



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.

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AUTUMN FOLIAGE COLOUR IN LILACS

by Robert B. Clark

In the north temperate zone, especially in north-eastern North America and in eastern Asia, the foliage of deciduous plants loses its summer green prior to falling (hence the term "fall" for autumn). Certain trees and shrubs are favored because they show variously vivid or subtle pastels: scarlet maple, yellow tulip-tree, rusts in the red oaks, pinks in the white oaks, for example. But other trees (shrubs too) lack this capacity, merely dropping their leaves green: black locust, Norway maple usually, and the common lilac.

There is a class of lilacs, however, which does put on a satisfactory display of fall colour: the little-leaved lilacs, especially S. meyeri and its kin. I have been partial to these decorative shrubs for several years because they lend themselves to landscape use. The flowers, attractive and small, delicate in colour and in fragrance, are borne in profusion at the height of the lilac season. The summer foliage is fine-textured and neutral green, but come October it turns into vinous reds and purples. Cv. 'Palibin' is particularly noteworthy with its dull reddish shades, if growing in full sunshine.

The Korean little-leaved lilac, S. patula, too produces exquisite ruby shades when grown in high or partial shade. And, of course, the early Korean lilac, S. oblata var. dilatata, is remarkable for its handsome red leaves. If a French hybrid exhibits autumn colour in its foliage, this is a strong sign of inheritance of Korean "blood" mingled with the so-called common lilac of Europe.

THE DARK ONES

Inspired by Walter Oakes' observations about Syringa vulgaris 'Negro', (Lilac Newsletter Vol. VIII, No. 5, May, 1982, pages 10 & 11), I took a closer look at some of our darkest lilacs in The Katie Osborne lilac collection.

Observing visually on the site; taking close-up photo slides at the bud stage and then observing again the open floret at its early stage (first and second day), I may offer the following conclusion:

During spring 1983 the darkest in the bud and early floret stage in sequence of darkness were:

S. vulgaris 'Mrs. W.E. Marshal'
'Zulu'
'Night'
'Volcan'
'Negro'
'Anne Shiach'
'Ethiopia'
'Frank Klager'
'Charles Joly'
'Mons. J. de Messemaeker'
'Diderot'
'Frank Paterson'

Beyond the fifth cultivar listed, the intensity of colour was often almost identical, hence 'Frank Klager' could have been typed before 'Ethiopia', etc.

Charles Holetich.

LILAC PREFERENCES ARE LIKE HORSE RACES

by John C. Wister, Sec., Pennsylvania Hort. Soc.

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Differences of opinion cause horse races, and also cause many garden books. What any one gardener thinks or any one author writes is always influenced by the peculiar conditions of his own garden or of the few gardens of others he has been able to see. It follows, therefore, that a person who sees the same plant in many different gardens can give a more valuable opinion about it.

Many gardeners, however, have this quality to a great extent, and one of the persons who has it best is Dr. Donald Wyman of the Arnold Arboretum. He first worked with trees and shrubs at Cornell and then for many years at the Arnold Arboretum. He has also travelled extensively, and his findings and observations are particularly valuable. He has just published them in one of the most useful books that has been published in years, namely Shrubs and Vines for American Gardens.

Dr. Wyman has presented his shrubs in a wonderful way, giving a list of the recommended varieties, and then at the end a list of the kinds he does not recommend and his reasons for listing them. He is striking at the old evil of too many named varieties of the same plants. This has been particularly noticeable in iris, gladiolus, peonies and daffodils, where it has been a nightmare to gardeners who try to pick out varieties from the hundreds of listed kinds. In shrubs the condition is not so bad as to numbers, but actually it is just as difficult because shrubs take more room and therefore each gardener can grow a relatively smaller number of them. Furthermore, they are more or less permanent inhabitants of the garden, while smaller plants can be easily moved about, tried in different

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June 1950.

locations and then discarded.

Dr. Wyman's reasons for not growing certain kinds of shrubs are well taken and constitute the first time that such a comprehensive list has been presented to the public. In his endeavor to cut the list as small as possible, he has been pretty severe and has left room for many differences of opinion. He would be the first to welcome these diverging opinions.

