

# Lilacs

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PHOTO CREDIT — GABOR SCHMIDT

*An ornamental lilac ("the white one") in a front yard garden of an old peasant's house in the village of Nagyrada (South-western Hungary).*

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of the International Lilac Society

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THIS  
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European Newsletters

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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 October, 1995*

## Cover Story

### *Front Cover*

An ornamental lilac ("the white one") in a front yard garden of an old peasant's house in the village of Nagyrada (South-western Hungary). See Gabor Schmidt's report later in this issue for more details.

### *Back Cover*

Staff-members of the Department of Floriculture and Dendrology (University of Horticulture and Food) collecting aggressively suckering semi-wild clones on Sashegy (the "Egle Hill") in Budapest. This hill is now a nature reservation area within the territory of Hungarian capital and is characterized by an almost Mediterranean climate and vegetation. The first lilacs were allegedly planted here at the beginning of the century and became quite a nuisance for the true native trees and scrubs.

## Lilac Distribution

*By Frank Moro*

The next lilac for distribution has been chosen. It is the cultivar 'Hagny' (*Syringa wolfii* × *S. reflexa*). It is a late blooming form listed as a class IV single produced by Olsen-Gram in Denmark and registered in 1935. The flowers are tubular with a lot of pink in the petals. I have found it to be a heavy bloomer with an attractive fragrance. The leaves are elongated and have a leathery texture to them. It is a lilac that attains a larger size than forms of *S. vulgaris* but will make an excellent hedge or border plant. Plants can be ordered this winter for delivery in Spring 1996. The order blanks are included in this issue and will be repeated in the winter issue. 'Hagny' is pictured in Plate 57 in Father Fiala's book.

The maximum order is two plants per customer. Canadian customers should follow the order sheet included as an insert. For U.S. customers, the price per plant, including all the necessary paperwork and certificates, is \$6.55 U.S. Please add \$3.00 U.S. shipping and handling for the first plant and an additional \$2.00 U.S. for the second plant if you wish to order the maximum.

## Lilac Swap Column

I have seed of *Syringa wolfii* and *Syringa oblata* provided by Donald Allen, owner of F.S. Schumacher Co., Inc., 36 Spring Hill Road, Sandwich, MA 02563 that I would be willing to swap for a letter telling about your lilacs, your special or favorite lilac, your spectacular failure with a lilac or anything else that needs to be said about lilacs. Owen M. Rogers, Plant Biology Department, University of New Hampshire, 131 Main Street, Durham, NH 03824-3597.

P.S.

F.W. Schumacher specializes in tree seed and if you ever have a need of a pound of *Pyracantha* (\$7.50) or *Viburnum* (\$5.50) I recommend them highly.

## Tips For Beginners

### *What fertilizer should I use on my lilacs?*

The recommendation is for a handful of 5-10-10 or its equivalent broadcast in the area around the bush yearly. The figures mean 5% nitrogen, 10% phosphorus and 10% potassium. The nitrogen figure is lower because nitrogen encourages leaf growth while the other two (especially the phosphorus) encourages bloom. "Or its equivalent" means that you can use any fertilizer adjusted to the "handful per bush" recommendation. If you mix some superphosphate and wood ashes you'll get a combination that is good for the lilac and will also raise the soil pH a little. If you have a source of well rotted manure, use that but remember that while manure is an excellent source of organic matter, it provides only small amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium so you'll need at least half a bushel per plant – a full bushel would be better. The fertilizer can be applied in the spring where it will enhance growth or in the fall where it will enhance plant hardiness and the quality of growth next spring. One caution, if you decide to apply fertilizer in both spring and fall be sure to also divide the amount applied. Too much fertilizer can "burn", i.e., kill, the fine feeding roots.

## European Newsletter

by Colin Chapman

**I**t is the policy of this Society to offer Complimentary Membership to people working with lilacs in places where hard currency is difficult to obtain. Fees are waived in exchange for contributions to the Journal or for exceptional acts of cooperation and service. In this edition, three of our members discharge this obligation.

The common name for *Syringa josikaea* is 'Hungarian Lilac' and from Hungary there comes an article on the introduction of the lilac into that country from Dr. Gabor Schmidt of the University of Horticulture and Food Industry in Budapest. Dr. Schmidt is a prominent member of the International Plant Propagators Society. I have long felt it rather odd that though the natural home of *Syringa vulgaris* was not discovered until 1828, the plant appears to have been introduced into European gardens from Constantinople in 1563. Forming the romantic concept of a "living pathway", Dr. Schmidt queries if the McKelvey version of the history of the cultivated lilac tells the whole story.

Like many of us, I learned of the existence of the work on Preston hybrids by Dr. Wladislaw Bugala from Father Fiala's book. It was not until the New Hampshire Convention that I was able to be in North America late enough to see them flower, particularly the fine collection of them at RBG, Hamilton. My own personal favourites are 'Goplana', 'Telimena' and 'Nike' but I won't argue since beauty lies subjectively in the eye of the beholder. I was delighted when the indefatigable Ole Heide visited Dr. Bugala at Kornik Arboretum two years ago and it is now a real pleasure to present the story of these lilacs by the hybridizer himself.

