



Lilac Newsletter

Vol. IX, No. 2, February, 1983

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
Family	10.00
Sustaining	15.00
Institutional/Commercial	20.00
Life	150.00

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

IN MEMORIAM

America's dean of horticulture died peacefully at home on December 28th in his 96th year. He was John C. Wister, born a Quaker, educated at Harvard (class of 1909), served in the A.E.F. (1917-1918), and for two decades was secretary of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, and latterly was director of the Arthur Hoyt Scott Horticultural Foundation and of the John J. Tyler Arboretum. He was co-founder of many plant name societies, serving on their respective boards or in other official capacities. He leaves a devoted wife and partner, Gertrude Smith Wister, and a host of adoring gardening friends.

He also leaves a memorial to posterity in the planting of the Swarthmore College campus in a secluded corner of which he made his home and garden. The campus landscape consists of rare and beautiful trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants, tastefully arranged, often in extensive collections, ever beautiful. Besides being a landscape architect and virtuoso gardener he was an avid student of horticultural plants, able to recognize them by name without their labels. Once asked why he brought a meager sandwich for lunch at a field outing, he quipped, "so as to have more money for plants". He studied nursery catalogues ordering wisely, testing performances of novelties, and publishing his observations.

From his vast knowledge of plants he compiled check lists of horticultural varieties (ie. cultivars). He wrote extensively about the plants he knew and grew. He was the author of books on lilacs, tree peonies, daffodils and other bulbs. His correspondence with horticulturists throughout the United States and Canada was prodigious. He visited their gardens,

Tested their hybrids in his private garden which became a veritable fairyland of form and color.

It is both risky and presumptuous to attempt to characterize a man's inner life, since we can judge only by outward appearances; nevertheless, from his quiet behavior, I make bold to venture the suggestion that he lived in peace with extreme modesty and self-effacement. For example, when it came time to compose the title page of the Preliminary Holly Checklist (1952) for which he had done all or most of the work, he omitted completely his name as compiler. In another instance Frank L. Skinner, who raised superb early hybrid lilacs naming many of them for prominent horticulturists, wished to honor his friend by an outstanding double lilac-colored seedling, Jack modestly declined the tendered honor. We know this lilac today as 'Swarthmore'.

"Because he loves me," says the Lord, "I will rescue him:

I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name.
He will call upon me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble,
I will deliver him and honor him.
With long life will I satisfy him
and show my salvation."

(Psalm 91: 14-16)

LILAC SEED EXCHANGE, 1983

A successful seed exchange depends on contributions from Society members. During the last several years these contributions have come from only a small group of members. So the question arises, is there real interest in sponsoring and continuing a seed exchange? Do members wish to have a source for lilac seeds? Are other members, especially those who are growing a large variety of species and selected cultivars willing to take the time to collect seeds for the Society?

On the average, over the past three years, I have mailed out between forty and sixty packets of seeds. It appears that there is an interest and demand for seeds providing they are available, especially those of the species which are the most difficult for the average grower to locate.

Seeds should be collected at the proper time in the fall, separated from the capsules if possible, and mailed to the seed chairman by early December so listings can appear in the February Newsletter.

The list of available seeds for this year is rather small, only those which I have gathered from my own collection and those left from seeds submitted by Father Fiala from last year.

Members who are interested in any of these seeds may list those desired, include a stamped, self-addressed envelope and mail to:

Roger F. Luce
RFD #1, Box 1126
Hampden, ME 04444

SEEDS AVAILABLE

Syringa komarowii

S. josikaea

S. julianae 'Hers Variety'

S. reticulata 'Chinese Magic' (semi-weeping form)

S. reticulata (Fiala seedling)

S. x henryi 'Summer White'

S. x josiflexa 'Anna Amhoff'

S. vulgaris 'Maud Notcutt'

S. vulgaris 'Sesquicentennial'

S. vulgaris 'Taglioni'

S. vulgaris 'Dwight D. Eisenhower'

Father John Fiala, Falconskeape, Medina, Ohio

S. oblata dilatata

S. pekinensis

S. vulgaris 'Glory'

S. vulgaris 'Priscilla'

S. vulgaris 'De Miribel'

S. vulgaris 'La Place'

S. vulgaris 'Diderot'

S. vulgaris 'Vestale'

S. vulgaris 'White Swan'

Roger F. Luce, Butternut Hill Gardens, Newburgh, ME

REMINDER: May I emphasize that seeds of horticultural varieties or hybrids can sometimes yield outstanding plants, but cannot be expected to come true to name. When further distributing propagation material from such plants, it is important to add the word "seedling of..." along with the cultivar name.

