

# Lilac Newsletter

Vol. XI, No. 6, June, 1985

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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I.L.S. NEEDS A NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Help! The Society needs a volunteer to be editor of the Lilac Newsletter. At the Annual Society Convention in New York we finally persuaded Charles Holetich to accept election as President. This is exciting - but - to accept the office of President, Charlie has to relinquish the post of Newsletter Editor. We have an interim editor for the summer but unless we find a new permanent editor by fall, the Lilac Newsletter is in great trouble.

The editor is responsible for regular publication of the Newsletter. At that persons's discretion that could be done once a month or once every two months. The Society will supply expense money to cover such things as paper, printing and typing if necessary. The Newsletter mailing is handled by Pauline Fiala.

In addition there is a Publications Committee available to the Editor to handle policy questions or give advice if needed. Also the previous editors are a storehouse of advice and counsel.

So, with all that support the editorship should be a joy of a job for someone reading this Newsletter. Won't you please step forward and help the Society - Don't wait to be asked or say, "Oh, sure, I'll do it someday". Your time and talent are needed now! If you have questions or could accept --- please write or call Dr. Owen M. Rogers, University of New Hampshire, Dept. of Plant Science, Durham, NH 03824 tel (603)862-1205, or Charles Holetich, c/o Royal Botanical Gardens, Box 399, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8N 3H8. Please don't be shy, bashful or coy. Please write today. Please.

LILACTIME 1985

by Robert B. Clark, Meredith, New Hampshire

The phone rang at eight o'clock Monday, April 29th. It was Fr. Fiala. He was home again after another winter in Northern Florida. "The lilacs and crab apples are in full bloom," he rejoiced. By noon I was on my way, stopping at Esperance and Clyde NY where Bill Utley joined me. We reached Medina by six o'clock Tuesday evening where great masses of crab apple blossoms in white and pink and huge clusters of white, mauve and purplish lilacs with their haunting fragrance were spread before our eyes and noses.

Rarely do lilacs bloom so early. But in the previous week Lourene Wishart sent me a paean to Henry Sass's 'Woodland Violet' which was blooming in her Lincoln garden. Continental climates are marked by extremes of temperatures of which season earliness is one manifestation. Consequently we might expect occasional seasons of extreme earliness in contrast to the maritime or oceanic climates near the seacoast where seasons are characteristically moderate or gradual.

Our pilgrimage to Falconskeape was to see the latest "American hybrid" lilacs, many derived from 'Rochester', many from Lemoine's choice French hybrids, also multibrids of the late blooming species of eastern Asia (although not in bloom at the time of our visit). Practically none of these marvelous lilacs are yet available in nurseries; therefore I am calling them "Twenty-first Century" lilacs because it will likely be another generation before they do appear in nursery catalogs. However you will begin to see specimens of these superb lilacs in certain private collections and leading arboretums within a very few years. I shall not

attempt any descriptions in this paper. Instead my focus this time will be upon the broad picture of lilacs in America today.

Last spring our Annual Meeting was held in Vermont where we visited two outstanding lilac collections: Shelburne Museum and Vale of Aherlow, the latter being the mountain home of our late President Thomas Chieppo. These collections occupy a small acreage of extensive estates. But lilac collections need not necessarily take up a few acres by themselves. They may be interplanted among shrubs and herbaceous plantings which make up the integrated garden. The gardener should make allowance for the development of each lilac plant so that they do not become crowded and spindly with blooms high in the sky.

In other years ILS has visited half a dozen private lilac collections, among them Gardenview Horticultural Park at Strongsville OH (1980), Lilac Land at Amherst (1977), Grape Hill Farm at Clyde (1976) and Lilacia Park at Lombard, Illinois (1975), this latter managed by the Lombard Park Commission. Not yet visited are The Peterson's Meadowlark Hill Farm at Ogallala, Nebraska, The Hulda Klager Memorial Garden at Woodland, Washington, and Dr. Joel and Tita Margaretten's Park at Leona Valley, California, all privately owned although open to the public on occasion or by invitation. Besides these private lilac collections there are literally dozens of lilac collections in arboreta, botanical gardens and municipal parks often being the centerpiece of festivals. These all are notable collections and worthy of traveling long distances to study and enjoy. In the offing are a few gardens which are abuilding lilac collections. I am not at liberty even to mention them, however I will say that the Village of Clyde, New York (official address of ILS) has adopted the lilac as its flower and throughout the town including its industrial park lilac cultivars are today being planted!

With each passing year I see hopeful signs of newer and better lilacs being planted throughout the length and breadth of the land. In the brief span of fourteen years of the ILS liacs are indeed making a splash in the home grounds and urban landscape.

\* \* \* \* \*

BITS OF WIT

We don't get ulcers from what we eat, but from what eats us.

Shoppers contend the bargain basement could be called a shopping maul.