In 1994, Ole and Grethe Heide made a visit to the Central Botanical Gardens at Kiev in the Ukraine where they met the Curator and author of books on lilacs V.K. Gorb, and his nephew who acted as interpreter. Ole writes:

*"Kiev is a large, old city with about 2.5 million people and, during our stay, it became clear to us how popular the lilacs are. On the bus, in the streets, everywhere we met people with bouquets of lilacs, and during the second weekend of May we experienced their Lilac Festival in the Botanical Gardens. In Ukrainia, the lilacs are not just an ornamental shrub but a useful plant, of which they use the beautiful flowers to express what can only be expressed with a bouquet of lilacs!"*

*Mr. Gorb took care of us during those five days and we had a lot to discuss and exchange: lilac know-how, practical and theoretical possibilities and I'm sure that we both felt that we got more than we gave.*

*With this pleasant feeling, Mr. Gorb and his nephew took us to the airport after five unforgettable days and a friendship was founded that can bring us both one step further in our common work with lilacs.*



PHOTO CREDIT – GRETHE HEIDE

*Ole Heide and Dr. V.K. Gorb standing in front of Syringa vulgaris 'Krasavitsa Moskvy'.*

*There are always things to learn. The collection itself was not so comprehensive but the beauty of the whole place we will never forget. The visit showed me the importance of displaying lilacs in the best way. The terraces, architecture, river, the golden globes of the church are all essential elements and they can not be copied. After all, which is most important, the number of varieties or the beauty in the display of the collection?"*

My thanks go to Ole and Grethe for this report of their visit and for the determination to pay tribute to the genius of the place, and to Dr. Gorb and his nephew for their courtesy and generosity as hosts. It makes me long to see again the huge single mauve-pink florets on my plant of *Syringa vulgaris* 'Ukraina' (pronounced 'Uh-krah-eena', with the accent on the 'ee') which was bred at Kiev by V.G. Zhogoleva.

In playing host to Mr. and Mrs. Heide, I regard V.K. Gorb as having fulfilled his Complimentary membership obligation for this year to ILS. However, he has done more, for both Ole Heide and myself have received as gifts from him not only his own book "Lilacs of The Ukraine" (Naukova

Dumka, Kiev, 1989) but also copies of the rare booklet "Lilacs" written by Leonid Alekseevitch Kolesnikov in 1952. We are very grateful and look forward to enriching further our contacts with Dr. Gorb and the Central Botanical Gardens, Kiev.

I have mentioned in the past that an exciting new Lilac Garden is under construction at Kew Gardens under the supervision of Tony Kirkham. Tony has presented an article on the work in progress and, in addition, describes his participation in a Kew plant collecting expedition to Far Eastern Russia. I have been delighted to help Kew locate cultivars for their new collection but Tony modestly omits to mention the large number of beautifully propagated own-root plants which he has sent back to me in return, together with specimens of Kew's own verified species and hybrids. I must also congratulate Tony on his recent and well deserved promotion at Kew and I am delighted to hear that he will continue to retain control of the Lilac project.

Thus things have moved on in the few years that I have been stirring up European affairs. There is much creative work going on elsewhere and it will be my pleasure to record this in future editions. If I overlook things now it is because the need to visit North America regularly has limited my scope for travels in Europe but I will catch up. Perhaps when the Kew and Norman's Farm lilacs are flowering fluently and in profusion we might think of something really adventurous, like a Convention in London, perhaps.



*Mrs. Grethe Heide*

*"... we were half a day with this view and this fragrance."*

## How Did The Common Lilac Get To Hungary?

by Gábor Schmidt, Assistant Professor and Head of Department  
University of Horticulture and Food, Budapest, Villányi út 35-43, H1118 Hungary

**H**ow did “the most lilac of all lilacs” *Syringa vulgaris* come to Hungary – well, this is still a controversial question. Some of our botanists claim it came from the Christian West (via Vienna) and cite the first written evidence about its planting (Lippay, 1664), others suggest it came from the Islamic South-East and argue with the geographical vicinity to its native habitat – the hills near Belgrad and the Southern Carpatian Mountains (Bihar).

Having in mind the historical situation, under which this lovely shrub entered our gardens, it is most likely that both versions are true.

Between 1526-1666 Hungary was torn into three parts: the Middle and the South were invaded by the mighty Otmano-Turkish Empire, the West and the North fell under Austrian rule and only the East and South-east reserved its delicate independence, forming the three-national state of Transsylvania.

Both Transsylvania and the Turks-invaded part of Hungary remained in direct contact with the native habitat of the common lilac (it grew within their southern borders) and both countries gave place to a certain migration of people (mainly Slavian nations from the Balcan Peninsula), drifting North or back to the South, as the dreadful Turkish Empire partially expanded or withdrew.

When finding a new home on the North, these people were (and still are!) keeping in contact with their relatives or friends left on the South (many of them, for example, became merchants), thus forming a “living pathway” (bridge) between the two regions.

It was probably this “living pathway” that the Common Lilac moved up and distributed over a great part of the present Hungary. (This distribution was made by simple people so it is quite clear that no records were taken about the times and places).

The other, much better documented entrance occurred from Vienna, where the first lilacs (originating from Constantinople gardens) bloomed in the garden of Augier de Busbecq in 1589. (Rapaics, 1932; Chapman, 1994). They are described by János Lippay (the author of the first book on gardening in Hungarian language) under the name of “*Syringa*, the Spanish Elder” as growing in the famous botanical garden of his brother, the archbishop of Pozsony, (now: Bratislava, near the Austro-Hungarian border) György Lippay.

So roughly said, we can conclude that the lilac of the poor entered Hungary from the south, and that of the rich was distributed from the West, moving, in a fashionable novelty, from castle-garden (manor-garden) to castle-garden.



Anyway, by the end of the 18th century it was reported (either as an ornamental plant or growing semi-wild) from almost all parts of the country (Kitaibel, 1803).

Similarly controversial is the origin of the Hungarian name for lilac "orgona":

Some etymologists assume it comes from the word "organ" (the musical instrument which is also called "orgona" in Hungary), and refers to the pipes that children can make from the young bark (peeled off carefully as a whole) of this shrub in the spring – (See also: *pipe-tree* in English, *Pfeifenbaum*, *Pfeifenstranch* in German). According to this version, the name "orgona" is a simple translation of the Latin name *Syringa* ("syrinx" means pipe and the musical instrument organ is a series of pipes).