GROWING LILACS FROM SEED

by Roger F. Luce

January 1983

Growing lilacs from seed can be fun and rewarding. It is exciting to see the large green cotyledons emerge from the soil. And if one has large areas to landscape, and wants splashes of color here and there, this is one of the least expensive ways to attain that end.

But if one is going to grow any great number of lilacs he must be sure of sufficient space to line out the plants and grow them on to blooming size, which generally takes from four to six years, depending on growing conditions.

My first experience at planting seeds began about fifteen years ago when a friend suggested that we plant a few. At that time I hadn't grown seeds of very many woody plants or shrubs and never thought that lilacs could be grown from seed. Perhaps the main reason for this misconception is the fact that rarely does one ever find a vulgaris seedling.

So we collected seeds from seven plants growing on a former estate near by, some with double, others with single blossoms in various colors from white to deep purple (cultivar names unknown). We planted the seeds in small containers about February and placed them under lights in the basement where the temperature remained an even 50 degrees. After several weeks a few seeds began to sprout and it was exciting to see the large green cotyledons emerge.

Some days later the first true leaves appeared. In May the flats were placed outside and with fluctuations in temperature and moisture we were pleased to discover other seeds germinating. Later

in the summer the seedlings were planted in the garden area to grow on.

The fourth year after planting eight shrubs bloomed, and within the following two years all had set buds. Colors ranged from white, through shades of lavender to deeper tones, singles and doubles, with a few blooms equal in size and quality to some named varieties. About twenty percent of the plants had small indistinctive blooms similar to *vulgaris* and *vulgaris alba*. These will eventually be pulled out.

The row of plants makes a colorful hedge, provides useful cut flowers for Memorial Day, and serves as a reminder of my first attempt at growing lilacs from seed.

Over the years I have continued to plant seeds for pleasure and enjoyment. The chances for discovering a plant of outstanding quality are slim when growing open-pollinated seeds but from about two hundred seedlings which I am growing, six plants thus far have proved to be of exceptional quality. I have moved these plants to individual areas for continued observation.

Many people perhaps do not have the time, space or desire to grow plants from open-pollinated seeds, when after all the work involved they may end up with few plants of outstanding quality. However, if one has large areas to landscape, and wants splashes of color here and there, this is one of the least expensive methods to attain that end.

Growing seeds of species can often be more reliable since the progeny usually come true. Fewer seeds need to be planted, with almost complete assurance that you will get what you expect.

Presently I am growing seedlings of the species S. reticulata, S. pekinensis, S. yunnanensis, S. pinetorum and S. tigerstedtii. If seeds of other species were available I would add those to my plantings. Growing one plant of each is generally

sufficient; others serve as enjoyable gifts to friends.

Last year during my visit to China I was able to obtain seeds of two forms of S. pekinensis from the Peking Botanical Garden. These seeds have germinated and I am hoping that some plants with good form and interesting characteristics will appear. In addition I collected seeds from lilac plants of unknown variety in various areas as I travelled in Peking and Xian. These seeds have also germinated, and even though I am uncertain as to what may develop at maturity, I will derive pleasure from watching them grow. Last fall some seedlings showed especially fine coloring, so they may be of S. oblata origin. If in the future I am able to visit China again I would like to obtain seeds of other lilac species.

Following are a few suggestions for collecting, storing and germinating lilac seeds, based on my experiences. No doubt numerous methods have been used with equal success by various other Society members.