The lilac list that he has recommended has been cut down drastically from the best 100 varieties which were published in the survey of the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboretums. He has made a splendid list about which I should like to make a few comments. He has recommended the following:

White: Single, 'Vestale', 'Mont Blanc', 'Jan Van Tol', 'Marie Finon'. Double, 'Edith Cavell', 'Ellen Willmott'.

Violet: Single, 'De Mirabel', 'Cavour', Double, 'Marechal Lannes', 'Miss Violetta'.

Blue and Bluish: Single, 'President Lincoln', 'Decaisne', 'Maurice Barres', Double, 'Olivier des Serres', 'Emile Gentil', 'Duc de Massa'.

Lilac: Single, 'Marengo', 'Jacques Callot'. Double, 'President Fallieres', 'Henri Martin', 'Victor Lemoine', 'Leon Gambetta'.

Pink and Pinkish: Single, 'Lucie Baltet', 'Macrostachya'. Double, 'Mme. Antoine Buchner', 'Katherine Havemeyer', 'Montaigne'.

Magenta: Single, 'Marechal Foch', 'Mme. F. Morel', 'Capitaine Baltet'. Double, 'Paul Thirion', 'Paul Deschanel', , Mrs. Edward Harding'.

Purple (or deep purple): Single, 'Monge', 'Mrs. W.E. Marshal', 'Andenken an Ludwig Spaeth'.

I agree with his recommendations on all the varieties except the following: 'Jan Van Tol' is a very handsome variety which evidently behaves

differently in various places. Mrs. Francis King always held it at the top of all lilacs, and her opinion is not to be ignored. My own experience with it here has not been satisfactory. In some years it has been a shy bloomer, and it has the defect of the old common white lilac to ascend through the air like a chimney, a difficulty hard to control. I do not give it a prominent place in the collection here at Swarthmore for that reason.

'Edith Cavell' is the most popular lilac in America according to the Lilac Survey. More people grow it and more nurseries offer it than any other variety. It evidently also behaves differently in different places. My experience with it both here and in Germantown is that it has been a shy and uneven bloomer. It loses its foliage in August, sends out new foliage in the Autumn and with it a new crop of flowers. It is for this reason alone that I have kept it as a few lilacs at that time of year are much appreciated.

'Emil Gentil' is a fine lilac, but almost a duplicate of 'Olivier de Serres', and not so good. 'Marengo' is one of the most magnificent flowers of all, but has consistently, over more than 15 years, been a very shy bloomer with me both at my former home in Germantown and at Swarthmore. 'Montaigne' is a magnificent variety. It is, however, so close to 'Mme. Antoine Buchner' that both should not be grown and the gardener should choose either one or the other. Which is the best is a toss-up.

My differences of opinion with Dr. Wyman's list of recommended lilacs are very small. When it comes to the varieties on his unrecommended list, however, I differ from him very widely. Perhaps I like lilacs better than he does, and am therefore anxious to grow more kinds.

First I should like to comment on some of Lemoine's older things, which should be grown in any collection larger than the one outlined by

Dr. Wyman. I cannot see how he was able to leave out of his list a variety like 'Reamur', which year after year has been one of the very top varieties with us, a well-shaped bush and a consistent bloomer bearing fine flowers. It has all the qualities a good lilac should have. Perhaps he thinks it is too close to 'Capitaine Baltet', but there is certainly room for both of them.

Then there are such fine old things as 'Belle de Nancy', 'Rene Jarry-Desloges', 'Thunberg', 'Virginite' and 'Waldeck-Rousseau'. I would like always to have them in my collection, but they are perhaps not enough different from some of those mentioned in Dr. Wyman's recommended list. Two others that I like particularly because they are dwarf growers are the deep purple 'Rochambeau' and 'Vesuve'. They do not seem to be widely grown, but I think deserve more recognition. A more debatable variety is 'Boule Azuree'. It is magnificent in color, but has proved a very shy bloomer here. A correspondent in Maine writes me that it is the most magnificent of all his lilacs there, and I think he had a note about it in HORTICULTURE several years ago. Another variety that behaves quite differently in different places is 'Prodige'. It is shy blooming here, but seems to be very fine in the West.