All these sound very logical and scientific but the truth is probably much simpler than that. Common people usually give common names to common plants and this is the name that they got it under: Lilac is called "orgovan" in Macedonia, "jorgovan", "jargovan" and "jergovan" in Serbia, Slavonia and Croatia. So our Southern neighbours, who probably brought the most of lilacs to us, call this fine shrub just as we do. The other name, "Spanish Elder" appears in some botanical books of the past, but it completely disappears by the beginning of 19th century, giving place to the present Hungarian name "orgona".

This is to note, that lilac have never been called "lilac" in Hungary, and this fact excludes (or minimizes) the possibility of Turkish introduction. (If we dig a bit deeper, however, it turns out that "erguvan" is the Turkish name of the Judas-tree *Ceris siliquastrum* – another plant with lilac-coloured flowers – and derives probably from the Persian "erdjewan" "erdjuwan" where it means both the plant and the colour).

And finally, let me say some words about the present state and distribution of the Common Lilac in Hungary:

So controversial in the origin and naming, all of our botanists agree in the fact that lilac is not native to the present territory of Hungary. It is widely distributed in all the parks and gardens and became naturalized on many sites: in hedgerows of vineyards, in old cemeteries, abandoned farmyards, on steep and dry slopes (serving as vineyards in the past) and under some Robinia woods – all such locations which show traces of former human activity (By the way: common lilac is one of the few shrubs that tolerate the nasty shade of Robinia).

Basically, we have two types of common lilac in Hungary:

- the "garden lilacs" or "noble lilacs" with huge inflorescences, large flowers and spectacular colours, and
- the "wild lilacs" or "the peasant's lilacs", much more modest both in appearance and in requirements but of highly wider distribution.

I suppose the readers of this article know much more about garden

lilacs (=French lilacs) than I do, but the "peasant" types may represent some interest to them:

The "peasant lilacs" are usually propagated by a simple division of rooted suckers (stolons), and, in their turn, fall again into two basic groups:

- the ornamental and
- the hedging (functional) group.

Members of the **ornamental group** were spontaneously selected for the beauty (and fragrance) of their flowers, which are somewhat larger and usually darker than those of the type, although white colours and semi-double flowers also occur. These types are still planted in the front gardens and graveyards of villages, usually as unnamed clones or just under names like "the dark mauve", "the white one", "the double one", "the pink lilac", etc. They are usually also higher in growth and less suckering in habit than the wild type, although suckers were essential for their propagation and distribution.

The **hedging type** (the "wild" lilac) was and still is extensively used for pruned and unpruned hedges: in the backyard garden, along orchards or vineyards, or just to border the estate or fasten a slope or a terrace. These types are also results of a spontaneous selection, but with a different aim in mind. When making a new hedge, people simply pulled up suckers from an existing one and planted them in a ditch (furrow) along the border, with a minimal watering or with no watering at all.

This operation was usually done in February - March, when the spring work in the field start. During this time the ornamental merits could be no points of consideration. Much more important role was played by the suckering habit and the hardiness of the given clone: Those "tough guys" that survived the rough handling for centuries and generations received a wide distribution, while the sensitive and less aggressive ones gradually disappeared.

While the native selections of our "ornamental" lilacs cannot compete with the beauty of the French lilacs and other garden hybrids, the "hedging" types certainly deserve some attention for use in extensive plantings: in native-looking low-maintenance parks, on the sides of wind-sheltering belts (windbreaks), and along the highways and motorways.

In Hungary, the Department of Floriculture and Dendrology (University of Horticulture and Food) started the collection of aggressively suckering hardy lilacs twelve years ago. By now, the first twenty-two clones are planted in experimental plantings along the motorway 111, and the best two are in process of building up at our experimental nursery near Budapest.

Literature - next page

## **Literature**

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## **Report From Highland Park**

*by Robert E. Hoepfl*

**D**evelopments at Highland Park reached an all time high in 1994. Following the March 1991 Ice Storm which devastated numerous trees and shrubs we received a Historic Restoration Grant from the Federal Government. Much of 1993 was spent studying this Olmsted designed park and making a horticultural assessment of every tree and shrub.

A twenty-five acre area in the central section of the park, known as the shrub collection was identified as the major restoration area. Many shrubs were removed, all trees and shrubs were pruned and fertilized. The remaining shrubs were incorporated into beds along with new plantings. The view from the pinnacle was reestablished permitting not only the 40-mile view to the Bristol Hills south of Rochester but, also allowing a view into the park toward Highland Ave. This view enforces Olmsted's formula for interior views emphasizing the rolling terrain and the dominant mature trees.

Along with the planting of 160 ornamental trees and 1200 shrubs the main walk through the park was realigned and resurfaced. An irrigation system was installed to provide water for the new plantings and an occasional drinking fountain.

Spring '95 broke through with a carpet of blue *Chinodoxa* followed by 30,000 daffodils. This project was designed and coordinated by Trowbridge & Wolf Landscape Architects of Ithaca, New York. Although this restoration did not impact the lilac collection it certainly enhanced them as witnessed by the 200,000 visitors that turned out at Highland Park for the annual Lilac Festival.

