



Lilac Newsletter

Vol. IV, No. 11, November, 1978

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.

This publication, *LILAC NEWSLETTER* (formerly *THE PIPELINE*) is issued monthly. Back copies are available by writing to the International Lilac Society, c/o Mr. Charles Holetich, Royal Botanical Gardens, Box 399, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, L8N 3H8. Please send 50 cents for each copy requested.

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Single annual	\$ 5.00
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*Mail membership dues to I.L.S. Secretary.

A Famous Lilac Breeder Writes.....ABOUT NEW LILACS

by: F.L. Skinner* - Dropmore, Manitoba

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WHEN I was a lad of six I remember seeing a bush of the old common lilac hanging over a gray granite garden wall and displaying its flowers so that anyone passing that way could enjoy their fragrance. Since then I have always loved lilacs and they still hold as great a place in my affections as roses and Rhododendrons.

Since those early days many changes have taken place in the lilac, the many new varieties raised by the Lemoines and others have given us a wide range of color, form and size. Not only that but several species that were practically unknown 50 years ago have been introduced by the Arnold Arboretum and thanks to that institution are now fairly common in American gardens today.

These new species are in some cases highly ornamental and some of them are amongst our most fragrant flowering shrubs. Syringa oblata var. dilatata, the earliest of these newly-introduced lilacs to flower was collected in the Diamond Mountains of Korea by the late E.H. Wilson in 1917. It is closely related to the common lilac and crosses readily with it. This lilac is fully as fragrant as any of the common lilacs and its foliage which has lovely bronze shades in spring turns to a deep red purple in autumn. Unlike most varieties of the common lilac S. o. var. dilatata seldom produces suckers and this habit is passed on to many of its hybrids with the common lilac.

Even though the flowers open about a week before those of the common lilac they are very seldom injured by late spring frosts and the fact that the panicles are more open in habit enables one to see the beauty of form of the individual

flowers. In color S. o. var. dilatata leans to the soft bluish and pale mauve pink shades. Some of the wild forms are as worthy of names as some of the older named varieties of the common lilac. The newer hybrids of this lilac are very fragrant and can now be found in double as well as single forms in a wide range of shades from white to deep purple.

Coming into bloom just as the common lilacs are beginning to fade are three other species of very fragrant lilacs. Of these S. velutina¹ which was also collected by Wilson in the Diamond Mountains in 1917 has large panicles of small white flowers. It has a haunting fragrance that reminds me of Narcissus poeticus. Syringa pubescens which comes from North China was considered by the late Professor Charles S. Sargent one of the most fragrant of all lilacs and well worth growing for its perfume alone. Its individual flowers are slightly larger than those of S. velutina but the spikes are much smaller. A hybrid I have raised between these two species has panicles that are as large as those of S. velutina and individual flowers fully as large as those of S. pubescens and very fragrant. Syringa julianae is very close to S. pubescens but flowers fully a week later.

By the time the flowers of S. velutina are beginning to fade some of the villosa section are coming into bloom. This section of the lilac family contains some good species and some that are extremely hardy. Flowering as late as they do makes them exceptionally good for sections where late spring frosts are liable to injure the flowers of the common lilac.

Syringa villosa, one of the earliest species of this section to be brought into cultivation, is an extremely hardy shrub that is never injured by even the most severe Canadian winters. On this account it has been used by lilac breeders especially in Canada to create a new type of garden lilac, a type that can be depended upon to flower freely every year and is now beginning to show almost as wide a range of color, form and habit as the common lilac. Prominent among the hybrids in this section are those between S. villosa and S. reflexa raised at the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa. The earlier

¹ = syn. of S. patula

of these Ottawa hybrids have very large open panicles of flowers usually in various shades of lilac. Later hybrids raised at Ottawa between S. reflexa and S. sweginzowii have long drooping panicles that give the shrub a very graceful habit when grown as single specimens.

At the Morden Experiment Station in Manitoba this work with the villosa hybrids has been carried a step farther and some of the selections are exceptionally good. Of these 'Royalty', a deep royal purple, and 'Redwine', whose name tells its color, are two of my favorites.

The Dropmore Hybrids are, for the most part, distinct from the preceding both in color and habit. Most of them have closely set panicles of rose-colored flowers. 'Hiawatha' and 'Donald Wyman' are two of my deepest rose-colored varieties, the latter holding its color much better than most of the villosa hybrids. 'Hedin', a hybrid I have between S. villosa and S. sweginzowii has very large panicles of fragrant pale pink flowers and is quite hardy in western Canada where neither S. sweginzowii nor S. reflexa can be grown.

As the last flowers are fading on these villosa hybrids one of the most striking sections of the lilac family begins to open its flowers. S. amurensis² and its variety japonica³ are extremely hardy and thrive in even the coldest districts of western Canada. When covered with their foot-long panicles of very fragrant creamy white flowers these are among the most impressive ornamental shrubs that can be grown in this region.

A hybrid between S. persica var. laciniata⁴ and S. pinnatifolia that was raised by Dr. Sax of the Arnold Arboretum has very finely cut foliage and is worth growing for that alone. I have not yet seen this hybrid in bloom but judging from its parents it should be both neat and fragrant and very free flowering.

2 = syn. of reticulata var. mandshurica

3 = syn. of reticulata

4 = syn. of laciniata

The severe winters of the northern half of this continent greatly reduce the number of ornamental shrubs that can be successfully grown here compared with western Europe and help to make the lilac, in its many forms one of our most popular ornamental shrubs. Lilacs are also easily grown, as any sweet soil that does not become too wet and has been kept in good heart will grow good lilacs. Neither do they require much in the way of pruning or training other than to remove weak and overcrowded shoots as well as the faded flowers before seed has been formed.

*Frank Leith Skinner, M.B.E., LL.D.