Temper is a valuable possession - don't lose it.

LILACS IN NORTH AMERICA

a vanishing luxury, or a drift to mediocrity?

For discriminating lilac collectors, one of the best sources for rare, unusual and special lilacs has been withering with the decline of mail order suppliers. For many years both growers and researchers have made available new and improved cultivars. A few mail order houses still have limited lists, offering known "old standby" cultivars. No great variety of choice exists today. There are reasons for this: One is purely economic, in that the mail markets have been replaced, since shipping has grown more efficient. Container material offered by local nurseries and garden centers can be hand transported with only minimum care, even across the country. Another reason is the cost of transportation, packing, coupled with the perishability of dormant plants in a limited shipping season. Local garden centers are offering limited choices of cultivars, but the problems of so many different names, colors, shadings, and the costs of inventories, explanations, and individual tagging, run the costs and inventorying up. The plant purchased in spring of 1985 may not bloom until 1987 or 1988. It takes a lot of faith to gamble that a little 6" plant in a small pot or container in 5 years can become a 5 foot mass of fragrant blossoms. Many of these problems will no doubt level themselves out in a matter of years. Meanwhile, who bridges the present gap in the diminishing list now available to lilac buffs? And who will be custodians of the choicest plants of today for perpetuity?

Private collectors and hobbyist, some of whom also do hybridizing. Frequently a lilac collection is built around knowledge and enthusiasm of one person or family. In terms of decades, the mortality of these collections is closely related to the mortality of the human owners. Happily there are some notable exceptions, and often endowment funds are available to support on-going studies.

Arboreta, botanical gardens, municipal gardens, parks, university plantings, some of which do extensive research as a portion of larger projects. This is logical, because lilac time only fills in a portion of a season, sharing and supplementing other flowering displays. It is good to know that interest in these sources is increasing, and a number of new lilac gardens are being developed around the country.

Nurseries, garden centers, serving regional needs. Most plants will be cultivars readily available via nursery wholesale markets. Some of the finest cultivars are scarcely available. To complicate matters more, lilac varieties may perform differently in various parts of the country. Tagging and identifying cultivars is a "drag" - a lost tag reduces the value of a plant, since an error may not be detected for several years. Sometimes careless personnel get tags mixed - creating a potential of high error. It is sad to learn that your plant purchased in 1985 for its lilac colored bloom, turns out white in 1987.

One of the best sources of rare lilacs are the Annual International Lilac Society Auctions, which are part of the I.L.S. Annual Conventions. Small plants are brought in by collectors, or shipped earlier by arboreta, and growers from all over the United States and Canada. The auctions are open to the public. It gives one an opportunity to obtain a very scarce cultivar, including some of the most

promising hybrids of Russian origin, as well as some of the finest cultivars that are rare, if ever available. These sales are strongly supported by the Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, Ontario, the United States National Arboretum in Washington, DC., The Arnold Arboretum, Jamaica Plains, MA, Agriculture Canada, Ornamentals Research Station, Ottawa, Ontario, The Holden Arboretum, Mentor, OH, and many others. All mentioned institutions maintain a broad range of basic protoplasts, breeding, and collections of wide spectrums. Each, as a public or privately funded entity with a long continuous record, form the best plant source nucleus on the continent. Without diminishing the additional contributions of a number of other arboreta, parks, and botanical gardens, it would seem that most existing cultivars and species of value could bridge the gaps so that these rare plants don't become lost to the world of lilac lovers. Many of the baby plants purchased at the auction, ride on people's laps, as the conventioners fly back to their homes, thus illustrating their enthusiasm. One of the bright spots on the lilac horizon are advances in propagating techniques; thus eliminating some understock problems. Some of the shortages may be filled by more rapid and efficient propagation, lengthened season, and adaptability over wider growing range - particularly into more temperate zones.

Lilac time, in addition to being an exhilarating element of springtime, is a time of nostalgia for older people. The image of the lilac plant by the well in the early years of pioneer expansion across the prairies is still vivid in many minds. It is instinctive for humans of all ages to poke the nose into a lilac blossom. Whether as a cut flower in a nursing home, where wheelchair patients can wheel by and inhale a few whiffs, or on the bush in the garden. The whole lilac scene will never disappear from the North American landscape - but the quality and adaptability has much ground to gain.