## New Cultivars Of *Syringa ×prestoniae* In The Kórnik Arboretum

by Władysław Bugala

Polish Academy of Sciences, Kórnik, Poland

Cultivars of *S. ×prestoniae* were first introduced into Kórnik Arboretum in 1929 from Ottawa. They were cv. 'Charmian', 'Valeria', 'Ursula' and 'Octavia'. In 1952 I started breeding work in Kórnik on various ornamental shrubs, including the lilac *S. ×prestoniae*. In the years 1953-55 I sowed out seed from open pollination of the two most beautiful cultivars namely 'Octavia' and 'Ursula'. I obtained several thousands of seedlings. After three years of cultivation in the nursery the first selections were made taking for further breeding work only completely healthy individuals. At that stage they did not flower yet. After a further 6-7 years, when the shrubs started to flower profusely, I performed a detailed, very demanding selection, leaving only 15 shrubs for further cultivation and observation. As criteria for selection I have used such traits as tree habit, character of foliage, colour of flowers, size and shape of panicles and finally abundance of flowering. Particular searches were made for shrubs with intensely pink or pinkish-red flowers so rare in this lilac species.

In 1965 the observations and selection work was terminated. Of the 15 shrubs, 9 were considered most valuable. They were given names and were described in the 15th volume of "Arboretum Kórnickie", the yearbook of the Institute of Dendrology in Kórnik. The ortets of these cultivars grow in the collections of the Kórnik Arboretum. Some of them have also been introduced into collections of other arboreta or botanical gardens.

The new cultivars of *S. ×prestoniae* obtained in Kórnik are characterized by intensive growth, great resistance to low winter temperatures (in Kórnik they have sustained winters with -32°C). They propagate easily through green cuttings. They flower in Kórnik in the first half of June, usually very abundantly. They are resistant to droughts and generally have low demands with regard to soil conditions.

Below is a short description of these cultivars:

- 1.) 'Basia' – A strong, broad shrub. Flowers pink, pale pink when going out of bloom. Panicles loose, wide, up to 25cm tall, very imposing. It flowers abundantly. It is characterized by having a beautiful, rarely found, pink colouration of the flowers.
- 2.) 'Danusia' – A broadly ramified shrub, rather slow growing. Flowers are dark red when in buds, after blossoming pink and pale pink when going out of bloom. Panicles dense, wide, about 20 cm tall, very imposing.
- 3.) 'Diana' – A densely ramified shrub, with a regular erect habit. Flowers

changing from dark violet to rose-purple and finally pale purple when going out of bloom. Panicles dense, erect, 20 cm tall. Flowers late and very abundantly.

- 4.) 'Esterka' – A strongly growing shrub up to 4 m tall. Leaves large not rugose. Flowers intensively carmine pink in buds (before blossoming), gradually becoming pale pink when going out of bloom. Panicles small up to 15 cm tall, erect, poorly ramified. Flowers late. Similarly as cv. 'Goplana' it is characterized by beautiful carmine pigmentation of flowers.
- 5.) 'Goplana' – A strongly growing shrub, loosely branched. Flowers are carmine pink, pale pink when going out of bloom. Panicles are wide, loose, up to 20 cm tall, very imposing. It is characterized by beautiful rich carmine pink pigmentation of flowers.
- 6.) 'Jaga' – A dense shrub globular in habit. Flowers small, bright violet, in loose, erect panicles up to 25 cm tall. Flowers early and very abundantly. It is one of the most beautiful cultivars in this group.
- 7.) 'Jagienka' – A shrub with a regular dome-shaped habit. Leaves narrow, glossy. Flowers lilac violet, pale lilac when going out of bloom. Panicles very large, imposing, up to 20 cm tall with pendulous lateral ramifications. Flowers very profusely, earliest from among the *S. ×prestoniae* cultivars.
- 8.) 'Nike' – A low shrub (up to 1.5 m), widely ramified. Flowers light violet. Panicles very large, wide, up to 30 cm tall, drooping under their own weight. Flowers very profusely and late. Shrubs of this cultivar are characterized by a wide, regular habit.
- 9.) 'Telimena' – A strongly growing shrub, very densely branched and abundantly leaved, with large elliptical, strongly rugose leaves. Flowers pale pink, when growing out of bloom almost white, in erect panicles up to 22 cm tall. Specially characteristic of this cultivar are the large, stiff, rugose leaves densely covering the shrub. This a characteristic absent from other cultivars of this group.

The new cultivars of *Syringa ×prestoniae*, which have been selected by me in the Kórnik Arboretum in the years 1955-63, grow in the collections of the Arboretum. So far they have not been introduced on a wider scale into nursery production and cultivation. I hope that the increasing interest in recent years in the cultivation of new ornamental shrubs in Poland will help to promote the propagation of these beautiful original shrubs. Possibly amateur collectors in other countries will also show interest in them.

## Lilac Time at Kew

by Tony Kirkham

**H**aving almost completed a hectic winter work season in the Arboretum at Kew, I felt I should inform all I.L.S. members of the progress with the new Lilac garden at The Royal Botanical Gardens Kew. During May and June 1993, I visited several gardens in USA and Canada to gain some inspiration for a design of the new garden, which was being kindly sponsored by a Mr. & Mrs. Giles Coode Adams. I went from The Arnold Arboretum to Hamilton, stopping off at Highland Park in Rochester and finished at The Dominion Arboretum, Ottawa, before returning to England, full of fresh ideas and a better understanding of the genus. Charles Holetich kindly spent much of his valuable time and knowledge with me and helped to choose the better cultivars for our garden. The sponsors and John Simmons, the Curator of R.B.G. Kew, came out to Hamilton and joined me for a walk round the Katie Osborne collection where I showed them some of my now, favourite cultivars, new to me, such as *Syringa vulgaris* 'Znamya Lenina' of Kolesnikov and *Syringa ×hyacinthiflora* 'Maiden's Blush' and 'The Bride', that were to be incorporated into our plans.

During the Winter of 1993 and Spring of 1994, we began the new development on the ground in the north end of the gardens and carried out phase 1 of the project. This involved creating 9 new beds for the species and hybrid collections, which are laid out taxonomically by subgenera and series. Planting of these started in March 1994 with natural source material from the collections and recent Kew expeditions.

