagating techniques the producer is thus able to offer own-root lilacs in less time or by using smaller acreage thereby cutting production costs while delivering quality lilacs to the consumer.

These own-root lilacs were not rooted cuttings, a slow process, yet they do not throw unwanted suckers."

Editor

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BITS OF WIT

Definition of a housing development: "A place where they cut down all the trees and then name the streets after them."

He who has never made a mistake has never made a discovery.

Better an acre of doing than world of promise.

LILACS AT BICKELHAUPT ARBORETUM

CLINTON, IOWA

by Mary C. Smith

Folks in eastern Iowa and western Illinois were blessed with good fortune when Robert and Frances Bickelhaupt established their privately owned arboretum in 1970. Out here west, of the Mississippi, we have to drive a long way to visit a public garden so the Bickelhaupt Arboretum at Clinton, Iowa is an important educational facility for home gardeners as well as students and others seeking help in stocking and growing plants suited to the area.

While the 13 acre size may seem small, comparatively speaking, I doubt that there is a better maintained garden to be found. That maintenance includes the excellent record system they employ.

Bob and Fran had an opportunity to purchase five acres adjoining their property, but after visiting and studying at many institutions were convinced that they preferred a smaller garden which they could keep up properly. With the present size their staff can be kept to a minimum.

Neither Bob nor Fran had any horticultural background so the success of their venture is a tribute to their determination, dedication and generosity. They have crammed a lot of learning into a few short years - they studied at Morton Arboretum, have visited nearly 150 other arboreta and have never missed a meeting of the AABGA.

Visitors from far away come to the Bickelhaupts for guidance in establishing public gardens.

Lucky for LILACS, Bickelhaupts chose to plant a Lilac Garden. They and their consultant, Roy Nordine, spent a year considering the location for the planting and finally decided on a gentle south-facing slope overlooking a natural amphitheatre.

The amphitheatre, in a grove of bur oak, is a popular place for summer church services and pretty weddings. Bridal parties proceed down an aisle through the middle of the lilac planting, over a footbridge and on to the amphitheatre.

With the assistance of Roy Nordine and Dr. John Wister the lilacs were chosen to represent early, mid-season and late varieties in a wide selection of colors. Plants were acquired from various sources including a few from ILS members.

The plants are spaced 15 feet apart and most were spring planted. Before setting out, the plants were pre-soaked in a Fapid-Gro solution. For every one foot of height one 21 gram Agri-form tablet was added about half way down in the planting hole. Grass clippings were mixed in the loosened soil and, of course, with the alkaline soil of the Midwest no lime was needed. Every day for the first week after planting, one gallon of water was applied for every foot of height. For two years thereafter, the same amount was applied every week when there was not at least one inch of rain.

An application of Rapid-Gro was applied in June after spring planting. For multi-stemmed plants Agri-form tablets and water were doubled.

These lilac bushes will be kept to a height of about eight feet.

LILACS AT BICKELHAUPT ARBORETUM

- S. x hyacinthiflora 'Anabel'
- S. x hyacinthiflora 'Assissippi'
- S. x chinensis
- S. x prestoniae 'Coral'
- S. x hyacinthiflora 'Doctor Chadwick'
- S. x prestoniae 'Donald Wyman'
- S. x hyacinthiflora 'Gertrude Leslie'
- S. x hyacinthiflora 'Maiden's Blush'
- S. meyeri
- S. x hyacinthiflora 'Mount Baker'
- S. meyeri 'Palibin'
- S. patula 'Miss Kim'
- S. x persica
- S. x josiflexa 'James MacFarlane'
- S. x hyacinthiflora 'Royal Purple'
- S. x josiflexa 'Royalty'
- S. villosa
- S. vulgaris
- S. vulgaris 'Ami Schott'
- S. vulgaris 'Andenken an Ludwig Spaeth'
- S. vulgaris 'Belle De Nancy'
- S. vulgaris 'Charles Joly'
- S. vulgaris 'Charles X'
- S. vulgaris 'Congo'
- S. vulgaris 'De Miribel'
- S. vulgaris 'Decaisne'
- S. vulgaris 'Edith Cavell'
- S. vulgaris 'Ellen Willmott'
- S. vulgaris 'Firmament'
- S. vulgaris 'Frank Paterson'
- S. vulgaris 'Leon Gambetta'
- S. vulgaris 'Lucie Baltet'
- S. vulgaris 'Marie Finon'
- S. vulgaris 'Mme. Lemoine'
- S. vulgaris 'Monge'
- S. vulgaris 'Mrs. Edward Harding'



S. vulgaris 'Mrs. W.E. Marshall'  
S. vulgaris 'Olivier de Serres'  
S. vulgaris 'Vestale'  
S. vulgaris 'Victor Lemoine'  
S. vulgaris 'Violetta'

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OTTAWA WELCOMES YOU

IT IS NEARLY TIME TO START PACKING FOR THE TRIP TO THE 1982 LILAC CONVENTION AT OTTAWA.

BRING YOUR CAMERA, A NOTE PAD AND PENCIL, AND A FRIEND; AND ABOVE ALL IF YOU DID NOT MAIL THE REGISTRATION FORM (END PAGE OF JANUARY 1982 ISSUE) PLEASE DO IT NOW.

THE ORGANIZERS MUST KNOW IN ADVANCE WHO IS COMING TO MAKE NECESSARY SERVICE RESERVATIONS.

SEE YOU THERE!

BY THE LILAC BUSH\*

A Sunday in November - but the lilac bush  
still holds the witness of a fragrant May;  
in spite of autumn storms the robin's nest  
sits safe and firm deep in the secret branches.  
The blossom grew to fruit; the heart shaped leaves  
are shed and blown across the lawn - the street.  
And yet this bush of fall, though winter took its  
toll  
exacting all of summer's plentitude,  
keeps safe the promise of another spring.

When does a year begin? In fall? In spring?  
When does it end? in an unbroken ring  
the seasons claim and take, bestow their gift-  
And time? Not long, not brief; not slow, not swift  
must go and come at its own pace - we wait -  
wait for the lilac, blooming by the gate.

Herta Rosenblatt

\*Reprinted from The Christian Science Monitor,  
November 4, 1981.

IN MEMORIAM

We are saddened by the news that one of  
our long time I.L.S. members, Miss Freda Foerster  
from Garden City, NY passed away after prolonged  
illness.

Many may remember Miss Freda, accompanied  
by her sister during the 1974 I.L.S. Convention  
in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, as a cheerful, eager,  
and colourful lady, especially on the tours  
which she seemed to enjoy the most; revealing  
her devotion toward lilacs, nature and travels.

LET'S HEAR FROM YOU.'

ARE THERE LILACS YOU WOULD LIKE TO GET  
BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE?

DO YOU HAVE SURPLUS LILACS THAT YOU WISH  
TO TRADE OR SELL?

ARE YOU EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS WITH YOUR  
EXISTING LILACS?

PLEASE, LET US KNOW, SO THAT WE CAN PRINT  
IT AND PUT YOU IN TOUCH WITH THOSE I.L.S.  
MEMBERS THAT MAY HELP YOU. THIS FREE OF CHARGE  
SERVICE IS AVAILABLE TO YOU AS AN I.L.S.  
MEMBER - SO USE IT.'