On most occasions I wait until after the first few heavy frosts before I begin collecting seeds. At this time some capsules begin to open and seeds drop out more readily. One exception to this timing pertains to the species S. reticulata. These seeds must be harvested earlier, when the capsules begin to turn brown, and before they open since the seeds are dispersed so quickly.

I then place the seed capsules of each variety in a paper bag. These bags are stored in the kitchen for a few days to complete the drying process, and then moved to a cooler area. By shaking the bags from time to time the seeds usually fall out of the capsules and may then be stored in small sealed envelopes. Thereafter treatment is no different from the methods used with other kinds of seeds.

With me, seed sowing begins in April. I use 4 by 6 inch plastic flats which I fill with a sterile potting soil. After planting I cover the seeds with vermiculite. These flats are then placed outside, near the greenhouse for ease of observation and watering. To protect from birds and rodents I cover the flats with screening.

Germination may take place over a period of several weeks or months. I find that with the greater the fluctuation in moisture and temperature the better the germination. But, of course, never let the flats dry out.

Seedlings may be removed from the flats and transplanted to permanent areas almost any time after they reach two to four inches in size. Don't be too quick to dispose of the flats when germination does not take place as soon as you expected. Some varieties and species take longer. As Joergg Leiss mentioned in his article (November 1982 Newsletter) "Propagation of Syringa reticulata and Forms", germination of that species does not occur until August. With choice seeds I sometimes store the flats in a cold frame over winter and find that additional seedlings emerge the following spring.

* * * * *

SORRY.....

Our apologies to Dr. Lammerts for our error in omitting the Tables from his paper published in the October 1982 issue of the Newsletter. Also to the readers who could have found this omission irritating.

Along with these tables Dr. Lammerts includes this correction:

The name of the white variety introduced by General Bionomics is 'Sierra Snow'. If anyone has this variety I would like to get cuttings for grafting. Also the population referred to on page 3 actually resulted from crossing 'Sierra Snow' with purple red and plum colored varieties. This accounts for the occurrence of two white seedlings in this relatively small population.

In order to make the Tables more meaningful, we are reprinting the entire article.

WARM WEATHER TOLERANT LILACS:
THEIR ORIGIN AND HYBRIDIZING POSSIBILITIES

by Walter E. Lammerts

In the fall of 1942 when at the University of California, Los Angeles, I made a trip up to Northern California, and among other organizations visited the W.B. Clarke Nurseries in San Jose, California. Mr. Clarke showed me various lilac varieties and selections from open pollinated seed that he had grown. He gave me seed of several species, named varieties and selections which he had made. As soon as I returned I planted seed of the following varieties: 'Lamartine', 'Buffon', 'Vestale', 'Kate Sessions', 'Claude Bernard', and an early leafing selection, C112, which he had not yet named.

In June of 1945 I left the University of California, Los Angeles and went to work for Manchester Boddy, then publisher of the Los Angeles Daily News, at his lovely Rancho Del Descanso in La Canada, California. By the spring of 1950 the lilac seedlings at U.C.L.A. were in fine bloom and I went back several times and selected 42108/20 as the best lavender one, had it budded on privet, patented it, and introduced it as 'Lavender Lady'. It was patented in 1954 and sold by Descanso Distributors for several years. The patent of course expired in 1972 and several nurseries have sold it since then. Now it is available at the Monrovia Nursery of Monrovia, California. I obtained this variety by growing plants from Clarke's C112 which was population 42108. There were 23 plants in this population, four of which

had lovely large flower clusters, but 42108/20 combined the best flower type with early leafing and good plant habit.

