



# Lilac Newsletter

Vol. V, No. 9, September, 1979

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, Devereaux Rd., Clyde, NY 14433.

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\*Mail membership dues to I.L.S. Secretary.

## MACKINAC LILAC FESTIVAL

The 32nd. Annual Lilac Festival as reported by The Upper Peninsula Sunday Times (June 17, 1979) was held on the weekend of June 10. Amidst lots of rain and fog there were but few of the fragrant blooms to be found, but the visitors were there in the seasonal numbers. However, as parade time rolled around the clouds thinned and the sky lightened to allow the "lilac royalty" to pass in review upon horse-drawn carriages and, this year, movie star Christopher Reeve.

Reeve the performing star of "Superman" on the Island for the filming of "Somewhere In Time", was grand marshal for the parade and festival which was sponsored by the local Chamber of Commerce. JoAnn Bagbey served as festival chairperson of the 32nd. Annual extravaganza which featured high school bands from two downstate communities as well as 15 appropriately decorated floats entered by local organizations and business firms and nearby towns.

Midge Bodwin, a 16 year-old Mackinac sophomore was crowned 1979 lilac queen to reign over the festivities - the crowning ceremony was performed by a former State legislator Dennis Cawthorne who was called upon to fill-in for Reeve who was not available account of filming commitments.

A later than usual spring and the festival having been set up one week had the promoters really scurrying to find enough lilacs on the Island to decorate the floats and provide a bouquet for the queen.

Editor

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ILS GETS THE NEW YORK TIMES EXPOSURE -

While ILS was just about ready to sit down to the serious business of Seventh Annual Conference, there appeared in THE NEW YORK TIMES, May 20, 1979 a very fine exposure in our favor. The article 'Lilacs You are Everywhere' observations of a New England poetess, Amy Lowell and put together for the TIMES by one Richard M. Bacon, a writer who is presently working on a novel.

The story goes to great lengths to collect together all the loose ends and information, and collectively claims the total printed space on P. 44 of Sec. D along with related commercial ads and they come off with about a 50-50 share of the page. He reaches out to the Arnold Arboretum collection 'cause Sunday the 20th. was 'Lilac Sunday' there, the U.S. National Arboretum, Rochester Parks and the Royal Botanical Gardens to emphasize the interest in Lilacs, how they are collected for breeding, study etc.

Bacon obviously noted a lot of information gleaned from Pres. Owen Rogers and like the articulata 'think on your feet' individual that our President is, there is a real collage of facts and data that is normally bypassed in the usual report. He touches on the many facets of our common interest and the entire dissertation extols all the color that we could ever hope for, not too much removed from the wide range of bloom shades that we associate with the genus Syringa.

While this writer didn't go way overboard telling his readers all about the merits of ILS, he certainly used all his notes and put together a picture in words that between the lines gave us a lot of good exposure.

Editor

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LILAC TIME

C.W. Caldwell

\*(reprint)

America has a soft spot in its heart for the lilac for, while it is not a native of this country, it early became a resident of this country so that today, many of us have or remember plantings around our homes. Most of these, of course, are of the common, yet very beautiful, purple or white variety. Occasionally in home plantings, we see a double-flowered one or possibly a lovely, lacy Persian. All of these are well worth having no one will deny. But lovely as are these varieties, how many of us know that in addition to these are literally hundreds and hundreds of other varieties. Those who think that purple and white is the range of colors in which lilacs are found will be amazed to learn that they also come tinted in pink, blue, reddish purple and cream. Each of these, in turn, is found in a variety of forms, singles and doubles, large spikes and small, dense heads of flowers and loose lacy forms - every one more stunning than the next.

Again for those whose experience with this lovely shrub is confined to his enjoyment or remembrance of a single bush or a small home planting, there remains the experience of seeing literally acres of these varieties in mass display.

Such is the never-to-be-forgotten experience of the thousands of persons who visit beautiful Lilacia Park in

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\*The following dissertation is one of several papers concerning lilacs which appeared as a Lilac Symposium in the Arboretum Bulletin, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash.. This particular expression appeared in Vol. XI No. 2 (Spring 1951) and is herein reprinted with the express permission of the Editor of that publication.

Editor

Lombard, Illinois, each year, for here are acres and acres of breath-taking beauty.