The newly identified area for the beds containing the cultivars was cleared, sub-soiled, cultivated and grassed down and allowed to lay fallow for at least a season prior to Phase 2 beginning.

Over the past 3 years we have been collecting material of cultivars with the help of Colin Chapman, Norman's farm and Charles Holetich at The Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, and propagating plants, ready for planting during 1995, 1996, and 1997. We now have some 200 cultivars successfully growing on their own roots in the nursery at Kew, thanks to the sterling work of Annette Wickham, our woody plant propagator. During April 1995, planting continued in the species beds and the first two of the new cultivar beds were cultivated and planted with single and double flowering *Syringa vulgaris* cultivars of Lemoine By Spring 1996, a further ten beds will have to be cultivated in preparation for phase 3 planting of the cultivars presently coming through our nursery system.

The design of the garden is intended to display as many different species and cultivars as possible. Given the limitations of space, we have focused on all the species and the more important cultivars, which, when planted in taxonomic groupings, related to the great lilac breeders, will help to tell the

history of the genus *Syringa*. Flower colour and type will be represented where possible, and full interpretation will describe each bed.

During the autumn of 1994, I spent five weeks plant collecting in the Far East of Russia for the Arboretum at Kew, with my colleague Mark Flanagan, Deputy Curator at Wakehurst Place, our satellite garden in Sussex. Our remit to collect seeds of hardy woody plants from the Ussuri forests, north of Vladivostok and The Island of Sakhalin, north of Japan.

I was particularly keen to collect seeds of *Syringa wolfii* and *Syringa reticulata* var. *amurensis*, which both occur in the lower mountainous regions of The Ussuri forests. Only on one occasion did we find *S. wolfii*, and the number of plants could be counted on one hand. They were strong, large leafed shrubs to three meters growing under *Betula davurica* and *Quercus mongolica* in competition with strong *Actinidia kolomikta* climbers and only one showed the old flower spikes from the previous Spring. Most had been parasitized by an insect, but after checking almost every spike, we found one with what we believed to be good, clean, green seed.

Several days later we found *Syringa reticulata* var. *amurensis* growing in several localities in the Chandalas range North East of Vladivostok. One particular woodland with rich, moist soil on limestone comprised almost pure Amur Lilac, with multi-stemmed trees to fourteen meters. Unfortunately after inspecting many specimens, no seed could be found, in fact there were no old flower spikes, which led me to believe that these plants had not flowered the previous spring, or they shed them extremely quickly after flowering time.

Since returning to Kew, the *Syringa wolfii* seed proved to be fertile and has germinated, and during the next two years should be on display in the Arboretum collections and The Lilac Garden.

I hope that when the garden is completed over the next four years, it will once again be a treat to 'Come Down to Kew at Lilac Time'.

*"In the dooryard fronting an old farmhouse near the white-washed palings,  
Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves  
of rich green,  
With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume strong I love,  
With every leaf a miracle – and from this bush in the dooryard,  
With delicate-colored blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,  
A sprig with its flower I break."*

From "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed"  
by Walt Whitman

## Exploring Mackinac (Mackinaw) Island, Michigan

by Walter Eickhorst

*Note: The Convention Committee is exploring a convention on Mackinac (or Mackinaw) Island in upper Michigan. Walter Eickhorst shares part of his exploration of the old lilacs that exist on the island in this report.*

**A**ntiquity and history abound in the Island of Mackinac (Mackinaw), dating from the 1650-70 era when one Father Jacques Marquette (Priest, leader, explorer) established a new mission on the Island in the spring of 1671.

Today there are many, many lilacs growing here, some few younger plants which have been established (estimated) within the last 15 - 20 years, but at the same time there is strong evidence of established plants having been here for something over (well-over) 100 years. Many of the 'old' specimens are exhibiting short trunks that exceed 15 - 18 inches and aged stems that are 8 - 12 inches, supporting heights and width of 20-25 feet and in some instances the plants are well rounded with limited bloom almost at eye level. Blooming characteristics exhibit a degree of flowers rarely seen in the modern day garden in that current seasons vegetative growth is well within the flower display, thus giving a magnitude of color rarely observed among the more recently introduced cultivar selections.

Most of the older plants appear to flower within a range of pink/pinkish, rose/mauve, bluish/lavender and white – almost a total lack of the darker purple ('Andenken an Ludwig 'Spath', 'Hugo de Vries', 'Hiram H. Edgerton', 'Monge' etc.) plants of the modern (more recently) named cultivars – none of these 'old' plants carry labels and to the best of our knowledge there is no one presently living on the Island possessing any information relating to there ever having been names or labels associated with these plants. Likewise, at this point in time most of the newer additions carry identification tags, but on the other hand those people presently responsible for the planting of 'newer' selections on both private property and /or public parks etc., are accepting the fact that if this location is to occupy its rightful recognition of a Lilac Collection, such (new) plants will be properly and adequately identified.

(Suspicion/assumption/opinion) – in that one or more (at least) of the earliest recordings of Lilac cultivars would direct one's attention to such plants as *Syringa vulgaris* 'Gloire de Lorraine' and *S. v.* 'Jacques Callot' (Lemoine - 1876) being the first two named French hybrid lilacs. If that is being the case I would strongly suspect that most of the 'old' specimens located in this site are part of a seedling 'swarm' (open pollinated) plants, perhaps grown by the Lemoine Nursery (French) during a period of years prior to 1876 and distributed within the limited sales area of that era, at a time when much of the immigrating populace seeking a lesser repressed



land of opportunity did, not totally infrequently, bring with them 'sprigs' of plants with which they were familiar, a bit of the 'motherland' so-to-speak. Hence the arrival of lilacs other than the common wild forms of purple and white.

