

Lilacs

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of the International Lilac Society

IN
THIS
ISSUE:

Lilacs in New Zealand and
Membership Roster



Beautiful display of mixed colors of lilacs in the Lee's garden
Photo Credit Beryl Lee



Lilacs in a pastoral setting in Ettrick, Central Otago, New Zealand
Photo Credit Beryl Lee

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Front Cover: Making childhood memories
Photo credit Beryl Lee

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President's Message January 2014

Dear lilac friends,

The New Year has arrived and many of you as I write this message are being visited by old man winter here in North America. He came early and he is brutal. But he makes us dream of spring and lilac time. It may be snowing outside but this is a good time to think green. By this I mean to give the gift of lilacs through a membership in the International Lilac Society. What better present can you give a friend or a family member than a present that will last all year long. A membership in ILS is a gift that keeps on giving: four publications a year full of lilacs news, participation on the International Lilac Robin, the opportunity to attend our convention, access to the member's only site on the ILS Web Page, etc. Imagine coming for the first time to a gathering of people who like you love lilacs. Yes we are about lilacs and more. It is about lilac culture, meeting lilac hybridizers, visiting important private or public lilac collections and yes it is about friendship and having fun.

We have fantastic auctions at these conventions. There you can acquire rare lilacs, great historic lilac cultivars and very new lilac cultivars; often for very low bids. After the auction even those of us who travel by air manage to pack our lilacs and take them safely home. Once planted lilacs live a lifetime and more. They are a reminder of good times spent in this corner or the other of the world with your lilac friends. Conventions are a moveable feast. Every year we go to a different location so there is always surprise and new lilacs to see. Last year the convention in Madison Wisconsin, USA was a jewel. In 2012 we took wing and went to Nancy, France. We were dazzled by the superb collection of Lemoine Lilacs at Les Jardins Botaniques de Nancy. The year before it was Lombard, Illinois, USA that invited us again for a great convention. All conventions are different and memorable. This year won't be an exception we are going to Cleveland, Ohio on May 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. In the last issue of *Lilacs* was a great article on the Lake View Cemetery, established in 1869, where we are meeting. We got a preview in a presentation David Gressley gave at the President dinner at the Madison Wisconsin convention. We will see many beautiful lilacs, venerable old trees and magnificent statuary. The registration form is included in the fall 2013 Vol. 42, Number 4 of *Lilacs*. To those of you who have never attended a convention, we would love to see you in Cleveland. Make plans now and send in your registration. I promise you won't be disappointed.

Now that you have given a membership to someone dear what do you do? Mentor that person. It is easy. Encourage them by giving them a lilac, acquainting them with other lilac members, taking them on a lilac excursion to some local garden, yes encourage them to attend the 2014 convention!

Anyone can be a candidate for membership. Young people need to be exposed to lilacs. In Russia children are involved in planting lilacs in parks and at

memorial sites. Tatiana Poliakova has documented these events. She has gone in support of these projects not only to other Russian cities but also to others European countries. These plantings are to honor the fallen of WWII.

2014 is the hundredth anniversary of WWI. All over the battles fields of France and Belgium in the cemeteries and every village the monuments in memories of the fallen will have ceremonies that will include the laying of wreaths. Even Le Tour De France, the world's hardest and longest bicycle race has been designed to pass through the towns, villages and countryside where the war was fought, as a salute to the heroes of La Grande Guerre. I have visited many of these old cemeteries and many have lilacs planted inside their walls.

On my last visit to Williamsburg, Virginia, USA, in November I visited again the site where the house of John Custis IV (1678-1749) was located. I was searching for any traces of lilacs but found none. Only a few sheep chewing their cud in the now pasture seem to be wondering what I was doing there. Custis IV is recorded as having the largest lilacs collection of his time. I visited other houses that had belonged to other prominent citizens of the same period. I saw only a few lilacs, none looked very old. But I'm going in the spring to Mount Vernon, in Virginia, USA home of George Washington and his wife Martha. The new library in his honor was opened in the fall. Since his wife was the widow of John Custis IV's son there may be more references to lilacs in the many records. We know George Washington planted lilacs on the allee leading to the privy and on each side of his garden gate. I'm curious to see if more lilacs were cultivated on other areas of the plantation.

