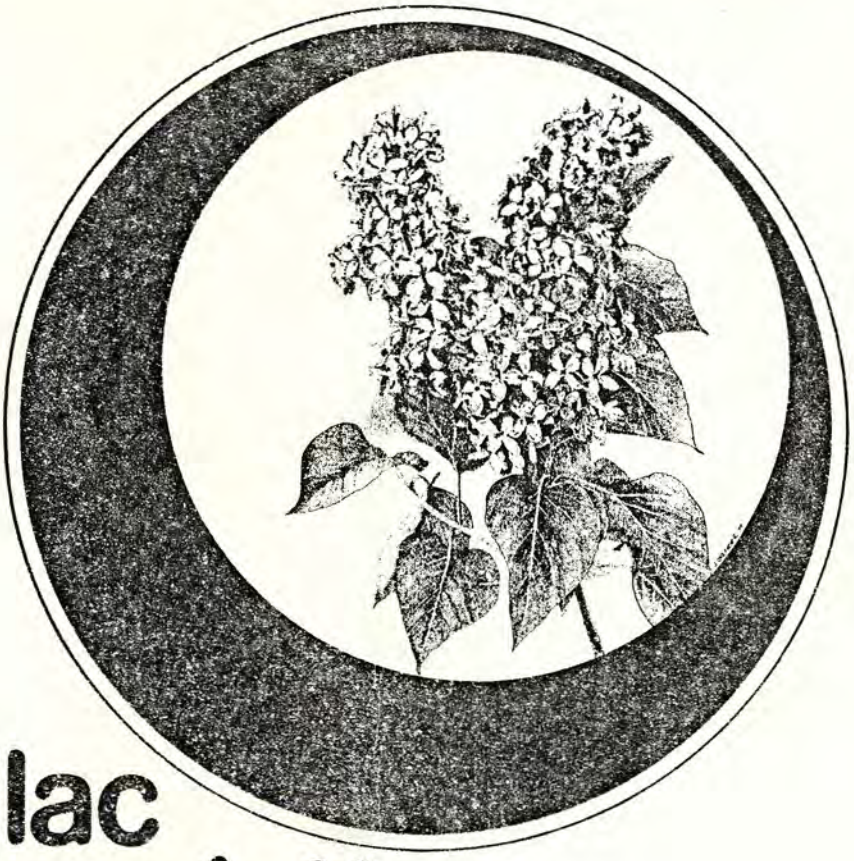

Lilac Newsletter

Vol. VIII, No. 2, February, 1982

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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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.

FROM MARTHA'S VINEYARD, MASSACHUSETTS,

A READER WRITES:

The article on the lilac auction at the 1981 meeting in Des Moines (in the August Newsletter) interested me most.

I wish the names of those lilacs auctioned were included, or at least the most unusual ones. I am not able to attend many meetings but would like to keep up with those lilacs that are auctioned.

If the names of the lilacs were available ahead of time maybe it would be possible to make advance bids. Could anyone ship the plants so auctioned?

At the least I would like to know the newer offerings and a few descriptions.

One of the three lilacs I purchased from an early special order sale is sending up suckers from the root of some understock. With all the rooting facilities available now I wonder why grafting is necessary.

Drought on Marth's Vineyard is at an all time high right now. Will it ever rain? No appreciable rain since June 20th.

Sincerely,

Polly Hill (Mrs. Julian W.)
Barnard's Inn Farm
Vineyard Haven, RFD
Massachusetts 01568

Dear Mrs. Hill,

It took time to compile the necessary information to answer your questions. Following article and the lists may be of interest to you as well as other I.L.S. members.

PROPAGATION

by J.C. Wister

LILACS are propagated by seed, cuttings, layers, grafting and budding. All the species will come true from seed unless the seed is taken from plants grown near other species, in which case there may be accidental hybridization caused by insects. None of the named varieties will come true from seed but by planting seeds of any of the good named varieties many plants will result that will be worth growing in a garden, although it is unreasonable to expect, in view of the many thousands of seedlings from which our present named varieties have been selected, that any chance seedlings will surpass them or even equal them.

