

# Lilac Newsletter

Vol. XIV, No. 6, June, 1988

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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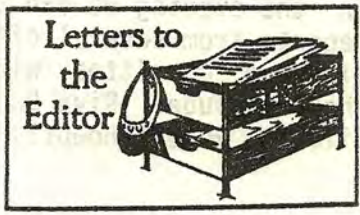
### Report From The Editor

Well, I'm editor again so there won't be many changes in the Newsletter this year. This is not to say that nothing was done by the Board meeting at Rochester, in fact, two promising suggestions were made and I report them here for your comment.

One was to follow the lead of other plant societies and publish a bigger and better newsletter on a quarterly basis. It would have a real cover, possibly with a color picture, and have the capability of black and white pictures in the text. Since I couldn't do the editing under this plan, Joel Margaretten volunteered to check with several firms on the west coast who specialize in printing journals for non-profit organizations. The Society would have an editor to collect information and plan the issue and a technical editor in the publishing firm to get it done.

The second idea is to split the job. The editor would be responsible for collecting the news and information, typing it in page sized chunks and preparing a posted mock up of the issue. The editor would then send it to us here in Durham and we would cut the stencils, mimeograph the pages, collate and staple the sheets and mail them to Pauline Fiala and Charles Holetich for mailing. This idea would free the editor from having to own or have access to the machinery necessary to reproduce the copies. All the editor would need is a typewriter, scissors and paste.

As soon as the publication costs are collected, the Publications Committee will be evaluating them so if any member would like to explore the idea of being the editor under either of these plans, please let me know soon so the Publications Committee can consider it at the time they look at our options. Don't let lack of experience stop you from writing. We have others who can provide advice to a beginning editor.





## Convention News

The 17th Annual Convention is now over and "a good time was had by all." For me, the "good time" started when I arrived at the Rochester Airport and discovered that my luggage had gone to Dayton, Ohio. (The airline recovered it and it was only a minor inconvenience). From the airport, I went to the hotel and found Bill Utley trying to shoehorn late registrants into rooms because the town was full and we had the biggest convention registration in years. Apparently he was successful because I didn't hear of anyone sleeping in the hall or on sofas. And his efforts were appreciated; other people looking for rooms had to go as far as Buffalo and Syracuse.

The lilac bloom was perfectly timed for the convention, only the first of many things that Bob Hoepfl handled perfectly for our comfort and entertainment. The first morning was for speakers. Dr. Ken Mudge talked about micropropagation of lilacs and the new procedures he is studying to bring the little plantlets from the test tube to the harsh open air environment. Jim Kelly shared the problems of judging quality in lilacs and showed pictures of lilacs from the Rochester collection. The last "speaker" was a panel who traced the history of lilacs at Highland Park and the contribution of the people who were important in its development.

In the afternoon we toured the Smith Farm where many of Dick Fenicchia's seedlings were on display. From there we went to the George Eastman House where we planted a 'George Eastman' lilac and enjoyed the house tour and the gardens. The weather predictions had not been good for this first day but it turned out beautiful with no rain until we were all safely back in the hotel (and some of us in the whirlpool spa in the hotel next door--but that's another story).

In the evening we had the President's Dinner and the Annual Meetings with reports from several officers and committees including the report from the election committee with the names of those newly elected to the Board. They included Riva Ballreich, Daniel Cohen, Walter Eickhorst, Robert Gilbert, Robert Hoepfl, William Horman, William Utley and Roger Vick.



Saturday morning we were off to the Ellwanger Gardens for a guided tour of plantings that included a couple of hugh old beeches and many of the plants carried by the old Ellwanger nursery. Then we visited the private gardens of Charles Hallick that featured a dazzling display of Rhododendron and Azalea bloom. From here we went to Highland Park where we joined the full Rochester Lilac Festival for lunch and visits to the newly renovated Conservatory Greenhouse as well as seeing the great display of lilac bloom from the festival grounds all the way down to the pansy bed. The Russian cultivars were at peak bloom and 'Rochester' was spectacular. Every garden needs one! Just about time for the lilac auction, the heavens opened and it poured but that presented no problem because Bob Hoepfl had thoughtfully provided a large tent. (He also arranged for the rain to stop after the auction so everybody could get their prizes back to the hotel without getting wet). The auction was a huge success with several plants being sold for over \$100 each. And the Awards Banquet that evening was also most enjoyable with awards going to some very nice people (that will be honored in a separate article).

The weather cleared out by Sunday morning so that a goodly number could enjoy the trip to the Utley's Grape Hill Garden and a tour of the Sonnenberg Gardens in Canadaigua.

