



# The Pipeline

Vol. III, No. 11, November, 1977

**THE INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY**

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*INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY* is a non-profit corporation comprised of people who share a particular appreciation and fondness for lilacs. By exchange of knowledge, experience and facts gained by members, it is helping to promote, educate and broaden public understanding and awareness of lilacs.

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#### MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION

Single annual .....	\$ 5.00
Family .....	7.50
Sustaining .....	10.00
Institutional/Commercial .....	15.00
Life .....	100.00

Mail membership dues to I.L.S. Secretary, Walter W. Oakes, Box 315,  
Rumford, Maine. 04276.

GROWING LILACS IN WARM CLIMATES

The International Lilac Society has been deluged with enquiries for information on how to grow lilacs in warm climates. Because of my experience in growing the flower in California, I have been asked to write this paper so that our fellow horticulturists in the South could also enjoy lilacs as do our northern friends. The requirements and procedures are quite simple when one understands that lilacs are deciduous and require a period of dormancy. When I first came out to California I was told to forget about raising lilacs here, they would never bloom. Being stubborn by nature I was determined to try. Yes, they flowered alright, but they were puny and soon aborted. This abnormal behavior continued for four years in spite of all the watering, fertilizing, pruning and spraying, nothing seemed to help. There I was with six tall shrubs, green and healthy, but no flowers; they never lost their leaves during those four years. What was wrong ? I checked and rechecked and the only difference between mine and those in the northeast was that my plants never went dormant. How could I make them go into this period of rest ? I knew that European growers forced them into bloom in the wintertime, breaking the cycle by applying ground heat to their dormant plants. To reverse the process by freezing the ground would do the trick, but that would be almost impossible in our climate. What else would do it ? Simple; take the water away from them at the end of the normal growing season - it worked.

Of the nearly two hundred lilac cultivars at Margaretten Park, all but the immature specimens have flowered, some better than others, some different than the original plant from which they were taken. Because of the care which the plants receive, forms that Mrs. McKelvey describes in her book as having small florets frequently show up larger and prettier. I have observed changes in shade which may be caused by differences in soil and water mineral content. There is no difference whether you plant species or hybrids, they all

bloom. The Lemoine selections as well as Havemeyers, Rankins, Prestons and my own seedlings have all been prize winners. Unlike lilacs in the east, our plants must have care and cannot be neglected as many I have seen in my travels. In those cold areas of the country dormancy is no problem, so why bother, they flower anyway.

Remember that history tells us that Marco Polo brought the original ones from China and dropped them off in Persia, a warm country, and on his second trip picked them up there and planted them in Turkey, also a warm country. When Ogier Ghislain de Busbecq the Austro-Hungarian ambassador saw them in Turkey they were in bloom. Bringing them to Europe meant still another period of acclimatization and change of cycle. It survived and eventually spread over much of the rest of the world.

To start with a plant that has been acclimated to warm weather helps. It will save about two years of waiting for flowers. Do not plant in the lawn where the sprinkler will keep the soil soggy and prevent them from going dormant. Place them on a slope or terrace where they will get good drainage - in full sunlight. The first year water them until they are established, then the second year do not water them after August 15th until the end of November or the beginning of December when they usually get natural rainfall. In arid areas water them from November until August 15th and only occasionally thereafter if the ground is dry to two feet below the surface, just to keep a little moisture around the roots. In these arid areas drip irrigation works very well and conserves water. In humid and wet climates where it rains intermittently all year round I suggest putting a plastic apron on the ground about 4ft. in diameter, to help keep the soil dry during the August to December period. I have also set lilacs in large redwood pots and followed the same routine. Be sure to set the pot on bricks to keep them up off the ground. Emptying a couple of trays of ice cubes from your refrigerator over the root area each week or two

during this period when you are trying to induce this dormancy will also help.

One of the advantages of the change of cycle is early flowers - they will blossom in April or early May instead of at the end of May. The late varieties will flower about two to three weeks later.

To recapitulate: get an acclimated plant, establish in good soil, slightly acid and well drained - NOT IN THE LAWN. In the second year after it shows good growth, take the water away August 15th and allow to go dormant so that the leaves turn yellow, brown and fall off. Start watering again in December if there is no appreciable rain and continue until August 15th. Follow the usual directions for pruning, fertilizing and insect control as recommended by the International Lilac Society, they publish literature that will help you raise the prettiest lilacs you have ever seen. For additional information write Walter W. Oakes, Secretary, International Lilac Society, Box 315, Rumford, Maine. 04276.

Dr. Joel Margaretten.

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ANNUAL FALL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- President Clark reports (briefly) :-

The annual fall meeting of the Board of Directors was held October 15th at Lima, Penna. (Tyler Arboretum). More than a sufficient number of voting members were in attendance to establish a quorum plus several people representing the host institution for the 1978 Conference. Preliminary convention arrangements were examined, viewed and discussed during the morning session and at this point in time all appears to be

shaping up in fine fashion - speakers and various phases of the program plans are well into the final stages of solidity, so mark your calender now for the Convention dates of May 5th and 6th, 1978. During the afternoon session By-laws were the heavy topic under discussion and a limited number of decisions were made (more later). The dues structure which was an issue of considerable concern at Amherst failed to be settled for want of time, but since the consensus of opinion along the way has been to soft-peddle this problem it is probably just as well that we continue to walk until we have gained sufficient status at which time we might begin to jump up and down with justification to be granted an increase in dues.

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Editor's Note:

While we as a Society are definitely suffering financially because of increased costs of operation, I personally feel that a dues increase is in order, but my better judgement dictates that those of us holding posts of leadership within the Society must justify such a demand on the membership with a more meaningful motivation within the Credo of I.L.S. However, many of the proposed programs that have been inaugurated during these early years are just now beginning to come into fruition - our Society is moving in the proper direction. If there is something that we're not doing properly in your light, Please, Oh Please, let us hear.

Committees and members are working with dedication to serve you, but the more in depth studies and programs will one day demand greater financial support.

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NOTICE - To All Committee Chairmen :-

If this is you, then I'm pointing my finger. One of the suggestions that met with considerable approval at the recent Board Meeting was that each Committee Chairman spell out in a sentence or two (brief, but thorough as possible), what the duties or purpose of your particular assignment entails. All too often we as elected officers expect utterly impossible effort on the part of a few, and while volunteers seldom come forward when called, we would like to publish in your own words exactly what you, as a Committee Chairman, are attempting to accomplish. Thus, we would hope to seek out knowledgeable individuals in your effort who might contribute to a more meaningful and realistic activity of your challenge. Everybody can use a little help once in awhile.

Editor

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SYRINGA ROOTING

Cuttings of two Syringa species were found to give poorest rooting when taken near the time of bud set, according to results of trials at Pennsylvania State University, U.S.A.

The two species of Syringa used were S. chinensis and microphylla, and cuttings were taken at weekly intervals from the last week of June until the last week of July. Half were dipped in an IBA talc and all were inserted in sand under intermittent mist. Rooting was assessed after two months.

The poorest rooting was found to be in early to mid-July. IBA treatment greatly increased rooting of S. microphylla before and after bud set but did not affect S. chinensis.

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