

Lilac Newsletter

Vol. XIV, No. 8, August, 1988

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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MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION

Single annual	\$ 10.00
Family	12.50
Sustaining	20.00
Institutional/Commercial	25.00
Life	150.00

*Mail membership dues to I.L.S. Secretary

EDWARD UPTON

"Edward Upton loved lilacs. The evidence exists today - six scrapbooks of lilac information patiently gathered over a period of forty-five years.

These scrapbooks were not compiled with any thought of reward or recognition. They were simply a labor of love to a man who was vitally interested in every aspect of lilac culture. The books are replete with lists, pictures, articles and letters from all the great lilac enthusiasts of his day. These are carefully pasted into his books, but far from being a mere accumulation of items, are dynamic with marginal annotations and updated plant names which Upton added continually in an effort to maintain the best possible set of lilac scrapbooks. As we read them, we learn much about lilac culture and development in the early 20th century and also much about the man himself."

The Society has republished Vols. 1 & 2, and 3 and 4 in two editions of the Edward A. Upton Scrapbooks of Lilac information. Both editions are 8½ x 11, soft-cover. Price \$22.50 ea., \$18.50 to members.

These books are the collection of a noted nurseryman beginning in the early 1920s of information from newspaper, correspondence, magazines and other sources. They are valuable reference works for anyone interested in lilacs.

Orders should be sent to Mr. Walter Oakes, Box 315, Rumford, ME 01276.

LILACS ARE FOR YOU ¹

by Bob Gilbert
Master Gardener

Mid-May is eagerly awaited by those folks who are fortunate enough to have lilacs in their yard. Here in Dutchess County, most lilacs come into bloom at that time. Enjoying the fragrance put out by the lilac flowers is a thrill no one should miss. One would be hard put to come up with a more delightful experience than to thrust one's face into branch of lilacs in full bloom and inhale that unforgettable aroma. But then, not all lilacs have a pleasing odor. Some of the newer cultivars are grown for their appearance and in this writer's opinion, have a downright unpleasant odor.

One should not get hooked on the lilac solely for its aroma because its colors are something to behold also. The days of seeing the two common lilac colors - the bluish-purple and the white - are long since gone. Today there are over 1700 named cultivars and they are generally placed in a category of one of seven accepted colors. But, with such a multitude of cultivars, there are hundreds of variations to these seven basic colors. To add to the color situation, many blooms show one color in the bud stage and, as the flower opens, take on another hue - and yet another shade when fully open. And some lilacs even have a color change from full bloom to when the flower really matures and gradually start to fade. Beyond color variations, one can have not only single flowers, but semi-double and doubles. And some of the doubles have as many as four layers of petals.

It is now possible for the homeowner to grow some of the newer cultivars and have a blooming season that lasts into early July. With a judicious selection of five to six plants, a homeowner can perhaps look for a six or seven week bloom period. Another consideration for the homeowner is the size of the plants. Some cultivars now are quite small and many are only six feet high with an equal width. Others can grow to a height of thirty feet or more. Most of the French hybrids will go eight to ten feet high and maybe eight feet wide. They can be pruned to maintain an acceptable size.

Lilacs need full sun and will do well in most soils as long as the drainage is good. They are best planted either in the early spring or in the fall just before the ground freezes. They respond well to feeding and, if the soil tends to be acid, some lime should be used every two or three years.

Lilacs are long-lived survivors and so have few diseases. Leaves in some plants may turn a grayish-white with what looks like mildew but it seldom harms the plant. Lilac borer can be spotted and can be cut out or drowned with an appropriate compound. Lilac blight and witches broom are rare and Cooperative Extension can help with these problems.

A word should be said about pruning. The lilac flowers on wood that has grown the previous summer. Therefore, any pruning should be done right after the plant blooms and before any new wood starts to grow. Some experts maintain that removing spent blooms before seeds set will give a more prolific bloom the following year. This question is yet to be resolved.

The lilac is an old plant. Botanically inclined travelers found lilacs growing wild in the regions of southeastern Europe, around the Black Sea eastward into Afghanistan, and still further east into China, Manchuria and Japan. These travelers brought plant samples back to western Europe in the 15th century and a century later lilacs found their way into England and across the Atlantic to America.