To get true-to-name lilac cultivar, a number of factors have to be right. Need to work in concert:

1. A bud or scion source needs to be found - known to be true to name and conforming to descriptions, if available. Scion stock needs to be transported carefully.
2. At the proper season, scions or bud sticks must be harvested. This propagating wood must be known to be true to name. Since an error may not be known until the time of bloom a lost tag or identification is a disaster.
- 3:
  - a) Grafting usually done in winter requires an understock of Ash seedling, lilacs, or privet. Of these Ash is most likely to work favorably, and the root stock serves only as a booster which usually breaks off when the lilac graft has developed its own root.
  - b) Soft wood cuttings of various types are done during the growing season, and when successful, provide own root plants. Some are grown in mist beds; some are grown in vitro.
  - c) New plants can also be made by budding on privet stock in late summer. The following spring pruning (a cut) is made just above the bud as planted in field rows. The privet understock is pesky and less desirable.
4. Record keeping, tagging, plant identities, are all hazards. If a tag is lost among small lots of scions it may take five years to identify it. Errors can creep in so easily, tags switched, as plants pass through each pair of hands. For a grower it is more simple to grow a very few varieties in large quantities of each. From a business point of view this is much more

efficient, but the range of variety, color and stature is not as great. Some arboreta are utilizing germplasm to bring out improved new hybrids thus enriching the horizons of the entire lilac world. Keeping this breeding stock, dwarf in stature, with delayed and prolonged bloom, with remarkable color varieties and resistance to mildew, is of vital importance.

International Lilac Society is taking a positive lead with the support and cooperation of the arboreta universities, nurserymen and private collectors.

W.R. Heard  
Heard Gardens Ltd.  
5355 Merle Hay Road  
Johnston, Iowa 50131

\* \* \* \* \*

GERTRUDE S. WISTER TO RECEIVE

ARTHUR HOYT SCOTT GARDEN AND HORTICULTURE AWARD

Swarthmore, Pa., April 19, 1985.....Distinguished horticulturist Gertrude Smith Wister has been chosen as the 1985 recipient of the Arthur Hoyt Scott Garden and Horticulture Award from Swarthmore College. Wister was presented with the prestigious award on Sunday, May 19, by Swarthmore President David Fraser.

Wister was assistant director of the Scott Horticultural Foundation for thirteen years, and held the same position at the John J. Tyler Arboretum in Lima, Pa. She is the wife of the late Dr. John C. Wister, the first director of the Scott Foundation and the Tyler Arboretum.

Gertrude Wister also edited the Bulletin of the National Council of State Garden Clubs and the Yearbook of the American Daffodil Society for many years, and was assistant editor of two books on gardening. She is the author of Hardy Garden Bulbs and numerous published articles.

The Scott Garden and Horticulture Award, established in 1929, consists of a gold medal and \$1000. It is given to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the science and art of gardening, and who has helped create and develop a wider public interest in the field. It is one of the top two horticultural awards in the country.

Born in Montclair, New Jersey, Wister graduated with honors from the University of Wisconsin's College of Agriculture with a degree in horticulture. She worked as a garden consultant before joining the staff of the Scott Horticultural Foundation in 1944.

In recognition of her contributions to the field, Wister has received three of gardening's most prestigious honors: the Distinguished Achievement

Award of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, the Thomas Roland Medal of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, and the Gold Medal of the American Rhododendron Society. She is a life member and trustee of the Tyler Arboretum, and a member of numerous professional organizations, including the American Horticultural Society and the Royal Horticultural Society and International Lilac Society.

\* \* \* \* \*

PROGRESS REPORT

Dr. Lammerts is working on a program to develop a warm climate tolerant strain of lilacs that would have a more dwarf and compact plant habit than is usual with *S. x hyacinthiflora* cvs. He has crossed Dr. Skinner's cultivar 'DOCTOR CHADWICK' with his strain of warm climate lilacs in the hope the seedlings will inherit the desired characteristics of Dr. Skinner's introduction. He reports;

(letter attached)

Dear Mr. Oakes:

It has been a very long time since I received your most interesting letter. Actually there was nothing to write about since the seedlings of 'Dr. Chadwick' crossed with my warm weather tolerant strain were simply growing. As you say the dwarfing gene is quite evidently recessive. I was surprised though at the variation in height of the seedlings, one in particular growing to a height of 4 foot and 8 inches. The others vary from 3 to 3½ foot in height. Now I may be wrong of course, but it appears as if the tall one may have a flower bud! At least there are two lateral buds and a very large central one. I simply left them in gallon cans in the unheated greenhouse since I was afraid that if I set them out the rabbits with which I am afflicted might start chewing on them. I can of course protect against gophers by putting plants in a basket of chicken wire on netting. So we will see what spring does and if indeed there are flowers on this plant which is so much taller than the others. I also suspect that the warm weather strain may have a factor for dwarf growth which might account for the great difference in height between this one seedling and the others.

Though we have in no way suffered the extreme cold which you folks back east are experiencing it has been one of those seasons with clear sunny days and for us cold nights, temperatures often dropping to below freezing. Unless it rains soon we are in for a severe drought this season. With below average rainfall last year this would mean that our water table would fall to dangerously low levels and even infiltration of sea water might occur.

Your suggestions about root pruning and withholding of nitrogenous fertilizer to promote formation of flower buds is much appreciated and will do just this to them this coming season. Will let you know

later on this spring if the one tall plant does actually have flower buds.

