



# **The Pipeline**

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**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.

President: Robert B. Clark  
Cattle Landing Road, R.D. No. 1, Box 288, Meredith, NH 03253

Secretary: Walter W. Oakes  
Box 315, Rumford, Maine, 04276

Treasurer: Mrs. Marie Chaykowski  
4041 Winchell Road, Mantua, Ohio, 44255

Editor: Walter E. Eickhorst  
129 West Franklin St., Naperville, Illinois. 60540

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Meyer Lilac - By Harrison L. Flint, Lafayette, Indiana.

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"When we think of lilacs, several impressions come to mind: fragrance of flowers, nostalgia, tradition -- but plants too large for use around most modern-day dwellings. Meyer lilac, on the contrary, is a small, compact shrub with almost scentless flowers, so new to landscape use that it hardly can have traditional value, much less bring on nostalgia. Yet it is a lilac, and probably the most useful landscape plant of all lilacs.

Meyer lilac (*Syringa meyeri*) is sometimes offered for sale under the name of *Syringa palibiniana*, and is often called "dwarf Korean lilac," even though it is not from Korea but from northern China. This handsome small shrub flowers at the same time as the common lilac and its French hybrids, with deep purple buds opening into medium-violet flowers that quickly fade to pale lavender. Flower clusters are smaller than those of most lilacs, but perfectly in scale with the size of the plant. Unfortunately, flowers are not fragrant, but this is more than compensated for by their appearance on very young plants, often no more than two feet tall. The plant's landscape interest is continued after flowering by its refined, lustrous foliage, usually free of the powdery mildew disease that disfigures many other lilacs in late summer.

The outstanding feature of Meyer lilac in the landscape is its compact growth. Seldom will plants exceed five feet in height and six feet in spread. In far northern climates and in poor soils they will remain under four feet without pruning for many years, perhaps indefinitely. Clearly this is not a plant for visual screening !

This versatile lilac can be planted against the foundation of a home without later obscuring the view from picture

windows. It can be planted in front of tall, leggy shrubs as a "facing" shrub, to cover their bare lower branches. It can also be used to supplement the seasonal interest of other plants in a mixed border. Or it can be used as a specimen, to serve as a center of interest in an intimate garden, or to draw attention to an entrance. The ideal time for planting is as early as possible in the spring.

Meyer lilac is hardy in the coldest areas in the Northeast, to temperatures of -40°F and lower. It also has been fully successful for more than ten years in tests in the north-central states, including North Dakota and Minnesota, in a cooperative experimental project among state universities and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Adaptability of Meyer lilac to different soils is equally impressive. It grows well in both light and heavy soils. Once established, it tolerates the occasional dryness of sandy soils, remaining more dwarf than on richer soils, but it will still benefit from an occasional soaking during unusually dry periods. Soil that is occasionally wet should pose no problem for this plant, but it cannot be expected to perform well in soil that is chronically poorly drained. Much has been written about lilacs and soil acidity; the fact is that they grow well over a wide range of soil acidity. Variations that occur in the Northeast make very little difference to the growth of Meyer lilac, or lilacs in general.

Another important feature of this landscape plant is that it is seldom bothered by insects and diseases -- certainly not enough to justify a preventative spray program -- although an occasional infestation by scale insects may require timely attention. Maintenance in the form of pruning is equally unnecessary, thanks to the plant's neat, compact growth. It is not even necessary to remove dead flowers in order to promote flowering the following spring, as is true of many other lilacs.



To find Meyer lilac in nurseries or nursery catalogues, look for it under its correct name (Syringa meyeri), or the often-used but incorrect synonyms Syringa palibiniana or dwarf Korean lilac. You probably will find it easy to obtain as more and more nurseries are offering it as time goes by. When it is growing in your yard, you will be able to enjoy the company of one of the finest of all dwarf flowering shrubs, an aristocrat among lilacs, and one that is adaptable to the most difficult of northern climates.