The memories of the 17th Annual Convention still crowd in---Don Wedge asking people to describe lilac colors---the peanut shells on the floor of the bar---the Gilberts' video of the bears in Bern, Switzerland---the group picture taken on the steps of the Eastman House---'Dwight D. Eisenhower,' Dick Fenicchia's seedling at the Smith Farm---nine people from California---Ed Hasselkus in from Wisconsin---Tissue cultured lilacs for fifty cents each---Pictures of lilacs growing in Florida---and lilacs, lilacs, lilacs; enough memories to hold until next year's convention in Ohio jointly hosted by Ameri-Hort and the Holden Arboretum. See you there.





## LILAC PILGRIMAGE 1988\*

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By Robert B. Clark, Meredith, New Hampshire

On the third Sunday of May I left Birchwood heading for Plymouth, Vermont where I joined Orville and Ellen Steward and Gertrude Hodgdon. The first leg of our pilgrimage brought us to Grape Hill Gardens at Clyde, N.Y. before dark. Bill and Lois Utley greeted us and showed us their glowing lilacs near peak bloom.

The second leg westward brought us to Falconskeape by mid-afternoon on May 16, having passed through a series of heavy showers. As we turned into Bechtel Road from Smith Road (west of Medina, OH) our eyes were arrested by a cloud of white crab apple bloom, called 'Moonglow'. Rain and hail showers had taken other crab apple petals. Here, beside the dark clusters of 'Sarah Sands', at the head of the driveway stood this entrancing and fragrant crab apple.

At Falconskeape, our hosts were Fr. Fiala and Peter and Karen Murray. Falconskeape was the site of the Society's 1980 convention. In the intervening eight years many improvements have been achieved. The squire now resides at Ocala, FL and the Murrays superintend the grounds. Several raised planting beds near the barn have been laid out and new paths made through the woodland. Here grow seedlings of Fr. Fiala's breeding projects of lilacs, crab apples, daylilies, peonies and nut trees.

The climate of northeastern Ohio is capricious. We arrived slightly after peak bloom for lilacs, that is, the so-called French hybrids of "common" lilacs including the Rochester strain which is the generic basis of many of Fr. Fiala's superb cultivars.

What we found at Falconskeape besides the arresting blues, such as 'Wedgwood Blue' and an unnamed seedling which took Orville's eye, were several USNA introductions sent out by Dr. Donald Egolf for testing and use in Fr. Fiala's breeding program. I had heard of the white-flowered form of the early broadleaved lilac, *Syringa oblata*, now for the first time I saw it with its loose feathery clusters. Also noteworthy is the blue-flowered form recently introduced into test gardens thus providing the full range of color to the early hybrids class, *S. hyacinthiflora*.

\*Editor's Note: As usual, Bob Clark shares with us his spring travels among lilac plantings. (You could make a whole garden from the lilacs he mentions).



Other Falconskeape lilacs of note were the dark flowered 'Arch McKean' with immense upright clusters, the two-toned dark flowered 'Albert F. Holden', the pink 'Lourene Wishart' all scheduled for tissue culture propagation before next year's annual meeting in Ohio (around Mother's Day).

After a 3-day midweek hiatus we visited Webster (NY) Smith Road lilac plantation on Friday as a feature of the Society's 17th annual meeting. These selected, as yet unnamed 'Rochester', seedlings constitute a source of new plants for Highland Botanical Park.

Outstanding lilacs were designated by blue streamers signifying need for propagation. The most conspicuous lilac, a white, occupied a prominent corner near Smith Road. Near the front also were two dwarfish or slow growing dark reddish lilacs. Toward the rear was a white-flowered slow grower with handsome erect clusters. There were a few noteworthy doubles. However, the most curious lilac was a dark-flowered plant with a branchlet bearing pale flowers whose petals were faintly edged whitish indicating its probable parent as 'Sensation'.

On Saturday we visited Highland Botanical Park which was celebrating its 100th birthday. Many changes have been made since the 5th annual meeting in 1976. The Lambertson Conservatory has been completely remodeled and modernized. Parking for cars and buses has been enlarged. Entrance to the lilac collection has been shifted westward, but the pansy bed remains is refreshingly attractive. And of course, most of the original plants, including lilacs, have become stately.

At the west end of the lilac collection new plantings consisting of 21st century 'Rochester' strain plus Russian lilacs have been made. Noteworthy are two cultivars developed by the former superintendent of horticulture, Richard A. Fenicchia, now retired. These are the floriferous 'Flower City', a lavender-flowered upright shrub, and 'Frederick Law Olmsted', a slow growing plant with white flowers in upright clusters.

Also seen in this sector near the magnolias were two outstanding seedling raised by Leonid A. Kolensikov, 'Krasavitza Moskv', a floriferous white flowering upright shrub, and 'Znamya Lenia', a slow growing lilac with perhaps the deepest red flowers, comparable with Dr. Rankin's 'Edith Braun'.

