



The Pipeline

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This issue is strictly for the scientists among the membership and to others who are certain there is no such thing as a lilac named Marley nor was there ever such a thing.

MR. LUMLEY'S SEARCH: At the May meeting in Lisle, IL Mr. Fred Niedz gave your editor the following transcript recorded by him of Mr. Lumley's statements in May, 1973.

"On April 11, 1973 I made a trip to Dubrovnik, Yugoslavia, of course looking for lilacs with the international convention coming up and the fact that I did not have in my own planting the Marley which is supposed to be the early ancestor of *Syringa vulgaris*.

"By the time 4 days had elapsed, I was on a bus trip from Dubrovnik to Venice, up the Dalmatian coast. I had gotten 400 meters above the city when I saw my first lilac. By the 6th or 7th day I was in Lake Bled and I climbed one of the largest mountains we had ridden up in our bus.

"Here I finally found a plant that I liked. It was alone, had no marks on it, had grass and bushes around it and I dug 21 shoots, washed the dirt off their roots and brought them back to Amherst, Mass.

"I was told by 3 professionals in Yugoslavia that this was a Marley. I am convinced that nobody else ever went up and clipped that bush. It was an old bush, about 6 inches in diameter with branches that were 3 inches across. It had at least 100 shoots around it.

" The ones I brought home are planted and are doing very well now. I gave plants to Dr. John Wister, Fr. Fiala, Walter Oakes and promised one to the Arnold Arboretum. I do no hybridizing myself, so would be interested in giving a plant to anyone who wants to do some work on them."

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IS THERE OR WAS THERE A MARLEY???? This account, and the statements by several ILS members that there never was and isn't such a lilac so intrigued your ed that she did a bit of research on the Marley lilac. Since she owns a super-library, it was unnecessary to travel elsewhere or maybe she would not have attempted this.

Here are the results:

Starting with THE reference for all horticultural questions, the 3-volume Standard Cyclopedia of Horticulture by L.H. Bailey, the 1935 edition, under the listing "Some of the best single-flowered varieties," and the color "Red", the Cyclopedia gives "Marleyensis, sometimes called Rubra de Marley". The account later states that In Europe this is an excellent forcing variety, that plants are always on their own roots and that *S. marleyensis* can be forced even when not potted, when roots are merely in earth balls. Later in the account, *S. marleyensis* is given as a horticultural variety of *S. vulgaris*.

Hortus II, also by Bailey, 1941, gives the fact that *S. marleyensis* is considered the same plant as that called *S. vulgaris* variety *purpurea*.

The only monograph on *Syringa*, The Lilac by Susan McKelvey (1928) adds these facts. After discussing the white common lilac as the first of the color variations of *S. vulgaris*, comes the statement "The second color variety of the common lilac is: *Syringa vulgaris* var *purpurea*, first described by Weston in 1770.

Two pages later, "Differs from the type, *S. vulgaris*, in the darker color of its flowers." "Known only as a cultivated plant." "The plant now known as *S. f. var purpurea* is first mentioned about 125 years after the common lilac was introduced into Europe and about 60 years later than the white variety. It appears as a name only, as *Syringa sive Lilac flore saturate purpureo*, which is simple enough Latin for anyone to translate into the deep purple lilac.

William Aiton, in 1810, calls the plant *S. v. var. violacea* and refers to the plant figured in Curtis's Botanical Magazine, plate 183 in Vol. 6 (1792). Several other botanists also refer to this plate, so your ed, being the proud owner of the first 45 volumes of this magazine, looked at that plate and to her it looks like a pale, red-violet common lilac.

The description under the picture is of "*Syringa caerulea*, the blew pipe tree (name given by Parkinson in Paradisus. "both Gerard and Parkinson describe 2 sorts, the blue and the white; to these another sort is added by more modern writers, superior in beauty to the original, as producing larger bunches of flowers, of a brighter hue, having more of the purple tint, and hence called by some the purple lilac. Miller considers the 3 as different species."

Continuing in McKelvey, we find that *S. v. violacea* and *S. v. purpurea* are often considered separate varieties. Now comes another name, *S. media*, for the purple variety of the common lilac, used by Mirbel in 1804. Noisette also writes about this *S. media*, which he also calls *Lilas de Marly* and considers to be a variety of *S. vulgaris*. Translating from his French description, "its flowers are larger, deeper (in color) and form a denser thyrse than the first (the common lilac) of which it has the agreeable odor".

Other botanists, in 1808, identify the same plant, known in France as *Lilac de Marly*, with the purple variety of *S. vulgaris*. McKelvey says, "It is possible that the *Lilas de Marly* may have originated at the Chateau de Marley which was situated not far from Versailles".

In 1876 the Comte de Jaubert gives as corresponding names for the plant he calls *S. v. var grandiflora purpurea*, *Lilas de Marley* and *Lilas Charles X*, which is a cultivar that many of you know today.

McKelvey concludes this discussion, "but I do not believe that at this day it (the lilac cultivated as *Lilas de Marly*, *Marlyensis*, etc.) is separable from *S. vulgaris var. purpurea*."

Wister in Lilac Culture, 1930, gives *Charles X* as having originated before 1831 and as synonymous with *Rubra Major (Caroli)*. *Purpurea* is not mentioned.

Alice Harding in Lilacs in My Garden, 1933, mentions neither *Charles X* or *purpurea*.

Rehder, Manual of Cultivated Trees and Shrubs, second edition, 1940, gives the name *S. v. purpurea*, attributes it to Weston, and doesn't mention *Marley* or *marleyensis*. Nor does Wyman, in Wyman's Gardening Encyclopedia, 1971.

Douglas Bartrum in Lilac & Laburnum, 1959, describes *Charles X* as "This is an old variety which has in the past appeared under many names. It was first mentioned in France about 1830 as *Charles Dix*. Loudon, the Scottish horticulturist, stated that it was probably a variety of *S. vulgaris var. purpurea*, though the specimen he had was not in bloom. (It came from Soulange-Bodin, who produced the famous hybrid *Magnolia x soulangiana*). Some of the other names for the plant were '*Caroli X*', '*Rubra major*', '*Rouge de Trianon*'. In all probability it is very close to *S. v. var. purpurea*; its origin, however is not known."

So, Mr. Lumley, there undoubtedly once was a *Marley lilac*, it has probably since been "merged" and, unless you have seen the flower color of the parent or of your shoots, you really don't know what you have.

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