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#### Unhappy Koreans

Last April (1976) we ordered some Dwarf Korean lilacs or Syringa palibiniana. This shrub was brought to our attention in Blair & Ketchum's Country Journal (April 1975) by a horticulturist who frequently writes about plantings suitable for New England. We thought that you might like to know that of our three syringas (lilacs, that is), only one survived the winter, despite the fact that they were carefully planted, were very healthy-appearing on going into the winter, and placed in a protected southern exposure against our foundation.

It is difficult for people who are not experienced in northern Vermont winters to know how bitter they can be. And we have found that the only reliable advice for our particular locale comes from Lewis Hill, a veteran nurseryman from Greensboro, Vermont. Plantsmen south of here are usually unduly optimistic. So we write this letter in the hope it may prove helpful to others from the north, as well as to the author of the article, in the hope he will be more cautious in the future. - Susan Weber, Plainfield, Vermont.

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Professor Flint replies :

It is always sad to hear of experiences such as Mrs. Weber's with plants recommended and planted in good faith as being hardy. To be fair to the southern New England nursery from which she purchased Meyer lilac (Syringa Meyeri or S. Palibiniana), their assurance of hardiness to  $-30^{\circ}\text{F}$  is well within the observed performance on this plant. As I mentioned in the original article, Meyer lilac has been systematically tested in the north-central states and found hardy in areas with average annual minimum temperatures as low as  $-40^{\circ}\text{F}$ . It also has been grown successfully in many parts of northern New England.

So what is the cause of the problem ? It's hard to say with certainty without more information. Survival over the first winter after transplanting is seldom so sure as with well-established plants. A protected exposure against a house foundation seems like an advantageous planting site -- unless the spot was too well sheltered from rain and snow and became dry over winter, or unless it was the recipient of large amounts of snow sliding from the roof, later becoming a pile of ice during late winter's alternate freezes and thaws. Then there is the problem of field mice seeking shelter and exotic food. Many things can go wrong for a young plant. Mrs. Weber probably can analyze the probability of these and other hazards, and perhaps discover why two plants died and a third lived. Am I copping out ? Perhaps, but establishment of shrubs in landscape situations is far from an exact science. The trial-and-error method is still useful. The best advice that can be given in a case such as this is not to give up too easily on plants that have failed on the first try. Unfortunately, such occurrences are not unusual.

I would compliment Mrs. Weber on placing her trust in experienced local plantsmen such as Lewis Hill. She may also wish to visit the plantings that Arthur Perry, Barre's Cemetery Superintendent has assembled over the years at Hope Cemetery on the East Montpelier Road in Barre, Vermont, at



his initiative and in cooperation with the University of Vermont. (November 1976).

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More on the Meyer lilac.

As an engineer, part-time horticulturist, and avid New England hiker, I feel it appropriate to comment on Mrs. Weber's letter in your November issue. You fail to point out that the lowest temperature at which a plant can be (or has been) grown is not the same as the lowest temperature (range) at which a plant can be reliably grown. As Mrs. Weber found out, Syringa meyeri can be grown in her area, but it is not reliably hardy.

To determine the lowest limits in which a plant would be reliably hardy one should consult Wyman's "Shrubs and Vines for American Gardens", his companion book on trees, or his "Gardening Encyclopedia". In these standard references geographical hardiness zones are listed for each plant based on detailed records. These objective statistics are far better guides than either the optimistic projections of an out-of-area salesman who wants to make the sale, or the conservative statements of a local retailer who does not want to hassle with a local customer about marginal plants.

I am attempting to grow many plants not reliably hardy in my area, Magnolia grandiflora for example. Your comments on care during the first winter and plant location are most pertinent. Of especial importance for a shrub which is not reliably hardy is whether it was obtained bare root or containerized (balled and burlaped). Bare-root shrubs, because they take longer to get established, should not be tried in marginal areas without special care.

