

LILACS

VOLUME 19, NUMBER 1

WINTER 1990



S. laciniata with *S. vulgaris* hybrids

QUARTERLY JOURNAL

of the International Lilac Society

*IN THIS
ISSUE:*

Membership Directory

A Publication of
THE INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY

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Copies of this publication are available by writing to the International Lilac Society, c/o Mrs. Pauline Fiala, 6995 Congress Road, Spencer, Ohio 44275.

International Lilac Society

President	<i>Daniel K. Ryniec</i> Brooklyn Botanic Garden 1000 Washington Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11225
Executive Vice President	<i>William A. Utley</i> Grape Hill Gardens, 1232 Devereaux Rd., Clyde, NY 14433
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Treasurer	<i>Walter E. Eickhorst</i> 140 West Douglas Ave., (2-C) Naperville, IL 60540
Editor	<i>Robert B. Clark</i> Cattle Landing Road, Meredith, NH 03253 27 Lake Wood Circle, Meadow Wood Farms, Ocala, Florida 32675

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Single or Family / Annual	\$ 15.00
Sustaining	30.00
Institution/Commercial	35.00
Life	150.00

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

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.

Published January, 1990

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Lourene Wishart at the lilac dedication.



Dan Cohen and Orville Steward look at 'Heather.'



IN MEMORIAM

Co-founder Lourene Wishart died on December 21st in her 98th year. The daughter of the John P. Bratts, she was the widow of Joseph S. Wishart, a Lincoln, Nebraska, attorney who died in 1962.

The Wisharts, after their marriage in 1920, lived at "Lilac Farm," Bennett, her maternal grandfather's homestead until 1926 when they moved into their city home at 2140 Sheridan Boulevard. For forty-two years the Wisharts were prominent in civic, state and national affairs. After her beloved "Jack's" death, Lourene carried on their mutual interests for nearly another forty years.

Lourene's own talents were in gardening, floral decoration and flower show judging. She promoted horticultural development and embellishment through garden clubs and civic groups. She was a member of local and national garden clubs and plant name societies: rose, iris, peony, day lily and lilac, also the American Kennel Club in which she exhibited her champion toy Manchester terriers.

Lourene was a leader in promoting Lincoln as "Lilac City" in 1930. Her civic group planted two miles of roadway to the Lancaster County airport with lilacs. She donated her lilac collection to the University of Nebraska horticultural farm at Mead in 1976. She also donated lilacs to the Maxwell Arboretum on the Lincoln campus of the University of Nebraska, as well as lilacs to Arbor Lodge, the home of Jay Morton at Nebraska City, to the Gerald R. Ford birthplace at Omaha. She was the patron of the Sass Memorial Garden at Offutt Air Force Base near Omaha.

Faithfully and with distinction she served International Lilac Society for many years as midwest vice president. A grateful Society bestowed its highest recognition by awarding her its Honor and Achievement Award in 1979. One of Father Fiala's pink lilacs bears the name 'Lourene Wishart.'

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Have a Friend? Make Him / Her an ILS Member!!!

Winfried K. Martin, Membership Chairman

BOOK REVIEW:

“The Lilacs are Blooming in Warsaw”

By Alice Parizeau. 1981.

A NOVEL recounting the experiences of a Polish family and their friends and neighbors from World War II to the shipyard strike at Gdansk (1939-1979). The book's title is the telegraph message to a Paris friend, alluding to the language-of-flowers' connotation of lilacs to solidarity, a word occurring a few times in the later chapters. No particular lilacs are even mentioned. Instead, character, tenacity, hope of a people are delineated through those forty-odd years of military occupation first by German and later by Russian soldiers. In brief this is a political or national narrative, not a horticultural or gardening book. Nevertheless, a good read.



Dr. Karen Murray, Orville Steward, Pero Dimsoski, Robert Clark.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SINCE our May meeting in Ohio I have been busy with visits to Delhi, N.Y.; Rumford, Maine; Meredith, N.H.; Greenboro, Vt., and with the concerns of I.L.S. board, committee chairpersons and the membership. Many thanks to our immediate past president Orville Steward, to the board of directors, and to all who have been supportive, and, when asked to carry out some function on behalf of I.L.S., have eagerly done so!

