



Lilac Newsletter

Vol. IV, No. 9, September, 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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Family	7.50
Sustaining	10.00
Institutional/Commercial	15.00
Life	100.00

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UPDATING THE LILAC

by: John C. and Gertrude S. Wister

The garden lilac, Syringa vulgaris, has been an inhabitant of American gardens for over 300 years. In Colonial times its beauty and fragrance made it the most loved dooryard shrub. In the last half of the 19th century hundreds of new forms with larger flowers of different shades and tints were introduced, and since the finest of these came from France they came to be known as French lilacs. They so greatly increased public interest that large collections were planted in arboretums and parks in our northern states and across Canada, and many of these now display between 300 and 600 named cultivars.

Up to the time of the Second World War many nurseries found it profitable to grow many of these selections in quantity, but after that the interest in lilacs seemed to decline. Today few gardens have any adequate number of the better cultivars and only a scant dozen of our prominent nurseries offer more than a few dozen forms for sale. Why?

Fashion and customs change. Gardens are smaller and cannot feature many shrubs. New competition for space has come from the fashion for evergreens like the Japanese yews so widely used for foundation plantings; from the smaller flowering trees; from hardier azaleas and rhododendrons; from the increased interest in wild flowers and rock garden plants; from exciting new daffodils, iris, peonies, hemerocallis, chrysanthemums and other plants which have had promotion from the national, state and local specialty societies.

What can be done to bring back the former popularity of the lilac and to promote once more the planting of many of the finest named cultivars. Plenty.

In the past three years a new special plant society, The International Lilac Society, has been formed. Its members, through newsletter and meetings, are beginning to tell the gardening public how magnificent many of the older, yet little-

known French lilacs are; what newer selections are on the way; and how important they can be in any but the very smallest garden all the way from the Atlantic to Alaska; how easy it is to plant and care for them; how to make the sometimes far from easy choices between the many forms; and finally how to find good plants of these cultivars in reliable nurseries which take every possible care to have their plants true to name.

Of course, the best selections are those of the colors and forms the individual gardener likes best. No one can choose these for anyone else. But many members of the new lilac society can and will be glad to tell which ones have been liked best over the years. Some of these may be very old -- even a century or more -- for old lilac selections have not been superseded as fast as the varieties of many other favorite garden plants.

It takes 5 to 10 years to get many flowers on a new lilac seedling and 5 to 10 more to judge fairly whether it is sufficiently superior and distinct enough to be named. Then it has to be propagated in quantity, publicized and offered for sale in nurseries. Even then it will take 10 to 20 more years to have its fame spread widely enough to make it worthwhile for many of our best known nurseries to list it.

Here are a few personal choices of favorite cultivars which most lilac enthusiasts agree have stood the test of time. (These are also listed alphabetically at the end of this article.)

To begin with, the old original single, common lilac still deserves an important place in the garden and in our affections for its beauty and its fragrance. 'Henri Martin' and 'Victor Lemoine' are double forms of color. All are enhanced by planting white selections like 'Mont Blanc' and 'Vestale' or the double 'Miss Ellen Willmott' near them. Try, also, planting both lilac-colored and white tulips with these and with the selections which follow. Even greater contrasts can be achieved by planting deep purple lilacs like 'Andenken an Ludwig Späth' and 'Sarah Sands' or the double 'Adelaide Dunbar' near the whites.

There are also many purplish flowers that blend well with these without so strong a contrast. 'Cavour' and 'De Miribel' and the double 'Marechal Lannes' have unique slatey tones. 'Sensation' gives a bicolor effect because the flowers have a tiny white border. Still others like 'Capitaine Baltet', 'Mme. F. Morel', 'Priscilla' and 'Reaumur' have reddish or magenta tones, and the double 'Paul Thirion' is startlingly reddish in bud, although it opens much lighter.

With any and all of these, the pale bluish and pinkish shades blend well, sometimes even giving an effect of contrast as well. Of these 'President Lincoln' is the bluest, the earliest and the tallest, but it does get leggy. 'Decaisne' or 'Firmament' and the double 'Olivier de Serres' are more shapely growers and have far finer flowers but are not quite so close to true blue.

All of these can be made to seem much bluer if pinkish varieties are planted near them. 'Lucie Baltet' and the double 'Virginite' are the closest to rose pink in bud, but both open paler and fade in hot sun. Both of these are comparatively dwarf which makes them of special importance in small gardens, but they are rather straggly and require pruning. The doubles 'Belle de Nancy' and 'Mme. Antoine Buchner' are not so close to true pink and neither is the single 'Charm', but all three are desirable where space allows.

