



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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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.

MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION

Single annual	7.50
Family	10.00
Sustaining	15.00
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*Mail membership dues to I.L.S. Secretary.

TENTH ANNIVERSARY AT DES MOINES

When I.L.S. meets at Des Moines on or about Mothers' Day one of the attractions we shall be seeing is the Charles Sing Denman collection of flowering crab apples on the extensive grounds of the Water Works. The collection, the work of Arie F. den Boer, a plantsman who began collecting these handsome ornamental trees in 1926, represents one of the largest plantings of crab apples in the world.

Lilac lovers can develop an interest in these companion plants because they bloom just a few days ahead of the lilacs, their colours -- pink, red and white -- complement the violet-blues of the lilac, and in autumn their fruits outdo anything which lilacs can offer. The genus Malus, to which crab apples belong, is a large one with several botanical sections. Although North America is home to one of these sections, the late blooming crabs with pink flowers and green fruits, the principle species and forms come from eastern Asia, several of which are known only in gardens suggesting long cultivation and hybrid origin. Crab apples differ from apples by the technicality of their fruits being less than two inches in diameter.

Several of our members grow crab apples as well as lilacs. The Des Moines annual meeting therefore offers additional appeal to study and enjoy a new horticultural group besides the superb lilac collection at Ewing Park.

Now is the time to plan for the tenth anniversary celebration of I.L.S. and tuck away a few dollars from the income-tax man to join our members at Des Moines. Bill Heard is putting together a worthwhile program of talks and tours for our enjoyment and edification. See you there.

Robert Clark

A GENERAL PLAN FOR LILAC COLLECTIONS IN PUBLIC GARDENS

John C. Wister, Landscape Architect Introduction

*Reprint

A century or two ago when a botanical garden was founded sections were marked out for each of the then recognized plant families and a few well known species that were supposed to have medicinal value were planted. The whole garden might not require more than an acre or so.

Nowadays it is not so simple. So many thousands of new species of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants have been discovered that no one institution can attempt to grow them all. Therefore any new garden must choose the type of work it will attempt to cover and what type of plants it will emphasize.

The arboretum of the University of Washington is still so new that all of its policies have not been determined. But a decision has been reached that among flowering shrubs, important collections will, for the present at least, be confined to rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias, lilacs and a few others that do particularly well in the Puget sound region.

Because of my work in the 1941 lilac survey I have been asked to prepare for this BULLETIN some suggestions about the importance that the lilac collection should have in this new Arboretum. I believe lilac collections should have an important place in public parks and I think this new Arboretum has an unique opportunity

* The following dissertation appeared in The Arboretum Bulletin, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash. (March 1944) and is herein reprinted with the express permission of the Editor of that publication. The only changes being herein made are those involving the updating of certain Nomenclature in accordance with the Int'l Code concerning such.

to build up the finest lilac collection in America. I don't mean the largest. Anyone foolish enough to wish to, can have the largest collection by simply planting one or more kind and/or one more plant than the largest that now exists. That does not get us anywhere. Some rival garden will come along and put in one more plant.

By "the finest" I mean first of all the collection that has the most comprehensive botanical foundation in a collection of authenticated wild species and of their important botanical (wild) varieties grouped first according to their botanical relations and then geographically and chronologically according to habit and their discovery by man and introduction into cultivation.

THE BOTANICAL FOUNDATION OF A LILAC COLLECTION

Such a collection will not be hard to assemble. Rehder states there are about 28 species but does not describe them all, an indication that some are unimportant. About 25 plants will be enough and will not take much room. They should be arranged (1) in their botanical relationship. Subgenus *Eusyringa* is divided into series *Villosae* with nine important species, series *Vulgares* with eleven important species and several important varieties, and series *Pinnatifolia* with only one species. All should be planted about 20 feet apart.

Subgenus *Ligustrina* has only two important species and one variety and they should be planted about 30 or 40 feet apart.

One plant of a kind will be sufficient in this collection.

(2) Next there should be a collection duplicating the above species and varieties arranged according to the country or district of their origin, and the date they were brought into cultivation. Here should be grouped together the three species from Europe, the eight from North China, the eight from West China,

the three from Central and Southern China and Himalaya, the two from Korea and the one variety from Japan.

The above two collections will give two plants each of all the wild types of any botanical importance. The two arrangements give a chance for the study of botanical relationships and also of the geographical distribution, and the times when they were discovered by man and brought into our gardens. This is a comprehensive botanical foundation upon which to build the study of the garden lilacs which follow.

