



Lilac Newsletter

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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*.

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	<u>1980 (\$ US)</u>
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*Mail membership dues to I.L.S. Secretary.

THE BEGINNINGS OF LILACIA PARK OF LOMBARD, ILLINOIS

by Charlotte R. Erlandson (Mrs. W.J.)

Without doubt, Lombard, Illinois' No. 1 citizen has been Colonel William R. Plum who bequeathed the original two and a half acres of lilacs to the village in 1927. He also gave his 14 room mansion together with a sum of money to establish what is now known as Lilacia Park and now includes seven acres.

It was our privilege to reside in the Plum mansion for almost a year, having moved there a few months after his death in April, 1927.

It was a well-built sturdy home and for a number of years it served as a public library until it was torn down to make room for a larger modern library.

My husband was the editor of the Lombard Press and became acquainted with some of the friends of the late Colonel Plum and thus we were asked to move into the home while the will was being probated and the village council debated whether Lombard would accept Colonel Plum's generous gift. Opinions were also divided when the decision was made to destroy the home and it was with regret we learned a new library would be built on the site. But a half-century ago there were no committees to save historic buildings. Colonel Plum was an attorney and a very successful one. He was graduated from Yale Law school in 1867 and the same year was married to Helen Maria Williams. He was active in the Civil War at which time he rose to the rank of Colonel. Among his treasures was a "wireless" device, which friends of the Colonel told us, was used to send secret messages to General Sherman.

His interest in lilacs started in 1911 when he and his wife visited the famous lilac collection of the Lemoine Nursery at Nancy, France. They brought back with them two lilacs, the lovely white 'Mrs. Casimer Perier' and the light purple 'Michael Buchner'. The bushes were but 16 years old at best when we moved into the Plum home but were already tall and beautiful growing in the rich black Illinois soil. Neighbours of ours in Lombard told us how beautiful the lilacs would be in the spring but we were little prepared for the fairyland of beauty as the many colors of lilacs blossomed. Already the popularity of the lilac collection was well known because in the spring of 1928 many people came from far and wide to see the lilacs.

I thought then how nice it would have been had I served coffee or tea to the people, some who had travelled distances, to see the blooms.

So, years later after we bought more than an acre of land in Lake Mills and planted many lilacs, we did have a public tea for eighteen years at lilac time. But now we are in our seventies and no longer have a public tea although we do invite friends to come in May. We have more than fifty varieties and many more bushes. I believe we have the largest private collection in Wisconsin although there are two beautiful large public collections of lilacs - one at the University of Wisconsin Arboretum and one at Whitnall Park, Hales Corners near Milwaukee.

Coming back to Colonel and Mrs. Plum's home. Mrs. Plum had been an invalid in her later years and so an elevator was built to take her upstairs. It was raised by pulling ropes but did a good job of going up and down. There was a huge billiard room upstairs with a fine table to provide recreation. On the first floor was a secret room where treasures were hidden. This was a panel in the wall and we

lived there some time before we were told of the room. We enjoyed a lovely conservatory attached to the basement where we raised flowers and garden supplies during the winter. It was a glorious old home with many fireplaces and we have many treasured memories for having lived there besides having a life-long interest in lilacs.

I have always been sorry that Colonel and Mrs. Plum were buried in Ohio from whence they came to Chicago suburbia. Somehow they are so much a part of Lombard that I felt they should have been interred there. Colonel and Mrs. Plum had two children who died at birth so they left no immediate heirs. However, relatives came from Ohio and took many things back with them. An auction was held on a hot summer day in 1928 but I was unable to attend much to my regret because we had moved to Elmhurst, Illinois and I had a small baby at home. I often wondered what happened to Colonel Plum's Civil War uniform and the many treasures I so much admired?

Written in June, 1980



STOP-PRESS NEWS ITEM: Portland, Me. - June 23, 1980

Ken Berdeen of Kennebunk was seen on WCSH-TV (People, Places & Things) Monday, June 23rd.. He showed his host acres of lilacs in living color.

LILACIA PARK AND MEMORIAL LIBRARY , THE DONORS...

by Helen Riedel

Starling beneath the shade of a towering silver aspen tree is the eighty year old home of the Helen M. Plum Memorial Library.