When at Descanso Gardens from 1945 until 1953, I grew 23 populations obtained by intercrossing the best selections found in the 1942 populations. Seeds of these were planted January 3, 4, and 5th, 1951 and the seedling were transplanted June 19, 20 and 21st, 1951. When Manchester Boddy sold Descanso Gardens to Los Angeles County in 1953, I went to Livermore to concentrate on rose breeding. At the time of the sale Robert M. Boddy, president of Descanso Distributors, had the lilac plants moved to Chimo, California where his nursery was located. On March 26, 1956 I drove down to Southern California and made a quick survey of the lilacs with Robert M. Boddy on March 27, 1956. There were a total of 615 plants in these populations so it took several days to classify the ones which were in flower. Robert Boddy and his plant propagator finished classifying them for me. Some idea of the variation which was shown, due no doubt to these populations tracing back to hybrids made by Mr. Clarke by crossing Syringa oblata X S. vulgaris is given in Table 1. We selected about a dozen seedlings as being unusually lovely in flower colour, size, form, and also early leafing. When Descanso Distributors was sold, Boddy took these to his ranch at Fort Bragg, California. In 1974 he made an agreement with the Hine's Nursery of Santa Ana, California, selling them the entire collection subject to a royalty payment to me for each plant sold of any variety patented by them and introduced. In 1975 they introduced and patented 'Old Lace', a light pink (technically purple to red purple), 'Heather Haze', another even lighter pink, 'Big Blue', a very large flowered violet blue, and 'Sweet Charity', a vivid purple red in color. All of these leaf out and

flower normally without the usual winter chilling required by most lilac varieties. All of these varieties undoubtedly inherited their ability to leaf out and flower normally in warm weather climates from Clarke's early leafing seedling C112.

In 1959 while at Livermore I began a modest program of lilac breeding crossing various selections made by Robert M. Boddy, and sent to me for observation. One of these, a very early leafing white seedling, was crossed with 42107/65, a large flowered, broad petaled white seedling of 'Lamartine'. Among the seedling was a very large clustered white one with unusually large individual florets. It was quite early leafing in Livermore. This was patented by me in 1967 and introduced by Dennison Morey of General Bionomics in Santa Rosa, California. Unfortunately this company is no longer in business and I do not know where this fine white lilac may be obtained. Gophers finally succeeded in killing my only plant. I am at present growing a population of lilacs resulting from intercrossing an un-introduced pink selection from one of the 1951 populations with a very large clustered lavender one. Among these are three selections which the Leonard Coates Nurseries of Watsonville hope to introduce as soon as they are able to propagate them on their own roots. One of these is an unusually fragrant large clustered pink variety and the other two are lavender ones considerably darker in color than 'Lavender Lady' and also very fragrant.

My interest in lilacs was reawakened when Dr. Joel Margaretten came up here to visit me in July of 1977. At that time he stressed the need of getting warm weather tolerant dwarf lilacs. Knowing the ease with which dwarfs are obtained in rose breeding it seemed to me that the easiest way to get them would be to intercross the best selections I had been growing here and

select for dwarf habit among the resulting seedlings. I had not been very observant as to the seed set in the population of seedlings which I had growing here. So unfortunately in 1978 the few crosses which I made simply did not result in any seed. In 1980 I had a bit more luck but still obtained very few seedlings and none of these appear to be dwarfs.

So then in 1981 I decided to really give this approach a real trial. Accordingly I made 459 pollinations of selection #1 with selection #2, and self pollinated 362 flowers. Also I crossed 194 flowers of selection #1 with 'Dr. Chadwick', using pollen of one of the three plants so kindly sent to me by Dr. Donald R. Egolf about the middle of February, 1981. Since 'Miss Kim' was also in flower at that time, the first week of April, I crossed two selections with it using a total of 560 flowers.

Also reciprocally used 'Dr. Chadwick' as the female parent pollinating 100 flowers with pollen of #1 lavender selection, and 25 flowers with the first plant in the row of warm weather tolerant selections or P₁.

Now at first all of the crosses of selection #1 X #2, the self pollinated ones, and those of #1 X 'Dr. Chadwick' started to have enlarged pistils and by the end of May were about half the size of fully mature capsules. Then the supporting stems of the various clusters of developing pistils started to turn brown and by the first of June all except those crossed with 'Miss Kim' had dried up! This of course was a terrific disappointment after such a good start. Those of 'Miss Kim' continued to look good until in July when they also dried up with the exception of two capsules from one of the selections which matured, each having one seed. As predicted by

Dr. James S. Pringle these did not germinate, though one of them appeared to have a good embryo.