COLLECTIONS OF GARDEN LILACS

The conception of a collection of garden lilacs is utterly different from that of a botanical collection. Botany is a science seeking to learn plant origins, relationships, natural evolution, differences and adaptations to natural surroundings, anatomical and other microscopic detail. The botanist, concerned with divisions into families, genera, species and botanical varieties and forms, does not care whether the plant is well balanced and attractive, or straggly and ungainly. He does not care if the flowers are conspicuous or hidden by the leaves, whether the colors are bright and varied, or whether they are muddy toned, whether there is fragrance, no fragrance or just bad smell. He is a scientist studying facts and trying to interpret them.

Horticulture on the other hand is an art. It walks hand in hand with the science of botany and builds foundations upon it, but it is concerned with the human use whether this be for food, for chemical, medicine, textile or other types of manufacture, or for flowers for enjoyment. The flower gardener wants beauty. He wants plants which grow happily in his locality, which do not require unreasonable care or coddling. In the case of shrubs like lilacs, he wants them to grow reasonably quickly and symmetrically, to flower

freely and regularly, to have bright colors and a wide color range if possible, and above all to bring him interest and pleasure.

For the gardener, therefore, lilac collections should show important wild types from which cultivated varieties have sprung, should show the relationship of the various cultivated varieties to their wild parents should show the history and evolution of these cultivated varieties from the wild types. Then great lilac collections should show the finest garden varieties splendidly grown, on a well drained hillside planted 15, 20 or more feet apart in fine soil and liberally fed.

To such collections can come gardeners from near and far for enjoyment, for inspiration, and to study which kinds seem to each individual the most pleasing and therefore the ones that individual should plant in his own home garden. And finally, there should be for the plant breeder and the advanced student or collector of lilacs a test garden of novelties conducted as a public service to determine which of many new kinds sent for trial will be worthy in the future of general planting.

These different collections of garden lilacs may be briefly stated as follows:

1. SPECIES AND HYBRID RACE COLLECTION

The most comprehensive collection of species and their varieties arranged according to their garden value and their value as parents, together with their resulting hybrids, including historical varieties and novelties for testing.

2. THE COMMON LILAC - HISTORICAL COLLECTION

The most comprehensive small collection of historical varieties, the best of their day though mostly now superseded.

3. THE COMMON LILAC - MAIN DISPLAY COLLECTION

The most comprehensive (not the largest) collection of the best varieties classified by season, by color, by origin and for garden purposes. As used here the term common lilac should include with the varieties of Syringa vulgaris, the earlier blooming hybrids of vulgaris and oblata.

4. THE COMMON LILAC - NOVELTY TEST COLLECTION

The most comprehensive (not the largest) constantly changing collection for the testing of novelties.

Let me elaborate on the above four different collections.

1. The Species and Hybrid Race Collection would include (1) the wild type of Syringa vulgaris and its ordinary garden form, and oblata var. dilatata which is probably the most valuable wild type recent discovery. Here also would be persica laciniata. Following these would come other species like microphylla, pubescens, Meyeri, Josikaea, reflexa, villosa, Sweginzowii, etc., and finally tree lilacs.

(2.) Next should come some of these same species arranged according to their value as parents of hybrids with examples of the resulting hybrids planted near them. Fourteen such hybrid groups were enumerated in "Lilacs For America", together with the name of the type variety. Of these the following groups are certainly of importance - x hyacinthiflora, x chinensis, henryi, x nanceiana and x Prestoniae.

(3.) Historical varieties should include at least a few forms of Josikaea and of x chinensis, which were so widely planted in the last century as well as the type varieties of the hybrids considered above.

(4.) Novelties for testing. This collection should include the resulting hybrids mentioned above except that the old x chinensis group. Restrictions of space will, however, prevent including too many

varieties of one cross or from one breeder. In only one group, x Prestoniae, is the number at present unreasonably large.

2. The Common Lilac Historical Collection can be and should be a monument to the work of plant breeders of a century of so ago, and at the same time a demonstration of how their work has now been superseded by the work of modern breeders that their varieties are no longer worthy of a place in our gardens. Yet without their work, our great modern improvement could not have been realized. So I feel strongly that they deserve all praise. Twenty or thirty varieties divided among singles and doubles will be enough to give them due honor and to demonstrate the great strides forward.

3. The Common Lilac Main Display Collection should include only the most comprehensive (not the largest) collection of the best and only the best varieties or clones classified by season, (1) early, (2) midseason. In these seasons they should be grouped (a) by color classification for study purpose, (b) by country of origin, by breeder, and by year of introduction for historical purposes, and finally (c) by color and height for landscape effect for garden purposes.

