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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A NEW YEAR'S GREETING FROM OUR PRESIDENT

I like the end of the year. It is a fun-filled time with holiday gladness both religious and secular. It is parties and food and all the other things we try to cram into a frenetic schedule. But it is also a time for reflection and quiet. Warm and snug before my fire, I think of the many things that we have enjoyed together this year as members of the International Lilac Society. I remember spring and lilacs budding. I remember the convention with all its associations and the anticipation of Wisconsin in 1983. I remember our letters, your offers of help and the reports of the ways in which you are advancing the lilac in so many places. The lilac is certainly in good hands.

And so I, like you shall dash about this holiday season, but all the while I shall be thinking of the promise of a lilac-renewed spring and of the bright future we share. May your warm places be quiet and comforting, your season joyous and tumultous and your future full of lilacs.

Yours for the lilac,

Owen M. Rogers,
President, I.L.S.

PALIBIN DWARF LILAC

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Syringa meyeri 'Palibin' is increasing in popularity because of its relatively dwarf size, attractive flowers and foliage, low maintenance requirements, and disease resistance. However, the plant may not sound familiar because the cultivar name is new and the species has been called by many different names in the past, both in the trade and literature.

In an effort to clarify and point out this plant's merits, an article by the late Donald G. Hoag is included, followed by remarks on the proper name for this plant. Donald Hoag was a research scientist, plant breeder, and instructor at North Dakota State University. This article originally appeared in North Dakota Farm Research, Vol. 23, January-February, 1965, and is used here with permission and slight adaptations.

MEYER LILAC - AN ATTRACTIVE DWARF SHRUB

Donald G. Hoag

The Meyer lilac (Syringa meyeri Schneider), a dwarf shrub with unusually attractive foliage, holds promise of becoming a valuable lilac species

*Reprint: This article first appeared in the Summer 1982 issue of Plants & the Landscape, Cooperative Extension Service, Purdue University and is reprinted with the permission of the author.

for landscape plantings. Meyer lilac matures at about five feet in height with upright branches, but with a spreading form that may result in a plant slightly broader than tall. The plant is typically well branched and symmetrical. Production of sucker shoots is rare, and when produced, such shoots are close to the base of the plant and are not particularly objectionable.

Leaves of the Meyer lilac are mostly 1 to 1½ inches in length and nearly as broad, tapering at both ends. The dark green color is enhanced by a lustrous satiny sheen. Most leaves are slightly waved, adding grace to otherwise ornamental foliage. The total effect is a foliage texture similar to that of the commonly known and highly valued Peking cotoneaster but with refinements that add up to a greater total attractiveness than that of the cotoneaster. Leaves are held until mid-October and are dropped without appreciable color change.

Flowers of the Meyer lilac are violet, fading to a light lavender. They are produced from dark violet buds in late May or early June.* Individual florets are small with a slender tube but are produced in dense, upright clusters. Most clusters will be less than four inches in length (occasionally up to five inches) and will consist of several pairs of smaller lateral clusters, so closely spaced as to appear to have been produced from a single bud. Fragrance is not pronounced. Occasional small clusters may be produced in late August or very early September,

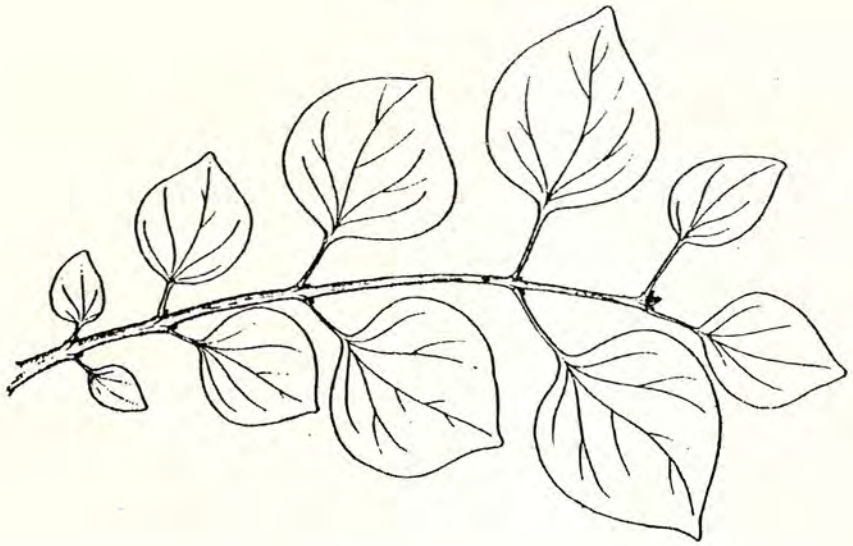
*In Lafayette, IN, area, flowering typically occurs in mid or late May, shortly after the Chinese and common or French Hybrid lilacs.