The past eighteen years have seen continuous progress toward our goals of promotion, education, research and exchange of knowledge about the lilac. This year's annual meeting in May at the Montreal Botanical Garden promises to be an exciting event. Our local chairperson, Francesco Tortorici, is working very hard to make this a most successful and memorable meeting. The pre-conference trip to England which Sabra and Robert Gilbert are arranging on behalf of I.L.S. is a rare opportunity to visit some of the most beautiful gardens in England. Please look through the mailing which Bob has sent you and, if possible, plan to participate with other I.L.S. members.

The Executive Board and other members have contacted me with several concerns which I had referred to the appropriate committees. Chairpersons presented their proposals at our October 1989 board meeting at Montreal. I am pleased to announce the following:

A tentative date of May 1990 has been set for the publication of *The Addendum and Corrigenda to Roger's Tentative International Register of*

Cultivated Names in the Genus Syringa by Freek Vrugtman and the Royal Botanical Garden, Hamilton, Ontario. The I.L.S. welcomes progress towards this publication since it will be helpful as a reference to type, color, parentage, hybridization and history of cultivated lilacs. We thank Freek and the Royal Botanical Garden for completion of this important project.

Bill Utley, our Executive Vice President and chairperson of the Lilac Distribution Committee presented a proposal that lilacs, both new and old varieties, and some species, will be made available to I.L.S. members. I.L.S. will receive a small amount of money to replenish the revolving Lilac Distribution Fund. This was the purpose when the Fund was established several years ago by Arch McKean.

The Education Committee chaired by Owen Rogers presented a proposal that I.L.S. will participate in the Eastern States Exposition at Springfield, Massachusetts in September 1990. In addition, Owen will assist in preparation for the Ameriflora Exhibition at Columbus, Ohio in 1992 with I.L.S. members in Ohio.

The Board supported the editor's report for the recent improvements in the I.L.S. quarterly journal *LILACS*. The position of business manager has been established to assist the editor with his administrative duties.

The Fiscal and Budget Committee has requested that all chairpersons submit written requests for monies so that the committee can prepare a fiscal budget, for approval at our Thursday night meeting in May 1990 at Montreal. Several committees have already submitted their proposals. This will be the first time a fiscal budget will have been adopted for I.L.S. for an upcoming year.

The topic of the I.L.S. archives was referred to committee. I feel confident that Chairperson Lois Utley will submit satisfactory proposals regarding access to, safety of, and confidentiality of the I.L.S. archives.

Dedication, commitment and generosity has characterized your officers, chairpersons and active I.L.S. members. Today, each of us can now show our support by filling out the enclosed renewal form, then making out a check for the appropriate amount and finally mailing both to Secretary Walter W. Oakes, Box 315, Rumford, Maine 04276.

An additional monetary gift to assist our Educational or Research programs, or a contribution to one of our several funds, or a gift membership to a friend would be greatly appreciated. Only with your continued support can we maintain these high standards for this grand and most beautiful of flowers, the lilac.

Happy New Year and Good Lilac Growing
Daniel Ryniec

Growing Lilacs in Warm Climates

By Dr. Joel Margaretten, Margaretten Park

THE INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY has been deluged with inquiries for information on how to grow lilacs in warm climates. Because of my experience in growing the flower in California, I have been asked to write this paper so that our fellow horticulturists in the South could also enjoy lilacs as do our northern friends.

The requirements and procedures are quite simple when one understands that lilacs are deciduous and require a period of dormancy. When I first came out to California I was told to forget about raising lilacs here, they would never bloom. Being stubborn by nature I was determined to try. Yes, they flowered alright, but they were puny and soon aborted. This abnormal behavior continued for four years in spite of all the watering, fertilizing, pruning and spraying; nothing seemed to help. There I was with six tall shrubs, green and healthy, but no flowers; they never lost their leaves during those four years. What was wrong? I checked and rechecked and the only difference between mine and those in the northeast was that my plants never went dormant. How could I make them go into this period of rest? I knew that European growers forced them into bloom in the wintertime, breaking the cycle by applying ground heat to their dormant plants. To reverse the process by freezing the ground would do the trick, but would be almost impossible in our climate. What else would do it? Simple; take the water away from them at the end of the normal growing season — it worked.

