

Lilac Newsletter

Vol. IV, No. 7, July, 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.

President: Dr. Owen M. Rogers,
University of New Hampshire, Dept. of Plant Science,
Nesmith Hall, Durham, N.H. 03824.

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

INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY,
William A. Utley, Ex. Vice-Pres.,
Grape Hill Farm, Devcreaux Rd., Clyde, NY 14433.

MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------|
| Single annual | \$ 5.00 |
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HARDINESS-RATED LILACS AT MORDEN ARBORETUM

by: Robert B. Clark, Meredith, New Hampshire

In the January 1977 number of the PIPELINE I announced the then recent publication of "Woody Ornamentals in the Morden Arboretum" (Contribution M-205, Agric. Canada, Res. Sta., Morden, Man., Canada, - w/o date). I called attention to the 36 pages of data (pp. 142-178) given to lilacs, compiled by Bill Cumming and Alfred Vitins. In the present paper I should like to discuss Dr. Cumming's findings in the hope of determining relative hardiness, or adaptability, of lilacs to North American gardens.

Cumming and Vitins report on some 385 lilacs of various categories, most of which are replicated several times. Moreover their report covers a period of about 35 years for the lilacs; however most of the lilacs were observed for periods up to twenty years, those less than five years were not rated (NR) for "hardiness". The hardiness ratings are based on a scale of ten points: plants showing greatest hardiness are accorded values of 10 to 9 points, while those which are doubtfully hardy are assigned ratings of 5 to zero. In a letter Dr. Cumming explains, "the ratings...are based on visual observations and a judgment annually of each particular plant. The ratings are recorded during the early summer before we do any pruning or removal of dead or injured wood. Notes are appended, if, in the judgment of the observer, outside factors, such as disease or insects, are involved."

Dr. Cumming continues, "I am sure that at least one of the factors which affects some of our plants is our alkaline soils (characterized by) high pH (7.0 - 8.5) plus the presence of soluble salts, principally those of calcium and magnesium. Most lilacs will tolerate a fair degree of alkalinity, but some of the species are definitely affected. Syringa reticulata, the Japanese tree-lilac, which does very well in most of our better soils, shows severe chlorosis when it is planted in soils of high alkalinity or high in soluble salts. I suspect that some of the other species may be even less tolerant.

Another very important factor is, of course, the area in the natural range of the species that our representative plants were originally collected."

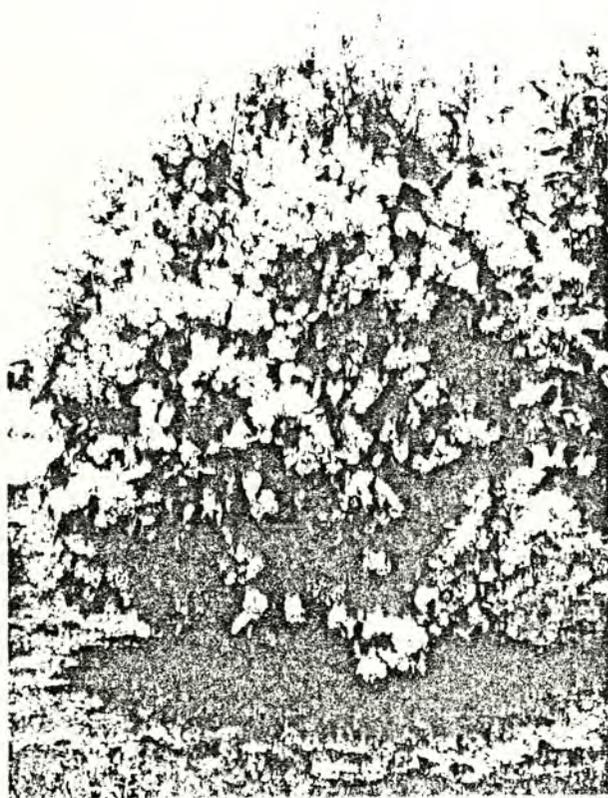
Most of the lilacs which we grow have come from eastern Asia. I refer, of course, to the parent species. Successful cultivation calls for understanding the native environment and trying to match it somewhat closely. From the Atlas of the Peoples Republic of China (CIA, 1971) I find, on page 53, an illustration of Climatic Analogues in which the temperature-rainfall patterns compare with those of Kansas and Kentucky, also Wyoming and east Texas. These are regional approximations, not microclimates, however they do indicate that lilacs tolerate wide ranges of environmental conditions. We see that the northern great plains are beyond the range climatically of the Chinese provinces where the species were found. Therefore Cumming's data are tremendously important to our understanding of lilac hardiness.

