

Lilacs

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of the International Lilac Society

IN
THIS
ISSUE:

In memoriam: Roger Coggeshall and
the New England Fall ILS Meeting



FC 15, as yet unnamed selection of Robert Hoepfl
note lighter coloring near edge of petals
Photo Credit Kent Millham



'Patrick Henry', a John Dunbar selection
Photo credit Kent Millham

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Photo courtesy of Michael Dirr

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President's Message

Dear Lilac Friends,

Fall is definitely here at least in the Northern Hemisphere. In the Southern Hemisphere October, November, December is spring time and the lilacs should be about to bloom or are blooming. Wish you could make the trip to see what cultivars are gracing the gardens of Australia? I'm curious to know what lilacs are doing well and how popular they are in private gardens.

Here it is mid-October as I write this message. The 2013 convention is now a memory. Always, after the convention when the all the excitement dies down it gets quiet. We go home and reflect on the good times we had, the beautiful lilacs we saw, the speakers who inspired us and the friends we share that adventure with. The 2014 convention seems a long way away but already, David Gressley, our host next year, is in full mode preparing for it. Remember that Cleveland, Ohio, is the place so maybe you could make early plans to attend or at least think about coming.

This year the ILS Board voted "yes" to digitalizing the journals. Joan Speirs, Board Member, has been diligently working on this project. Journals dating from 1989 to the present have been converted/digitized and will soon be posted on the ILS web page. As voted by the ILS Board the last three years of the current journals will be accessible on the member- only site. The board voted to reserve them exclusively for the members. All lists with personal information will not be disclosed in order to protect your privacy. It is a big project and Joan Speirs is to be commended for her work and dedication to the project. Candace Wentz, our web page administrator, is also giving advice and spending precious time on this project.

In September we lost a cherished member of the society. Roger G. Coggeshall died on August 22, 2013. He was a dedicated nurseryman. He began as a propagator and educator at Arnold Arboretum, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, then moved in 1958 to Cherry Hill Nurseries in West Newbury, Massachusetts, USA, where he served as president for 5 years. For the last 20 years he was the business associate of Evelyn King at Syringa Plus Nursery also located in West Newbury. Roger was awarded the Jackson-Dawson Medal by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, the Award of Merit by the International Lilac Society and was made a Fellow of the International Plant Propagators Society. We are very sad to have lost Roger. He had a long career in horticulture and to the very last day he was involved at Syringa Plus Nursery. Our condolences to his family and to Evelyn King. Jack Alexander, plant propagator at Arnold Arboretum, Harvard University, Boston Massachusetts USA was introduced to Roger Coggeshall by his grandfather. Jack said of Roger: "He was the anchor to lilacs past and our link to horticultural history in the New England Region."

On the weekend of September 28th the New England Gathering took place.

Started under the leadership of the late Mary Lizotte it continues to attract not only members from the area but members and non-members from other ILS Regions. Jack Alexander, RVP New England, and Evelyn King organized this years gathering with the help of many ILS members from the area. A great slate of speakers were on the agenda. Evelyn King insisted that the gathering went on in spite of the sadness. She says Roger would have wished that it did.

I talked to a friend who lived in Ohio in his youth. He remembers the lilacs growing in his parents and grandparents gardens. He knew the name of one cultivar 'Miss Kim'. Now he lives on the Eastern shore of Virginia, USA on the edge of the Chesapeake Bay. To his chagrin lilacs do not grow very well there. No they do not grow there at all he said. The soil is sandy and his garden is often inundated by brackish water from the bay. There are so many lilac stories around. Just say the word lilac and immediately you hear some beautiful, fragrant memories about our favorite shrub.

I also heard from a Virginia horticulturist who had a call from someone with a problem with great hornets or European Hornet (*Vespa crabro* var. *germana*). They look like yellow-jackets and are very aggressive. They attack the bark of lilacs; cutting it away from branches and trunks causing the shrub to died. Not only did they attack lilacs, but the added problem was that the insects were seen taking over beehives evicting and killing honey bees.

Watching a documentary on olive oil and the cultivation of olive trees (*Olea europaea*) I learned we can now grow olive trees in cold climates. New cultivars of olives resistant to cold have been developed. Because of it many new countries that could not have imagined producing olive oil are doing just that. In ancient times the major producers of olive oil were Italy, Spain and France but now countries along the Mediterranean and faraway lands in the North produce and export their own olive oil. That gives us hope, because if olive trees can grow in cold climates then why can't lilacs grow in warm climates. Amazing what man can do... I believe one day we will have "A Lilac in Every Garden the World Over!"

As we brace ourselves for winter in the Northern Hemisphere it is time to dream of the new season when lilacs will be blooming again. Now is the time to choose the lilac cultivars you are going to add to your collection. Did you see the beautiful pictures of lilacs published in the summer issue of *Lilacs*? Take a look and you will be inspired.

The seasons are like a merry-go-round; round and round they go. You can be sure your favorite season will come again. In the meantime while waiting for spring dream, dream of lilacs.

Nicole Jordan, ILS President
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Roger G. Coggeshall: 10/7/27 - 8/22/13

After graduating from high school, Roger entered the military, serving with the U.S. Army from October 2, 1946, until his honorable discharge on February 25, 1948. He subsequently graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts.

Roger was a lifelong, passionate nurseryman, devoted to the propagation and cultivation of many varieties of woody plants, trees and shrubs, for use in New England landscapes. He began his horticultural career as a propagator and educator at the Arnold Arboretum. In 1958, he joined Cherry Hill Nurseries in West Newbury, where he became president five years later. For the past 20 years, he worked with Evie King of Syringa Plus Nursery, to make available lilacs to growers for the public.