Lilacia Park started as a man's hobby. That man, William Plum, as a seventeen-year-old boy, served as a volunteer telegrapher under Gen. George R. Thomas in the Civil War. After the war he worked his way through Yale and in 1867 he married Helen Maria Williams. Mr. and Mrs. Plum chose the West as their home and Lombard as their home in the West. The house which they built is still standing and serves as the village library.+

After his retirement Colonel and Mrs. Plum traveled extensively. In Nancy, France, they visited the Lemoine lilac gardens named for M. Victor Lemoine, the famous lilac hybridizer. This impressed the Plums so deeply that, as a result, with two lilacs which they brought back from France, they started their own garden which was later to be willed to the village and which now, with certain additions, is the world famous Lilacia Park.

The Park now boasts approximately 1500 bushes in some 300 varieties in the Park proper and several hundred more in the nursery. This year certain new varieties are being added from other collections. In addition to the lilacs some 10,000 tulips in beds and borders and some 5000 pansies all blooming at the same time as the lilacs add beauty to this fairyland. The Park proper covers some nine acres of ground with winding paths, open meadows and a lovely, rock-rimmed pool.

Lombard is located roughly fifteen miles west of Chicago and may be reached by excellent roads, by steam or electric train. The Park itself is located right in the center of the village.

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+The old home was razed in 1963 to make way for a more modern and adequate Library facility as well as office space for The Lombard Park District.

Editor

Each spring, in May, Lombard welcomes tens of thousands of visitors from all states of the Union and from many foreign countries. These visitors, the village residents, the banners and the blooms all add up to a festival - a visit to which will never be forgotten.

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GARDENING WITH LILACS

by Louis R. Fischer, Hastings, Minnesota

\*(reprint)

The common lilac is well known all over America but is only one of the many species of the lilac family. There are perhaps about 25 botanical species which are native of China and Central Europe and they differ greatly in appearance. It was from the common lilac, Syringa vulgaris, however, that the modern French lilacs have been developed. Victor Lemoine, of Nancy, France, can rightly be called the father of the modern lilacs. It was through his efforts of scientific breeding, started about 1870, that we now have these beautiful creations. No attempt will be made to discuss the various species, but only to give a brief review of the modern lilacs, in the hope that it will assist the beginner in understanding their great beauty.

Thrive in the North

The lilac is popular throughout the world but nowhere is it as beautiful as in the United States and Canada. The

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\*"Gardening With Lilacs" was first published in The Minnesota HORTICULTURIST, Vol. 72, No. 4 - April 1944 and is herein reprinted with the express permission of the Editor of that publication.

Editor

contrast between the very rigorous winters and the dry, warm summers lends itself wonderfully to the development of the lilac and to the richness of its bloom. Any good garden soil is suitable. A heavy loam in natural limestone country is the best but lilacs will thrive without lime in a neutral soil. Gravelly soil that becomes parched will never do. Select a location in full sunlight where there will be a free movement of air. Under no conditions select a low and poorly drained site. They like plenty of moisture but will not tolerate wet feet.

#### Preparing the Soil

After selecting the location make sure that the soil is deep. For best results dig a hole at least 3 or 4 feet wide and 2½ feet deep. Mix well into the soil a liberal quantity of well decayed manure and one or two pounds of bone meal. If your soil has a tendency to be sour, the addition of slacked lime or finely ground agricultural limestone will be beneficial. Plant as you would most other shrubs, being sure to spread the roots, and tamping the soil firm about the plants. Keep lilacs well watered the first season. A two-inch layer of mulching peat is also fine for newly set plants. If not mulched cultivate freely during the summer.

The selection of the proper type of plant is absolutely necessary. Always be sure that the lilacs you purchase are on their own roots and not grafted on common lilac understocks. In the latter case you would have the problem of untrue suckers coming up about the bush. Suckers from own-root lilacs will always be identical to the mother plant. It takes longer to propagate and develop own-root plants and for that reason they will be slightly higher in price. However, it will prove to be a good investment that will pay dividends in satisfaction in later years.

For best results secure plants that are sturdy and young, preferably not over four feet tall. Such plants usually suffer very little setback in transplanting and recover quickly to make a normal growth. Large bushes usually suffer considerably in the transplant and are not quick to re-establish themselves in their new location. The result is that growth is stunted and it will take several years before normal growth is started again.

Such upsets rarely follow the transplanting of young plants.