Mr. Havemeyer, who was certainly the greatest lilac grower of his time, once told me that judgement on a variety should never be made in less than 10 years as plants are not mature enough before that to allow a fair appraisal. He said further that no grower should make up his mind until he had seen the flowers in 10 different seasons and in a number of different places.

Dr. Wyman places in his unrecommended list many kinds which he cannot have seen for this period. I should like to mention a few of them and suggest to amateurs that they try them because they seem promising, but with the understanding that they are not thoroughly tested and may in the long run, as he suggests, prove disappointing.

The first lilacs in this group are some of Lemoine's new ones, introduced in the years indicated- 'Ambassadeur' 1930, 'Candeur' 1931, 'Crepuscule' 1928, 'Gismonda' 1939, 'Henri Roberts' 1936, 'Monique Lemoine' 1939, 'Monument' 1934, 'Rosace' 1932 and 'Souvenir d'Alice Harding' 1938. The Arnold Arboretum undoubtedly has 10-year-old plants of these, but I don't believe that Dr. Wyman or anyone else has seen typical blooms on them in different places in a 10-year period. I saw 'Ambassadeur' at Mrs. Havemeyer's before the war. It looked extremely promising. This variety and 'Candeur' and 'Rosace' apparently have become mixed up. Several that I have purchased have not been true to name. 'Ambassadeur' is a single pale blue, a very lovely color. 'Candeur' seems to be slow to bloom. The few spikes are large and the individual flowers very large. It seems to me to hold great promise.

'Crepuscule' seems to us here at Swarthmore to be a fine single blue bloom that is going to find its place with the very finest varieties. From a few years' experience the variety 'Henri Robert' seems to be a most desirable acquisition as a late-blooming double blue.

I do not know what to say about 'Monument'. I have seen big plants at Rochester that were perfectly magnificent. We have only one 10-year-old plant here and its spikes are apt to be stubby. When I complained about this to R.E. Horsey of Highland Park, he told me to hold on to it because he believed that this habit of bloom was due to the fact that the plant was not thoroughly established. We have had fine flowers on 'Monique Lemoine' and 'Souvenir d'Alice Harding', and from the way they behave as young plants, they give promise of being extremely important. I think it will take a good many years, however, to reach any real conclusions about them. 'Gismonda' had not bloomed for us.

Another group which have been overlooked are

some of the new Havemeyer varieties. They are not widely distributed, and no real consensus of opinion concerning them is available. I have seen them at Mr. Havemeyer's and in several Pennsylvania gardens, and have grown them here. The largest are 'Glory' and 'Priscilla'. They have most magnificent spikes, but the plants have somewhat the fault of the beautiful variety, 'Mme. F. Morel', in that they are straggly growers, and several people have told me they are shy blooming. There are two very dark varieties - 'Sarah Sands' and 'Zulu'. I have seen them both extremely handsome, but they are very slow to get started, which seems to be a characteristic of many of the darkest colored varieties. We have long grown an earlier Havemeyer variety - 'Night'. Everyone here likes it. It is perhaps the darkest of all, a good bloomer, and is all the more valuable because it is extremely late. All of these must have been at the Arnold Arboretum more than 10 years, and Dr. Wyman may have good reasons for omitting them, but they certainly have not had any trial over any wide area. I feel they deserve it.

We have a very few Dunbar varieties here. I have studied them a good many years at Rochester. Nearly all are first class, but not particularly different from the older Lemoine varieties. However, I have picked out the single white 'Henry Clay' for a further trial here as I was very much impressed with it at Rochester. Last year in the Ewing Park lilac arboretum in Des Moines, I was much struck with 'President Roosevelt'. I had seen the variety before only at Rochester and in one private garden outside Philadelphia.

When I was working on the lilac survey, I visited Mr. Brand and was much struck by the variety 'A.M. Brand'. He had a magnificent big plant of it, and it was the outstanding variety in his collection. He sent me some scions and I have a young plant here, but it has not yet bloomed. It also deserves a trial which will take many years.