Last year we said good bye to Roger Coggeshall. I hope you read all the fine tributes in the last issue of *Lilacs*. He was certainly an exceptional man. We lost a very important member of the society. We were privileged to have known him. His knowledge of horticulture and of lilacs was immense.

Since we are starting a new year, I want to thank everyone who has served and is now serving on the ILS Board. Thank you to all the committee chairs and RVPs. Also thank you to our Executive Vice President Bradley Bittorf, Treasurer and Convention Chair Karen McCauley, Editor Kent Millham, Assistant Treasurer William Tschumi, Web Page Administrator Candace Wentz, Registrar Freek Vrugtman. Thank you to you the members of the ILS for your fidelity, enthusiasm, support and participation. Let us continue to grow the society and move forward to promote lilacs the world over.

I wish all of you a very Happy New Year! See you in Cleveland for another great convention.

Amities,
Njordan236@aol.com
Nicole Jordan, ILS President
Chester, VA USA

ILS Cleveland 2014

I have heard Cleveland described as the western most eastern city. John D. Rockefeller's oil made Cleveland one of the wealthiest cities in North America. Much of that money still hides in parts of the Northeast Ohio. I can take you on a drive that would make you think Cleveland was the most opulent city of North America. Starting along the meandering Lake Shore Boulevard and going through the lake shore community of Bratenahl you would see the first set of estates whose residents prospered well from Cleveland's industry. We'll take a turn heading south along Doan Brook on the most scenic tree lined drive in all of Cleveland. Sometime back in the late 1800's the road was built by the Gordon family to connect their estate to the Rockefeller estate. Three stone built bridges overpass this road whose name is now Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. Each bridge is uniquely designed and has the potential to outlast most of the buildings in Cleveland. Other stone buttressed bridges traverse Doan Brook as the brook and road tangle around each other.

Gardens emerged in the 1920's honoring the ethnic groups that called Cleveland their home. The larger plots are the oldest gardens full of sculpture, fountains and steps accented with plants. Cleveland was originally a city of European immigrant communities as seen with the nations represented by the Cultural Gardens. Crossing East 105th takes you around a traffic circle or roundabout, a reminder of Cleveland's East Coast influence as you enter University Circle. University circle is a realm of contemporary architecture and gardens around health, cultural and educational institutions.

The 75 acres of Wade Park was given to the City of Cleveland by the Wade family to be used as a park on the space originally known as Doan's Corner. Now part of University Circle, it is the most vibrant area of Cleveland. The concentration of cultural institutions includes the Cleveland Museum of Art, a world class institution with a recently completed \$120 million expansion of exhibit space and free to visit. The Cleveland Museum of Natural History holds one of the most extensive herbarium specimen collections nationally representing the most complete botanic collection of plants growing in the Allegheny Plateau. Wade Oval separates the two venerable institutions creating a gathering place for summer events. Forming a triangle across the oval is the other CBG; Cleveland Botanical Garden where we will tour, hear our keynote speaker and have lunch.

CBG provides a comfortable setting with time to tour the gardens both inside and out. I'm really looking forward to hearing Hongxia, Cui a scholar of Chinese lilacs speak about them. I first heard of Hongxia when she was at Beijing Botanic Garden while I was at The Holden Arboretum. Fate would have it that Hongxia is at UCLA doing research on drought hardy plants that can grow well in China. Maybe the day will come when International Lilac Society will meet for a convention in Beijing.