A meeting place for village and church affairs when its owners, the late Col. and Mrs. William R. Plum lived there, it now houses approximately 12,000 volumes in what was the study, the "best" parlor and other rooms.

It was the year 1867 when Col. Plum graduated from Yale Law School, married the former Helen Maria Williams and came west to establish this home.

Locating on an extensive piece of property which was to become the nucleus of Lilacia Park, Col. Plum and his wife began to indulge in their hobby of collectiong lilacs. Traveling extensively through the states, Mexico, Canada, and Europe, the Plums were in Nancy, France in 1911 where they visited the famous Lemoine lilac gardens. They returned with two varieties, the beautiful, pure white Mme. Casimir and the double, light purple Michael Buchner. Thus was started a lilac collections which has grown to include over 1500 bushes, embracing approximately three hundred varieties. When Col. Plum passed away in 1927, the estate was bequeathed to the village, the home to be used as a library and named the Helen M. Plum Memorial Library as a memorial to his wife who preceeded him in death, and the grounds to become a lilac park. Expanded from the original two and one half acres, the park now comprises about seven acres of land to accommodate the 1500 lilac bushes, the 50,000 tulip bulbs, and the many flowering shrubs and evergreens which have been added from time to time.

The exterior of the home remains much as it was when the Plums lived there, but many changes have been made to remodel the interior of the building to house the library. The library proper is on the main floor, while the second floor includes an apartment for the caretaker, storage rooms, and a meeting room for the Library Board.

The library is supported by taxation and is aided by the Friends of the Library, which was organized in 1940. Since then the Friends have given more than \$2500.00 for the purchase of new books.

Offshoots of the two original French lilacs which the Plums brought from France mark the graves of the Colonel and his wife in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. In profuse bloom each spring they stand as a living memorial to the love of beauty and nature which was inherent in the Plums, and each spring the people of Lombard are reminded again of the generosity of the Colonel and his wife as they stroll through the beautiful and fragrant Lilacia Park.

BITS OF WIT

The secret of happiness is not in doing what you like, but in liking what you do.

Small deeds done are better than great deeds planned.

They can because they think they can.

LILACS AVAILABLE - WANTED

by Walter W. Oakes

The Society offers its members only two tangible benefits - information and plants/seed. We are all concerned about our plant distribution program and finding practical solutions to the problem.

A Plant Propagation and Distribution Committee is being formed and already has plans underway and plants in propagation as part one of a two part effort to make rare and exceptional lilacs available to our members at reasonable cost.

The second phase is where members with good lilac collections can help. Here's what can be done to get some plants out this fall and we offer for your suggestions and/or amendments the following guidelines:

(1) Begin immediately to have ready for shipping small lilac plants in the fall. Everyone must have quantities of suckers to spare of good named cultivars. If these are lifted now and grown on in a row in the vegetable garden, they will be in good condition to ship by late September or October.

(2) Send Walter W. Oakes, Box 315, Rumford, Maine, 04276, a list of what is available and the prices not later than August 15 for meeting the deadline on the September "Newsletter". Send it earlier than that if possible. Please make it clear how you want to cope with packing and shipping costs. A small plant costs about \$.75 on the average to ship by mail.

(3) Customers will be instructed to order directly from you what is wanted and you take over from there.

(4) There is no need to go on and like the Federal Register since most of the details i.e. moist packing of roots and labelling we would all do without really thinking about it.

With all of us helping just a little, no one is stuck with an insurmountable amount of work and we may develop the best plant distribution program going.

It is most unfortunate that the paperwork involved will prevent us shipping to Canada. We hope that the Canadians can put together an organization for distribution there. We know from experience that we will have to work hard to stay ahead of the Canadians once they have a problem to solve.

Will you go even further and let us know as soon as possible if you will be included in the program. Time in summer flies on winged foot and we would like to have our plans in the air and ready to fly by August 15 latest.

* * *



from the ...
... Registrar's Desk

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

THE PATERSON LILACS - A CORRECTION

Only recently did I discover that it was Mrs. T.A. Paterson, (1872 - 1957), not Mrs. Frank Paterson, who originated the lilacs 'Dr. Brethour', 'Frank Paterson' (not Patterson), 'Helen Schloen' and 'Jimmy Howarth'. Where the misspelling of the name Paterson and the erroneous reference to Mrs. Frank Paterson first occurred, I do not know, but the errors were widely proliferated because of their appearance in "Lilacs for America" (1953).

