

# Lilac Newsletter

Vol. VI, No. 12, December, 1980.

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.

Articles printed in this publication are the views and opinions of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent those of the editor or the *International Lilac Society*.

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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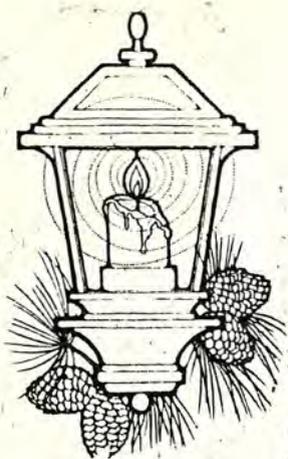
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#### MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION

	<u>1980 (\$ US)</u>
Single annual .....	7.50
Family .....	10.00
Sustaining .....	15.00
Institutional/Commercial .....	20.00
Life .....	150.00

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



# Season's Greetings

Another Holiday Season is with us and again we find it most appropriate to reflect upon the accomplishments of yet one more year of gracious being. A time when we are so often and vividly reminded of the Greatness and All Powerful Strength that surrounds our every effort, for while we are each unto ourselves but a partical of dust in this vast universe, as a cohesive society we collectively look to the needs of our fellow man with a deep sense of compassion - at one time or another we all look to the less fortunate one and help if and when we can. That which we as individuals contribute in the overall plan of things is indeed as the mortar that binds the structure itself. We must, each of us, reflect upon that which has been a part of us and now passing before our very eyes, and if we cannot sincerely acknowledge a dedication of purpose, then we will most assuredly find ourselves searching among the rubble of the fallen Temple for the less than perfect pieces that might have otherwise stood as our aspired goal.

We must re-affirm our convictions, re-new our hopes in the mysteries of yet another New Year, search out our hidden Wisdom and Strength that we might project our help to those that seek.

It is a time when we would express our sincerest GOOD WISHES to all Lilac Society Members and trust that you too might each in your own way send up your thanks, and share your Blessings with Him, the Almighty Architect of all earthly things. We are without meaningful words to adequately say Thank You in Heaven for that ongoing Strength which is ours, that Strength of purpose which binds us together in a common cause.

May each of you in your own mission enjoy a JOYFUL, HAPPY and PEACE LOVING Holiday Season and a NEW YEAR that will be Blessed with a generous portion of GOOD HEALTH.

Editor

HONOR goes to I.L.S. President, Dr. Owen M. Rogers -

At the May 20, 1980 LILACTIME FESTIVITIES, an annual function of the Monroe County Parks, our esteemed President was awarded a plaque which read:

The Monroe County Department of Parks

and

The Lilac Festival Committee

present the

1980 Lilac Festival Award

to

Dr. Owen M. Rogers

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to horticulture through his promotion of lilacs as president of the International Lilac Society

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May 20, 1980

Editors Note: Such high recognition comes to but a few and we of the Society are indeed proud that our president should be so honored, and I would at this time take it upon myself to include the entire membership in extending my hardy congratulations.

"To Grow, or Not to Grow?" - Lilacs

By Paul Tritenbach, Berkeley \*

One winter day, about ten years ago, when I was delivering for a Pasadena nurse, I discovered a little old lady directing her ice man with 25 pounds of ice to her lilac. "Oh", she exclaimed, "such work to keep its roots cold here, but I MUST have my lilacs!"

The gardening public seems to insist on having its "old fashioned" lilacs, regardless of any advice they may get against them; and discussion about whether or not to grow certain lilacs in many of our California climates is frequently heard at this season.

When most gardeners refer to lilacs, they generally are talking about the typical, old fashioned purple lilac their parents had "back East". This lilac, Syringa vulgaris, including the newer "French hybrids", will likely be in the greatest favor for many years - although the Persian species, S. x persica, is gaining in popularity. "Syringa" is Greek for "tube" or "pipe", and "vulgaris" is Latin for "common".

Let's take a look first at this Syringa vulgaris, see what there is of conversational interest about it, and check what you can do to get better results.

This lilac needs little description. Virtually all Golden Gardeners know it - a rather large deciduous shrub; with opposite, simple leaves, and familiar, fragrant flowers in panicles at the ends of the new

\*Reprint: This article was first published in GOLDEN GARDENS, An All California Garden Magazine, April 1957 and is herein reprinted with the express permission of the Assistant Editor of that publication.

branches. Fruit is a leathery small capsule with winged seeds.

Walter Clarke, of San Jose, largest lilac grower in the West, says there are 24 to 28 species of Syringa, and that he has tested 250 varieties in 35 years, developing many of them himself. Over 500 varieties are recorded, according to John Grant, "Trees and Shrubs of Pacific Northwest Gardens", who knows that "no two gardeners will ever be agreed on what constitutes the best dozen".

Originating in the Balkans, lilacs were brought to Western Europe, in the early 1500's, presumably by a German traveller, Busbeck. In 1597, Gerarde says "I have them growing in my garden in greate plentie". About 1600 they were brought to America, and finally arrived via "prarie schooner" to California during the Gold Rush.

Early improvement is largely credited to Victor Lemoine of France (1823-1911) and his son Emile. His selections of S. vulgaris types are now called "French hybrids", although very few are really true hybrids. The goals of large flowers and clusters, larger range of colors, and increased climate adaptability are still being worked on by Clarke's and a few others.

Walter Borchers, of Clarke's recommends these four varieties as being the best of their color for central California:

- 'Clarke's Giant' - sky blue, single, very large flowers.
- 'Esther Staley' - pink, single.
- 'Purple Heart' - deep purple, single
- 'Sunset' - ruddy purple, double.