Saturday will take us to Lake View Cemetery on the eastern end of University

Circle where an intimately designed landscape with the oldest collection of trees in Cleveland will greet us. Along with the cemetery tour, we will see two noteworthy monuments: Wade Chapel and Garfield Presidential Monument. Wade Chapel is listed on the National Historic Register and is one of seven surviving chapels completed by the Tiffany Studio. The window, Flight of Souls, is one of the largest windows Louis Comfort Tiffany executed. The chapel was built around the window and is made entirely of glass mosaic. Word and picture fails to convey the grandeur of the window and its chapel. The same can be said of the Garfield Memorial, a president whose term yielded nothing except his early prolonged death. The monument represents the national outpour of grief. Docents in both locales will provide in depth tours and information about their respective sites. A tent will provide our venue for lunch and the lilac auction in the afternoon before returning to the hotel.

ILS Cleveland 2014 will be much different than the first ILS gathering. We'll be in the heart of Cleveland and we'll enjoy the cuisine of the Marriott and Morton. Although we'll venture to The Holden Arboretum on Thursday to see their venerable Display Garden of lilacs, most of this convention will be in the vibrant University Circle area of Cleveland. Although many parts of Cleveland are in strugle, University Circle's vibrant history continues unabated and will hopefully lead other parts of the city to recovery. I look forward to showing it to you this May.

*Dave Gressley
January 2014*

Convention Corner Calendar

May 1-3, 2014 **ILS Convention** Lakeview Cemetery in Cleveland, Ohio
Marriott Downtown at Key Center

SAVE THE DATE: May 28-30, 2015 ILS Convention in Montreal, Canada

Details will be in published shortly. Our host, Frank Moro is very excited about having the convention in Montreal again. We last visited Montreal in 2000. If you're contemplating having a convention in your area, please contact me. We're always on the lookout for new sites and would welcome revisiting sites from decades past. Thanks for your cooperation.

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Voting Instructions for ILS Board of Directors Election

Voting in the election for International Lilac Society Board of Directors is easy. You have a voice in how ILS is operated. You elect the Board of Directors, and they conduct ILS business, and set direction for the Society. The ILS Board of Directors also selects officers of the ILS, as directed in the governing ILS By-Laws.

To vote, you have two choices. Before the voting deadline (April 20, 2014):

1. You can fill out the ballot that is included in the ILS journal, "Lilacs," seal it in an envelope, sign the envelope, and return it by mail to the address shown on the ballot. There is a space for write-in candidates if wish to vote for someone not shown on the ballot.
 - a. Once received by the Elections Committee, paper ballots are checked against the list of members in good standing to ensure only qualified members cast votes, per our By-Laws.
 - b. Paper ballots are then removed from the envelopes, and counted by an impartial third party.
2. Alternatively, you can vote using the internet. To vote by internet, the steps are as follows:
 - a. You send an e-mail identifying yourself to "vote@internationallilacsociety.org."
 - b. Within a few days (probably faster), you will receive a reply to your request to vote, which will include two things:
 - i. a link to an internet address (URL) that you will use to access the voting web site, and
 - ii. a voter identification word or number, somewhat like a password. You will use this when you vote, so don't lose it.
 - c. Navigate to the internet address you receive by typing the address into a web browser (such as Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, Google Chrome, Safari...or many others)
 - d. Follow the instructions at that web page to cast your vote(s). This will include entering your voter identification "password." This step ensures that only members in good standing are able to vote, and avoids duplicate ballots. (We also compare the paper votes to internet votes to ensure there are not duplicate ballots.)
 - e. Should you wish to cast a "write-in" ballot, you may also do this using the on-line system.
 - f. Note that the internet system is also an anonymous system, since the person counting the votes only sees the "voter identifier" and not the person's name.

- g. Voting on the internet also allows you to “change your mind” and cast a new ballot—only your most recent ballot is counted.
 - h. If you need help on any of the steps, send another e-mail to vote@internationallilacsociety.org and we will be happy to assist.
3. Just after the voting deadline, all the votes are counted, and the totals from paper and online voting are added together.
 4. The highest vote-getters become members of the International Lilac Society Board of Directors.
 5. Winners will be announced during the 2014 ILS Annual Meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, and will also be published in the journal.