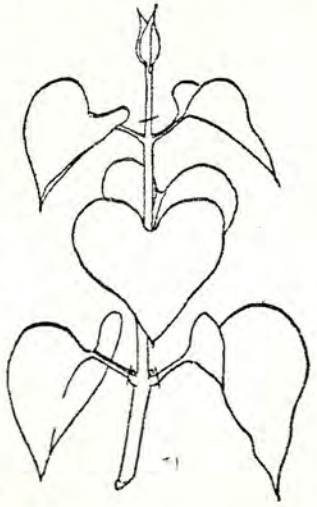

FIGURE 1—GREEN CUTTING
Lines show parts to be removed before inserting in sand

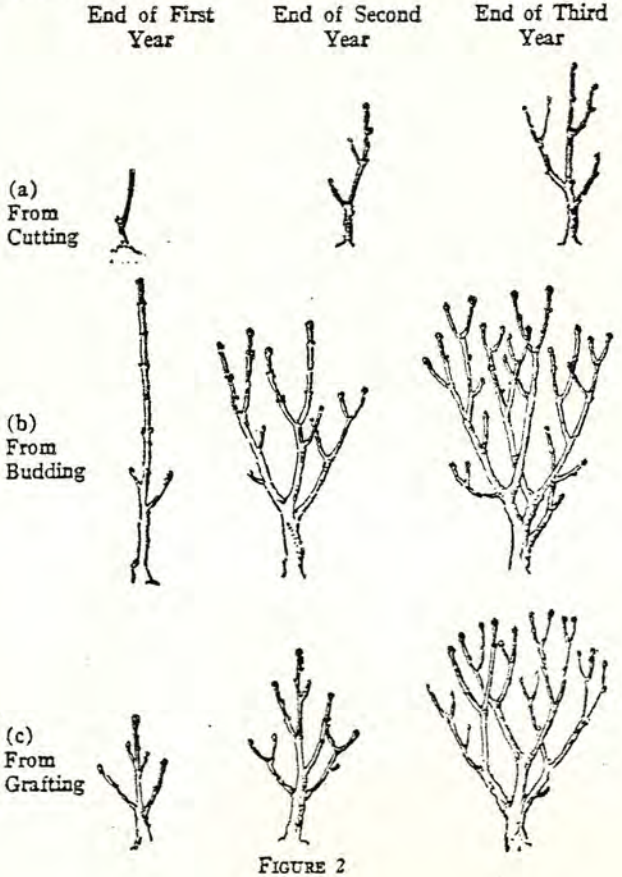

FIGURE 2

For a good many years it was the commercial practice to grow Lilacs from cuttings made from the half ripe wood about the middle of June in the climate of Philadelphia, or about the first week in July in the climate of Boston. These cuttings were taken from two to three inches in length and placed in sand in cold frame or in greenhouse, and kept well shaded during the summer. If the wood is taken at just exactly the right time a fairly large percent will root before winter, and can be potted or planted in the field the following spring. In practice it was found, however, that very few propagators were skilful enough to judge exactly the right time to take these cuttings, and if taken a few days too early or a few days or a week too late, the percentage of loss was large. For this reason and because the young plants on their own roots grow slowly in the nursery, as is shown by the accompanying illustration, Plate No. 2a, growing Lilacs from cuttings commercially has been almost discontinued except in a very few nurseries. The nurseryman is under great expense for land, taxes, labor, advertising, overhead, etc., and he can not afford to waste his labor on cuttings and get only a small percent to root. Neither can he afford to waste the wood of new varieties, which is scarce, by such a method. It has therefore become more and more the practice to graft or bud the Lilac, and while this has led to many abuses and caused many complaints from amateurs, I believe that when properly done it is a perfectly proper and legitimate method of propagating the Lilac.