but the late summer bloom is very light and may be scattered over a period of several weeks. Bloom of the Meyer lilac is attractive and entirely in scale with the dwarf habit of the plant. Often some bloom is produced on young plants less than two feet in height, a charcteristic that is highly unusual among lilacs but one that is appreciated by gardeners and nurserymen alike.

The Meyer lilac is to be valued as an ornamental for its useful size and attractive vegetative characteristics. The five foot height makes it usable on small properties where the much greater size of most lilac species precludes their use. The rounded form and well branched symmetry result in the shrub's value either as a specimen, or massed in groups, or in an informal hedge. Texture and sheen contributed by the foliage make the specimen truly aristocratic in appearance.

The history of the Meyer lilac, as summarized in Susan McKelvey's comprehensive treatment The Lilac (MacMillan and Co., 1928), has frequently been confused. Collections by F.N. Meyer (1908) near Peking and again by J. Hers (1920) near Chengchow, China, were from cultivated plants grafted on privet roots. Both reports mentioned only cultivated plants and assumed that the plant was not hardy, which perhaps accounts for the lapse of time between discovery and trial in the northern areas. The species was never collected from the wild.

Meyer lilac has been included at times as a variety of the closely related S. pubescens. However, Meyer lilac is not as hairy and lacks the fragrance of S. pubescens. It also differs in the distinctive venation of its leaves, showing two pairs of lateral veins nearly paralleling the margins of the leaf. (see illustration next page).



Also confused with Meyer lilac is the littleleaf lilac (S. microphylla) which has pinnate venation; more slender, tapering leaves; and slender branches that often become arched with the weight of bloom. Littleleaf lilac's fall bloom is considerably more profuse.

Further confusion may have been added by the nursery distribution of Meyer lilac under the name dwarf Korean lilac (S. palibiniana). This last species name is not legitimate for any presently known lilac species but has been a synonym for S. patula (S. velutina), a tall growing species distinct in leaf venation and in characters such as the insertion of anthers near the mouth of the floret.

In spite of this confusion, Meyer lilac is now available to growers, although in some instances as S. palibiniana or S. velutina. Its overall attractiveness should guarantee its popularity for both public and private plantings wherever a shapely, medium height shrub with unusually attractive foliage is needed.

Although Hoag's article was first printed 17 years ago, it is still timely. He was among the first to point out the cold hardiness of this specimen, which as recently as 1977 has been misrepresented as being hardy only to zone 5 or 6. Actually, in USDA hardiness zone 3b (average annual minimum temperature -35° F) at the Morden Arboretum, Morden, Manitoba, it has grown to six or seven feet tall according to Dale Herman at North Dakota State University. Hoag stated that the average mature height is about five feet; other references consider five to six feet as typical. However, the plant grows slowly, withstands pruning well, and can be kept as low as three feet. It may also be grafted on a standard about four feet high with the crown kept trimmed to a spherical shape. The plant flowers freely at a very early age. It appears to be resistant to leaf-roll necrosis and powdery mildew.

As stated above, the first Meyer lilacs were sent to the U.S. in 1908 from cultivated plants in China. The name Syringa meyeri was given by Karl Schneider in 1912 to commemorate Frank N. Meyer, who introduced the plant to the United States.