Board of Directors Candidates

John Bentley

I am the founder of the Katie Bentley Lilac Project, a tax exempt organization dedicated to promoting and planting lilacs. The organization has inspired the planting of more than 600 lilacs in ten states and 3 foreign countries. A 300 plant lilac collection is being planned in New Hampshire as part of a plan to promote lilacs. I have served one term on the ILS board of directors, and would be honored to continue to serve the organization. I have also served as a consultant to the New Hampshire Governor's Lilac and Wildflower Commission and spoken at local garden clubs and elementary schools to promote my favorite flower. I published the booklet “Lilacs: A New Hampshire Perspective” in 2013. I live in New Hampshire with my wife Cheryl and two young children, and may be reached at katiebentleylilacproject@gmail.com, or 603-783-6779.

John Kirk

Finding some lilac remnants growing outside the front door of our old cape in Vermont got me to noticing lilacs, their hardiness and their suitability to New England's climate. A few more specimens from the local nurseries coped well with the “benign neglect” of an absentee landowner. Once I became a full time resident and met the owners of Syringa Plus, I got hooked. Now I have enjoyed the company of other like-minded lilac enthusiasts, the annual conferences and appreciated greatly the knowledge and friendly information sharing of the experts within ILS. Serving as auditor and attending board meetings has allowed me to contribute and understand ILS better. I would very much like to help move this unique organization forward over the next three years.

Frank Moro

I have had the chance to serve on numerous committees in the past. Presently I am helping develop the lilac collection in St. Georges de Beauce just south of Quebec City. I am also embarking in helping out NYBG to redo their lilac collection over the next 2 years. I am actively hybridizing many new lilacs for Select Plus Nursery and ship lilacs worldwide. We have also had the chance to be visited by the curator of the botanical gardens of North Korea on November 11th 2013 to start to build a world class lilac collection there. I have always had ILS at heart and hope that I will have the chance again to serve for board of directors. I truly believe that I am doing positive things for the lilac world.

Tatiana Poliakova

Lilacs are the main passion in my life. Since the size of my garden is limited, I can't have more than 100 lilac bushes. To have as many lilacs as possible next to me constantly, I started to gather a collection of lilac objects. This process brings me no less pleasure than watching "live" lilacs. Botanical prints, antique porcelain, vintage "Lilac" jewelry, postcards, books - all these things suggest that lilacs were loved at all times. My main purpose is to promote lilacs. I am the author of about 150 articles about lilacs, the anthology "Lilacs" (2006), the book "The Time of Lilacs" (2007), "A History of Russian Lilacs. In Memory of Kolesnikov" (2010) and "The Magnificent Seven" (2013) (7 best cultivars in each of the seven colour groups).

Myrna Walberg

Lilacs remind me of my Grandmother- trite but true. But after reading Fiala's 'Lilac Bible' in 2002, I never looked at a lilac in the same way again. Because of my quest to identify the lilac on my brother's grave, I explored the history, provenance and culture of lilacs and became 'hooked'. It is fascinating to observe how the humble lilac intertwines itself into so many personal experiences, cultures and different geographical areas around the world. It is my wish that the ILS remains and continues to be a vibrant and useful organization for sharing internationally everything pertaining to lilacs.

2014 Green Thumb Awards

Five new plants have won the 2014 Green Thumb Awards from the Direct Gardening Association (formerly called the Mailorder Gardening Association) in the US, one of them is *Syringa* 'SMSJBP7', marketed as Syringa Bloomerang® Dark Purple, from Spring Meadow Nursery bred by Tim Wood. <www.newplantsandflowers.com/green-thumbs-for-mail-or-online-products>

The World's most Southerly Lilacs? Lilacs in New Zealand

*'The syringa's out. That's nice for me:
All along Charing Cross Embankment
The sweet dragging scent reinventing
one of my childhood gardens.'*
Adcock, Fleur (1979:26)

So begins a poem by Fleur Adcock, one of New Zealand's best known poets now resident in London.

