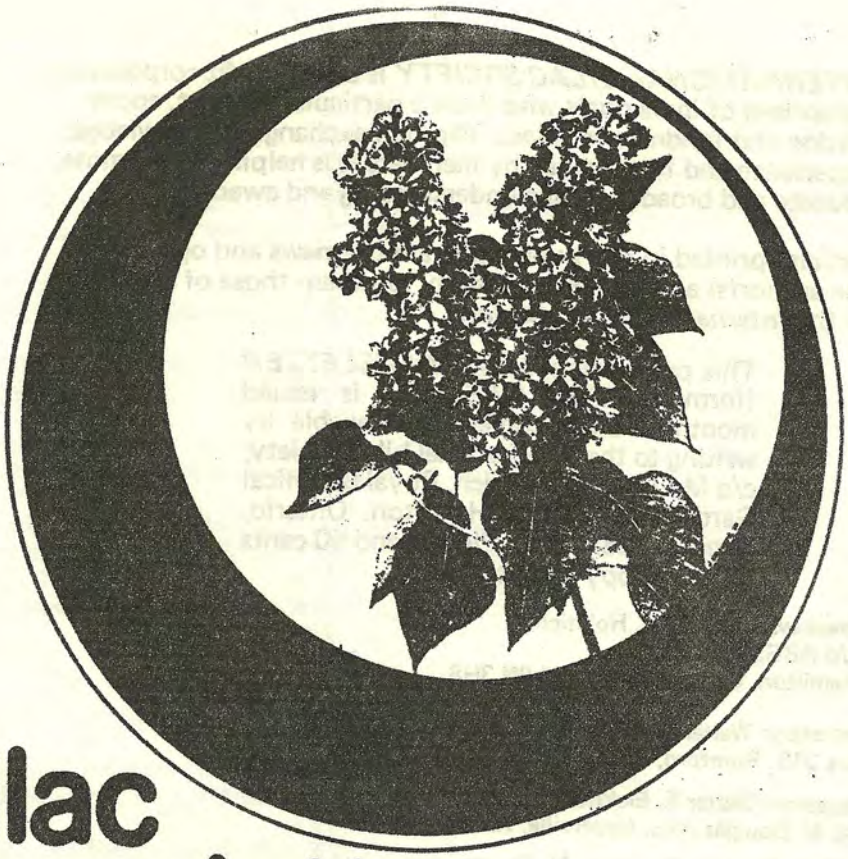

Lilac Newsletter

Vol. XIII, No. 5, May, 1987

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*.

This publication, *LILAC NEWSLETTER* (formerly *THE PIPELINE)* is issued monthly. Back copies are available by writing to the International Lilac Society, c/o Mr. Charles Holetich, Royal Botanical Gardens, Box 399, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. L8N 3H8. Please send 50 cents for each copy requested.

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3 Excerpts from an article entitled GROWER'S TIPS TOWARDS THE 25-YEAR LABEL
M. J. Harvey, Halifax, Nova Scotia

I don't know if I'm the only person who plants, say, fifteen rhododendrons, and then six years later has difficulty remembering which is which, but I'll bet there is at least a couple of people in the same boat. If you are one of those people then this article is for you. Here, then, is the story of my personal identification crisis.

The problem falls into three distinct categories: 1. the nature of the label material, 2. the method of marking the name, 3. the placement of the label. These will be treated in that order.

MATERIALS. The materials available fall into three general classes: wood, plastic and metal. Wood is definitely out as long-lasting label material.

Plastics occupy a large part of the market in the popular and readily available category.

Generally speaking, all the commonly available plastic labels suffer from embrittlement; the only difference is the rate at which it takes place. In the end they all snap and blow away. When old the least blow will break them.

Embossed adhesive plastic tape, as marketed for example by Dymo Corporation as 'Dymotape' has been used frequently by amateurs. The hand machine to do the embossing is simple and cheap. On the whole these labels are not sufficiently robust for long-term outdoor use.

Metals provide the remaining category of materials. Several have the lasting quality required to survive 25 years.

Current interest centers around aluminium, especially the heavily anodised form where the surface has been oxidised to give it both bite (to take pen or pencil) and weather resistance.