CONSIDER THESE LILACS FOR MODERN SETTINGS

by Pat Shedesky, LaCrosse, Wis.

*reprint

When homeowners are faced with the problem of choosing flowering shrubs, why do so many overlook the lilac? The list of hardy spring shrubs is limited this far north, but lilacs often prosper.

Perhaps the reason for this oversight is the visions of rambling, neglected specimens often seen around old buildings or bordering foundations crumbling with age.

But, seek out the new design and color lilacs can give the landscape today. We falsely use the word "new" since many lilacs still high on the popularity list were introduced years ago. But only recently have they found their way into modern American gardens.

Color at blooming time is the strongest point to consider when choosing lilacs. Consider your color scheme in relation to other plants blooming at that time. Phlox subulata and divaricata, intermediate iris and most varieties of tulips make their appearance at lilac time. Interplanting these with lilacs creates stunning combinations.

Choosing varieties from a list numbering close to 100 is a hard task. In the pink class, 'Lucie Baltet' and 'Katherine Havameyer' are top contenders. 'Leon Gambetta' is a huge double in a delicious mauve shade. Graceful in habit and bloom is the beautiful

* The following dissertation was first published in HORTICULTURE Magazine (October 1961) and is herein reprinted with the express permission of the Editor of that publication.

Editor

rose lilac 'Mme. Antoine Buchner', and it's easy to see why 'Paul Thirion' is still a popular favorite as it's deep carmine buds open to a full double pink. Each panicle resembles a cluster of rose buds.

The red-purple class holds many outstanding varieties that are sure to please. 'Congo', 'Etna', and 'Charles Joly' are just a few in this color range, with 'Addelaide Dunbar' the darkest of all.

'President Lincoln' is the truest blue although the double 'President Grevy' is a close second. The blue of 'Oliver de Serres' is enhanced by the contrast of pale lavender buds.

No lilac planting is complete without a white, and here the double 'Ellen Willmott' and 'Edith Cavell' are two choice varieties although 'Jan Van Tol' displays the largest panicles.

Lilacs will usually outlive the structure they surround, so it seems logical to get the best plants. The first requirement when selecting your lilacs is that they be own-root plants, originating either from suckers or cuttings. Firms selling own-root lilacs are proud of that fact and will usually print the words boldly on their price list. If you are in doubt, ask the nurseryman or write the firm asking if their lilacs are own-root.

Inferior nurseries attract buyers with low prices for their grafted lilacs. These hybrid grafts are made on privet or ash and produce large, but short-lived shrubs. Other concerns will graft on inferior lilac understocks and the resulting suckers are bound to be from the understock. These suckers will usually surpass the original in vigor, and soon the shrub will divert to the undesirable species.

It is not necessary to purchase the largest shrub available. An 18-24" shrub planted this fall will have a fine crop of blooms the spring after next. However, do not judge the plant's quality until it is at least six years old.

Lilacs thrive in any location but deep shade. Full sun is best though a daily minimum of four hours sunlight will still give satisfactory bloom.

When planting, prepare a hole at least 3½' across and 2½' deep. Mix plenty of manure, compost and leaf mold with the removed soil. Unless your soil is extremely alkaline, add two pounds of lime to the soil mixture, as lilacs demand a sweet soil.

I never realized a sweet soil was so important to lilacs until last year two bushes on a slope seemed to stop growing after the first leaves appeared in spring. I thought of a lime deficiency and tested the soil and found it had a level of 5.5. Within days after a heavy application of lime new shoots formed, and after growth was well along I gave the bush a strong solution of high nitrogen fertilizer. By the end of the season growth on both lilacs surpassed that of any other year.

Should there be any delay between the time the plants arrive and when they are planted, take every precaution to keep the roots from drying. Dampening the moss packing or setting the roots in water is sufficient if only a day or two passes before planting. However, if more time lapses, heel them into damp soil.

Trim off any broken roots and spread both thick and hair roots out before covering. Anchor the plant with an inch or two of soil and then check for correct depth. Set the plant an inch or two deeper than it was in the nursery plus two inches for water catch.

Mulching helps conserve moisture, and fall-planted lilacs should be mulched heavily since they will not have sufficient time to anchor themselves before winter.