Editor

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Forty Years Ago - -

Many of you have heard of, or perhaps some few may remember Mr. B.O. Case of Vancouver, Washington and his extensive work with lilacs.

While doing some searching a number of months ago I chanced upon an item in the Bulletin of The Garden Club of America (May 1938). One Miss Mabel Lawrence of the Portland, Orig. Chapter of the G.C. of Amer. reported that through the timely efforts of a Mrs. Cabell the then President of the Chapter, who suggested the purchase of the renowned Case Lilac Collection (following the death of Mr. Case) as a G.C. project which might enhance a spot in that community. All concerned heads nodding in the affirmative, contact was made with the Park Bureau and the city of Portland and via these combined efforts that city became the benefactor of this then fine collection of some two hundred forty-three labelled plants. Many of the selections having originally been imported from Victor Lemoine in France while others had been obtained from the Arnold Arboretum in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts - some of those cvs. included were; 'Charles Boltel' (Prob. 'Charles

Baltet'), 'Victor Lemoine', 'Wellanger' and 'Mr. Wilke'.
(these last two cvs. have your editor scratching his head (and he can't afford to do that), but these do rather vaguely sound familiar although not exactly correct as such) How about a little help here?

The G.C. Chapter of Portland actually purchased the collection and in turn gave the plants to the city who in a good cooperative gesture provided trucks and men to dig, ball and move the plants to DUNIWAY PARK on Terwilliger Blvd. in Portland.

Forty years later one tends to wonder just what might remain of this generous contribution on the part of a community minded G.C. effort.

Perhaps there's an IIS member who is familiar with this activity and would be so kind as to update the foregoing.

Editor

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BITS OF WIT

A conference is a gathering of important people who singly can do nothing but together can decide that nothing can be done.

If inflation keeps on going as it has been, a lot of folks will be able to file for Social Security and bankruptcy at the same time.

Cold cash is so named because few of us can hold onto it long enough to get it warm.



from the Registrar's Desk

Freek Vrugtman, Curator of Collections, Royal Botanical Gardens,
Box 399, HAMILTON, Ontario, CANADA L8N 3H8

INFORMATION WANTED on Mr. Gilbert Becker of Climax (Kalamazoo Co.), Michigan. Mr. Becker originated two lilac cultivars:

Syringa vulgaris 'Virginia Becker', Becker 1947 (S V)

Seedling of 'Hugo Koster'; from seed gathered at the Leila Arboretum, Battle Creek, Michigan; selected in 1941.
(Information taken from J.C. Wister, Lilacs for America, 1953.)

Syringa x hyacinthiflora 'Jewel', Becker (S V)

Open pollinated seedling of Syringa oblata. In the plant records of the Arnold Arboretum the name is spelled 'Jewell'.

Your Registrar has been unable to get any lead on either Gilbert Becker or the Leila Arboretum. Any bit of information may be helpful, please write to the Registrar.

INFORMATION WANTED on Mr. Raymond J. Ruliffson of Rochester, New York. Mr. Ruliffson originated three lilac cultivars:

Syringa vulgaris 'Bernard Harkness', Ruliffson pre 1953 (S VIII)

- - 'Edward A. Schmidt', Ruliffson 1940 (D VI)

- - 'Red Feather', Ruliffson pre 1953 (D VI)

From J.C. Wister, Lilacs for America, we learn that Ruliffson was associated with Gracewood Lilac Gardens; in 1942 the

address was 791 Mt. Hope Avenue, in 1953 it was 440 Seneca Parkway in Rochester. Anyone having any further information or suggestions on where to obtain more information on Mr. Ruliffson, please write to the Registrar.

Syringa vulgaris 'Berdeen's Chocolate', Berdeen (S VI)
Cultivar name registered in 1963, ARNOLDIA 23(4):80 (April 1963).

Mr. Kenneth Berdeen informed us some time ago that this selection did not live up to his expectations and that he has discarded all plants of 'Berdeen's Chocolate'. We would like to know whether there are still plants of 'Berdeen's Chocolate' growing elsewhere. Please send a brief note to the Registrar.

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WHAT IS HAPPENING IN YOUR WORLD?

We are constantly in need of short articles for our publication. Please let us know what is new in your corner of the world, and mail it to the editor.

* * *

ELECTION OF ILS DIRECTORS

At the October meeting of the Board of Directors of the ILS it was decided that the election of directors be by mail. Since ballots must be prepared soon, the Nominating Committee would appreciate suggestions of members that might be considered for nomination.

Please send your suggestions Immediately to Jack Alexander, Nominating Committee Chairman, Arnold Arboretum, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130. To be assured of consideration, your suggestion must be received before January 1, 1979.

Following is a list of directors currently serving:

<u>Elected 1976</u> <u>(for 3 year term)</u>	<u>1977</u> <u>(for 3 year term)</u>	<u>1978</u> <u>(for 3 year term)</u>
Dr. Robert Clark	Marie Chaykowski	John Alexander III
Richard Fenicchia	Nancy Emerson	Dr. Donald Egolf
Fr. John Fiala	Sue Fergusson	Travers Hutchison
William Heard	Dr. Joel Margaretten	Al Lumley
Charles Holetich	Freek Vrugtman	Sally Schenker
Walter Oakes	Nancy Alexander	Clare Short
Dr. Owen Rogers	Walter Eikhorst	Lorene Wishart
William Utley	Winfried Martin	one vacancy left by Phil Hodgden - (deceased)

For Nomination Committee
Jack Alexander - Chairman

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REMEMBER THE GOOD COLD DAY....

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Wednesday, May 11, 1977

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR



Snow on lilac bush, Dedham, Massachusetts

By Barth J. Falkenberg, staff photographer

On May 10, 1977, at 7 a.m. Can you believe it?