1. Early season varieties would include the Lemoine oblata var. giraldii group typified by 'Lamartine' and the oblata var. dilatata hybrids of Skinner, classified by origin, and again for garden effect. These are important plants and deserve plenty of room.

2. The main collection contains, of course, the midseason well known so - called French lilacs. It should be displayed in several different ways. First, (a) for study purposes by color classification, one plant each of some 50 or 60 varieties chosen from the best one hundred recommended in "Lilacs for America". Second (b), also for study purposes one plant each of these same varieties grouped according to originator and year of introduction, Finally (c) these same varieties

grouped to make the most attractive garden display. At least 100 and preferably 200 or more plants should be used here but no more varieties. At least one quarter of the plant should be white. Deep purples should be plentiful, and should be used near the whites for contrast. Pinkish varieties should be used near bluish varieties again for contrast. It is not necessary to have uniformity of numbers by simply planting 2, 3, 4, or more plants of each variety. It will be much better to have as many as 10 plants of the very finest kinds and fewer plants of some of the others. The object of this collection is to impress upon the beholder the beauty of lilacs and their importance for the garden. I most strongly emphasize that this can be done much better by using 200, 300, or even 500 plants in only 50 or 60 varieties than by planting one plant of each 200, 300, or 500 varieties. Public collections in the past have suffered from the use of too many varieties. Stick to the best and leave it to institutions like the Arnold Arboretum to continue large variety collections as a matter of historical record. Every horticultural purpose is served by planting the best and only the best.

4. To round out the usefulness of the above collection there should be a section (not necessarily open to the general public) for the testing of novelties. Such testing is badly needed. Every breeder naturally believes all his lilac seedling geese are swans. And equally naturally this is not true. Public test gardens can do a valuable service in separating the geese from the swans, the chaff from the wheat and the many poor, mediocre, fair, good and even very fine but not distinct lilac seedlings from the few that are spectacular and outstanding achievements.

This is no easy task. It cannot be done by any one person in any one place. But a dozen or twenty competent persons working on as many test collections in various parts of the country could, by pooling their

information, do an enormous service to improve horticulture.

In these four great collections then I believe the Washington Arboretum can serve the botanist, the plant breeder, the advanced horticulturist and the plain dirt gardener. It can do this without attempting to bring together a collection of some fantastic number like five, six or more hundred varieties. It can teach by visual demonstration taxonomic botany, plant geography, the history of plant exploration, the history of plant breeding and its results. It can show the gardening public the best fifty or one hundred or so lilacs from which this public can choose what it believes best. And it can encourage the production of improved varieties by testing new kinds and publicizing those that seem the finest. All these are worthy projects of public service worth the serious attention of the officials of a great public garden.

* * * * *

BITS OF WIT

Middle age is when your narrow waist and broad mind begin to change places.

There's nothing wrong in having nothing to say, unless you insist on saying it.

A lot of people love their jobs. It's only the work they hate.

THE
TENTH INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY CONVENTION

May 14, 15, 16, 1981 Holiday Inn South

DES MOINES, IOWA

Our tenth Annual Convention is being held in Des Moines this year. We have an exciting program planned for all who attend, which includes some time for you to explore Des Moines on your own! Please put this on your schedule now and plan to join us.

Thursday, May 14 Evening board meeting, Hospitality Suite open, and places to see for early arrivers.

Friday, May 15 General Registration, Lunch at New Botanical Center, Tour of Ewing Park Lilac Collection, pass through internationally known Arie den Boer Crabapple Arboretum, President's Banquet and Annual Meeting.

Saturday, May 16 Lilac Clinic with advice from a panel of experts, Symposium on grafting, budding, and root structure, Arie den Boer Arboretum and Awards Luncheon, Evening Buffet and Awards to Society members, Annual Lilac Auction.

Added Attractions A report on the study of dormant buds of various lilacs on Scanning Electron Microscope.

Optional Sunday Open House

Visit to Des Moines Botanical Center
(soon to be featured in a National
Geographic article).

BRING 5 TO 10 SLIDES THAT CAN BE SHOWN!

PREPARE TO PURCHASE RARE LILACS FROM MANY DIFFERENT
SOURCES AT THE ANNUAL AUCTION!

BRING SAMPLES OF PLANTS WITH PROBLEMS!

HEADQUARTERS: Holiday Inn South, Des Moines, Iowa
(2101 Fleur Drive) (515) 283-1711, near
the Airport. Courtesy limousine service
from Airport. Accomodations - Single
\$29.00 Double \$35.00...Reservation
Cards are being distributed.

Registration Fee is \$50.00 per person
(includes 2 lunches and 2 banquets, as
well as transportation and convention
expenses).

Please send your registration fees in
as soon as possible!