Let us first examine the objections to it. The European method was to graft on seedlings of common Lilac which could be done cheaply and a good stand of strong healthy plants secured. Under European conditions with skilled gardeners to handle these plants the objections to their use may not have been or be great, but certainly under conditions in America at the present time such plants are not suitable for putting in the hands of amateurs. The seedling Lilacs will almost always send up suckers and these can not be distinguished, by any inexperienced person at least, from the tops. The result is that the purchaser of a fine named variety in five or ten years time finds the variety is dead and nothing but the seedling stock remains in its place. This certainly is sufficient to condemn this method of propagation for American conditions. It can not be denied, however, that a Lilac seedling provides a more natural, hence more congenial, stock than does Privet or other plants not so closely related.

Realizing this grave fault, American nurserymen looked about for some other stock, and are now almost universally using California privet. Many people believe this is as undesirable as Lilac because it also will sucker, and moreover in very severe climates such as northern New Eng-

land or the northwestern Mississippi Valley, California privet stocks are not reliably hardy. In such cold sections Ibota or Amur privet may be substituted. The advocates of the privet stocks, however, point out that under proper handling there are few if any suckers, and that furthermore within a year or two, or at most within three or four years, the entire plant gets upon its own roots, and the privet stock gradually disappears.

Let us examine first the case of the Lilac plants grafted upon privet. Young wood from one to three inches in length can be cut any time during the winter months and grafted upon young privet roots, approximately the same size, which varies from an eighth of an inch or so up to about the thickness of a pencil. The operation of grafting is very simple and may be performed by a simple side graft, or by the slower but more desirable whip graft, as shown in the accompanying diagrams, Plate No. 3. This work should be done indoors in the winter months, the graft wrapped with string or raffia, and then waxed with grafting wax or melted paraffine. The grafts may then be tied in bundles and buried in moist sand in any ordinary cellar until time for planting out in April, when they are then lined out in nursery rows about six inches apart in the row, and should be buried so that only the top bud shows above the ground. Some advocates of this method use a long scion five or six inches in length and while

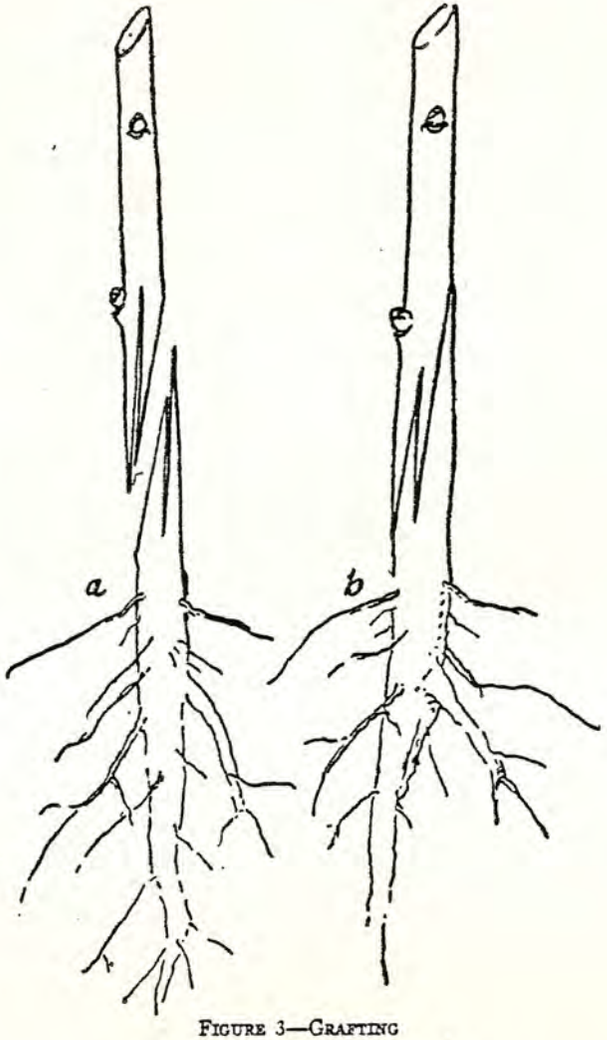

FIGURE 3—GRAFTING
(a)—Scion and stock prepared
(b)—Scion and stock united and ready to tie

this is extravagant of wood of scarce varieties it gives just that much more length of the scion under the ground to take root. Such grafted plants will by the end of the first growing summer make from one to three feet of growth and should have many roots of their own before the winter sets in. This gives a plant the first year as large or larger as own rooted plants would be at the end of the third year, and explains easily the preference of the nurserymen for this method. Moreover, the skilled propagator can get almost a one hundred percent stand of plants by this method. Some propagators consider this operation so simple that they do not even wax the grafts, but unwaxed plants that I have planted as a check have showed a loss of often as high as fifty percent.