Fortunately I was more successful with the reciprocal cross, and was able to harvest 88 seeds from 'Dr. Chadwick' X #1 selection and five seeds from the cross P₁.

I did not attempt any crosses of my selections this spring as it rained so much during the flowering season that any program of cross pollination would have been a waste of time. However, I did start germinating the seed obtained from 'Dr. Chadwick' and am glad to be able to report that I have one plant from 30 seeds of the cross with selection #1 and four plants from the cross with P₁. The five seeds resulting from the cross with P₁ germinated on towel paper very easily, but I lost one seedling when they were transplanted to soil. Contrarywise, the seeds from the cross with selection #1 did not germinate on towel paper. In order to get any response I had to excise the embryos from the seed coats, and only about ten were at all normal in size. Of these only one turned green when placed between towel paper in a plastic tray kept in a warm cubicle of my greenhouse in January.

On June 30th I placed 25 seeds between moist towel paper and kept them on a window sill in my kitchen where they get the warmth of the afternoon sun. Though the seeds swelled up, they did not germinate. Accordingly I excised all the embryos and the results are shown in Table II.

Of the fairly normal sized embryos 7 have turned green and with good luck should result in viable plants.

The remaining 32 seeds were placed between the towel paper July 9th and the results of excising them are also shown in Table II.

From the difficulty in germinating seeds of

the 'Dr. Chadwick' crosses, especially the high percentage of dried up and minute to very small embryos which did not turn green, it would seem the 'Dr. Chadwick' is genetically quite distinct from my S. x hyacinthiflora hybrids.

From the open pollinated seed of several of my warm weather tolerant seedlings planted in 1979 I have 25 seedling surviving of which four are definitely dwarfs.

In 1977 I ordered two plants each of 'Ferna Alexander' and 'Miss Kim', and the tree lilac from the Alexander Nurseries. This year for the curiosity of it I crossed 'Ferna Alexander' with 'Miss Kim' and to my surprise every pistil which I pollinated rapidly grew into a seed pod! There are about 75 seed capsules developing. Whether they will ripen into mature embryos remains to be seen. I note that 'Ferna Alexander' is listed as a Prestoniae hybrid which would make it a cross of S. reflexa X S. villosa, according to Pringle.¹ Since 'Miss Kim' is a S. patula selection this would mean that we have here an interseries cross successful at least as regards producing normal looking seed capsules. This is something which so far has not been possible according to excellent evidence presented by Pringle. So it will be most interesting to see if ripe seeds actually develop and if so whether they germinate.

The field of lilac hybridizing has many fascinating facets and regret that I am not able to give more time to investigating them.

1. Pringle, James S. A review of attempted and reported interseries and intergeneric hybridization in Syringa. (Oleaceae) Baileya, September 1981.

TABLE I

Classification of Lilac Populations Spring 1956. Population-
50216 Large Flowered Lilac #3 x Pink (42109/4)

No.	Leafing out date	Height	Leaf Size	Cluster size	Floret size	Color	General Remarks
1	3/26	3½'	¾ x 1¼"	7 x 5"	¾"	Pink	Good small foliage. Colorful small plant
2	3/24	4 ¾'	7/8 x 1½"	6 x 6"	1"	Pink	Propagate for poss. intro.
3	3/24	4½'	7/8 x 1¼"	5½ x 5½"	¾"	Lilac	Destroy
4	3/28	4½'	1¼ x 1½"	1½ x 2½"	½"	Lilac	Destroy
5	3/24	6'	1 3/8 x 1 3/4	3¼ x 7"	¾"	Lavender	Prop. for Pink intro.
6	3/31	4¼'	1 ¾ x 2½"	3 X 6"	½"	Lavender	Destroy
7	3/28	4 ¾'	1 1/8 x 1½"	3 x 4"	¾"	Pink	Fls. born high up. Open grower Save
8	4/1	3 ¾'	1½ x 2"	3 x 4½"	½"	Lilac	Destroy
9	3/26	5'	1½ x 2"	8 x 8"	1"	Pale purple	Good foliage Big clusters Save.