I think Mrs. Weber is to be congratulated, not only for successfully growing (so far) a Syringa meyeri in her area, but for selecting a shrub that would not have been recommended by her local plantsman. - Benson H. Scheff, Lincoln, Mass. (Mar. 77) "

Species Hold a Place Among the Better Lilacs -

By Clyde Heard.

In an issue of one of the garden magazines an article dealt with the species lilacs. Some of these should be used more extensively.

One of the best plants for screening purposes is *Syringa chinensis* (*rothomagensis*), sometimes erroneously called Persian lilac. The "Chinese" lilac makes as dense a hedge as Zabel's honeysuckle. The purple flowers are borne in profusion and are attractive. The pink and paler shades are not outstanding. The true Persian lilac grows lower and under Iowa conditions is not a dependable or heavy bloomer.

Another species of Korean origin is *Syringa oblata dilatata*, which was introduced in 1917. It has pinkish blooms and is the earliest lilac in our collection to bloom. A dependable bloomer, it flowers when quite small. One plant less than six inches in height bloomed in the nursery. The species grows compactly.

Japanese Tree Lilac - Another species too often overlooked is *Syringa reticulata* (*amurensis japonica*), Japanese tree lilac. It should be used more frequently. The blooms are white. Specimens on the Iowa State University campus are at least 25 feet tall.

A few other species of especial value are *Syringa microphylla*, the daphne or little-leaved lilac. Its flowers are pink. Compared with other lilacs, the leaves are much smaller and narrower.

*Syringa velutina* (sometimes called *palibiniana*) is another Korean variety dating back to about 1910. It is a late-season bloomer, has flowers of an attractive pink color and is inclined to be a dwarf grower. This and some other species have a place in the landscape where smaller-growing plants are desirable.



The hybrid lilacs must still be looked to for the wide range of colors from white through violet, blue, lavender, pink, reddish purple and deep purple, also for the singles and doubles that may or may not be of major consequence.

Hybrid Lilacs - I have avoided using the term French hybrid lilacs. Lilacs were called French hybrids largely because Victor and Emile Lemoine, Nancy, France, introduced some 214 varieties, and other Frenchmen introduced a few more varieties. Let us judge lilacs on their merits instead of their origin.

Ludwig Spaeth, a top-rated single, deep purple variety, was introduced by the Spaeth Nurseries, Berlin, Germany. Other varieties were developed in Holland and Belgium. Many of the finest lilacs were developed in the United States and Canada. To John Dunbar, late of the department of parks, Rochester, N.Y., is owed the development of the top-rated, single blue, President Lincoln. This is the bluest of all lilacs. Adelaide Dunbar, a top-rated double deep purple, is another of his introductions. His President Roosevelt is a good dependable deep purple.

Hulda Klager, Woodland, Wash., is responsible for Frank Klager, City of Gresham and My Favorite, all reddish or deep purple. The principal fault I find with My Favorite is in the name itself. It is a splendid lilac, but not my favorite.

Havemeyer Lilacs - Theodore Havemeyer, at Glen Head, Long Island, N.Y., originated about 40 varieties, some of which were introduced after his death. Among these are several of the finest lilacs, including Charm, Glory, Mrs. W.E. Marshall, Anne Shlach, Night and Zulu. Charm and Glory are especially valuable in extending the blooming season. They frequently steal the show when our lilacs are in bloom.

W.B. Clarke, San Jose, Calif., introduced some 20 varieties, of which several are worth growing, including Clarke's Giant, Esther Staley and Bountiful.

F.L. Skinner, Dropmore, Man., Canada, is to be thanked particularly for the varieties Assessippi, Excel, Hiawatha and Pocahontas. Three of these varieties are dependable heavy bloomers, they are early and their growth habit is excellent. Hiawatha is a late bloomer. Thanks are due to Miss Isabella Preston, Ottawa, Ont., Canada, for Isabella, Coral and Royalty, among others. These varieties extend the blooming period by a couple of weeks and are worth considering in any collection.