I love this sentiment. The implied selfishness of enjoying lilacs for oneself, is a human frailty that somehow seems quite acceptable when considering these wonderful plants. Members of the lilac fraternity will instantly recognise the poet's musings.

Lilacs are relatively recent arrivals on the New Zealand's horticultural scene. Because the country is new, both in a geological sense and from a settlement perspective, *Syringa* has been cultivated for only a little over 150 years. Sad to say, there is not a great deal of interest in growing these beautiful shrubs and neither is there a large range to choose from in plant nurseries. A few elderly people have fond memories of relatives or neighbours having a lilac in their garden and of course remember the heavenly fragrance. They tend to describe them as 'the dark purple' one, 'the lilac one' or 'the white one' – as though there are just three!

But back to why lilacs do not have a particularly big following in this country. A good place to begin is to consider the geography and human settlement of the country.

New Zealand is comprised of two main islands in the south of the Pacific Ocean. The center of the North Island is a volcanic plateau with active volcanoes while the South Island has a mountain chain running from north to south, the length of the island. Both these geological features along with the country's southerly aspect, impact on the growing conditions. The east coast of the South Island where I live, catches the southerly wind which blows straight off the Antarctic. With no land mass to tame the biting cold wind, we often have beautiful sunny days that are tempered by a cold wind. In the north of the North Island, the climate changes to support semi-tropical vegetation with humidity well beyond the comfort level of lilacs. Still, we do have a temperate climate and enough warm days to make this an agricultural nation.

Colonization began with the first wave of European settlers in the 1840's. They came predominantly from the United Kingdom and brought with them, their

northern hemisphere deciduous trees, fruit trees, vegetables and flowers. The rainforest was cleared and new plants appeared. Often this was at the expense of native bush and trees such as the bright yellow kMwhāi (*Sophora*) and the stunning red pMhutukawa (*Metrosideros*).

The earliest mention I have found of lilacs coming into the country was reference of a plantsman, John Edgerly returning from England in 1842 with 'a plant or two of lilac', given to him from the director of Kew Gardens, Sir William Hooker, in return for a collection of New Zealand native plants. A Mr McVicar advertised having 'English lilac' bushes and *Syringa* plants available, while an 1853 plant catalogue offered 'English Lilacs' for 1 shilling per plant while *Syringa* were 2 shillings. I wonder if the 'English Lilac' was in fact *Syringa vulgaris* and given the name as these plants were shipped from England while those given the title 'Syringa' were named cultivars? Certainly more investigation is required into this.

It appears many of the first settlers with memories of home still fresh, planted lilacs, roses and other flowers to soften the harshness of their pioneer world. Today a few older gardens have established lilacs growing besides old sheds, walls, fences and gates but these are becoming fewer as the old homes are being pulled down to be replaced with new housing estates.

As with many others of my generation, my interest in lilac had a false-start. I grew up believing the New Zealand lilac, *Hebe hulkeana* was in fact a true lilac. This low growing bush is native to New Zealand and although beautiful when in full bloom, unfortunately is without fragrance.

My own small property is only 500 metres from the Pacific Ocean and until the last few hundred years was covered by the sea. Obviously it is now reclaimed land but because it is below sea level, has a very high water table. (If I dig a hole during wet weather, it will fill up with water when the tide is in!) A high fence has been built around the entire garden and trees have been planted to protect it from the wind but it does not stop salt-laden water drops falling making many plants including lilacs, difficult to grow. Happily, in spite of the adverse conditions, I have managed to encourage nineteen different named cultivars to grow – all with varying degrees of success.

While 'Mrs Edward Harding' and 'Charles Joly' flourish and 'Alice Eastwood', 'Condorcet' and 'Olivier de Serres' do well, the same cannot be said for 'Belle de Nancy', 'General Pershing' and 'Katherine Havemeyer' which struggle to survive. After a single growing season, neither of my two 'Esther Staleys' has made it through to the following summer.