In studying these new plants, botanists identified thirty different species, some of which are still grown today. But from the time lilacs arrived in western Europe, well over 100 years had to pass before a French nurseryman, in 1830, grew a lilac he had hybridized. It produced a bloom different magenta in color and was given the name Charles X. This new lilac gave nurserymen all over England and Europe the first vague hint of the potential there was to hybridizing lilacs. Today Charles X is still a very popular lilac.

In 1843 a nurseryman in Belgium developed the first double form of lilac. But another thirty years had to pass before a nurseryman in Nancy, France started to work with lilacs. His name was Victor Lemoine

and it was he who created the fountain head of what today is called the French Hybrid Lilac. Lemoine started his lilac hybridizing in 1870. He died in 1911 and his son carried on his work. From 1870 until about 1933, the father and son team created over 190 named lilacs that were totally new to the world. These included only the plants he thought worthy of propagating. He must have discarded hundreds of other less desirable crosses. The amazing thing is that these two men, especially the father, did all of their work on about three acres. An example of the difficulty of developing a new plant is shown by the work of a dentist in our own midwest. This man spent a lifetime trying different crosses and succeeded in producing only one plant that he deemed acceptable to name and propagate.

For the homeowner who wants to raise a few lilacs, there are two questions. First, with over 1700 cultivars to choose from, how would the choices be made? But the larger question comes later; namely, where can they be obtained? Local nurseries pretty much limit your choices to three or four varieties. For the person who wants to have some fine lilacs, one way to find them is to join the International Lilac Society and to attend an annual convention. The society holds a sale at the convention, auctioning off as many as 350 plants to the highest bidder. These are healthy plants, true to name, ready to go in the ground and unobtainable anywhere else. Prices range from \$3 to \$30 or \$40 but most go for around \$10.

A listing of some choice varieties follows:

- *Vestale one of the best single whites.
- *Sensation a unique tall-growing variety, single, purple-red with a margin of pure white around each floret.
- *President Lincoln .. a single, Wedgewood-blue, beautiful.
- Buffon single, pink, early, very feminine, large panicles, superb lilac.
- Congo single, dark red-purple.
- William Robinson ... double, pinkish-red.
- *Miss Kim single, purple buds open to pale lavender, mature plant looks like large snow ball, excellent for the yard.

- *Miss Canada single, pink, flower trusses can be 16" long and 8" in diameter, hard to get.
- *Mme. Casimer Perier. double, white, excellent.
- Krasavista Moskv... "Beauty of Moscow", double, white, may have four layers of petals, superb, developed in Russia 25 years ago, hard to obtain.
- *President Poincare.. double, magenta colored, a dandy.
- *Belle de Nancy..... double, pink, very good.
- Massena..... single, dark reddish-purple, very large cupped flowers.
- Katherine Havermeyer. double, pink, excellent.
- Assissippi single, lilac colored, very good.
- *James Mac Farlane .. single, clear pink, late, excellent.

* - indicates the varieties that may be available at a nursery.

For those contemplating a purchase, perhaps a trip to a lilac garden would be time well spent. Here in Dutchess County, there is the Cary Arboretum which has a nice collection. The Brooklyn Botanical Garden is excellent, as is Arnold Arboretum outside of Boston. The Shelbourne Museum just south of Burlington, Vermont is excellent also, but many plants are not named. Highland Park in Rochester, NY is one of the best sources and the Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton, Ontario has the largest collection in the world. All varieties are named, making it well worth the trip.

‡ This article by an ILS Board member first appeared in "Dutchess Life" in April 1987.



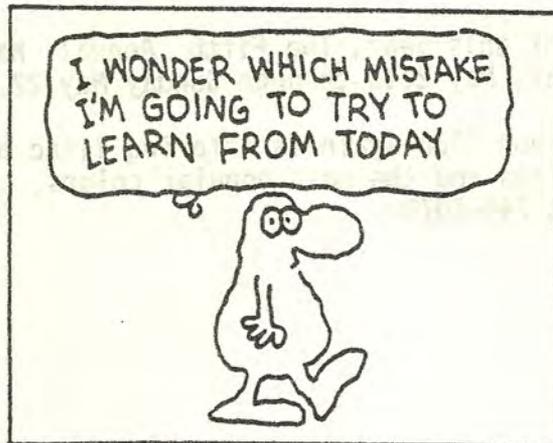
Book Review
by
Robert Clark

LILACS : GENUS SYRINGA by Rev. Father John L. Fiala. Timber Press
August 1988, Hardcover. Illustrated and indexed. \$59.95.