Of the nearly two hundred lilac cultivars at Margaretten park, all but the immature specimens have flowered, some better than others, some different than the original plant from which they were taken. Because of the care which the plants receive, forms that Mrs. McKelvey describes in her book as having small florets frequently show up larger and prettier. I have observed changes in shade which may be caused by differences in soil and water mineral content. There is no difference whether you plant species or hybrids, they all bloom. The Lemoine selections as well as Havemeyers, Rankins and Prestons and my own seedlings have all been prize winners. Unlike lilacs in the east, our plants must have care and cannot be neglected as many I have seen in my travels. In those cold areas of the country dormancy is no problem, so why bother, they flower anyway.

To start with a plant that has been acclimated to warm weather helps. It will save about two years of waiting for flowers. Do not plant in the lawn where the sprinkler will keep the soil soggy and prevent them from going dormant. Place them on a slope or terrace where they will get good drainage — in full sunlight. The first year water them until they are established, then the second year do not water them after August 15th until the

end of November or the beginning of December, when they get natural rainfall. In arid areas water them from November until August 15th and only occasionally thereafter if the ground is dry to two feet below the surface, just to keep a little moisture around the roots. In these arid areas drip irrigation works very well and conserves water. In humid and wet climates where it rains intermittently all year round I suggest putting a plastic apron on the ground about four feet in diameter, to help keep the soil dry during the August to December period. I have also set lilacs in large redwood pots and followed the same routine. Be sure to set the pot on bricks to keep it off the ground. Emptying a couple trays of ice cubes from your refrigerator over the root area each week or two during this period when you are trying to induce dormancy will also help.

One of the advantages of the change of cycle is early flowers — they will blossom in April or early May instead of at the end of May. The late varieties will flower about two or three weeks later.

To recapitulate: get an acclimated plant, establish it in good soil, slightly acid and well drained — **not in the lawn**. In the second year after it shows good growth, take the water away on August 15th and allow it to go dormant so that the leaves turn yellow, brown and fall off. Start watering again in December if there is no appreciable rain and continue until August 15th. Follow the usual directions for pruning, fertilizing and insect control as recommended by the International Lilac Society.



Lilac Farm, Bennett, Nebraska, family home of Lourene Wishart.

ASK DR. LILAC . . .

Siting Lilacs

IN last spring's issue of *LILACS* (volume 18, number 2) under "Letters" an anonymous lilac fancier asked several cultural questions for which he sought opinions, if not authentic responses. Dr. Lilac, to use the third person modestly, ventures to sidestep questions regarding fertilizers, mulches, etc., and discusses a basic proposition, namely, selecting optimum sites and ameliorating inferior ones.

Garden writers, nurserymen and other generalists assert that lilacs are not fussy but respond well to "full sunshine and well-drained fertile soil." Period. That is fine if your particular garden is *average*. However, many factors mitigate against your garden being average: microclimate, soils, competition with other plants as well as animals, to name a few.

Let's assume, at the moment, that soil and its properties is the chief variable, and that its capacity to hold moisture is high, or at least that it is subject to seasonal saturation. What to do?

1. The wise farmer fits his crop to the land, meaning that he plants his crops only in suitable land and foregoes raising crops unsuitable to his acres. We've all seen June corn retarded in swales or saturated depressions. You cannot expect lilacs to flourish in such sites either.

2. Clay soils hold moisture better than sandy soils. Such capacities are useful during droughts and if plants are able to withstand flooding. The lowland flora is peculiarly adapted for such extreme conditions. Lilacs, however, are upland plant dwellers and show distress signals when located inhospitably. Make the percolation test by digging a hole and allowing rainwater to collect; watch how long it takes to seep into the soil. Should water stand too long, you'll know the site is not fit for raising lilacs.