Now we come to a newer group of cultivars that are particularly valuable because they lengthen the blooming season by opening their flowers one or even two weeks earlier. For this reason they are commonly called Early Hybrids. Actually they are hybrids between garden forms of the common lilac and varieties of the Asiatic species *S. oblata*. They are mostly singles with extra large spikes but with smaller flowers more loosely arranged on the spike and in not such a wide range of colors. Most of the plants grow faster and taller, which unfortunately makes them less suitable for small gardens except perhaps as backgrounds or to screen nearby buildings.

There are two general types. First to be considered are the

Lemoine hybrids with S. oblata var. giraldii. They are mostly pale pinkish and include 'Lamartine', the pioneer, introduced in 1911; 'Catinat', with the largest spike of all; 'Fenelon', the very earliest of the lot; and the darker, more purple 'Louvois' and 'Montesquieu'. The American cultivars 'Scotia', a better pink; 'Esther Staley', a deeper magenta pink; and the lovely blue but too-leggy 'Blue Hyacinth' belong here. There are no whites in this group.

The second and perhaps even more desirable group of hybrids is from S. oblata var. dilatata raised by F. L. Skinner in Manitoba. They are broader and not so tall and are said to be hardy even at 60 degrees below zero. Of these 'Assessippi' of lilac tone is the oldest (1932) and best known. 'Swarthmore' forms a more compact plant and its flowers are double. 'Churchill' is the most compact of all, and therefore the selection best suited to the small garden. It is also the earliest and the pinkest. 'Doctor Chadwick' and 'Tom Taylor' are the bluest and valuable for contrast. In this group we do have whites, although they are not quite so early. 'Mount Baker' and 'Sister Justena' are the best known of these.

The alphabetical list which follows gives information about the men and women who raised the cultivars. The dates of introduction show the extraordinary number of years that some of them have been grown in our gardens. Even so, many are hard to find in present day nurseries, and for this reason a second or alternate list gives many splendid selections which may be substituted for those in the text.

Do not forget, in planning your gardens, the lovely colors and the delightful fragrance of the many different lilacs:

Alphabetical List of Selections

S denotes single; D, double. I denotes white; II, slatey violet purple; III, bluish; IV, lilac; V, pinkish; VI, magenta or reddish purple; VII, deep violet purple. Next is the name of the originator or introducer and year of introduction. Symbols EH = early hybrids; EH-D of dilatata parentage; EH-G,

giraldii parentage.

- D VII 'Adelaide Dunbar' (Dunbar 1916)
- S VII 'Andenken an Ludwig Späth' (Späth 1883)
- S IV 'Assessippi' EH-D (Skinner 1932)
- D V 'Belle de Nancy' (Lemoine 1891)
- S III 'Blue Hyacinth' EH-G (Clarke 1942)
- S VI 'Capitaine Baltet' (Lemoine 1919)
- S V 'Catinat' EH-G (Lemoine 1922)
- S II 'Cavour' (Lemoine 1910)
- S V 'Charm' (Havemeyer - about 1935)
- S V 'Churchill' EH-D (Skinner 1945)
- S III 'Decaisne' (Lemoine 1910)
- S II 'De Miribel' (Lemoine 1903)
- S III 'Doctor Chadwick' EH-D (Skinner - about 1935)
- S VI 'Esther Staley' EH-G (Clarke 1948)
- S V 'Fenelon' EH-G (Lemoine 1937)
- S III 'Firmament' (Lemoine 1932)
- D IV 'Henri Martin' (Lemoine 1912)
- S V 'Lamartine' EH-G (Lemoine 1911)
- S II 'Louvois' EH-G (Lemoine 1921)
- S V 'Lucie Baltet' (Baltet - before 1888)
- D II 'Marechal Lannes' (Lemoine 1910)
- D I 'Miss Ellen Willmott' (Lemoine 1903)
- D V 'Mne. Antoine Buchner' (Lemoine 1909)
- S VII 'Mne. F. Morel' (Morel 1892)
- S I 'Mont Blanc' (Lemoine 1915)