#### When to Plant

Lilacs can be planted either in the early spring or in the fall. As they start their bud and leaf growth so early in the spring it is preferable to plant in the fall as soon as they become dormant. Mulching the lilacs the first winter is desirable. If you want to plant in the spring be sure it is done early so as not to risk the possibility of checking the plant growth after it has started. Lilacs rather resent being moved, although if handled in the right way and at the proper time they transplant easily.

A great deal of criticism has been voiced against the lilacs because of the tendency to sucker. That is true of the common lilac as the suckers become very unsightly and are difficult to control. On the other hand the modern French lilacs will sucker very little, a few varieties being the exception. Deep planting will also help to control this condition. Set the plants so that the crown is five to six inches below the surface. They like deep planting and there will be fewer suckers. Another advantage they have over the common lilac is that they bloom on younger plants, often producing tremendous plumes on very small bushes.

The French lilacs are both double and single-flowered. Their panicles are usually large, measuring up to 14 inches in length. The individual florets on some varieties are as large as a quarter of a dollar. They can be had in a wide range of colors from the palest pink and white up through the various shades of blue to deep purple and violet. The average beginner will be attracted to the rich reds or wine-purple colors but as one becomes better acquainted with these fine creations the paler-tinted varieties and the magnificent whites are better appreciated. Personal preference as to colors varies greatly and what one likes another may not. However, the varieties I will attempt to recommend are considered by noted authorities to be outstanding and ones I have observed in our own plantings as especially fine.

### Single Varieties

'Decaisne' - This is the bluest of all single lilacs except 'President Lincoln', which is a different blue. It produces abundant clusters of medium-size panicles. One of the very best.

'Lucie Baltet' - One of the oldest but one of the best pink lilacs. Stock is very scarce but worth trying to get.

'Mme. F. Morel' - Rosy-pink to deep mauve-pink. The trusses are long with remarkably large florets. An unusually attractive lilac.

'Reaumur' - This floriferous lilac produces very broad trusses. A stunning purple-red with rose-red effect. One of the great lilacs.

'Andenken an Ludwig Spath' - One of the oldest but perhaps the most popular dark-colored lilac. Flowers large and of brilliant red-purple.

'Vestale' - The large, graceful trusses of this lovely lilac cannot be excelled. Color is pure, rich white. Anyone looking for a graceful white can surely get it in Vestale.

'Mme. Florent Stepman' - Another fine single white which is attracting a lot of attention. The unopened buds are creamy but expand to pure white. Flowers large and a prolific bearer.

### Double Varieties

'Marechal Lannes' - Color is campanula-violet. The enormous blooms are composed of individual florets of unbelievable size. A wonderful lilac.

'Victor Lemoine' - One of the best lilacs in existence. Pinkish buds open to a soft pink overlaid with a delicate blue-lavender. Panicles are very large and composed of very double individual florets which look like little double roses.

'Henri Martin' - This amazing lilac is blue-lavender in color and one of the largest in size. The heavy blooms are of the finest form. A very rich and imposing lilac.

'Leon Gambetta' - A superb lilac bearing large graceful panicles. Pink buds open to rosy-mauve. Strong growing, early and free flowering. Many consider it the most beautiful lilac.

'President Fallieres' - Light rose-pink with center of florets almost white. Large and imposing. Very much like 'Leon Gambetta' and considered as outstanding by those who know them both.

'Stadzartner Rothpeltz' - A very rich red-purple having long panicles which are borne on an upright bush. One of the fine double reds.

'Miss Ellen Willmott' - This fine double white is creamy-white and is well like. A strong grower and free bloomer.

'Edith Cavell' - The large trusses of this fine lilac are also creamy white in color but more lace-like in appearance than is 'Miss Ellen Willmott'.

In describing the varieties I made no mention of fragrance. Some varieties are more fragrant than others but all are very sweet-scented. While color is an important factor in selecting a lilac, I might say that fragrance is perhaps the most popular characteristic.

There are hundreds of different lilacs, some equally as beautiful as those I have described, but because a long list only tends to confuse the beginner, I have limited my discussions to a few of the best. I know the descriptions are inadequate for the beauty of these lovely creations, but if I had let my enthusiasm get the better of me there would not be enough adjectives to do the task. After all, the only way to appreciate their beauty is to see them in bloom.

The modern lilacs are becoming very popular and I hope that what I have written will inspire many more to plant them. I suggest that you try at least a few or you will indeed be missing one of the joys of the garden.

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