He was a leader in the nursery industry, serving as president of the New England Nursery Association, and a member of the Massachusetts Nursery Association, Horticultural Club of Boston, and the International Lilac Society. In recognition of his professional achievements, he received the Jackson-Dawson Medal from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, the Award of Merit from the International Lilac Society, and was made Fellow of the International Plant Propagators Society.

We honor his lifelong passion to life, family and plants and recognize his commitment to always "seek and share."

Member Tributes to Roger

Michael Dirr: "Roger was a "kind, gentle, honorable and loving human being. I don't believe he ever met a stranger. When Bonnie and I visited Syringa Plus in May, 2013, it was like we had lived around the corner forever (like) friends dropping by for coffee. He loved woody plants and especially lilacs and, through the nursery, opened the doors to those who sought the best of the best. Bonnie and I will always cherish the visit. PS-he was so kind and unforgettable. it was a great day. I have horticultural heroes. Roger was one!"

John Bentley: "I knew Roger Coggeshall for only the last few years of his life. Even so, he welcomed me as though we had known each other for decades. He was always cheerful, always interested, and very tolerant of those less knowledgeable. His range and depth of plant knowledge was vast, reaching across many genera and species, and he could recall that knowledge within seconds when asked. Roger was a great guy, a pleasure to be around, and I will miss him."

Ted Collins: "When asked about something of current interest, Roger replied, 'don't ask me, Ted, I'm a dinosaur!' ... When learning his age, the same as mine, I asserted 'then I'm a dinosaur too.' So for 22 years thereafter when I'd call Syringa Plus, Evie would call him saying 'Hey dinosaur, it's the other dinosaur calling.' "

Kent Millham: "The first time I met Roger was at the 2000 ILS convention in Montreal. I had talked to him over the phone before that, since Roger and Evie were propagating *Fenicchia* hybrids for Highland Park. He greeted me like he had known me for many years... My favorite memory of Roger is whenever I called Syringa Plus, if Roger would answer, we would discuss the weather and how it was affecting our work and lilacs. He would always end the call by saying 'Evie's right here'... I will always treasure spending a few days in May at Roger and Barbara's house at Syringa Plus."

Evie King: "Rog is the strongest man I will ever meet.

If anyone of us are 1/2 as strong as he was that should be all we'll ever need.

We Love You Rog.

Rest Hard!"

Roger G. Coggeshall: Master Plant Propagator

Most ILS members knew Roger as a kind, friendly knowledgeable plantsman who was an expert at growing lilacs. What they may not have known was that Roger's expertise in propagation extended to many plants as well as in the genus *Syringa*.

As plant propagator at the Arnold Arboretum, Roger was given the opportunity to work with many unusual plants. Some of his work is documented in the Arnold Arboretum horticultural publication *Arnoldia*. Some examples of his articles are "Propagating Some Rarer Plants from Seed", Vol. 14(5): 25-28 [1954], *Polyethylene Plastic- Its Application to the Propagation of Hardwood Cuttings*", Vol. 14(11): 67-73 [1954], "Asiatic Maples, Their Propagation from Softwood Cuttings", Vol. 17(8-9): 45-56 [1957], and "Rooting Ghent Azaleas Under Plastic", Vol. 29(1): 1-7 [1960].

At the time of publication (1954), Roger's work rooting cuttings using polyethylene plastic was a groundbreaking discovery. He was one of the first propagators to employ this method, and it allowed for successful rooting of plant species that were previously impossible or difficult to root. He discovered that the use of polyethylene greatly promoted rooting of cuttings because it allowed air to permeate in and out of the rooting case, while retaining most of the water vapor. The retention of high humidity greatly increased the amount of successful rooting in difficult to root species. As an example, the Ghent azaleas were previously rooted mainly by layering. Once the polyethylene rooting chamber was

employed, this type of azalea readily rooted from cuttings.

Roger was a long-time member of the International Plant Propagators Society (IPPS), and was nearly a charter member, joining one year after its inception. After many years of important contributions, he was named a fellow of IPPS, a great honor.

Of importance to ILS, of course, is Roger's work on lilacs. Roger published an article in *American Nurseryman*: June 15, 1962, pp.7-8 entitled "*Hybrid Lilacs from Softwood Cuttings*". In Volume 27 of the IPPS proceedings, pp. 442-444, he published an article entitled "*Propagating French Hybrid Lilacs by Softwood Cuttings*". In this article, he conveys very clearly and concisely the entire nuts and bolts process of rooting lilac cuttings using the methods he used at Cherry Hill Nurseries, and later Syringa Plus.

Evie King summed up Roger's legacy as a propagator very well to me when she said "Roger loved propagating lilacs the most....and he instinctively knew how to propagate a plant just by looking at it".

Kent Millham
October 2013



Roger working at Arnold Arboretum in propagation house
Photo Credit Arnold Arboretum from archival photos

Editor's Note: The following article written by Roger Coggeshall was originally printed in the Combined Proceedings of the International Plant Propagators Society, Vol. 27, pp. 442-444 [1977].

Propagating French Hybrid Lilacs by Softwood Cuttings

Roger Coggeshall

Cherry Hill Nurseries, Inc.

West Newbury, Massachusetts 01985

Lilacs have been reproduced asexually for centuries. The methods used have varied greatly from continent to continent and from nursery to nursery. Many nurseries prefer to propagate their lilacs by root-grafting onto understocks of *Ligustrum*, or *Fraxinus*, while others prefer to propagate them from suckers, or divisions. At Cherry Hill Nurseries, Inc., located in the northeastern corner of Massachusetts, about 4 to 5 miles from the ocean, we have found that a softwood cutting procedure works well.