To make the finest possible plant these young grafts should be transplanted the second spring and again put about six inches deeper than they were growing before, thus giving again more room for the Lilac roots. By this method a good strong bushy two or three foot plant may be had the second year entirely on its own roots, with the privet stock present but not functioning very much, and by this deep planting there will be practically no sign of suckers in the future. The amateur who is still afraid of grafted plants under these conditions can easily with his pruning shears remove the privet root when he is planting the Lilac and have nothing but the own roots left.

Many nurseries have, however, found it more desirable and cheaper to bud than to graft for new varieties. It is much less extravagant of wood as from four to six budded plants can be made from the same piece of wood, which will only supply one graft. Furthermore, larger privet can easily be used which gives a plant a stronger send off, and plant scientists tell us that as the privet is not being transplanted, as is the case when the roots are used for grafting, it is just that much stronger in the spring to begin growth.

Budding is done in the nursery in July, August and September, and the grafted top is cut off the following spring allowing the little bud to take up the strength of the root. Many nurseries secure a growth of from two to four feet the first year on a strong cane, half to three-quarters of an inch in diameter. One eastern nursery I am told puts in two buds on the privet instead of one, and gets two canes the first year, thus having a salable plant. It is obvious that such plants can be sold for one dollar or so, when own rooted plants which must be grown in greenhouses or frames once potted and once transplanted, and then grown three to four or more years to get that same size, must necessarily be sold at five or six dollars a piece. The budded plant when coming from the nursery of course has no roots of its own, as the bud is just above the ground, therefore it

should be treated most drastically and planted six inches or a foot deeper than it originally stood, and it also will in time get upon its own roots.

Before leaving this subject I should like to point

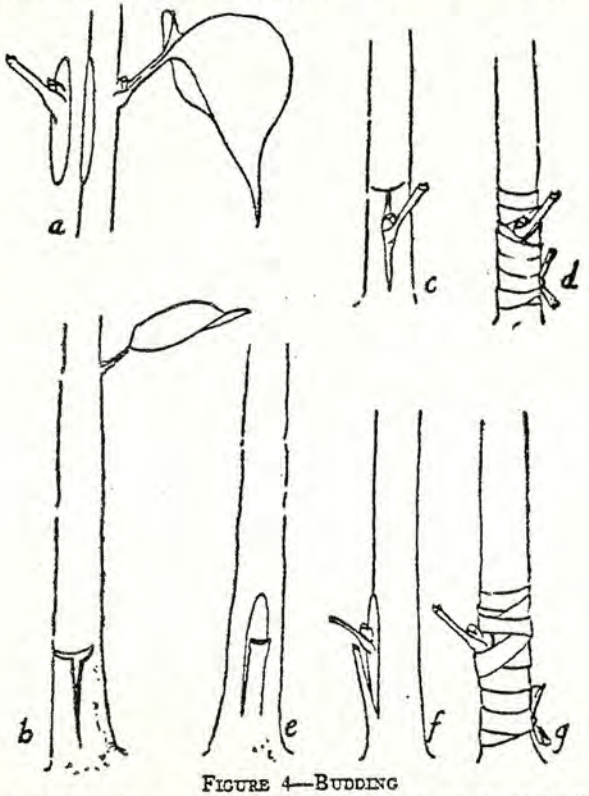

FIGURE 4—BUDDING

(a) Bud stock, one bud cut; (b) T-shaped cut in stock; (c) T-shaped cut, bud inserted; (d) T-shaped cut, bud inserted (e) Flap cut in stock; (f) Flap cut, bud inserted; (g) Flap cut, bud inserted and tied