MARKING. After finding some good material the next problem is to make a mark on it which will last at least 25 years.

India ink is the oldest marking ink (invented in China of course) and still very good.. I have seen labels which were written in India ink where the ink has vanished but the name is still visible since the label surface around the ink had been etched away, resulting in a ghost image which was still readable. But 25 years? I think not.

Somewhat surprisingly a near winner in the 25 year race is the old lead pencil. The 'lead' is of course graphite mixed with clay which make a very stable mark. A fairly soft, 'B' grade pencil is easy to use, easy to read and lasts for many years. Twenty-five years is probably too long to expect, but graphite on rough aluminium is good for ten.

Well, that just about eliminates all the inks, paints and pencils from contention. We are left with only intaglio techniques, that is any method of cutting, scratching, stamping or engraving the surface of a material.

Thicker aluminium labels are not easily obtainable since few stores stock them and they are fairly expensive. I have, however, found a low-cost source of high-grade aluminium coated with a high-grade lacquer guaranteed to resist mild acids and with a long life. These labels can be found literally lying around the streets (unfortunately). I refer to extruded aluminium beer and soft-drink cans. Just get a pair of tin snips or even stout kitchen scissors and cut each can into strips. Scratch the name in the clear lacquer on the inside face of the can and you have your 25-year label for free. I should emphasise that this scrap is quality material; various health regulations and the requirements of competition ensure that only the top grade materials are used. This is in contrast to horticulture where we literally have no standards.

PLACEMENT. The remaining problem is where to place the label.

One way of placement is to have a pointed label or a special holder with a spike to stick into the ground. This is often the best means of placing a label for readability. A problem here is that people and especially children pull up labels either the better to read them or 'because they are there' and then either do not put them back or, worse, stick them somewhere else. What was it W. C. Field once said - "Someone who hates dogs and small boys cannot be wholly bad"? You have to face the fact there there is a high probability that one day in a 25-year period someone or something is going to destroy that label.

In my opinion, there is only one place to put a label. Your bury it on the north side of the specimen. How then do you read it? You don't. It is just there for insurance. Make two labels for each plant, bury one and hang the other from a branch. Any above-ground label should be regarded as liable to vanish any day but that does not matter if you have another label hidden in reserve. So the perfect labelling system has two labels: an above-ground disposable one and a buried permanent one.

As a postscript I might add my futuristic ideal label. It would be a microchip embedded in teflon or some longer lasting plastic, buried in the ground. It could be interrogated by pointing some minute antenna at the specimen and the readout would be a choice of voice, videoscreen or hard copy paper. There would be a choice of information on the label such as scientific name, varietal or common name, date when planted, parentage if a hybrid, name of hybridiser, geographical distribution if a species, normal flowering date, hardiness, awards or prizes, etc. Unfortunately it is easier to get to the moon. Well, maybe there is an eletronic engineer reading this who could put such a system together. After all, gardening is about dreaming.

Lilacs

by C. H. Heard
Des Moines, Iowa
August 1961

Over the last 30 years that I have been growing lilacs no other plant has given me greater pleasure.

Since we are convenient to the private collection of Miss Vivian Evans, who had over 300 varieties of lilacs, and to our local Ewing Park with more than 200 varieties, it has taken a real effort to narrow our own list down to the 150 hybrid varieties and several species that we grow. It is so much easier to try out new varieties than it is to discard the old ones.

Many of these lilacs deserve much wider use by the average gardener than they are now receiving.

Several of the species lilacs can make an excellent contribution to the landscape. Some of them are low growers, which makes them adaptable to situations where the hybrids grow too large. Among the species, these seem to us to be especially useful.

Syringa chinensis (frequently called Rothomagensis and erroneously called Persian). It is a native of China and came to us by way of Persia. This makes an excellent hedge lilac. It grows as dense as Zabel's honeysuckle, produces almost no suckers, and has attractive purple flowers in great profusion. The pink and paler shades are rather disappointing. There is also a true Persian lilac (Syringa persica), a lower grower, but with us the bloom has not been profuse and we have discarded it.