Timing: The single most important factor in the success or failure in the rooting of softwood cuttings of French hybrid lilacs, is the time the cutting material is collected. In our latitude this operation begins around May 25 and continues until the end of June. Although development of new growth varies from year to year, best results have been obtained between these dates.

Cutting Selection: Only current season's growth is used. As growth rates vary among cultivars, the length of the cutting wood selected will vary. The collected material is placed in 2 mil poly bags and is placed in a cool cellar to prevent the soft growth from heating in the bags. No additional moisture is added to the bags. An attempt is made to collect just enough cutting material for each day's propagation. We try to work with the freshest material possible.

Cutting Preparation: Following collection, the new softwood cuttings are trimmed to 3 to 4 inches, depending on the length of the internodes. The cuttings are stripped of all but 2 pairs of leaves and the very soft terminal growth is pinched out. Often the cutting material selected is so soft a terminal bud has not formed. In other cases, mainly where the growth is more firm and mature, the terminal bud is left. However, the two small underdeveloped leaves on either side of this terminal bud are removed. The cuttings are now ready for a hormone treatment.

Hormone Treatment: Two hormone treatments are used: Hormodin #2 and Hormo-Root B. Both are used in powder form, which is sprinkled out onto pieces of paper. Care is taken to see that the basal ends of the cuttings do not get too wet. If they are allowed to get too wet, too much hormone powder will stick to the basal ends and the cuttings will be killed. The hormone powders

on the papers must be kept dry from day to day. Great damage can be done to these softwood cuttings by too strong a hormone powder. The growth is so soft it is easily killed by "overdosing". In general we have found that the white cultivars require the longest time to root (2 to 3 months), while the darker colors are the quickest to root (1 to 2 months).

Rooting Medium: We have found that the best rooting medium for softwood cuttings of French hybrid lilacs is a 1:1 mixture of sand and perlite. The sand is a clean, washed sand, while the perlite is a coarse horticultural grade. The two ingredients are combined thoroughly on a volume basis. Mixing is a messy job due to the dryness of the perlite (a respirator helps); the medium is watered thoroughly for several days prior to sticking. Once the medium is satisfactorily moist, the cuttings are stuck approximately 2 inches apart in rows which are approximately 4 inches apart. Great care is taken to see that the cuttings are firmly watered in, which is difficult with this medium, as the perlite tends to "float" to the surface.

Propagating Structures: One of the reasons for our success in rooting softwood cuttings of lilacs is the structure we root them in. After the cuttings have been stuck, we mist them to prevent wilting. The time clocks are set so that the cuttings receive 6 seconds of mist every 30 seconds. In addition to misting, the cuttings receive additional humidity by covering the propagating structure with 4 mil clear polyethylene plastic. This creates a very high humidity situation for the cuttings to root in. The plastic covering also causes a buildup of heat on a clear day. When this occurs we ventilate the house to reduce the heat buildup. We try to maintain an air temperature of approximately 100°F. Root initiation begins with a 10-14 day period under these hot, humid conditions. After rooting, the cuttings are gradually hardened off by reducing the amount of misting until they are only watered as needed by hand (late August). The cuttings remain in the rooting bench for the entire winter. They freeze solidly in the rooting medium, as there are no heating facilities in the propagating structures.

In the spring the bare-rooted cuttings are lined out in the field. They are planted 10 inches apart in the row, with 30 inches between the rows. Their survival in the field depends on rain as we have no irrigation facilities.

At the end of the first season's growth the young plants are trimmed back to a height of 2 to 3 inches above the ground. This induces branching of the second year's growth, and we have a well-branched, heavy liner at the end of the second growing season. In mid-September the 2-year old liners are transplanted; the tops and roots are pruned back, the plants set 30 inches apart in the row and allowed to grow for another 2 years. At this spacing they develop into well branched, well budded plants for the nursery trade.

ILS Comes to Cleveland in May 2014

If I told you ILS is going to meet in a cemetery in Cleveland for its Annual Convention next May, what would you think? Of course there's Père Lachaise in Paris and Mount Auburn in Cambridge overlooking Boston and thirteen other recognized historic cemeteries in North America. Well, Cleveland has a grand surprise in Lake View Cemetery.

Established in 1869, Lake View was established just as Cleveland was emerging as a major industrial city. Lake View was chartered by some of the most astute 19th century business minds in the country. Founded on 285 acres of what was then outside the city limits, Lake View was designed as an English Garden cemetery by a pre-eminent landscape designer who was given a leave of absence from his employment at Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati. Adolph Strauch was trained in the Pückler School in Germany and studied landscape design throughout Europe. Although lost in obscurity, Strauch was acknowledged as an influence on the life work of Fredrick Law Olmsted. Strauch remained with Spring Grove through the remainder of his working life but found time to design parks and cemeteries throughout the American mid-west. Thanks to Strauch's initial planning, Lake View has followed his lead in preserving an intimate atmosphere beset with the oldest collection of trees in Cleveland.

At Lake View, Adolph Strauch started with a clean slate of mostly wooded land. He laid out the roads and initial sections in a curvilinear design giving the eye a fresh angle of view with each turn. Roads were set at a lower grade giving views of a contiguous landscape. Vistas and water figure abundantly in the layout. Dugway Creek, a tributary running north to Lake Erie was expanded into lakes and ponds through the length of its stretch through Lake View. Most importantly each section has stipulations on the size and placement of monuments and gravestones making them an intrinsic element in the landscape comparable to a planted shrub layer.

Adolph Strauch was also a noted Horticulturist who introduced plants not seen in contemporary landscape designs. Lilacs, can be seen throughout the cemetery in mostly at their mature size to fit the scale of the landscape. Graduating from The Holden Arboretum's lilac collection in the Display Garden, I found homes for more lilacs in the cemetery.