I must stress that the growing conditions in my garden are quite localized. A short distance away, other suburbs in this coastal city do have the odd lilac or two but it is mainly a rhododendron growing area. Inland 150 kilometres, the landscape changes to rocky schist plains backed by mountain ranges. The

climate is hot and dry in summer and cold and dry in winter and here lilacs tend to do well. One enterprising grower even cultivates lilac blooms for export in the northern hemisphere's autumn. (It is timely to remember that being south of the equator, New Zealand's lilac season is from October until mid-November.) In this inland area, lilacs are still found around old homesteads, in old churchyards and cemeteries and often standing alone, sentinel on the barren landscape as a reminder that here someone's home once stood. I often wonder if these lilacs are still grown in other parts of the world just as a number of early varieties of fruit trees have been discovered, conserved and returned to their country of origin. Over the past two years, I have travelled the local area extensively seeking out old lilacs. Even so, in that short time, several specimens from my first trips have been cut down. It seems a race against time as I have taken suckers from over two dozen bushes and now have them growing happily, mostly in pots, in my garden.

For a novice lilac lover such as myself, an immediate dilemma presents itself when trying to identify these rediscovered lilacs. I am restricted by my limited knowledge and experience. I have attempted to name them, first by checking if they are the same as named cultivars I have access to. Beyond that, I have attempted to align the possible age of the plant with what was available in nursery catalogues of the time. This has been made difficult for after considerable research, I have not located a single early catalogue that gives the advertised lilacs, a name. The final method, and possibly the least satisfactory, is using photographs and written descriptions to make a judgement. For me, this has been and continues to be an interesting and immensely satisfying project.

In spring, I open my garden to visitors, often as a fundraiser for a local school. The pleasure gained from having groups of people enjoy the lilacs and then to learn they have planted a bush or two themselves, adds a special dimension to sharing our favourite plant. Right now though, the happiest time is watching grandchildren play in the lilacs, seeing them occasionally stop to take in the glorious scent, all the while making their own childhood memories, and yes, I'll be in them. How lucky am I?

Reference

Adcock, Fleur. (1979). *Syringa*, in, *The Inner Harbour*: (pp26) Wellington: Oxford University Press.

Apart from a few species, the only named lilacs I am aware of having been introduced to New Zealand are:-

- S. vulgaris* 'Alice Eastwood'
- S. vulgaris* 'Andenken an Ludwig Späth'
- S. vulgaris* 'Belle de Nancy'
- S. vulgaris* 'Charles Joly'
- S. x hyacinthiflora* 'Clarke's Giant'
- S. vulgaris* 'Condorcet'

- S. vulgaris* 'Congo'
- S. vulgaris* 'Edith Cavell'
- S. × hyacinthiflora* 'Esther Staley'
- S. vulgaris* 'General Pershing'
- S. vulgaris* 'Glory'
- S. vulgaris* 'Katherine Havemeyer'
- S. vulgaris* 'Madam F Morel'
- S. vulgaris* 'Madam Lemoine'
- S. vulgaris* 'Mme Florent Stepman'
- S. vulgaris* 'Maréchal Foch'
- S. vulgaris* 'Miss Ellen Willmott'
- S. vulgaris* 'Mrs Edward Harding'
- S. vulgaris* 'Olivier de Serres'
- S. vulgaris* 'Primrose'
- S. × hyacinthiflora* 'Purple Glory'
- S. × hyacinthiflora* 'Purple Heart'
- S. vulgaris* 'Rhum Von Horstenstein'
- S. vulgaris* 'Sensation'
- S. vulgaris* 'Souvenir d'Alice Harding'

Beryl Lee
January 2014



Lilac blooming beautifully in New Zealand
Photo Credit Beryl Lee

What is the New Zealand Lilac?

We now know from the preceding informative article by Beryl Lee that lilacs (*Syringa vulgaris*) can be grown quite well in New Zealand. However, there is a native plant called the New Zealand Lilac, *Hebe hulkeana*, that flourishes in New Zealand.