So it is that I further suspect that it would be almost humanly (impossible) and totally unwise to enter into an in-depth effort of attempting to identify or otherwise affix names (presently within the nomenclature of the genus *Syringa*). Any such endeavor would have to follow the prescribed (trying) task of taxonomically describing these individuals (most of which would probably be *S. v.*), and the floral color identity would consume many, many hours of laborious comparison of the endless Color Chart shades, etc., only to learn that these aged plants would probably not match any of the already names cultivars, but rather they would be little less than hitherto unnamed entities with present day names affixed.

In conclusion I feel compelled to suggest that Mackinac Island without a doubt offers the only opportunity in North America where I.L.S. members can enjoy and drink-in the grandeur of aged Lilac plants like few other places in the world, specimens that have already survived many, many decades and more than likely will outlive most persons now living on this earth – an opportunity of a lifetime.

### The Lilac

*The sun shone warm, and the lilac said,  
"I must hurry and get my table spread,  
For I am slow, and dinner late,  
My friends, the bees, will have to wait."*

*So delicate lavender glass she brought  
And the daintiest china ever bought,  
Purple tinted, and all complete.  
And she filled each cup with honey sweet.*

*"Dinner is ready!" the spring wind cried;  
And from hive and hiding, far and wide,  
While the lilac laughed to see them come,  
The little gray-jacketed bees come hum-m!*

*They sipped the syrup from every cell,  
They nibbled at taffy and caramel;  
Then, without being asked, they all buzzed: "We  
Will be very happy to stay to tea."*

*Clara Doty Bates*

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*The E.A. Upton Scrapbook of Lilac Information Vol. 1: Page 87.*

## Lilac Tidbits

by Frank Moro

Over the years I have observed a variety of lilacs, as well as different ways of displaying them. I hope that there are lovers of the lilacs in the Society who will find these notes educational or at least entertaining.

In one garden I saw clematis vines growing up the base of an older lilac. It was a great marriage because the clematis did not interfere with the growth of the lilac, but it surely gave a nice bloom display in the summer and still left some of the larger lilac trunks exposed.

*Syringa laciniata* and *Syringa pinnatifolia* are not hardy in the Montreal climate but the hybrid between them is very hardy even when grown in a container.

For those who have leaf miner problems, I suggest you try smaller leaved lilacs such as 'Miss Kim' *S. meyeri*, *microphylla* 'Superba', or *potaninii*. They seem to be less bothered by the culprits.

For those gardeners living at the seashore or coastal areas, *S. vulgaris* 'Montaigne' is able to handle higher saline levels in the water supply. Ordinarily higher saline levels in the water will burn finer roots and kill the plant.

Gardeners who have poorer drainage in their soil might wish to try 'James Macfarlane'. I have found that it can stand up to wetter conditions. In fact, I consider it to be almost indestructible.

Although the "French Hybrids" are the most commonly referred to lilacs, they still represent only one section of the genus *Syringa*. I would suggest that one pay attention to many of the other families, as I have done this year, and you will be in for some surprises in the wonderful lilacs you will discover. They may not have the traditional fragrance but I promise you will see some unusual flowers, texture of foliage, and be able to explore some different fragrances.

## The Classification of *Syringa* 'Lavender Lady'

by James S. Pringle, Royal Botanical Gardens

According to Freek Vrugtman, the registrar of cultivar names for *Syringa*, who supplied the background information for this study, the classification of the lilac cultivar 'Lavender Lady' has been in question for several years. This cultivar was listed by Wister (1963) and Rogers (1976) as being of *Syringa vulgaris* L.  $\times$  *S. laciniata* Mill. ancestry, but it has been suspected of being *S. vulgaris* or *S.  $\times$ hyacinthiflora* Rehder (= *S. vulgaris*  $\times$  *S. oblata* Lindl.) instead (The name *s. laciniata* or *S. persica* var. *laciniata* (Mill.) Weston has historically been applied to cut-leaved lilacs generally. The systematics of the cut-leaved lilacs requires much further study, but pending such research it seems best to follow Green [1989] in this paper, designating fertile cut-leaved lilacs *S. protolaciniata* P.S. Green & M.C. Chang, except in quotations of or similar direct references to earlier works).

*Syringa* 'Lavender Lady' was identified by its originator, Walter E. Lammerts of Freedom, California, as the product of a cross between two unnamed lilac selections, both of which were seedlings derived from open-pollination of a lilac designated C112 (Lammerts 1954). No indication of ancestry at the species level was included in this document. According to Lammerts (1982; also in a letter to Robert B. Clark, quoted in Clark 1978), he obtained C112 from W.B. Clarke, a plant breeder and proprietor of a nursery in San José, California. In the letter cited above, Lammerts wrote that he "grew seedlings from W.B. Clarke's C112, which was evidently an *S. oblata* hybrid [i.e., presumably *S.  $\times$ hyacinthiflora* - J.S.P.] and intercrossed these." Lammerts (1982) referred to Clarke's having made crosses involving *S. oblata* and *S. vulgaris*, although not specifically in the context of the origin of C112, and to his (Lammerts') own *S.  $\times$ hyacinthiflora* hybrids. In none of these papers is there any indication that the ancestry of 'Lavender Lady' was believed to include *S. protolaciniata* or any cut-leaved lilac, or that either Clarke or Lammerts had included a cut-leaved lilac in their breeding programs.