Lake View Cemetery is much more than a hallowed piece of ground to mourn and honor the dead. It is a place very much for the living. Through its initial conception, Lake View was a grand park because urban green space in the 19th century was rare in North American cities including Cleveland. Lake View Cemetery reflects Cleveland's status as the financial capital of the emerging United States where "Millionaire's Row" housed 50% of all the millionaires living in the world from 1880 to 1900. The opulence that once adorned Euclid

Avenue mansions, now graces the burial spaces and monuments throughout the older sections of Lake View. Angelic sculptures, Greco-Roman architecture and Egyptian motifs comprise many of the cemetery's monuments and mausoleums. Contemporary art is beginning to fill niches in other places around the cemetery. Lake View Cemetery is as much a museum of art, an arboretum and a history museum as well as a cemetery.

Despite having a poor historical record with U.S. Presidents from Ohio, Lake View Cemetery has one of the most ornate Presidential Monuments in the country housing the remains of President James A. Garfield and his wife in the crypt below the monument. Dedicated in 1890, the Garfield monument draws visitors from around the country. The Wade Chapel was dedicated in 1901 as a monument to Jephtha Wade, the founder of Western Union Telegraph. The window executed by Louis Comfort Tiffany in 1896 is titled, "The Consummation of the Divine Promise" and is the focal element in a chapel used today for wedding and funeral services. The chapel is one of fewer than a dozen surviving chapels completed by the Tiffany Studio. Mosaic glass panels executed in the New York studio of Tiffany were shipped on barges along the Erie canal to their destination at Lake View.

Saturday will feature a full day in Lake View Cemetery for tours and lectures by the docents who best know the buildings and grounds. After lunch we will commence with the lilac auction.

University Circle is the most vibrant and dynamic part of Cleveland. Therein lies the heart of Cleveland's cultural, educational medical institutions. The host of museums, includes the Cleveland Museum of Art; one of the best art museums in the world and thanks to the bequest of the Wade family, there is no admission charge to see the permanent collection which alone could take a week to see. Adjacently located is Wade Oval, named in honor of the 75-acres donated by the Wade family to create one of the early green spaces in Cleveland. A stones' throw away is the Cleveland Botanical Garden where we will visit on Friday.

The drive along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard includes many gardens dedicated to the many ethnic groups that call Cleveland their home. Rockefeller Greenhouse at the northern end of the Cultural Gardens always has a horticultural display either in the glasshouse or on the grounds in the outdoor gardens. Traveling back toward Cleveland Botanical Gardens on East Boulevard passes by the original Cultural Gardens laid out in opulent designs.

Depending on our time, we could postpone the return leg of the tour and visit a Nature Preserve on the shore Lake Erie, the shallowest Great Lake where Dugway Brook flows outward.



Large swath of naturalized daffodils
at Lake View Cemetery, Cleveland OH
Photo courtesy of Mary C. Krohmer



Scenic setting at Lake View Cemetery, Cleveland, OH
Photo courtesy of Mary C. Krohmer

ILS New England Fall Meeting Program

David Dudley – USDA: Import / Export of Lilacs

Kent Millham-History of Lilac Hybridization at Highland Botanical Park

John Kirk – ILS annual meetings recap / Trip to Highland Park

Jamie Greager - Growing Lilacs at F&A Farm, Maine

John Bentley – Historic Lilacs in New England

John Thurlow – Hand out on the history of Cherry Hill nurseries and Lilacs

– Propagation demonstration / Grafting & Softwood cuttings

Fall ILS Meeting 2013

On a color filled Saturday morning about twenty lilac enthusiasts met at the West Newbury, Massachusetts town hall annex to talk about lilacs. After refreshments and welcome from ILS New England vice president, Jack Alexander, the group heard five presentations, viewed two demonstrations, and received a handout on the history of Cherry Hill orchard.

The most distant travelled member to attend was Kent Millham who gave a talk on Highland Botanical Park, its history and the many lilacs that originated there. David Dudley, a New England representative of the USDA based in New Hampshire, spoke on the regulations governing importation and exportation of lilacs to and from and within the US. He made special mention of quarantine areas within the US and of relatively easier restrictions on movement of lilacs from Canada to the US. John Bentley spoke of the research on the date of origin of lilacs in Duxbury Massachusetts, possibly the oldest in the US. Being a good New Hampshire citizen, he found the evidence as yet inconclusive, preferring to honor the claim of the oldest to Governor Wentworth of New Hampshire, although he indicated that Freek Vrugtman was trying to find records of a nursery in Holland in the 17th century that may have provided the Pilgrims with lilacs. John Kirk updated the New England chapter on the 2013 convention in Madi-

son and showed slides of Highland Park lilacs he saw on his way back from the Midwest. Jamie Greager spoke of his experience growing lilacs commercially on his farm in Maine and Evie King and Jack Alexander gave demonstrations on grafting and rooting of softwood cuttings. John Bentley auctioned lilacs, maple syrup and a rose which helped cover expenses. A good time was had by all and we look forward to next Spring's lilac season.

John Kirk

Great Gardens: Highland Park, Rochester, New York

Highland Park, the Rochester, New York botanical gardens, has one of the largest and oldest lilac collections in the United States. It can be reached easily from Interstate 490 or 390 in Rochester and is located within a comfortable residential area, which, during lilac season, is filled with many front yard lilac bushes of great variety. Highland Park has long hosted a 10 day lilac festival in early May and a lilac celebration since the early 1900s. In 2013 the week chosen was perfect for enjoying the *Syringa vulgaris* and *×hyacinthiflora* cultivars. While there are many activities—a parade, live bands, various food festivals and concessions, the centerpiece of the festival are the 1200 lilacs of 500 cultivars, many originated at Highland Park.