- S VI 'Montesquieu' EH-G (Lemoine 1926)
S I 'Mount Baker' EH-D (Skinner 1961)
D III 'Olivier de Serres' (Lemoine 1909)
D VI 'Paul Thirion' (Lemoine 1915)
S III 'President Lincoln' (Dunbar 1916)
S VI 'Priscilla' (Havemeyer 1944)
S VI 'Reaumur' (Lemoine 1904)
S VII 'Sarah Sands' (Havemeyer 1943)
S V 'Scotia' EH-G (Scott 1950)
S VII 'Sensation' (Eveleens Maarse 1938)
S I 'Sister Justena' EH-D (Skinner 1956)
D IV 'Swarthmore' EH-D (Skinner 1954)
D III 'Tom Taylor' EH-D (Skinner 1962)
S I 'Vestale' (Lemoine 1910)
D IV 'Victor Lemoine' (Lemoine 1906)
D V 'Virginite' (Lemoine 1888)

Alternate Selections

- S VII 'Agincourt Beauty' (Slater 1968)
S VII 'A. M. Brand' (Brand 1950)
S III 'Ambassadeur' (Lemoine 1930)
D III 'Ami Schott' (Lemoine 1933)
S VII 'Anne Shiach' (Havemeyer 1943)
D III 'Azurea Plena' (Libert-Darimont 1843)
D VII 'Charles Joly' (Lemoine 1896)
S VII 'Chris' (Berdeen 1966)
S IV 'Christophe Colomb' (Lemoine 1905)
S III 'Coerulea Superba' (Ellwanger & Barry 1868)

- S VI 'Congo' (Lemoine 1896)
D V 'Cora Lyden' (Lyden 1966)
S III 'Crepuscule' (Lemoine 1928)
S III 'Diplomate' (Lemoine 1930)
S VII 'Dusk' (Havemeyer - about 1941)
D I 'Edith Cavell' (Lemoine 1916)
S I 'Fraicheur' (Lemoine 1946)
S VII 'Frank Patterson' (Patterson 1961)
S V 'General Sherman' (Dunbar 1917)
S VI 'Glory' (Havemeyer 1935)
S VII 'Hallelujah' (Havemeyer & Eaton 1954)
S I 'Heather' (Havemeyer & Eaton 1954)
S VII 'Helen Schloen' (Patterson 1962)
S I 'Henry Clay' (Dunbar 1923)
S IV 'Jacques Callot' (Lemoine 1876)
S V 'Macrostachya' (Renaud 1874)
S I 'Maud Notcutt' (Notcutt 1956)
S III 'Maurcie Barres' (Lemoine 1917)
S III 'Madame Charles Souchet' (Lemoine 1949)
D I 'Mme. Lemoine' (Lemoine 1890)
D VI 'Mrs. Edward Harding' (Lemoine 1922)
S VII 'Mrs. W. E. Marshall' (Havemeyer 1924)
S VII 'Night' (Havemeyer 1943)
D I 'Oakes Double White' (Origin unknown; found in New
Hampshire garden about 1960)
S VI 'Paul Deschanel' (Lemoine 1924)
D III 'President Grevy' (Lemoine 1886)

- S VII 'President Roosevelt' (Dunbar - about 1919)
- S I 'Prinrose' (Maarse G. 1949) The most yellowish
creamy-white.
- S VII 'Rochambeau' (Lemoine 1919)
- S I 'Rochester' (Grant)
- S V 'Rowancroft Pink' (Blacklock 1953)
- S VI 'Ruhm von Horstenstein' (Wilke 1921)
- S VII 'Triste Barbaro' (Origin unknown, imported from
England 1938) A true dwarf.
- S III 'True Blue' (Havemeyer)
- D II 'Violetta' (Lemoine 1916)
- S VII 'Volcan' (Lemoine 1899)
- S I 'White Swan' (Havemeyer 1943)

Acknowledgment:

The foregoing article was first printed in HORTICULTURE magazine June 1974, and is herein reprinted with the express permission of that publication as well as the authors. Photographs used with the original printing have been omitted.

(This appraisal represents the evaluation of the authors and reflects observations made over a long period of time. Many of the more recent introductions were not included in the collections being monitored, hence such were not considered. However, if a survey of all known cultivars could be accomplished, making up a list of the 100 BEST, it is acknowledged that most of the selections herein listed would be included.)