I have taken the liberty to extract and rearrange the Cumming data in the accompanying table into taxonomic groupings to better illustrate his findings. For species and cultivars which are replicated I have selected the data representing the hardier and the longer period, except for the following four groups of hybrids (SS. x hyacinthiflora, x josiflexa, x Prestoniae, and vulgaris) for which I have taken composite ratings. Two taxa, although present in the Arboretum collection in 1970, were not at that date sufficiently established for inclusion in the data.

First I must mention those lilacs which made the perfect score: certain cultivars of S. vulgaris, S. x hyacinthiflora 'Evangeline', S. oblata var. dilatata, S. patula (as palibiniana), S. villosa, S. x Henryi 'Lutece', certain cultivars of S. x Prestoniae 'Hedin' (villosa x Sweginzowii), S. x josiflexa 'Royalty', S. Komarowii, S. reticulata (as japonica) and var. mandshurica (as amurensis). These are indeed meritorious lilacs.

Those lilacs which scored less than 8.0 points deserve consideration. They are seven in number and all are species. S. reflexa comes from Hupeh, which has an east Texas-Oklahoma climate, while S. Sweginzowii, toментella and yunnanensis come

from Szechuan and Yunnan with east Texas climate, scarcely to be found in southern Manitoba. S. laciniata, was discovered in 1915 growing wild in eastern Kansu near the Shensi border, while both S. pekinensis and S. microphylla have a much more extended range comparable with Wyoming-Montana to Kansas. These latter three lilacs are puzzling since they scored in the middle range. I personally can understand the showing of the Peking lilac because of its irritability: at the first rise of temperature in early spring its buds begin to expand and are caught by the almost inevitable springtime frosts. We need input from our readers who have had experiences or who can offer explanations for the behavior of these seven lilacs.



MORDEN ARBORETUM LILACS RATED ACCORDING TO HARDINESS

VULGARES

| <u>Species or Cultivar</u> | <u>No./pls.</u> | <u>Yrs.</u> | <u>Ratings</u> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|----------------|
| vulgaris | (23 cvs.) | 37 | 10.0-8.5 |
| x persica: x chinensis | 2 | 19 | 9.0 |
| x oblata: x hyacinthiflora | (41 cvs.) | 31 | 9.5-9.0 |
| 'Evangeline' | 2 | 24 | 10.0 |
| 'Maiden's Blush' | 2 | 2 | NR |
| oblata (var. Giraldii) | 4 | 19 | 9.0 |
| var. dilatata | 6 | 30 | 10.0 |
| pubescens | 4 | 20 | 9.3 |
| x patula (as velutina): | | | |
| x Skinneri | 4 | 17 | 9.5 |
| patula (as velutina) | 2 | 19 | 9.5 |
| - (as Palibiniana) | 3 | 14 | 10.0 |
| Meyeri | 2 | 6 | 9.5 |
| persica | 10 | 26 | 9.0 |
| 'Alba' x oblata var. dilatata: | | | |
| 'Grace MacKenzie' | 3 | 24 | 9.5 |
| var. laciniata | 2 | 20 | 6.0 |
| microphylla 'Superba' | 4 | 20 | 6.0 |
| Potanini | 3 | Fn | -- |

PINNATIFOLIAE

| | | | |
|--------------|---|---|-----|
| pinnatifolia | 2 | 7 | 9.0 |
|--------------|---|---|-----|

VILLOSAE

| | | | |
|---|-----------|----|----------|
| villosa | 19 | 18 | 10.0 |
| x Josikaea: x Henryi 'Lutece' | 2 | 8 | 10.0 |
| x reflexa: Prestoniae | (51 cvs.) | 37 | 10.0-5.0 |
| x Sweginzowii: 'Hedin' | 1 | 22 | 10.0 |
| Josikaea | 1 | 16 | 10.0 |
| x reflexa: josiflexa 'Royalty' | 6 | 16 | 10.0 |
| x unknown sp. or hyb.: 'Kim' | 1 | 25 | 9.0 |
| Komarowii | 2 | 7 | 10.0 |
| emodi | 2 | 8 | 9.5 |
| Wolfii | 4 | 8 | 9.5 |
| reflexa | 2 | 5 | 7.5 |
| x Sweginzowii: swegiflexa 'Fountain' | 6 | 15 | 9.0 |
| Sweginzowii 'Superba' | 4 | 7 | 7.5 |
| x Henryi: x Nanceiana | 2 | 1 | NR |
| tomentella | 2 | 14 | 5.0 |
| yunnanensis | 2 | 16 | 4.0 |

LIGUSTRINA

| | | | |
|--|----|----|------|
| reticulata (as amurensis var. japonica) | 4 | 27 | 10.0 |
| var. mandshurica (as amurensis) | 5 | 1 | 10.0 |
| pekinensis | 12 | 32 | 7.0 |



* * *

BITS OF WIT

Nature seldom creates a fool. She just furnishes the basic material for a "do-it-yourself" job.