The earliest reference to 'Lavender Lady' as a cultivar of "*S. vulgaris*  $\times$  *S. laciniata* F<sub>2</sub>" appears to be in a registration list published by Wister in 1963, in which the cultivar is attributed to Lammerts and said to have single, purple corollas. No further information is given in this list except "bred for southern California". Wister's list was the basis for Rogers' (1976) listing 'Lavender Lady' as being of this parentage. The next such reference was in a letter from Lammerts to Freek Vrugtman in 1976, in which he wrote that 'Lavender Lady' "resulted from crossing of two open pollinated seedlings of C112, a seedling of W.B. Clarke, San José, California, an early leafing variety tracing back to a cross with *Syringa persica* (*laciniata*)." This, of course, antedates Lammerts' 1982 paper and his letter quoted by

Clark (1978), in which C112 was identified as "evidently an *S. oblata* hybrid." In a letter dated 16 July 1985, Louis C. Erickson specifically asked Lammerts whether 'Lavender Lady' was in fact of *S. vulgaris* × *S. laciniata* parentage. Lammerts' response, dated 25 July 1985, repeats much of the information on the origin of this cultivar given in his 1954 and 1982 papers, but completely ignores the question of *S. vulgaris* × *S. laciniata* ancestry. (Copies of cited correspondence are in the files of Freek Vrugtman, the registrar of cultivar names for *Syringa*.)

In May 1993 I examined the plant of 'Lavender Lady' at the Royal Botanical Gardens (accession no. 840186). I found no morphological evidence of *S. protolaciniata* (or *S. laciniata* s. lat.) ancestry. Its morphology appeared compatible with its identification as *S. ×hyacinthiflora*. Likewise, Walter W. Oakes (in letters to F. Vrugtman, dated 23 January 1993 and 9 February 1993; quotation from the latter) found that 'Lavender Lady' appeared to be "pure *hyacinthiflora* intermixed perhaps with *vulgaris*. There is no indication whatever of laciniation in the foliage structure to suggest *S. persica laciniata* parentage."

Hybrids between *Syringa vulgaris* L., the common lilac species, and a fertile cut-leaved lilac have been produced, providing a basis for comparison (see review in Marsolais et al. 1993). Such hybrids constitute *S. ×persica* L. (pro sp.) s. lat. (The designation "s. lat." indicates that *S. ×persica* is referred to here in the broad sense, encompassing the well-known Persian lilac and also the hybrids that have been called *S. ×chinensis* Willd. [pro sp.]). This hybrid complex is readily distinguishable from *S. vulgaris* by its smaller, proportionately narrower and occasionally notched leaves, as well as by more subtle differences in the flowers and inflorescences.

Although hybrids between fertile cut-leaved lilacs and *Syringa vulgaris* have been produced on several separate occasions, these hybrids have consistently been sterile. Among flowering plants generally, it is not unknown for largely sterile interspecific hybrids to produce a few viable gametes at least on rare occasions, but there is no reliable record that such an event ever occurred in *S. ×persica* s. lat. For an  $F_2$  generation to have come into existence, therefore, would not have been inconceivable, but it would have been an event at variance with the history of such hybrids to date.

Hypothetically, if an  $F_2$  generation had come into existence, it might well have been fertile. Conceivable, moreover, repeated backcrossing to *S. vulgaris* could eventually result in progeny that exhibited no morphological evidence of its *S. protolaciniata* ancestry, but this would seem unlikely within only one or two generations.

In summary: *Syringa* 'Lavender Lady' was originally implied, albeit imprecisely, to be of *S. vulgaris* × *S. oblata* (= *S. ×hyacinthiflora* ancestry; not until six years after it was patented was it said to be of the *S. vulgaris* × *S. laciniata* (s. lat., i.e. *S. protolaciniata*) ancestry. Its morphology is entirely compatible with its being of *S. vulgaris* × *S. oblata* ancestry, but it

neither resembles lilacs known to be of *S. vulgaris* × *S. protolaciniata* parentage nor does it show any other evidence of *S. protolaciniata* ancestry in its morphology. 'Lavender Lady' would be at least three generations of fertile progeny removed from a cross of *S. vulgaris* with *S. protolaciniata*, if such a cross had been involved in its ancestry, but from the substantial existing knowledge of the sterility of such hybrids it seems extremely unlikely that any such third-generation progeny could have been produced. It seems most probable, therefore, that the designation of 'Lavender Lady' as "*S. vulgaris* × *laciniata*" (or equivalent) represents a *lapsus calami* or similar error by Lammerts, Wister, or both, where "oblata" was intended instead of "laciniata," or at most an incorrect recollection. The available evidence indicates that 'Lavender Lady' should be considered a cultivar of *S. ×hyacinthiflora*.

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## Editor's Notes

*Bob Clark sent in the following notes that prove he has been busy this summer.*

### Drought!

The late summer in east central New Hampshire – familiarly the Lakes Region – was sunny and hot – Bermuda high to weathermen. Ideal vacation weather. Not so welcome to gardeners who found leaves wilting and turning brown or falling. When I was a fussy gardener keeping weeds out, I used to have to irrigate many a summer day. Nowadays I'm less tidy and practice nature's mulching, so suddenly I find some of my newly transplanted shrubs and herbaceous perennials wilting. A soaking will revive these distressed plants usually if you discover their plight soon enough. Gardening, like rearing children, is a full time pleasure, and responsibility. I don't know which comes first.

### Identity Of A Commercial Lilac

This past summer while visiting a friend's garden, Carolyn Merrill and I were asked, as lilac experts, to verify a Persian lilac SOLD at a local garden center. Knowing the Linnaeus type *Syringa persica* to be rare in cultivation, I was suspicious. For instance, the flower clusters, though small, were clustered at the tips of the branches instead of strung along à la foxtail, the common name for the Persian lilac. The leaves were small to be sure, but the flowers were violet, not pink, also unscented. No seed pods had been set. After sleeping over this poser, suddenly its identity came to me and Carolyn agrees – *S. ×chinensis*, Varins or Rouen lilac. This lilac in the trade is known as Persian Lilac, and it has been often used as stock in grafting owing to its lack of suckering. Grown as a flowering shrub in the landscape, the Rouen lilac is covered with small lilac colored flower clusters slightly later than peak bloom of the French hybrids.