Cultivar 'Palibin'

A smaller-growing specimen than those originally introduced by Meyer has been widely distributed both in the U.S. and England. This specimen is the plant described above by Hoag. It appears to be a clone, propagated vegetatively. Other examples of Meyer lilac (perhaps some yet to be discovered) differ from this one in various respects. For these reasons the plant described here needs a cultivar name to distinguish it from the others. To satisfy this need, the name 'Palibin' was proposed for this cultivar in 1978

by Peter S. Green of the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew, England. The cultivar name helps preserve the name associated with this clone of Meyer lilac when it was mislabelled S. palibiniana .

Confused Synonymy

A great deal of confusion has resulted from this plant (S. meyeri 'Palibin') being distributed under the wrong name, S. palibiniana. The name S. palibiniana properly refers to S. patula (formerly called S. velutina). When this information became known, people assumed that the dwarf Meyer lilac, which they mistakenly knew as S. palibiniana, was S. patula. As a result, S. meyeri 'Palibin' sometimes has been mislabelled S. velutina and S. patula. Another result of the misnaming is that descriptions of S. meyeri 'Palibin' have been used to falsely describe S. patula.

The name "Korean lilac" applies to Syringa patula (S. velutina, S. palibiniana). When the dwarf clone of Meyer lilac was wrongly labelled S. palibiniana, the name "dwarf Korean lilac" became attached to it. This name should be dropped because of the confusion with S. patula and because it is inaccurate as a description of S. meyeri, which is not known to occur in Korea.

Syringa meyeri 'Palibin' has also been distributed as S. microphylla 'Minor' or var. minor, or "dwarf littleleaf lilac." This also is an error, as Meyer lilac is distinct from the littleleaf lilac, S. microphylla. No cultivar 'Minor' or variety minor exists for S. microphylla.

Because of the past confusion of species' names, it should be pointed out that the cultivar 'Miss Kim' belongs to S. patula and should not be attributed to S. meyeri.

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MAY 13TH & 14TH 1983 ARE THE DATES OF OUR NEXT, 12TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY CONVENTION AT MADISON, WISCONSIN

* * PLAN TO ATTEND * *

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A PERSONAL INVITATION
TO THE
12TH ANNUAL I.L.S. CONVENTION

BY KENNETH W. WOOD

I.L.S. MEMBERS AND FRIENDS ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THE 12TH ANNUAL I.L.S. CONVENTION WHICH WILL BE HELD IN MADISON, WISCONSIN ON 12 - 14 MAY, 1983. MADISON, THE "FOUR LAKES" CITY, IS THE STATE CAPITOL AND HOME OF THE UNVIERSITY OF WISCONSIN. I.L.S. MEETINGS WILL BE HELD ON THE LAKESHORE ON CAMPUS. A PROGRAM FEATURING LILAC PROPAGATION AND NOTABLE LILAC BREEDERS FROM THE UPPER MID-WEST IS IN THE WORKS. THERE WILL BE LOTS OF TIME TO MEET OLD FRIENDS AND NEW, AS WELL AS CHANCES TO VISIT THE U.W. ARBORETUM.

THE 1,200-ACRE ARBORETUM IS UNIQUE IN ITS ATTEMPT TO RECREATE WISCONSIN'S PRE- SETTLEMENT PLANT COMMUNITIES: PRAIRIES, FORESTS AND WETLANDS.

A 60-ACRE HORTICULTURAL AREA DISPLAYS LANDSCAPE PLANTS SUITABLE FOR THE AREA. HORTICULTURAL FEATURES IN MID-MAY ARE THE CRABAPPLE COLLECTION WITH 130 TAXA AND, OF COURSE, THE LILACS. WITH OVER 250 TAXA, THE LILAC COLLECTION IS ONE OF THE LARGEST IN THE MIDWEST.

THE CONVENTION WILL ALSO FEATURE THE ANNUAL LILAC AUCTION, BANQUETS AND MORE.

RESERVE 12 - 14 MAY

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE

MORE DETAILS NEXT MONTH

KENNETH WOOD,
CONVENTION CHAIRMAN