Your discussion of the intricacies of studying the inheritance of suckering is appreciated and I believe that I will not even try to work on this problem. Were I younger it would be most interesting but now am only interested in problems where there is some hope of solution within a few years.

Will write again later on when these lilac seedlings leaf out.

Ever regards,

Walter E. Lammerts

\* \* \* \* \*

BITS OF WIT

If you don't know where you're going - you're there.

If we were to see ourselves as others see us we probably wouldn't believe our eyes.

DEVONIAN BOTANIC GARDEN, LILAC COLLECTION

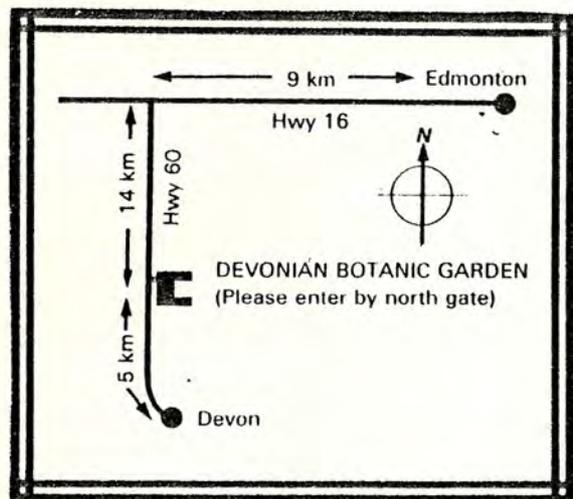
Edmonton, Alberta

The complete name of the collection is University of Alberta, Devonian Botanic Garden, Lilac Collection. It is located 5km (3 miles) north of Devon on highway #60. Visiting hours are 10 am to 4 pm on weekdays and 12 am to 6 pm on weekends and holidays. Admission is free.

The collection accumulated mainly through the Prairie Regional Trials for woody ornamentals. Hardiness trial initiated by the Western Canadian Society for Horticulture (about 1959) and operated through the Federal Research Station at Morden, Manitoba. The DBG Lilac collection dates from the 1960's with most additions in 1970's.

For further information write to:

Mr. Roger Vick, Curator  
Devonian Botanic Garden  
University of Alberta  
Edmonton, Alberta  
T6G 2E9



Alphabetical listing of lilacs in the collection

- Syringa dilatata*  
*S. josikaea*  
*S. meyeri*  
*S. meyeri* 'Pallbin'  
*S. microphylla* 'Superba'  
*S. oblata*  
*S. oblata* var. *alba*  
*S. patula* 'Miss Kim'  
*S. pinnatifolia*  
*S. reflexa*  
*S. reticulata*  
*S. reticulata* 'Ivory Silk'  
*S. tigerstedtii*  
*S. tomentella*  
*S. villosa*  
*S. vulgaris*  
    'Banquise'  
    'Blue Hyacinth'  
    'Charm'  
    'Cheyenne'  
    'Dawn'  
    'De Miribel'  
    'Diplomate'  
    'Edith Cavell'  
    'Ellen Willmott'  
    'Emile Gentil'  
    'Henri Martin'  
    'Jean Bart'  
    'Jean Mace'  
    'Joan Dunbar'  
    'Katherine Havemeyer'  
    'Lilarosa'  
    'Marie Legraye'  
    'Marlyensis'  
    'Massena'  
    'Midwest Gem'
- S. vulgaris* 'Mme. Antoine Buchner'  
    'Mme. 'Casimir Perier'  
    'Mme. Charles Souchet'  
    'Mme. Florent Stepman'  
    'Mme. Lemoine'  
    'Monge'  
    'Monique Lemoine'  
    'Montaigne'  
    'Mrs. Edward Harding'  
    'Mrs. W.E. Marshall'  
    'President Grevy'  
    'President Roosevelt'  
    'Primrose'  
    'Priscilla'  
    'Reaumur'  
    'Rosace'  
    'Victor Lemoine'  
    'Vivian Evans'  
    'Volcan'  
    'White Surprise'
- S. wolfii*  
*S. yunnanensis*  
*S. x chinensis*  
*S. x hyacinthiflora* 'Assessippi'  
    'Buffon'  
    'Doctor Chadwick'  
    'Gertrude Leslie'  
    'Mount Baker'  
    'Pink Spray'  
    'Royal Purple'  
    'Sister Justena'  
    'Vauban'

S. x Josiflexa 'James Macfarlane'  
S. x prestoniae 'Coral'  
    'Donald Wyman'  
    'Hiawatha'  
    'Isabella'  
    'Minuet'  
    'Miss Canada'  
    'Nocturne'  
    'Royalty'  
    'Silvia'  
    'W.T. Macoun'

\* \* \* \* \*

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