Considered Best Varieties -- Below is a list of varieties that we consider among the best :-

I WHITE

Single	Double
Marie Finon	Ellen Willmott
Vestale	Edith Cavell

II VIOLET

De Miribel	Marechal Lannes Violetta
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III BLUE & BLUISH

Firmament	Duc de Massa
President Lincoln	Olivier de Serres
Maurice Barres	Gaudichaud

IV LILAC

Jacques Callot	Leon Gambetta Victor Lemoine
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V PINKISH

Lucie Baltet	Katherine Havemeyer
Charm	My Favorite



Single  
Capitaine Baltet  
Congo  
Glory

VI REDDISH PURPLE

Double  
Paul Thirion

VII DEEP PURPLE

Ludwig Spaeth  
Monge  
Edmond Bossier

Adelaide Dunbar

EARLY HYBRIDS

Assessippi  
Louvois  
Mirabeau  
Pocahontas

LATE HYBRIDS

Coral  
Hiawatha  
Romeo  
Royalty

Clyde Heard is the retired owner of HEARD GARDENS, 5355 Merle Hay Rd., Des Moines, Iowa 50323. Clyde (now 88 yrs. young) resides at Calvin Manor in Des Moines. During his active lifetime he not only conducted a nursery/landscape business, but found time to establish a rather sizeable Lilac Collection numbering some 150 specimens which his son (ILS Member) Bill is presently in the process of restoring.

Since this expression was first published in May of 1960 it has been slightly altered to more adequately fit present day thinking as well as updating of nomenclature. This depicts some of the excellent thinking that was going into lilac breeding in the late 1950's and the early 60's. Ed

THE PIPELINE takes on a new look! This was discussed very briefly at Amherst in May -- how does the new format strike you? Let me hear your constructive (or destructive) comments whatever they might be -- if I don't hear I'll assume that you concur and agree that an improvement has been made. At this time I'd like to use a little bit of space to say "Thank You" on behalf of the membership for the very able efforts of John M. Oblender, Staff Artist at Royal Botanical Gardens. John does very nice work and I especially appreciate his expression.

Ed

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LILACS - Cut and Keep 'em Fresh (?)

There are undoubtedly many ways to keep fresh cut trusses fresh and decorative when taken indoors (says who?). You will (perhaps already have) probably find your own favorite method, BUT, first you might try this (also works on a number of other woody materials): Cut the lilacs late in the afternoon (sounds ridiculous after the sun has been on them all day long, but that's neither here nor there). Take off all the leaves and lesser stems. Make a crosswise cut across the bottom of the stem and pull the bark off the branch about two or three inches above the cut end. Then put the branches in a tub or container filled with cool (not too cold, not too warm) water. Allow to stand overnight. When removed the following morning the flowers will be ready to arrange and will stay fresh for days.

Ed Note:

I haven't tried this one and while I'm skeptical this is primarily what the hint conveys. In that one would most certainly wish to have some foliage to compliment the bloom, I would be inclined to leave at least a few leaves, or maybe better yet, cut a few lesser branches strictly for the foliage, removing all but those necessary to properly set the flowers off in the desired atmosphere. If you're a stem crusher, maybe this will help too.



The Awards presented during I.L.S. Convention in Amherst, Mass.

The Directors Award

Dr. N.L. Mikhailov, Curator, Principal Botanical  
Garden, Moscow, USSR

For deidicated work in promoting the Lilac through an internationally known lilac collection and the publication of works designed to extend knowledge of the Lilac in his native country and the world.

Awards of Merit

Mr. Albert E. Lumley, Amherst, Mass.

For his hard work and dedicated service to the International Lilac Society and his continued efforts to promote use of Lilacs.

Dr. Walter E. Lammerts, Corallitos, Calif.

For his pioneering work in the development of warm winter tolerant Lilacs and the introduction of new cultivars for southern areas.

Historic Deerfield, Deerfield, Mass.

For their understanding of the importance of the Lilac to early settlers and the development of the historic plantings as a source of education and inspiration to the public.