This past May a stroll down the lilac path, just uphill from Highland Avenue made for a very pleasant and instructive tour of mature and well-tended bushes framed at either end by the glorious 'Rochester' (*S.v. Grant*, single white). The Tuesday of lilac week was a sunny day with temperatures in the mid 70's. Many people from all walks of life, single and in groups of family or friends, came to take in the sight and fragrance. All were smiling and taking pictures. One authoritative father and husband in his late 40's definitively proclaimed that all the bushes were not lilacs as they "were not all the right color." A couple of well dressed, twenty-something women, who should have known better, had picked a multi-colored bouquet (and avoided the fine). A kindly grandfather cautioned me to mind a ground hog family as I peered to read a label. Others enjoyed the hillside from inside an open horse drawn carriage that slowly made its way down the partially closed Highland Avenue.

There were so many rarely seen cultivars, as well as the favorites, that the display was overwhelming. And lilacs are only one part of the collection. As with any major botanical garden, one visit can not hope to suffice.

Lilacs have grown at Highland Park since the noted hybridizer, John Dunbar,

planted the first in 1892. The park has grown to 155 acres from the original 19 acres given to the city of Rochester in 1887 by the Mt. Hope nurseries. Frederick Law Olmsted designed the gardens and, in addition to John Dunbar, Highland Park has been home to Alvan Grant, Richard Fenichia and, currently, Kent Millham. All have made significant additions to the number of lilac cultivars.

With so many excellent specimens in full bloom the attached four represent just a minute sampling of the complete list (which follows) of what awaits the lilac enthusiast on one of the “must see” botanical gardens in the U.S.

John Kirk



'Bishop Bernard McQuaid', a Richard Fenicchia selection
Photo Credit John Kirk



'Bright Centennial'
Photo Credit John Kirk



'Maureen'
Photo Credit John Kirk

Lilacs in New Hampshire and New England

The lilac holds a special place in the hearts and minds of the people of New Hampshire. It is closely interwoven with our state's identity, from the time when New Hampshire was still a colony of England to the present day. New Hampshire is home to one of the oldest lilac plantings in North America, at the Wentworth Coolidge Estate in Portsmouth. The State Flower is the purple lilac, and the University of New Hampshire in Durham was a lilac breeding center for over 60 years. There is even a Governor's Lilac and Wildflower Commission, dedicated to promoting the purple lilac in New Hampshire, something no other state has.

Lilacs are not native to New Hampshire, or even to North America. There are 21 recognized species of lilacs, known to botanists by the name of the genus, *Syringa*, and all but two originate in Asia, mostly in China. However, two species are native to south-eastern Europe, and one, *Syringa vulgaris*, the common lilac, is the species that most people are familiar with in New Hampshire and New England. It is likely that your grandmother's favorite lilac, whether purple or white, was a *Syringa vulgaris*.

Lilacs are usually found planted in areas with cold winters. This includes much of North America, Europe, Russia, Siberian Asia, and Himalayan India. Parts of New Zealand and Australia, Iceland, and more rarely, southern South America and the Falkland Islands, have lilacs growing and flowering for people to enjoy. What is not widely known is that lilacs also grow in warmer climates. Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, Northern Iraq and Iran, and the Adriatic coast of Croatia also support the growing of lilacs. The name Lilac originally comes from Arabic, by way of Sanskrit, and means blue, evidence that lilacs were growing in the Mid-East for centuries before they came to the West. The author's barber is a Kurd, from northern Iraq, and tells of lilacs growing in his village when he was a child. A waiter at the author's favorite Boston restaurant is from Punjab, and also tells of lilacs growing there, perhaps planted by the British in the late 19th century.

Research and documentation on sites in Mesopotamia remains to be investigated and completed, but reliable reports from members of the expatriate community personally known to the author confirm the existence of lilacs in those areas.

History of the Lilac in North America

It is difficult to determine where or when the first lilacs in North America were planted. Lilacs are not native to our continent, so any lilacs we find were planted by someone who admired them and brought them from somewhere else. Several locations are candidates for early introduction, including Mackinac Island in Michigan, the William Brewster site in Duxbury, Massachusetts, and the Wentworth Coolidge Estate in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Legend suggests that

the lilacs on Mackinac Island were planted by French Jesuit missionaries in the late 1600's, but no documentation has yet been discovered to support the claim. The town of Duxbury, Massachusetts, is home to the site of the abandoned homestead of Elder William Brewster, leader of the Pilgrims at Plymouth Plantation. The site north of Plymouth Plantation on which he built his new house in 1630 is covered with lilacs, and tradition tells us that he brought lilacs with him from Holland to plant at his new home, perhaps on the Mayflower voyage. The present lilacs are believed to be descended from the original planting. Ongoing research may produce documentation to support the traditional claim. The Wentworth Coolidge estate in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, is home to the Governor Wentworth lilacs, and date from 1750. The Wentworth Lilacs represent the oldest lilacs in New Hampshire and North America for which there is reasonable documentation.

We know that lilacs were grown all over the colonies by 1652, but few records exist, apparently because the lilac came in as a personal family possession, not part of the agricultural inventory. In 1753, Peter Collinson, English Quaker and wool merchant of London, sent lilacs to botanist John Bartram, of Philadelphia, sometimes called the "Father of American Botany", who complained that lilacs "are already too numerous, as roots brought by the early settlers have spread enormously". Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1767 that he planted lilacs at his estate Monticello, and George Washington, writing about his estate, Mount Vernon, recorded in his diary that he "removed two pretty large and full grown lilacs to the No. Garden gate – one on each side, taking up as much dirt with the roots as cd. be well obtained."