out again that there is a great division of opinion on this subject. Nurserymen are almost unanimously for it. They are practical business men desiring to produce plants at reasonable prices so that the public will reply with large orders. Some of them doubtless find the dollar so large before their eyes that after they have sold the plant they do not care if it lives or dies. I believe, however, that such a nurseryman is the exception rather than the rule. I believe that most of our modern nurserymen want the plants they sell to succeed in the amateur garden. Not only is this a matter of common honesty but it is good business logic. Future business is going to come from satisfied not dissatisfied customers.

It therefore seems to me that the nurserymen's statements should not be lightly dismissed as mere "sales talk." But an equally impartial attitude to the arguments of the own-root advocates can not fail to convince the open minded that the nurseryman can not be 100% correct. Privet is not a natural or congenial stock and if the Lilac does not form its own roots it may be short lived. Experienced gardeners know that plants on Privet sometimes unaccountably die. We come thus all the way round the circle to the argument presented at the beginning of this discussion. If the planting is deep, the Lilac should form its own roots above the graft. It will do this in most cases; the percentage of such cases will vary with the variety, with the soil and treatment in the nurs-

ery and with the soil and treatment given the plant by the buyer. Under the best of treatment a few plants in every hundred may fail to make their own roots and instead of living to be fifty or a hundred years old may die when five or ten years old. Those who buy plants propagated in this manner must accept this risk in view of the lower price. If unwilling to accept this risk, then they must be willing to pay the much higher price which it costs to produce salable plants from cuttings.

The Lilac like many other shrubs can be easily layered but it will take about two years to get satisfactory roots, and it is therefore not commercially attractive when budding and grafting are so easy. For the home garden, however, it is easily accomplished just by bending the branch down under the ground and placing a stone on it. Experts will make the process more certain by making a small slit with a sharp knife in the portion bent under the soil. In either case two years are necessary for the formation of good roots.

Plants that are on their own roots and not grafted on other Lilacs, may easily be propagated by suckers which come up around the base in great quantities in some varieties. These must be cut off, dug up and transplanted and grown a year or two to make a satisfactory plant. It is the commonest way of increasing the common Lilac.

Lilac seeds germinate easily and should be sown when ripe in the autumn. They may be planted directly outdoors or put in a flower pot in a cold frame and the young seedlings pricked out when small. Such seedlings will grow six inches or a little more the first year, and from two to three feet the second, and many persons report they bloom a third or fourth season, although I have never had seedlings to bloom as quickly as this. It is a desirable way to increase species but it is certainly not worth while for the ordinary gardener to plant seeds of the common Lilac or of the French hybrids, as named varieties are so much better than the plants that he is likely to get from chance sowing of seeds. Professor Sargent as long as ten years ago said that the perfection attained by Lemoine in breeding Lilacs had made it most unlikely that there would be any further improvement in the named Lilacs, but since that time Lemoine himself has put out improvements on the varieties that Professor Sargent considered as perfection. It is certainly to be hoped that from time to time new and improved varieties will continue to appear just as they do in other plants, but certainly there is little room for any startling improvement at the present time. It is most unlikely that the casual amateur sowing only a limited quantity of seeds, will get varieties good enough to warrant the trouble involved in saving the seed and growing the seedlings.

LIST OF LILACS SOLD AT I.L.S. AUCTION - 1981

Plants supplied by the Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, Ontario

Sensation $14.50
Krasavitsa Moskvy $14.00
Rochester $10.00
Churchill $7.50
Flora $6.00
Frank Paterson $6.00
Bright Centennial $6.00
Nadezhda $5.50
Mrs. Harry Bickle $5.25
Mieczta $3.50
Etoile de Mai $5.00
Dappled Dawn $4.50
Purple Glory $4.50
Alexander Hamilton $4.50
Primrose $3.50
Syringa laciniata $3.50
Erzherzog Johann $4.00