How to Improve Bad Drainage

1. Ditching at the surface, or laying a system of agricultural (porous) tile below the plow sole.
2. Amend the soil with coarse sand or screened gravel.
3. Plant above ground in raised beds outlined with railroad ties or similar materials to retain a one-foot fill of "good garden soil." This will produce a pancake root system unless the original surface is loosened, but it will allow you to grow lilacs in your garden.

LILACS "UP NORTH"

By Francesco Tortorici and Raymond Cochez

Montreal Botanical Gardens

IT SEEMS like a miracle at this time of year when the fields are all covered with snow, the temperature is cold and the wind chills people and plants to their core; there is our lilac collection enduring this harsh climate.

The lilacs patiently await the spring season to start growth and to bloom. When we look at them, we cannot believe they will make it through the winter, but when the snow melts away and the air begins to warm, they come to life.

The buds start to swell in a tender green as the leaves appear in a shy way and start to unfold. Following the mild rainy days, the flowers will undoubtedly show up. First they will resemble small green grapes and later turn into glorious, colorful and fragrant panicles.

Like faithful friends, lilacs don't ever miss this yearly rendezvous. How reliable and consistent this shrub can be.

The lilacs up north await your arrival for the May 24-26, 1990, convention in beautiful Montreal. Indeed they will have a French flavor, but the beauty and fondness for these plants stays the same.

The Montreal Botanical Garden staff are very eager to see you next spring, and will do their best to make your stay a most pleasant one.

Corrections and Apology

The flowering branches on the back cover of the Autumn Number of *Lilacs* were not properly identified. They were drawn by Victoria Goaman of the Royal Botanic Gardens, and were originally published as Plate 132 in the August issue of *The Kew Magazine*. The caption should have read: *Syringa laciniata* (left) and *S. protolaciniata* 'Kabul' (right). Furthermore they are copyrighted.

We apologize to Victoria Matthews, editor of *The Kew Magazine*, for failing to obtain her permission, a grievous oversight. -- Ed.

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LETTERS . . .

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S. laciniata Grown in Alabama

To the Editor:

We have been successfully growing *S. laciniata* in central Alabama for several years. Our lilacs bloom around April 1st. Walter Oakes has given us great assistance and encouragement since we began propagating this lilac.

We were thrilled to see *S. laciniata* illustrated on the back cover of *Lilacs Quarterly Journal* and to read of the article in *Kew Magazine* by Peter S. Green.

/s/Ellen Beard
Waverly, Alabama

Wonderful Gift Lives On

Dear M. Heard:

I was just reading *Flower & Garden's* April issue and I thought you'd enjoy my lilac story.

We moved into our home 37 years ago and when one of our special neighbors had to move away, she insisted we take her lilac, which originally belonged to a cabinet member of Abraham Lincoln. It was a huge bush then, and we said there was no way to safely transplant it without destroying it.

This wonderful woman lived around the corner and she put a chain around the plant and the other end she attached to her bumper and backed up until the bush was free, drove to our house and we planted it, certain it would be a goner. Thirty years later it's still doing great. Each spring its beauty and fragrance brings to our mind that beautiful gray-haired woman, who didn't want that "common lilac" to belong to a stranger.

Mrs. Page died many years ago but her wonderful gift to us lives on.

Yours truly
/s/Anita Turner
Hamden, CT



(Above) Lourene Wishart and two officials from the University of Nebraska are interviewed at the dedication of the lilac collection. (Below) With Bill Utley and Dr. Clark.



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After strolling through the Kew gardens of London — famous for lilacs and many unusual plants, trees, vines and flowers — one is delighted to have tea with friends at this charming parasol table. Cruller, tea cakes and tea are served with china, crystal and silver imported from England. The lilac-designed place mats are also from England. This garden table was one of 46 tables designed by prominent Nebraskans (by invitation) to support the Cascade Fountain, a bicentennial civic project placed in Lincoln, Nebraska's city park. Theme and design: Lourene Wishart.