These lilacs are long gone, but the Governor Wentworth lilacs and the Brewster lilacs are still there, making them the oldest recorded lilacs in North America, and the oldest that are still in the same location. There may well be other lilacs in New Hampshire, New England, and the Hudson River Valley in New York that are as old, or older, than the Wentworth and Brewster Lilacs, but discoveries have yet to be made and research and documentation have yet to be completed.

Lilacs in New Hampshire: Colonial Days and the Governor Wentworth Lilacs

The first time lilacs are mentioned in New Hampshire history is in 1750, when Royal Governor Benning Wentworth enlarged his house and the plantings around it. Since the only plant that has ever been planted near the house was a lilac, we believe it was there in 1750.

In 1939, Helen Hussey Champlin, of Rochester, New Hampshire, celebrated the first Lilac Day (on Arbor Day) in New Hampshire by planting lilacs at the State House. Six lilac plants dug up from the Wentworth estate were donated by Mr. J. Templeman Coolidge, the owner of the property at the time. Governor Murphy issued a proclamation declaring Arbor Day to also be NH Lilac Day. This was the first official celebration of the Lilac since it was named the State Flower in 1919.

Recently, the Governor Wentworth lilacs have been diagnosed with a disease called Armillaria, also known as Shoestring Root Rot or Honey Fungus. This fungal disease results in a slow decline and the eventual death of the plant.

Efforts began in the early 1970's to propagate and distribute them to ensure their survival. Dr. Owen Rogers of the University of New Hampshire propagated and distributed them as early as 1973, offering 2 to be auctioned at the International Lilac Society's plant auction, conducted at their Annual Convention, held in Portsmouth, NH that year. One went to Ohio, and one went to New York.

From the 1990's to the present, Evie King and Roger Coggeshall of Syringa Plus Nursery in West Newbury, Massachusetts, have worked closely with Dr. Rogers of UNH, the Governor's Lilac Commission, and with the Wentworth Coolidge Estate, to propagate and preserve the Governor Wentworth lilacs. The Wentworth Source lilacs have been listed in their catalog since 1994.

In 2010, a renewed interest in the preservation of the lilacs at the Wentworth Coolidge estate resulted in a propagation and planting effort that is still under way. The original plants were propagated in quantities sufficient to ensure the replacement and distribution of this historic lilac.

Lilacs have a popularity that few other flowering shrubs enjoy, and their history often coincides with the early history of the settlement of North America. If there are old lilacs in your town, look into their history and see what you can learn. It is a journey well worth undertaking, and one may be pleasantly surprised to learn about significant lilac history right under his or her nose.

*John Bentley
October 2013*



The Brewster Lilac Stand in Duxbury, MA
before archaeological dig in Oct. 2012
Photo Credit John Bentley



Lilacs at the NH State House Arch.
 Lilacs are offshoots of the Wentworth lilacs
 Photo Credit John Bentley



Lilacs in Lake View Cemetery, East Andover, NH
 Photo Credit Cheryl Bentley

Editor's Note: The following article was originally printed in the Spring Issue of Lilacs. Within the history of Cherry Hill Nurseries, there is also biographical information about Roger Coggeshall.

Cherry Hill Nurseries: 1832-2000

by John Thurlow

The origin of Cherry Hill Nurseries located in West Newbury, Massachusetts, USA goes back to 1832 when my great-great-grandfather George Thurlow offered to sell some surplus budded apple trees to his neighbors. This he continued to do for many years until the 1850's, when his son, Thomas Chase Thurlow joined him. As well as continuing with the various orchard fruits and vines, ornamental plants were added.

The earliest printed list I have seen is 1863 which offered only fruit trees and vines. The list in 1869 included the earliest mention of lilacs with several choices: Common White, *josikaea* and Persian lilacs, along with the cultivar 'Charles X', all at 25 to 35 cents each; no size indicated. These early price lists carried many of our native and flowering ornamental trees and shrubs. Favorite needle evergreen trees at this time were the Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*) and the Siberian Arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis wareana*). Many examples of Norway Spruce still exist on the former nursery land that are 120 to 140 years of age.

During the 18870's and 1880's the price lists offered lilacs but with no breakdown as to species or cultivars. By 1891, 'Marie Legraye' was offered. As other cultivars appeared, I expect they had been imported from Europe. A note in 1893 speaks about having imported rhododendrons for over thirty years. All kinds of ornamental plants were added during the late decades of the nineteenth century. A lot of hybridization work at Cherry Hill went into herbaceous peonies which during the early twentieth century became a major part of the business. Many named peony introductions were made from Cherry Hill starting in 1915.

Now as we continue into the twentieth century, many *Syringa vulgaris* cultivars have appeared. 'Professor Sargent', 'Mme. Lemoine', 'Mme. Casimir Perrier', 'Andenken an Ludwig Späth', 'Président Grévy', 'Frau Bertha Dammann', 'Mme. Florent Stepman', 'Belle de Nancy', 'Emile Lemoine' and 'La Tour d'Auvergne' for example. Many of these are still commonly grown today.

In 1909, with the death of Thomas Chase Thurlow, the family incorporated the company as T.C. Thurlow's Sons, Inc. I believe by this time that the nursery was growing only ornamental trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants and bulbs. Also by this time Cherry Hill crews were planting stock grown at the nursery to the many estates along the Atlantic coast, between Boston and Portsmouth, New

Hampshire. Transportation to these job sites was by horse drawn vehicles, or by the new motor trucks which were then appearing. Old photographs show some large shade trees and evergreen trees being moved, some with eight to ten foot diameter root balls. These larger trees were dug in the winter months, so that the outside of the ball would freeze and stay intact while handling. This was accomplished by the use of block and tackle with planking and rolls. Many large plants were moved this way until the mid-forties, when heavier mechanical equipment became available for lifting.