For sixty years the latest authority on lilacs has been Mrs. McKelvey's monograph entitled **THE LILAC**. But now, our own Fr. John L. Fiala has written of his experiences over the past forty years, in growing and breeding lilacs.

In addition to the usual chapters on lilac species and hybrids, color classes, culture and uses, Fr. Fiala has illustrated this encyclopedic work with 398 of his own color photos so that the reader may easily identify or at least get an impression of any particular lilac in cultivation. And for the student of lilacs he writes intensively and with clarity of his own breeding projects while surveying those of other breeders both foreign and domestic.

In compiling these comprehensive data, he traveled extensively and has listed the lilac collections, both public and private, he visited. And finally, the 372 page hard cover book is thoroughly indexed so that one may easily look up any given lilac species or cultivar. This contemporary monograph deserves to be in every lilac lovers library.



LILAC PROMOTION

Editor's Note: We received these press releases telling of one town's efforts to promote the lilac and their town. Perhaps you know of a local organization in your town that is just waiting for you to suggest such a project.

BRISTOL LILAC FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FOUR YEAR BEAUTIFICATION PLAN

BRISTOL - a four year beautification plan to make highway entrances into Bristol more attractive begins with this year's Lilac Festival. Each year one of Bristol's four highway entrances will be slated for improvement with landscaping, the planting of lilac bushes and perennial flowers. New "Welcome To Bristol" signs, and local service organization signs will be displayed. The first year's project is on Route 3A south.

"It'll be beautiful" said project co-ordinator Bill Bucklin. "Work is coming along nicely. The Bristol LIONS Club volunteer crew has already cleared the area. Work will be completed by opening day dedication ceremonies."

A three day event this year, The Fifth Annual Marjorie Field Lilac Festival runs Friday, May 20th through Sunday May 22.

The Pasquaney Garden Club again is offering lilac bushes for planting. Available in two sizes and the most popular colors, they may be ordered from Edna Miller at 744-5070.



CHILDREN'S COLORING CONTEST

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NEWEST LILAC FESTIVAL EVENT

BRISTOL - "We wanted to get the children really involved," said Irene Nesteruk, chairperson of the Lilac Festival Coloring Contest. "We all know how much children love coloring. This contest will get the Newfound Area children involved in a great family event, the Lilac Festival."

The Coloring Contest is just one of many events happening during the Fifth Annual Marjorie Field Lilac Festival to be held from Friday, May 20 through Sunday, May 23, in the Newfound Area.

The Official Coloring Contest picture, a spring planting scene, is available at Carol's Furniture, Bristol 5 & 10, Bristol House of Pizza and Bristol Market. All area children are invited to participate.

Coloring contest prizes will be awarded in seven categories, for children from pre-school age through sixth grade. First prize winners will receive awards and a certificate for a large pizza at the Bristol House of Pizza. Awards will be given to second and third prize winners in the categories.

Completed colored pictures should be returned to Carol's Furniture by May 5th. The pictures will be pre-judged and displayed in downtown Bristol merchant's windows during the Lilac Festival. Awards ceremonies will be at noon on Saturday, May 21, at the Bristol Town Hall.



L I L A C S

GENUS: SYRINGA

by Rev. Father John L. Fiala

100 PAGES OF PHOTOGRAPHS IN TRUE COLOR

This is the first major work on lilacs since
The Lilac a monograph by Susan Delano McKelvey, 1928

A SPECIAL ADVANTAGE FOR I.L.S. MEMBERS

Grape Hill Gardens is making an introductory offer to
International Lilac Society members of 20% discount.

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plus \$3.00 shipping and handling

Please send coupon below along with \$48 plus \$3 total \$51.00

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