Syringa oblata dilatata, a species of Korean origin, has attractive pink flowers and is the earliest to bloom of any lilac that we have grown.

Syringa amurenis japonica, the Japanese tree lilac, should be used more. It makes a small tree and would fit well with ranch type homes where many shade and ornamental trees grow too large. Some of the Japanese tree lilacs in one of our parks are now over 30 feet tall. The flowers are white.

Syringa microphylla (daphne or littleaf lilac) has much smaller leaves than most lilacs. At maturity it makes a small to medium size plant, and has pink flowers.

Syringa velutina (sometimes called palibiniana) is another Korean lilac dating back to about 1910. Blooming late in the season, it has flowers of attractive pink. Inclined to be a dwarf grower, it deserves a place where smaller plants are desirable.

Syringa pubescens is the most fragrant of any lilac we know. Unfortunately, with us it has not proved to be a dependable bloomer. The flowers are lavender.

Syringa villosa is another late flowering lilac. It is a parent of several of the later-blooming hybrid varieties.

Syringa swegiflexa, a cross between sweginzowi and reflexa, is another variety worth further trial. It has pinkish flowers which appear late in the blooming season. This plant seems to be a rather dwarf grower, although we haven't had it long enough to evaluate it properly.

So much for the species. Now, if you want the wide range of colors from white through violets, blues, lavenders, pinks, reddish purples and deep purples - combined with single or double flowers - you must look to the hybrid lilacs.

NOT ALL FRENCH

Note that I did not say "French hybrids." True, many years ago Victor and Emile Lemoine of Nancy, France, introduced some 214 varieties and other Frenchmen introduced several more - giving the term "French hybrids" its start. But many worthwhile hybrid lilacs have come from other sources, and we should prefer to judge the plants on their merits rather than their origin.

'Ludwig Spaeth,' the top rated deep purple variety, came from the Spaeth Nurseries of Berlin, Germany. Other good varieties came from Holland and Belgium. Paul Dunbar, formerly of the park department in Rochester, New York, developed the top rated single blue 'President Lincoln.' He also developed 'Adelaide Dunbar,' the top rated deep purple. His 'President Roosevelt' is a good dependable deep purple variety.

Huldah Klager, of Woodland, Wash., introduced more than 80 varieties. Of them all, three that we consider outstanding are 'Frank Klager,' 'City of Gresham,' and 'My Favorite.'

Theodore Havemeyer, a nurseryman at Glen Head, Long Island, originated about 40 varieties, some of which were introduced after his death. Among these are several of our finest hybrid lilacs, including 'Charm,' 'Glory,' 'Anne Shiach,' 'Night' and 'Zulu.' 'Charm' and 'Glory' are especially valuable in extending the blooming season. They frequently steal the show when our lilacs are in bloom.

About 20 hybrid varieties were introduced by W. B. Clarke, of San Jose, Calif. Among them: 'Clarke's Giant,' 'Esther Staley,' and 'Blue Hyacinth.'

F. L. Skinner of Dropmore, Manitoba, and Isabella Preston of Ottawa, Ontario, are also responsible for the introduction of several excellent varieties. These include early and late season bloomers. Among them are 'Assessippi,' 'Pocahontas,' 'Excel,' 'Hiawatha,' 'Isabella,' 'Coral,' and 'Royalty,' which will extend the blooming period for two weeks.

Those who wish to learn about more lilac varieties than those described or listed here, should consult the bulletin "Lilacs for America," published by the A. H. Scott Horticultural Foundation, Swarthmore, Pa. (Price, $1.) In this bulletin lilacs are rated as to their desirability, by a group of top lilac authorities from the arboretum, private collectors and nurserymen specialists.

Hints on Culture

Lilacs do best when planted in a sunny location. They may survive in shade, but will produce few flowers. They will do well in any good, well-drained garden loam. If the humus is low in the soil, it will pay to spade in plenty of manure or compost, or to add a balanced commercial fertilizer. Cow manure is excellent for lilacs. If your soil is acid, an occasional application of lime is recommended.