As these early decades passed, many new cultivars were added, some which are 'Président Viger', 'Michel Buchner', 'Congo', 'Hugo Koster', 'Jan van Tol', 'Volcan', 'Duc de Massa', 'Paul Hariot', 'Paul Thirion', 'Président Loubet', and 'Réaumur'. One name I found interesting was 'Pyramidal'.

With the depression years of the late twenties, and some changes in the ownership of the nursery, a new corporate name was acquired. David Stranger had come to work for the Thurlow brothers during the early teens and worked his way up in the business. The new name in 1930 was "Thurlow's and Stranger, Inc.". Everything still continued under the Cherry Hill name. The depression years and those that followed, including the war years of World War II, were tough years for a nursery business. Many fields were let go and their ornamental plants grew wild. This is how I remember many of the fields when I was a child. Following the war, when labor again became available, winter work was undertaken to burning these overgrown plantings. Within a year a bulldozer was added to dig out the stumps- great entertainment for a young person.

To return to the lilacs, the new plantings were suckers dug from the older plantings to fill the saleable orders. I'm sure at times, lilac liners were probably bought from outside sources, but only occasionally did I see any grafted plants with their privet suckers. In the mid-forties, 'Macrostachya' and 'Lilarosa' were added for the first time. These are old-time cultivars from before 1890. Meanwhile in 1947 'Charles X' appeared for the last time, having been offered at Cherry Hill for 75 years.

Due to the death of Walter Stranger in 1956, control came back into the Thurlow family with my father Harold Thurlow. In 1958, Roger Coggeshall, known for his plant propagation work at the Arnold Arboretum, in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, came to be employed at Cherry Hill.

Roger set up the propagation part of the nursery. Rooting lilacs by cuttings was one of the main things he set about to accomplish. With an increase in propagation came an increase in field liners. This was the beginning of a shift from retail sales to a wholesale type of operation. 1960 brought a new heading to our lilac listing: "Own Roots", the results of Roger's work in the greenhouse. Our 1961 catalog shows that we now listed lilacs as a balled and burlapped (B&B) plant, instead of the old method; digging our shrubs bare root. This was necessary for the garden center trade we were after. New names for us during the fifties

and early sixties were 'Edith Cavell', 'Mrs. W. E. Marshall', 'Princess Clementine', 'Miss Ellen Willmott', and 'Monge'. With the death of my father, Harold, in 1963, the burden of management fell on Roger. Two years earlier, we had hired Andrew Heatlie, recently arrived from Scotland, to work with Roger. Andrew continued the propagation work.

Trips to the University of New Hampshire and their lilac collection yielded some late flowering types of lilacs, to include the hybrids: 'Isabella', 'James Macfarlane', 'Nellie Bean', 'Maybelle Farnum', and 'Carol'. Also the wonderful *Syringa pubescens* subsp. *patula* 'Miss Kim'. In 1964, 'Turgot' was added. This was the first *S. xhyacinthiflora* hybrid offered. Up to this point all had been *S. vulgaris* cultivars, excepting those from UNH. Later years *S. xhyacinthiflora* hybrids 'Gertrude Leslie' and 'Maiden's Blush' were grown.

Earlier in this article, I had written about the peony for which Cherry Hill was well known for 75 years. 1970 saw the last year offering peony roots for sale. We were moving towards growing a general line of woody plant material for the wholesale trade, lilacs being an important part of the total nursery stock grown. Many years during the eighties and nineties, the fall and future spring orders of lilacs eliminated any left for spring sales.

A final change in our corporate name was made in 1966 to Cherry Hill Nurseries, Inc., reflecting little connection left with the Stranger family. This change was a logical choice, as the nursery had always done business as Cherry Hill Nurseries.

'Cheyenne', with origins from *Syringa oblata dilatata* was grown starting in the early eighties. This one required a wider spacing in the nursery row, due to its bushy growth. By now, we had not only learned that the *xhyacinthiflora* cultivars bloomed a week earlier than the *S. vulgaris* cultivars, but bloomed about a year earlier in life. This in turn helped the saleability of the smaller lilacs in a garden center.

At the end of 1987 Roger left the nursery, leaving my wife, Ellen, and I to run the nursery, and we continued the lilac propagation, along with propagation of other shrubs.

1997 saw the last catalog printed, as we knew by this time that the nursery would go out of business. We also tried taking the rooted cuttings, potting them in one gallon containers for a year before lining them out. In the past, we had lined out the rooted cuttings directly in the field for two years before transplanting. We were saving a growing year by using the containers.

By the summer 2000, it was decided to close out the business before the end of the year. In November, an auction was held to sell all the personal property of the nursery. This included all nursery stock in the fields as well, which by now only consisted of lilacs and arbovitae; several thousand one year lilacs in containers included.

Many years ago the nursery sold to Roger Coggeshall a home and land during his term of employment with Cherry Hill. This is now the home of Syringa Plus, the propagation and growing area for the nursery of Roger Coggeshall and Evelyn King.

I had looked beyond the termination of Cherry Hill with the idea to continue growing lilacs by myself. In the spring of 2001, Syringa Plus provided me with 700 lilac liners that I planted on my own property. Along with a good dosage of cattle manure and ample moisture, these turned out to be one of the best plantings I have been involved with. The *Syringa vulgaris* cultivars I planted are: 'Avalanche', 'Mme. Lemoine', 'Monge', 'Primrose', 'Sarah Sands', and 'Wonderblue'. *S. xhyacinthiflora* cultivars included 'Blanche Sweet', 'Excel' and 'Maiden's Blush'. Also, *Syringa pubescens* subsp. *microphylla* 'Superba', an interesting lilac that blooms both in the fall and spring. In May I added four more lilacs purchased at the ILS auction in Rochester; one of which was the cultivar 'Rochester', which I will treasure as a reminder of the 2001 ILS convention.