### William Dallimore

Readers might be interested to know something about the author of "Lilac Wood (*Syringa vulgaris* L.)", William Dallimore, which appeared in the Summer issue, page 80.

Dallimore wrote the horticultural monograph on hollies which appeared in installments in **Gardeners' Chronicle** a century ago, and his book, long out of print, became a collector's item upon the formation of the Holly Society of America, much as Mrs. McKelvey's botanical monograph of Lilacs is to our members.

## Editor's Notes

*You think you have a hard time accurately describing the color of a lilac; think about the problem faced by the nursery industry. This article on lilac colors was taken from the catalog of the A.M. Brand Peony Farm; ca 1949.*

### Lilac Descriptions

Many of the peculiarities of any variety of Lilac are easily described. One can tell at a glance whether the florets are single, semi-double, or double, or whether the panicles are simple or compounds, long or short, loose or compact.

But when it comes to color probably no two persons would name exactly alike the colors of any dozen varieties of Lilacs.

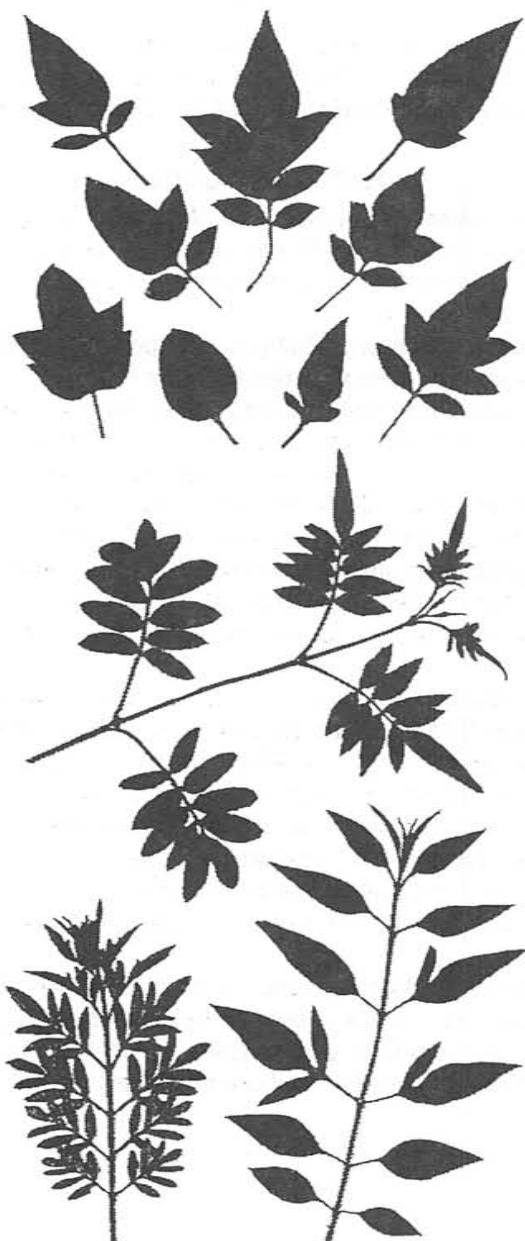
A little explanation may help to interpret our descriptions. When we say a Lilac is red, we do not mean that it is scarlet; or, when we say it is blue, we do not mean sky-blue, as an occasional customer seems to expect. The truth is, the colors of all Lilacs are soft. They are made up of different proportions of blue and red with more or less addition of white. If the red predominates in the light shades, we may call the color pink or rose. If the blue predominates decidedly, we may call the color blue; but if the blue while dominant is less pronounced we may call it lavender or lilac or violet or mauve.

In the dark colors, if the red predominates decidedly we may call it red, as with Reaumur. If the blue predominates we call it purple. Then to be more definite we sometimes say reddish purple or purplish red.

It must be remembered also that, aside from the difficulty of getting an exact name for the normal color of a variety, this color may change somewhat with the season. For example, this year we had cool, cloudy, and rainy weather throughout the Lilac season. Consequently, the colors were all darker than usual. The character of the soil also sometimes changes the color slightly.

We make our descriptions as clear as we can, but we understand how difficult it is for a purchaser who cannot visit a Lilac field during the blooming season to make his selection. However, we list only good varieties, those that should give much pleasure to those who plant them.

## Compound Lilac Leaves



Top: Varied leaf forms of *Syringa diversifolia*; center: *S. pinnatifloia*  
bottom left: *S. protolaciniata*; Bottom right: *S. persica*  
Silhouettes taken from the E.A. Upton Nursery Catalog.



## Lilac Auction '96

**Y**es, it's time to start thinking about and planting the lilacs and plants which will make it to the annual plant and lilac auction in Poughkeepsie, New York in May 1996.

I have been asked by Bob Gilbert, our 1996 Convention Host, to coordinate the plants for the auction.

Please consider your donations of lilac varieties and start them growing for the spring. Maybe we can get some "rare or unusual" varieties which might challenge even Charles Holetich when asked to describe a cultivar.

Please write or contact me with any information about your possible donations – names of varieties if possible. Group donations are very much appreciated – and the funds from the auction help to provide for the interesting programs throughout the year.

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*Staff members of the Department of Floriculture and Dendrology (University of Horticulture and Food) collecting aggressively suckering semi-wild clones on Sashegy (the "Eggle Hill") in Budapest.*