Plants supplied by Max Peterson

Hyperion $8.00
Oakes Double White $7.00
Hallelujah $6.00
Sunset $6.00
Marechal Foch $5.00
Crepuscule $4.50
Red Giant $4.00
Alice Harding $4.00
Henri Robert $4.00
Snow White $5.00
Victory $5.00
Sylvan Beauty $5.00
Marengo $4.50
Leon Simon $4. 0
Macrostachya $4.00
Bleuatre $3.50

Plants supplied by National Arboretum

Sensation $17.00
Ami Schott $11.00
Pocahontas $10.00
oblata Alba $8.00
Sarah Sands $8.00
Minuet $7.00
Capitaine Baltet $5.00
Charles Nordine $5.00
Znamia Lenina $5.00
Sunset $5.00
Mood Indigo $4.50
Summer Skies $4.50
Violetta $4.00
President Lincoln $4.00
Annabel $4.00
Ester Staley $4.00
Ellen Willmott $4.00
Clarke's Giant $4.00
Vauban $4.00

Plants supplied by Don Wedge

Lark Song $10.50
Anna Amhoff $9.00
Syringa josikaea $8.50
Prophecy $8.00
Georges Bellair $7.50
Etoile de Mai $7.50
Elinor $7.50
Dancing Druid $7.00
Viviand Morel $6.00
Maiden's Blush $6.00
Charles Joly $6.00
Lewis Maddock $5.50
Glory $5.00
Syringa wolfii $5.00
Aline Mocqueris $5.00
Gertrude Leslie $4.50

Plants supplied by Bob Clark

General Sherman $3.50

Plants supplied by the Arnold Arboretum

Charles Sargeant $4.00

Plants supplied by Bill Heard

Jesse Hepler $5.00

LILACS PROPAGATED BY THE ROYAL BOTANICAL GARDENS

HAMILTON, FOR THE I.L.S. AUCTION, MAY 1982

Syringa vulgaris cultivars:

Archeveque
Bogdan Przyrzykowski
Bright Centennial
Dappled Dawn
Dwight D. Eisenhower
Edward J. Gardner
Erzherzog Johann
Flora
Frank Paterson
Glory
Jules Simon
Katherine Havemeyer
Kosmos
Krasavitsa Moskvy
Martha Kounze
Mrs. Harry Bickle
Nadezhda
Nancy Frick
Ogni Donbassa
Ogni Moskvy
Olivier de Serres
Pamiat O.S.M. Kirove
Paul Thirion
President Poincare
Prof. Josef Brzezinski
Rochester
Saint Margaret
Sensation
Souv. de Mme. Louis Gielis
Thunberg
Utro Moskvy

Syringa x hyacinthiflora cultivars:

Sunset
The Bride

Syringa pekinensis 'Pendula'

Syringa meyeri 'Palibin'

Syringa 'Miss Canada'

* * * * * * * *

Time needed to obtain necessary plant inspection certificate, packaging and shipping does not permit I.L.S. at this time to consider mail bidding on lilacs auctioned. Each person not attending the Convention is encouraged to find a member attending and willing to act on his or her behalf.

Individuals and Firms planning to bring lilacs for the auction are encouraged to submit the list as soon as possible so it could be printed in the March or April 1982 issue.

Charles Holetich
for Editor

PRUNING LILACS

Q. Why should lilacs be pruned?

A. It is done first to restore the lilac (or other woody plant) to better flowering (and consequent fruit production.) Secondarily it is done to restrain shoots, to eliminate ungainly growths, or to remove broken and dead branches. In topiary work, including hedging, it obliges growth to conform to certain patterns. But primarily the function of pruning is to restore the balance of carbohydrate/nitrogen relationship in order to improve flower (fruit) quality.

As seedlings, woody plants pass through a nitrogen phase characterized by rapid, lush growth; there is shoot elongation but no (or little and puny) flower production. Carbohydrate ascendancy features good flowering, both qualitatively and quantitatively. As the plant ages, however, flower production diminishes both in quantity and progressively in quality. Competition for light and water also leads to decreased flowering. Therefore it becomes necessary to take corrective measures, one of which is pruning.