I have here on trial a number of varieties of W.B. Clarke of San Jose. Among his older ones, 'Blue Hyacinth' has given us lovely spikes, but it seems to be developing the tendency I so much deplore - growing up like a Lombardy poplar. If it continues I shall not want to keep it. This and also 'Alice Eastwood' and 'Kate Sessions' have not been tested long enough. Clarke's new varieties like 'Esther Staley', 'Pink Spray' and 'Clarke's Giant' have not yet bloomed here.

A deep purple variety raised by Mrs. J. Norman Henry is 'Gladwyne'. I have seen and admired this in her garden. It has proved a slow grower here and has not bloomed.

Mr. E.A. Upton writes me that he is much impressed by Mrs. Klager's variety 'City of Gresham' which was first sent out as Klager's Dark Purple. It is in the Ewing Park collection in Des Moines and has given handsome blooms the last three years. It is the only one of her varieties that has impressed me. I do not have any of them here at present.

With constant emphasis on the size of flower, I think we often forget the charm of some of the smaller blooming kinds. There are a number of old ones which to me are very interesting. Among these are Ellwanger and Barry's old 'Coerulea Superba', an extremely good single blue, and 'Azurea Plena', a tiny double blue. They lend variety among the giant flowers.

In early hybrids I would omit 'Turgot' and 'Villars' and would substitute 'Scotia' and 'Montesquieu'. 'Scotia' opens somewhat the same color as 'Necker', but does not fade which 'Necker' does badly. 'Montesquieu' seems to me best of all that group of Lemoine varieties.

Dr. Wyman has cut down very severely on late-blooming lilacs. I think he is right on this. The number is unreasonably large and most of them are alike. I think the list could be cut even more.

Most of our present day lilacs have too much of a tendency to grow tall and straggly if not consistently pruned. I hope that this fault may be overcome by using some of the fine varieties of F.L. Skinner, particularly 'Asessippi', which has a splendid broad habit. The varieties descended from *Syringa oblata* var. *dilatata* also seem to have fine foliage not subject to Autumn mildew. Too many of our lilacs, just like apples, are biennial bearers. We need ones which bloom regularly every year. 'Capitaine Baltet' is certainly outstanding in this quality. Of course we need varieties which will lengthen the season by coming still earlier or lasting later. At present var. *dilatata* is the earliest and 'Night' and 'Henri Robert' about the latest. The Chinese species and their hybrids are, of course, in a different group.

More public lilac collections are being planted. I have mentioned the new one at Des Moines, which, when completed, will have about 1200 plants on about 25 acres. The New York Botanical Gardens has just received a gift of about 500 plants from Mrs. T.A. Havemeyer. The Arnold Arboretum, Highland Park and the Morton Arboretum continue to add new varieties.

WE NEED SLIDES OF LILACS

The city of Delhi, NY can be proud of its resident, Mrs. William J. Emerson, (Nancy). Nancy loves lilacs, grows a lot of them and always has a lot of plants of Japanese Tree Lilac to give to other residents, children and to the town. Nancy speaks at Garden Club groups on behalf of lilacs and presently she is collecting slides to make up programs that can be shown to groups all over the country.

So, Nancy needs more slides of lilacs. She would like at least one slide of each species--one of the shrub and a close-up of the blossom. She needs examples of all forms and heights of lilacs - trees, tall, medium and low types as well as the reflex types. She also needs slides of more hybrids, especially newer ones. It would be helpful to show lilacs in landscape and used in groupings, as specimens or around structures, she says.

She will make copies of any slides you send to her and then return originals to the owner.

The mens Garden Clubs of America have recently asked for slides so see what you can do to help Nancy make a good collection for the promotion of lilacs and the I.L.S.

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Looking For Talent

I.L.S. members, if you like to draw, you can help us. We need line drawings to illustrate procedures in lilac culture for the proposed Lilac Manual.

The drawings will be simple and done in ink. Send us a sample or two and we will let you know later specifically what is needed. Don't be shy.

Editor

HAVE AN ADVERTISING MESSAGE?

Full, half, and quarter page advertising space is now available in the Lilac Newsletter. Merely set up your ad as you wish it to appear. The proper size ad in camera ready condition would be desirable but not essential, however, any enlargement, reduction and/or PMT sheets if needed will be added to the nominal price.

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