It is hard to predict the future, but with a little luck and good health I can, in a year or two, write a sequel to this article, telling more about myself and my experiences growing lilacs.



'Yankee Doodle' and 'Atheline Wilbur' in the Thurlow's lilac field
Photo Credit Kent Millham

Excerpts from “The History of Lilac Hybridization at Highland Park” -Kent Millham

Highland Park Lilac Collection History

- Plants donated by Ellwanger and Barry Nursery
- Other lilacs obtained from Lemoine Nursery, Späth Nursery, and Arnold Arboretum
- First Highland Park horticulturist John Dunbar began collecting seeds
- Selected 30 cultivars
- Bernard Slavin expanded the collection to 20 acres
- Alvan R. Grant named the ‘Rochester’ lilac; an outstanding cultivar
- Using ‘Rochester’ as a parent, Richard Fenicchia in the 1960’s and 1970’s named 20+ superior cultivars
- Current collection has over 500 cultivars represented by 1200 shrubs

Dunbar selections

- Selected 30 cultivars and named them in 4 general categories
- President series: examples ‘President Lincoln’, ‘President Monroe’, ‘Thomas Jefferson’
- Army, Navy series: examples ‘General Grant’, ‘General Sherman’, ‘General Sheridan’, ‘Admiral Farragut’
- Historical figures: examples ‘Patrick Henry’, ‘Henry Clay’, ‘Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’
- Family members and local people: examples ‘Adelaide Dunbar’, ‘Joan Dunbar’, ‘A. B. Lamberton’

‘Rochester’

- a seedling of ‘Edith Cavell’ planted by Alvan Grant in 1947
- named in 1963
- superior cultivar because of its unique characteristic of radial doubling
- very useful as a parent for hybridization

Richard Fenicchia selections

- used ‘Rochester’ as a parent
- approximately 20 cultivars named
- all show superior characteristics such as radial doubling, pearled colors, or other traits
- examples: ‘Frederick Law Olmsted’, ‘Flower City’, ‘Dwight D. Eisenhower’, ‘Independence’, ‘Sesquicentennial’

Robert Hoepfl FC hybrids

- FC denotes ‘Flower City’ seedling selections
- examples: FC 07, FC 15, FC 20

‘Beautiful Susan’

- *Syringa komarowii* subsp. *reflexa* selection
- named by Kent Millham to honor his wife Susan’s memory
- large, vigorous cultivar reaching 12’ high by 20’ wide



'Admiral Farragut'; a John Dunbar selection
Photo Credit Kent Millham



large inflorescence of 'General Sherman', another John Dunbar selection
Photo Credit Kent Millham

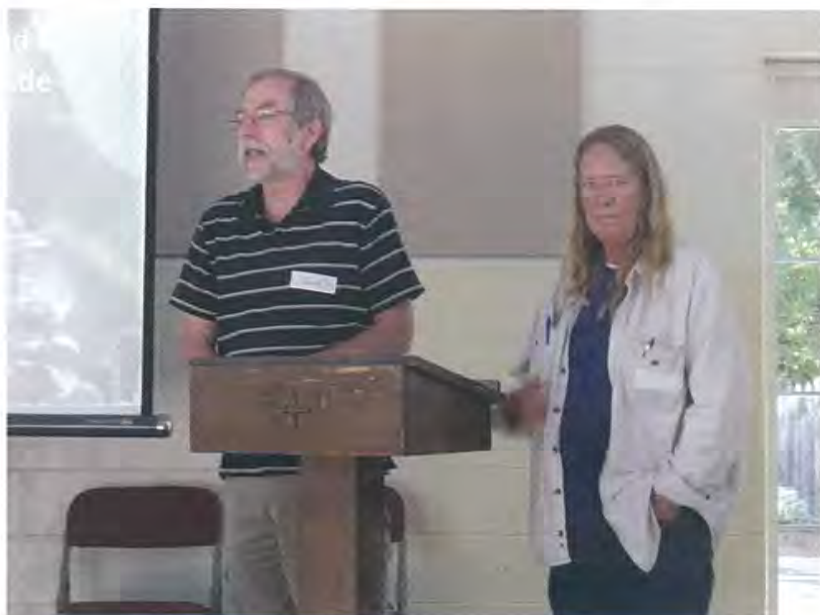


Beautiful full double FC 07 of Robert Hoepfl,
former Supt. of Horticulture, Highland Botanical Park
Photo Credit Kent Millham



soon to be named FC 20;another Robert Hoepfl selection
Photo Credit Kent Millham

New England ILS Chapter Fall Meeting



Jack Alexander and Evie King introduce meeting
Photo Credit Kent Millham



John Kirk talks about the May convention in Madison, Wisconsin
Photo Credit Kent Millham



Jamie Greager describes growing lilacs at F & A Farms in Maine
Photo Credit Kent Milham



Auctioneer John Bentley describes a lilac to a captive audience
Photo Credit Kent Millham



Jack Alexander describes his technique of grafting lilacs to privet understock
Photo Credit Kent Millham



Evie King demonstrates her and Roger Coggeshall's method
of taking softwood lilac cuttings
Photo Credit Kent Millham

International Lilac Society

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'Adelaide Dunbar', John Dunbar selection,
growing in lilac field of John and Ellen Thurlow
Photo Credit Kent Millham



'Wonderblue', a Father Fiala hybrid grown at the Thurlow's lilac field
note the large petals and many florets with radial doubling
Photo Credit Kent Millham



This lilac growing next to a palm is located
on the Adriatic Coast in Istria, Croatia
(not related to any article- just a unique photo)
Photo Credit Dr. Zelimir Borzan