Q. When should lilacs be pruned?

A. Many experienced gardeners are of the opinion that the best time to prune common lilacs or 'French hybrids' is while the plants are dormant, that is, in wintertime when there are no leaves. It is then easier to see what needs to be done and to do it expeditiously, when pruning is completed before spring growth starts.

Q. Why do some authorities and garden writers tell us to prune after flowering?

A. Probably, because thereby you would enjoy the flowers for another season. But the job is harder then because of the fully expanded leaves, and also it disrupts the orderly appearance of the garden.

Q. How is bloom restored in an old lilac 10 years old or more?

A. Some gardeners claim it can be restored to perfection by eliminating 20 to 33% of older canes, while allowing the strongest, most promising canes to develop.

Suckers should be kept under constant restraint -- too many should not be allowed to develop any one year. In this way the common lilac's height will be kept to a size such that its bloom may be seen to advantage and within a height of 8 to 10 feet.

Q. Should spent blooms be removed?

A. Actually the removal of spent blooms is a trimming process and is done for appearance or to prohibit seed formation. It applies only to single flowering varieties.

Lilacs growing under optimum conditions with full sun, adequate moisture, fertile "good garden" soil should produce large, well-formed clusters of blooms year after year.

-Lilacs-

A MEMBER WRITES

Dear Editor,
Enclosed is a short poem I've written and I thought perhaps you might consider it for publication in the Lilac Newsletter.

THE QUESTION

I asked myself again today
How can this be?
What makes a tree?

What says to the seed
The worlds that way
The first shoot out will go to it
The first root out will turn away.

Who decides
Now's the time to grow
We've had three good days in a row
The sun is up
There's been lots of rain
The snow has stopped
It's spring again!

Who tells the lilac roots to take
Just the right things from the earth to make
A lavender flower
With all the parts it needs
To some how make another seed.

The answer to the question may
Not come to me again today.

Wayne E. Hughes
356 Mae Road
Glen Burnie, MD 21061

BECOME ACTIVE

In Lilac Time as you drive down the streets of your town do you see overgrown, lanky 'unbeautiful lilac shrubs, with little bloom?

Do you see some of the more beautiful lilacs growing? Or, mostly common lilacs? Or, do you see many lilacs at all?

You can be of service to your neighbors and to the community by helping to inform your fellow citizens about lilacs.

During Lilac Time would be a good time to approach your local newspaper with a general lilac article including practical information and a few suggestions of which lilacs to buy (that are available). Persuade the editor that the information would be valuable to citizens who have lilacs, often they are lilacs that came with the house and the new owner doesn't know what to do with them.

Well, before such lilacs are destroyed they need to learn how to restore them.

Photographers from the newspaper are usually available to shoot some pictures. Should you not feel you like to write such a column, contact the editor and then let me know what you want and I will see that you get some copy for your paper.

Members, start at home. Help boost the status of lilacs in your town.

For added credibility, be sure to mention I.L.S..

Editor

LATE BUT NOT TOO LATE

We publish, belatedly, Holiday Greetings from an I.L.S. Award winner, Cora Lindsey Lyden - I have a new address, had to give up. I'm 90 now and they won't let me live alone. I'm with my daughter, Mrs. A.E. Sharrard, 1011 Beyer Way, Sp. San Diego, CA 92154. May your Holiday Season be bright with happiness!

Signed, Cora Lindsey Lyden.

Members, please send me your new address if you should move. We will publish it along with your note or letter telling us about the lilacs you have been growing and how much you're going to miss them. Then we'd like to know what you expect to do about lilacs in your new location and which would be the first ones you would buy in starting a new lilac garden.

Editor.

PLEASE RENEW YOUR 1982 I.L.S. MEMBERSHIP NOW AND SAVE THE SOCIETY TIME AND MONEY USED TO SEND THE REMINDER NOTICES.

(Membership categories are listed in the Lilac Newsletter on the inside of the front cover)

Charles D. Holetich
Membership Committee Chairman