These new varieties or selections can be increased by softwood cuttings, grafting, or budding. If on their own root, home gardeners can propagate by dividing the rooted suckers. Commercially, the common practice is to bud or graft on privet about July or August. Why? - - because if cutting grown it takes too long to come into

bloom, and if grafted on common lilac root, too many suckers develop.

However, plants worked on privet must be planted deep - about 4 inches above the union - so that the lilac will form its own roots. Disregard of this is one of the main reasons for weak growth, often seen among grafted lilacs.

A long dormant season is required for best bloom. That is why the Pasadena woman kept hers iced - a misguided attempt to maintain its dormancy during warm winter spells there. "French hybrid" and most forms of Syringa vulgaris are not well suited to Southern California's climate, J.M. Story, Armstrong Nurseries, states. He recommends using the Persian lilac, or the native California lilacs (Ceanothus) instead. Sidney Mitchell was discouraged with his in the Berkeley hills, but has observed success in the Santa Rosa, San Jose, and Placerville types of climates.

The colder it is, the better they seem to like it (to 20 or 30 degrees below zero), as in the Eastern United States. In most of the West, however, here's what you should do to get better flowers -

1. Plant in early winter, in the coldest spot in your yard, yet with summer sun. 4 or 5 inches above the bud union.

2. Don't water after midsummer. (People who find their lilacs blooming in September should check this for the cause, according to Joseph Williamson, Sunset's assistant garden editor).

3. Give it a fairly well-drained spot; (it dislikes hardpan or heavy clay), and use lime, if necessary, to counteract acid soil.

4. Don't expect best blooms until the third season. Cutting old flowers is recommended by Borchers, as seed-formation shortens bloom period. That, plus thinning out, is usually all the pruning needed. On very large old lilacs, though, it is often good to remove the 3 or 4 heaviest trunks, preferably one each season.

Pests or diseases seldom attack, although occasionally it is necessary to treat for mildew or oyster shell scale.

"French hybrid" lilacs come in almost all colors except yellow, and by selecting varieties, can be in bloom from April to June. April seems to be their best month in California lowlands, and Clarke's Nursery holds its annual Lilac Show about mid-April.

Lilacs beautiful spring blooms combine well in your garden with such plants as Laburnum vossi (Golden Chain Tree), Spiraea vanhouttei (Bridal Wreath), iris, and late tulips. Because of their flowers, and their habit of growth, they are useful also as an informal hedge, or a background for rose, bulb, or herb gardens. A purple lilac blooming beside a white picket fence or arbor brings back memories of "auld lang syne" to former Easterners.

Many people, like the lady in Pasadena, attach great sentiment to lilacs. Miss Ildrewe, in "The Language of Flowers", 1865, and others, considered that the "lilac symbolizes the first emotions of love".

"O Lilac, in whose purple well,  
Youth, my perpetuo, doth dwell,  
My fancy feels thy fragrant spell."

- T.W. Parsons

Have you ever wondered where the common name, "lilac", came from? It is thought to be adapted from the Persian word for "flower". Other common names have been given to it - Rev. H. Friend, in "Flowers and Flower Lore", says that in parts of England it is called Laylock, Duck's-bill, Oysters, and May.

Then there are other plants that have been called "lilac". Buddleia is sometimes know as "Summer Lilac." "California" or "wild" lilac refers to Ceanothus. While Ceanothus is being improved by Maunsell Van Rensselaer\* and others at the Saratoga Horticultural

\* Deceased

Foundation, and at the Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens, it should not be confused as a species of true lilac.

Aside from Syringa vulgaris, the only other species commonly used in California is S. x persica, or Persian lilac. This is an important one, however, as it is well suited to warm winter areas.

Armstrong's lists S. laciniata which has finely cut foliage, usually evergreen, on long arching branches. The flowers are fragrant, long-lasting, bright lavender spikes. While it would seem to be a native of Persia, it was discovered in Kansu province, Western China, in 1915. The most serious trouble with S. laciniata is that it does not look like an Eastern lilac.

Growing only 5 to 7 feet, this is the smallest species, agriculturist H.M. Butterfield of the University of California writes. The largest, and sometimes seen in California, is Syringa reticulata. Japanese Tree Lilac, growing to 30 feet, with white flowers in panicles 18 to 24 inches long.

Whether to grow the old-fashioned Syringa vulgaris and its "French hybrids", or to substitute the Persian lilac, or even the Ceanothus, will be discussed for many years. But there will always be gardeners, like the little old lady in Pasadena, who will insist, "I must have my lilacs!"

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#### BITS OF WIT

The secret of happiness is to count all our blessings while others are counting up their troubles.

Dieters go to great lengths to avoid great widths.

ELECTION OF ILS DIRECTORS

It is that time of the year when the Members of the ILS should start considering whom they would like to nominate to the Board of Directors. The Nominating committee would appreciate suggestions of members that might be considered for nomination.

Please send your suggestions to

Max Peterson, Chairman  
Nominating Committee  
RR1, Box 273  
Ogallala, Nebraska  
USA 69153

To be assured of consideration, your suggestions should be received before February 1, 1981.

Following is a list of Directors currently serving:

Elected 1978 (For 3 Year Term)	Elected 1979 (For 3 Year Term)	Elected 1980 (For 3 Year Term)
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John Alexander III	Dr. Robert Clark	Marie Chaykowski
Dr. Donald Egolf	Fr. John Fiala	Nancy Emerson
Travers Hutchison	William Heard	Dr. Joel Margaretten
Roger Luce	Charles Holetich	Walter Eikhorst
Sally Schenker	Walter Oakes	Winfried Martin
Elsie Kara	Max Peterson	Lyle Littlefield
Lourene Wishart	Dr. Owen Rogers	John Carvill
Al Lumley	William Utley	Pauline Fiala

For the Nomination Committee  
Max Peterson  
Jack Alexander