One may plant lilacs in either early spring or fall. After unwrapping the plants, be sure to keep the roots well moistened until they are planted. It would even be well to soak them in water for a few hours. Place the top-soil to one side and use this to fill in around the roots. Water the plant in thoroughly and finish filling the hole. Set the plants a couple of inches deeper than they stood in the nursery - as shown by the soil line on the trunk. This allows for some future settling of the earth around the plant.

Water the new plants frequently, especially during dry spells. Keep the soil cultivated about two inches deep, and free from weeds. A watering that reaches the bottom of the roots is worth a dozen half-hearted sprinklings.

Lilacs require little or no pruning at planting time or for the first five or six years. If the plants become old and too woody, cut out some of the larger limbs as close to the ground as possible. Save a few new shoots to take their place. If suckers become too numerous, thin them out, but always leave a few new shoots as they will give you your best bloom a few years later.

Lilacs have only two pests of much importance, borers and oyster shell scale. Borers are small white worms which eat their way into the wood and weaken or kill some of the larger branches. Watch for sawdust being thrown out, usually near the soil line. These little worms can be dug out with a knife or killed with a wire run into the hole. Another standard remedy is carbon bisulfide squirted into the holes. Some of the newer borer treatments such as Borgo also seem to be effective.

Oyster shell scale appears as small raised areas on the bark. These "bumps" can be picked off easily. The scale consists of small grayish insects which attach themselves to the stems and suck out the plant juices. They spread rapidly, and will compeltely cover the stems of a plant in a few years. If they are on only one or two limbs, cut off and burn the affected parts. For a wider infestation, spray the plants with a miscible oil just before the leaves appear. In applying any spray, follow closely the directions on the container.

HYBRID LILACS ....that I consider among the best

SINGLE	DOUBLE
WHITE	
Marie Finon	Ellen Willmott
Vestale	Edith Cavell

VIOLET

De Miribel

Marechal Lannes
Violetta

BLUE AND BLUISH

Firmament
President Lincoln
Maurice Barres

Duc de Massa
Olivier de Serres
Gaudichaud

LILAC

Jacques Callot

Leon Gambetta
Victor Lemoine

PINKISH

Lucie Baltet
Charm

Katherine Havemeyer
My Favorite

REDDISH PURPLE

Capetaine Baltet
Glory
Congo

Paul Thirion

DEEP PURPLE

Ludwig Spaeth
Monge
Edmond Boissier

Adelaide Dunbar

EARLY HYBRIDS

Assessippi
Louvois
Mirabeau
Pochahontas

LATE HYBRIDS

Coral
Hiawatha
Romeo
Royalty

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SYRINGA

Thirty-six seedlings germinated from the 1984 cross of Syringa vulgaris 'Souvenir de Louis Spaeth' by S. pinnatifolia. The early leaves were entire but later in the season eight plants produced leaves that were pinnately lobed or divided (Fig. 1). The seedlings will be assessed for flowering habit and ease of propagation.

Seeds were obtained from crossing the white-flowered S. vulgaris 'Vestale' by S. pinnatifolia.

(K.R. Tobutt, H. Longbottom)

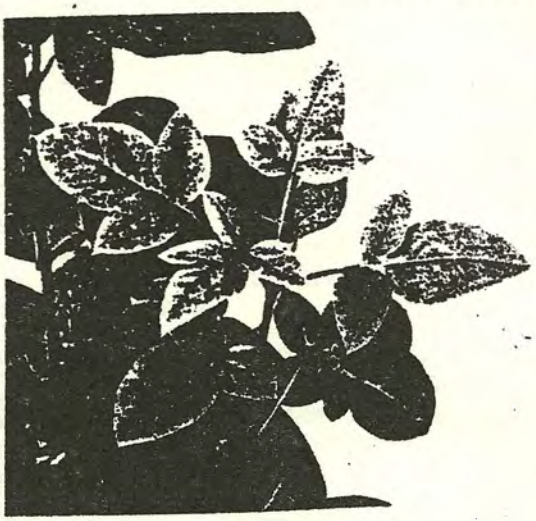

Fig 1
Seedling of *Syringa vulgaris* 'Souvenir de Louis Spaeth' × *S. pinnatifolia* showing pinnate younger leaves

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Vacant

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Vacant.

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SEE YOU THERE

SEE YOU THERE