Some people don't recognize opportunity because it is not dressed up and greatly resembles labor.

POTPOURRI:

On May 21 last 'yours truly' flew down to Rochester (NY) to accept The Monroe County Department of Parks NATIONAL ANNUAL LILAC TIME AWARD. Said plaque so reads: "In recognition of his outstanding dedication to lilac promotion and to the Lilac Society of America. Your tireless efforts in lilac promotions have helped Highland Botanical Park bring much enjoyment to all park visitors. Your dedication as a horticulturist will long be appreciated".

The outing was most enjoyable and much appreciated - we met several very fine people (some new, some old) and in general had a fine time both at the Lilac Time festivities and doing a bit of visiting in the parks which I haven't had the opportunity of doing for several years. Other than the fact that the lilac bloom was only about 15 - 20% showing, the afternoon was right next to perfect.

Editor

* * *

Whoops!!! Now when I go back to the May issue to re-check the Mackinac article I note that in the very first para. it states that the measurements were made in 1947, however, I guess that in order to keep the air perfectly clear we'd best run the following:

CORRECTION:

Referring to the May '78 issue of ILS NEWSLETTER which carried the reprint of "The Lilacs of Mackinac Island" - the original publication date was inadvertently omitted and is herewith acknowledged: The AMERICAN MIDLAND NATURALIST, Vol. 39, No. 2, P. 505 - March 1948. Since 31 years have passed since the measurements reported in this paper were

made, updated information on the lilacs of Mackinac Island would be of interest. Anyone who plans to be in the Straits of Mackinac area might consider visiting the sites reported by Prof. LaRue to see whether these notable lilacs still exist and, if so, how large they are now.

Editor

* * *

Things to write for:

Two items that have been called to my attention as being of potential interest, particularly to individuals concerned with plant nomenclature and the accepted use of same, specifically related to writing, labelling, records, etc.: "THE CONCEPT OF THE CULTIVAR" and "NOTES on the ITALICIZATION and SPELLING of BOTANICAL NAMES", The Garden's Bulletin of ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8N 3H8 - Vol. 27, No. 3 and Vol. 31, No. 3 respectively, both compiled by James S. Pringle, Taxonomist. Copies may be obtained by writing: Publications Chairman, R.B.G. - there is a nominal cost to cover handling and mailing.

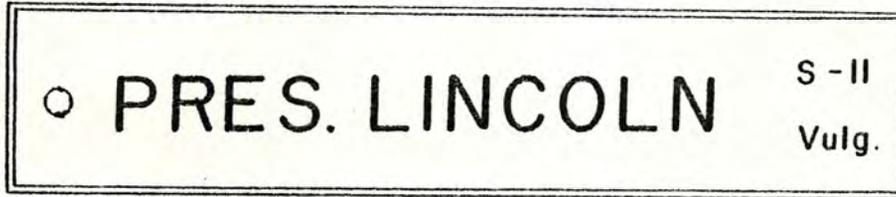
Editor

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LABELS - LABELS - LABELS!!!

Labels are a never ending problem, and even the least expensive are not cheap. Some few of you that were on the LONGWOOD tour at the Annual Meeting were introduced to the METALPHOTO sign/label process. Several individuals expressed an interest - hence this squib - I'm neither a wizard nor a financial juggler, so, the best that I can do is give you a few basic facts. In this photographic method of manufacture, such markers actually have the image as an impregnation of the metal itself, thus there is an excellent contrast and a long life expectancy.

The base quote on tags 4½ in. x 7/8 in. (1/10 in. thick) is \$2.50 each (these would be drilled or punched for threading of wire for hanging).



If we (the Society membership) could make up a composite/ order (12 or more of the same legend) there would be a slight discount (perhaps suff. to handle mailing costs).

As an initial approach to this problem I would like to pursue the possibility of the quantity order - LET ME KNOW YOUR PLEASURE BY NOT LATER THAN August 1, 1978 . If this does not develop satisfactorily, then as individual participants you can go directly to the source of supply.

Once your requests are in and compiled, then I'll have a better picture of what we might expect and I can get the necessary information back to you on a one to one basis.

Editor