Hebe hulkeana is native to the eastern side of the South Island of New Zealand, and grows naturally on cliffs and rocks. It is an evergreen plant with glossy, spear-shaped leaves with red, serrated margins. From October to December (in New Zealand) it blooms in spectacular fashion with pale lilac flowers on large sprays. It grows to about 20 inches (50cm) high by 60 inches (150 cm) across. It is a member of the Plantaginaceae, or Plantain family. Formerly only comprised of three genera, this family has been expanded to include members of the Figwort family (Scrophulariaceae), which includes familiar plants such as *Veronica* and *Digitalis*.

Information about New Zealand Lilac I discovered from The Hebe Society, affiliated with the Royal Horticultural Society. It is dedicated to the preservation and conservation of hebes and other New Zealand plants.

-Kent Millham



A stand of New Zealand Lilac (*Hebe hulkeana*)
Photo Credit Beryl Lee

Mackinac Island 2013

In 2009, the State Park Commission that controls Marquette Park (in front of the fort) decided to overhaul the lilac presentation, as many of the old lilacs were in very poor health. Much of this was due to many of the lilacs being grafted and therefore having only one stem. Mackinac Island's severe winters with its snow and ice took a toll on the old plants. Each spring required much chain sawing to clean up from the aftermath of the winters.

Rejuvenation started in 2009, by thinning 2 of the 15 lilac "islands" in the Park and continued with 2 more in 2010. But the Park Director decided that this process was too slow and secured a grant to do all the remaining work in 2011. I traveled to the Island on three separate occasions to oversee the removals, prunings and new plantings. We also initiated adding more compost to the soil and mulch to control weeds and retain moisture. The changes will take many years to mature, but the lilacs will now be maintained in a much healthier condition.

The lilac number will remain at 180 with 95 different cultivars. There are still several lilacs that we have not identified, either because they are a seed-out from another plant or their characteristics are different from the normal parent plant due to the growing conditions on the Island. The number of "lilac islands" was reduced from 15 to 13 by combining some islands, but the amount of area dedicated to the lilacs has increased.

We were able to plant some more recent cultivars as new plantings. Where there were three or four of the same plant we usually reduced it to one and we allowed all the suckering plants (non-grafted) to create new stems to rejuvenate the plants.

I have also seen a lot of new plantings around the Island, as recent winters have brought down several large plants. The last 2 years have had spectacular displays of lilacs, some of the best in my 9 years there. The "Walk and Talks" have evolved into a "tour and more", so I am now doing a mini workshop which in addition to showing many of the Island's lilacs I also demonstrate how to prune lilacs as well as how to select, plant and transplant. I did 12 walk and talks during the festival (410 attending) and one in early evening, which proved to be very popular with over 60 in attendance. We also added 2 Roads Scholar workshops during the week with about 20 in attendance at each. This is the third year for the Roads Scholar participation and the workshops have been rated as one of its most popular parts of the tour. I also continue to do interviews for the local papers and tourist magazines promoting the Festival and lilacs (five this year).

I have committed to the 65th Festival this coming year, June 6-15, 2014, which will be my 10th anniversary on Mackinac Island. Mary Maguire, which many of you will remember I am sure, is still the tourism director and has been wonderful to work for and does much to promote the Festival and lilacs. My wife Jan still does the lilac education sessions in the afternoons at St Anne's Church, with plants donated by Brigg's Nursery. Jan had over 250 attend her sessions where she demonstrates proper planting technique and sends them home with a 3" lilac in a cup (also a great hit with the kids).

*Wishing you all a happy New Year,
Jeff Young, Vermont Extension Master
Gardener*



"World of Lilacs" float in 64th annual Mackinac Island Lilac Festival
Photo Credit Jeff Young



Marquette Park on beautiful summer day 2013
note much reduced lilac islands and new plantings
Photo Credit Jeff Young

Method Modifications for DNA Extraction in Lilacs

This article is the result of the completion of the third part of the project "*Syringa vulgaris* genetic resources" that was supported by Finnish Academy of Sciences in 2012.