Three of Dr. Skinner's early hybrid, 'Pocahontas', were conspicuous among the several Rouen lilacs in the middle sector west of the tall Japanese



cypresses. In the older section we found the Lemoine double white, 'Edith Cavell', which is the seed parent of 'Rochester'. Upslope toward the rhododendrons we found Dunbar's premier cultivar, 'General Sherman' of which we wrote, in the royal plural, "We consider this perhaps one of the most beautiful lilacs in cultivation."

Sunday, May 22nd was dedication day for Grape Hill Gardens, the horticultural park and institute of research and testing of ornamental plants, built by the Society's founding and current board members, Bill and Lois Utley. Father John Fiala gave the dedicatory address. The Honorable Frank Horton, congressman from the 29th district of New York, accompanied by his wife, Nancy, presented GHG with a flag that had flown over the Capitol on July 4, 1987.

Noteworthy lilacs in bloom during the ceremonies were Lemoine's 'Monument', an alternate year blooming white which is worth waiting an extra year for its spectacular erect and floriferous clusters. GHG is noted for its collection of Maarse's 'Sensation' assembled from different sources. The distinctive coppery colored form of 'Lucie Baltet', now called 'Clyde Lucie' found in a local door yard garden, is also featured as well as the widely grown pink-flowered 'Lucie Baltet'.

Near the visitors' center is growing two floriferous dark-toned single lilacs which "experts" concur to be 'Andenken an Ludwig Spaeth'. Also, a bush behind an old stone wall, a bluish double flowered shrub, is believed to be Lemoine's 'Olivier de Serres'.

Back at Birchwood by noon Monday 23rd I found the broad-leaved Korean *Syr. oblata* var. *dilatata* 'Birchwood,' a pink, in bloom as well as several early hybrids of *S. hyacinthiflora*: 'Lewis Maddock,' 'Maidens Blush,' 'Anabel,' 'Esther Staley' and 'Assessippi.' In traveling 750 miles from continental Ohio to maritime New England I was able to reverse bloom from past peak to full bloom at upstate NY to early bloom all in 10 days. And then finally we visited Gertrude Hodgdon's Hamesbest Garden on May 31st where we found Ken Berdeen's 'Cynthia' with its large clusters of shell pink flowers outstanding.



The town's position on the south coast of England adjacent to the English Channel and its very thin calcareous soil overlying the South Downs has, over the years, led to a predominance of Elms which, despite the ravages of Dutch Elm Disease in the United Kingdom, has with considerable effort from the Local Authority and its staff meant that one of the finest stands of this species had been preserved. All that changed between 2 and 4 a.m. on October 16th when the worst of the storm passed over the counties of Kent and Sussex. Of some 700 trees in the town centre area of the Old Steine, Victoria Gardens and The Level Open Space, little more than 100 now stand and many of these are so badly mutilated by the wind that they will need to be drastically pollarded.

#### PARK IS BACK IN BLOOM\*

It could take 100 years for Withdean Park in Brighton to look the way it did before the Great Gale.

But thanks to dedicated park staff it is back in bloom.

Park workers have made sure no one walking there will trip over toppled trees or broken branches.

A mammoth effort, spear-headed by park foreman Roland Thornton, has cleared away all the debris from the grass walking areas.

Daffodils might not quite fill the gaps left by the lost trees but swift action has saved 90 percent of the hundreds of trees in the park's national lilac collection.

Mr. Thornton, foreman since 1958, said: "We had as much damage as anyone else. We lost 90 percent of the mature trees.

"But we managed to save most of the lilacs in the top part of the park. Instead of coming right out of the ground they were partly pulled up. We pruned them severely and we've put the roots back. They should be back to normal in two or three years' time."



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Meanwhile, in the rest of the park Mr. Thornton and his team of four have been busy clearing up.

He said: "We've cleared the trees and branches which were obstructing people walking on the grass and we've burned the wood so we don't have to take it away. I think people appreciate what we've done. In another six weeks when the surviving trees are in leaf it will look even better.

**\*Editor's Note:**

Withdean Park contains the largest collection of lilacs in England. It is situated on a steep sloping site facing south over the white cliffs of Dover. You can see pieces of chalk in the soil where the lilacs are growing and the pH is 8.4.

The site has always been exposed to high winds. It is the only place where I have ever seen lilacs staked to keep them from blowing over but, as you can see from the article, the "Great Gales" of October 15 and 16th 1987 was extra. Local winds at Brighton were measured at 108 miles per hour.



**A REQUEST FROM ROBERT CLARK**

Ten years ago, ILS member Raymond R. Baker of Holderness (P.O. Ashland), NH died. If anyone who attended the early conventions has a snapshot of him, please lend it to R.B. Clark, Cattle Landing Rd., Meredith, NH 03253. He was in the fourth row of the group photograph at the Amherst Convention in May, 1977. Ray grew seedling lilacs of rare quality.



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