Editor

* * *



from the Registrar's Desk

Freek Vrugtman, Curator of Collections, Royal Botanical Gardens,
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CORRECTION

Lilacs Vol. 6, No. 1; PROCEEDINGS Sixth Annual Convention
(1977) 1976 Lilac Registrations, Page 16

Syringa x hyacinthiflora 'Heather Haze' U.S. Plant Pat. 3885
The synonymy should read:

(First named 'Pink Lace'; not 'Pink Lace' J. Sass; not 'Pink
Lace' = 'Herman Eilers').

REQUEST FOR CATALOGUES

Nursery trade catalogues are the most important primary source of information on cultivar names, year of introduction, description, and so on. The Royal Botanical Gardens' Library has a growing Nursery and Seed Trade Catalogue Collection; by January 1978 this Collection contained 3,243 catalogues representing 739 firms.

In connection with our ongoing lilac work it would be very useful to know who has catalogues of firms that introduced lilacs. We do welcome donations of catalogues (most catalogues in the Collection were donated), but it is of greater concern to us to know who owns an important catalogue in order that we may photocopy the essential pages for our files. If you happen to have any catalogues of any of the firms that introduced lilac cultivars, please write us a brief note. Chances are that you can save us many hours if not days of fruitless searching.

QUESTION

In April 1959 the Arnold Arboretum received from the Brand Peony Farm in Faribault, Minnesota, ten grafts of Syringa 'LEONORE'.

The people at Brand Peony Farm and Nursery cannot help us, they do not know where 'LEONORE' lilac was acquired originally.

We would like to hear from anyone who has the 'LEONORE' lilac in his or her collection, from anyone who has a literature reference (catalogue, article), and from anyone who has seen it in flower and could describe it to us.

* * *

BITS OF WIT

If you live your life too tense you will soon become past tense.

The road to success is always under construction.

Failure has often been the beginning of success.

Initiative is doing the right thing without being told to do so.

I am not afraid of tomorrow, for I have seen yesterday and I love today.

If you find that truth gets in your way, you are surely on the wrong road.

OLD LILACS -

I have an interesting letter from Mrs. Warren G. Wentworth, Jr., in reference to an article published in the March 1 issue of Horticulture which states that the Wentworth lilacs in Portsmouth, N.H., are probably the oldest in this country. My correspondent takes issue with this statement, saying that lilacs are to be found near her home in South Duxbury, Mass., as the Elder Brewster lilacs and stand on the site of the Brewster homestead. The spot is marked by a granite tablet on which is inscribed, "The Elder Brewster lilacs, said to have been brought from Holland by Elder Brewster." These lilacs now cover the site of the original house, completely filling the cellar depression. They rise to a height of ten feet or more and, each year, make a picture which attracts the attention of many tourists.

Mrs. Wentworth has a lilac hedge which came from the original Brewster lilacs and this year a plant was sent to Professor Raymond Hepler of the University of New Hampshire at Durham, from which both Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth were graduated. The plant will be added to the collection of lilacs that has been started at the rear of Thompson Hall on the campus.

(The foregoing item is herein reprinted with the permission of HORTICULTURE, the publication in which it first appeared - July 1, 1940 (The Massachusetts Horticultural Society).

IT TAKES A LONG TIME -

For example: the 'Cortland' apple was the result of work done in 1898, introduced into the trade in 1915, reached commercial significance in 1965 when it became the third most important apple cultivar grown in New York State. To date there are over one thousand cultivars being maintained in the N.Y. Agr. Exp. Sta. at Geneva, N.Y. There are also about 500 numbered apple selections presently being evaluated at Geneva, but only a few of these may reach commercial importance.

IN REMEMBRANCE

It is with much sorrow that we learn of the passing of Philip B. Hodgdon, Randolph Center, Vermont, August 9, 1978. Memorial Services were conducted at the First Congregational Church in Randolph Center on Thur., Aug. 17, 1978.

Phil's almost 76 years of serving his fellow man came to a close while he slept in peace following a day of normal work - a reward granted to but few. Those of you that were present at the election of Board Members at Media last May will recall that he was elected to serve our Society in that governing capacity. As a group with a common purpose we looked to men such as Phil for his deep sense of dedication, sincerity and wisdom.

His quiet nature and sound judgment set him apart as a man of high principles and desire to do good for his fellow man. His high hopes for the Society should give us strong reason to carry on in an attempt to reach our goals, as his stalwart being will be missed by his many friends in IIS. As we extend our sincere sympathy to Mrs. Hodgdon and other members of his family, we are equally certain that he will be missed by the many people for whom he worked in his community where his sage counsel will be long remembered.