The description of the project can be found in the Winter 2013 issue of LILACS and available on the internet. Our part includes research of the DNA markers for the *Syringa vulgaris* cultivars identification.

The first step of this research was dedicated to the DNA extraction for further PCR analysis. PCR analysis or polymerase chain reaction analysis, is a biochemical technology in molecular biology to amplify a single or a few copies of a piece of DNA across several orders of magnitude, generating thousands to millions of copies of a particular DNA sequence.

DNA fingerprinting, also referred to as barcoding, is an important tool for distinguishing closely related plant species and verification of the identity of cultivars. The technique is already used extensively in verifying trueness to name of fruit and nut cultivars.

As a result, the method of the DNA extraction, more specifically the CTAB or Cetyl Trimethyl Ammonium Bromide method for the long-term stored samples of lilac leaves, was modified.

Our study material consisted of 60 shrubs that were chosen for lilac evaluation in old parks of Helsinki City in 2006, 2009 and 2012 and foreign cultivars. The reference material for cultivar verification included 3 samples (2009) from the Montreal Botanical Garden (Canada), 3 samples (2009, 2012) from the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University (USA), and 13 samples (2012) from Conservatoire et Jardins Botaniques de Nancy (France).

The shrubs of the study were sampled for young leaves collected in 2006, 2009, and 2012. The fresh leaves (2012) were transported to the Department of Agricultural Sciences, University of Helsinki, put in small plastic bags and stored at -20°C or at -80°C until DNA isolation. Reference samples from abroad were sent by air mail to the Department of Agricultural Sciences, University of Helsinki, where they were frozen at -20°C and -80°C on the day of arrival.

All samples collected in 2006 and 2009 were stored at the same conditions as samples of the Department of Agricultural Sciences, University of Helsinki (Finland).

Frozen leaves were ground with liquid nitrogen in a mortar with a pestle and stored at -80 °C. There were 29 ground old leaves stored at -20°C (2006, 2009) and 31 fresh leaves (2012) stored at -80°C.

DNA was extracted from leaf tissue using the Plant DNA Mini Kit Protocol (Fresh/Frozen Samples). 32 isolations of DNA were made with the Kit. The concentration of DNA was quantified with a Nano drop program. The DNA for samples was checked by 2.0 % and 0.8% agarose gel in 0.5xTBE buffer. After checking 15 DNA samples in gel, we concluded that obtained concentrations of DNA were not sufficient for PCR. This was not a valid method for DNA isolation from 2006 and 2009 year samples. Therefore, CTAB protocol of Doyle and Doyle(1990) was used. This method also was not successful for the old collections. After a series of experiments, some conditions for "old" samples (2006, 2009) were changed:

Step 0 in the Protocol. Add mercaptoethanol to CTAB buffer to a final concentration of 2%, instead of 0.2% in Protocol.

Step 4. Leave the samples at -20°C 1or 2 hours, instead of keeping them at room temperature.

Step 5. Centrifuge for 30 min., instead of 10 min., at maximum speed, at +4°C.

Step 6. Wash the pellet with 0.5 ml of 70% ethanol, instead of 1 ml.

The major modification was to increase mercaptoethanol concentration 10 times for DNA extraction from old samples, and to increase the time of centrifugation after adding cold isopropanol.

Good results were obtained with 44 isolations of DNA from the old and fresh samples. The work resulted in DNA isolations from 13 "old" (2006, 2009) samples by modified CTAB method and 31 "fresh" (2012) samples by standard CTAB method.

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Lilacs tolerating the salt spray near the sea
at Port Chalmers, Dunedin, New Zealand
Photo Credit Beryl Lee



Lilacs struggling to reach the light growing between 2 trees
Photo Credit Beryl Lee



Mature lilacs with mountains in the distance at Lake Wanaka, New Zealand

Photo Credit Beryl Lee