General comments: Remarkably uniform for small leaf size. Seems that this trait is dominant. Plant open pollinated seed of P2, P5, and P9 for possibly better pink varieties. Except for small leaves P2 may be worth while introducing. Florets larger than 50219/24 and plant bigger.

TABLE II

Classification of embryos of 'Dr. Chadwick' x #1 warm weather selection.

Excised after seed kept one week between moistened towel paper in plastic tray.

	Rotted	Dried up	normal* in size	small to minute	Accidentally broken	Total
June 30 1982	1	6	11	5	2	25
July 9 1982		2	15	14	1	32
Total	1	8	26	19	3	57

*Actually the "normal in size" embryos were only from $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$'s of the size of embryos from my warm weather open pollinated seeds.

HELPFUL HINTS FROM CALIFORNIA

by Dr. Joel Margaretten
Regional Vice President

Pruning

When to prune - I prefer to prune in fall or winter when I can see what I am doing. The plant is dormant then with no leaves to interfere with the work.

What to cut - First, cut off all dead stems and branches, then all branches that run against each other. Crooked or twisted branches are usually short stemmed and produce poor flowers so I cut them out along with any unwanted suckers. In rehabilitating an old bush it is advisable to leave a few live suckers to take over, if old stems are to be removed. Exception: You should not remove all of the branches in the procedure if there are not enough young ones coming along. Leave at least three and wait until the new ones are 18 inches high the following year and then cut the rest of the old ones out. The larger old branches will give nourishment to the shrub in the interim. All suckers should be removed if the plant is not on its own root.

Remove all spent flowers unless you wish to allow them to form seeds. Cut them off at the end of the flower stem leaving next years flower buds right below the cut. Cut seed pods at the same place.

Some bushes get too tall. Some are naturally tall. A few branches can be cut down to a 6-foot height every year to keep your plants to a desirable height and form. Dwarf varieties should simply be thinned out or they get too 'jungle-like'.

Winter pruning may sacrifice some of the following year's flowers but you will end up with a better looking bush, better flowers and a longer life for the shrub.

INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY

12TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

About the Convention Location

The Convention will be held at the J.F. Friedrich Center on the Lakeshore of the University of Wisconsin Campus. Built in the 1950's for use as a dormitory, the facility has recently been completely remodeled for use as a conference center. Guest rooms are hotel-style. Each room is air-conditioned, with twin studio beds, private bath, telephone, radio and color TV.

The Lakeshore location provides attractive scenery and a pathway of several miles for walking, jogging and birding. Tennis and basketball courts adjoin the Center. For a small charge, visitors may use the nearby natatorium which provides such indoor activities as swimming, racquetball and squash. Parking is available for a small fee.

While the program for the convention will be held at the Friedrich Center (Program details next month), the principal activity will be visits to the U.W. Arboretum both Friday and Saturday afternoons. The Arboretum is located two miles south of the campus. Its 1,200 acres feature a unique experiment in the restoration and re-creation of native plant communities (more about this next month). Guided tours of some of these communities will be available for convention participants. A considerable part of each afternoon will be given to tours and individual inspection of the sixty-acre Longenecker Horticultural Gardens in the center of the Arboretum.

REGISTRATION FORM

INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY

12TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

12-15 May 1983

Madison, Wisconsin

Registration Deadline - 30 April 1983

Registration Fee \$40

Registration Fee Includes: two lunches and two dinners, on Friday 13 May and Saturday 14 May; local transportation; and miscellaneous expenses. The fee does not include: breakfasts, which will be available on an individual basis; or rooms.

Room arrangements must be made individually with the Friedrich Center or elsewhere. Rates at the Friedrich Center will be \$24 for single and \$28 double-occupancy, with payment upon arrival. A card for making reservations at the Center, or information about other accommodations, will be sent with confirmation of your registration.

Complete the form on the following page and return it to:

International Lilac Society
U.W. Arboretum
1207 Seminole Highway
Madison, Wisconsin 53711

Make cheque payable to: International Lilac Society.