THE LILACS OF NEW ENGLAND

The public interest in lilacs is most strikingly shown by the great number of people which come to view the Arboretum's collection of these plants each spring. It has been estimated that on a clear day at the peak of flowering in the latter half of May, crowds in excess of fifty thousand view this colorful spectacle. The numerous requests for identification of specimens and for information regarding the availability of cultivars in New England are other manifestations of this interest. It is in hope of aiding this latter group that this paper is being prepared.

My study of nursery catalogues and lists of offerings supplied by nurserymen has shown that 88 kinds of lilacs are offered for sale in New England. In the preparation of the lists and keys, the identification of the nurserymen offering these plants for sale is assumed to be correct. Names of cultivars which could not be verified from the checking of such authoritative works as Mrs. McKelvey's "The Lilacs" and "Lilacs for America," or for which the nurserymen offering it for sale could not offer satisfactory clarification of place and time of origin, are not included. The scientific names used in this article are taken from Rehder's "Bibliography of Cultivated Trees and Shrubs." Synonyms used by catalogues are cited in the text describing the plants.

Those who wish to know to what species the specimens growing in their collection belong, may find the key to be of use. No key could be made that would separate all of the cultivars found in Syringa vulgaris, so they are classified according to color and the presence of single or double flowers. The system of color classification is the same as that used in "Lilacs for America." In cases where there is a difference in the color given by the nurseryman and "Lilacs for America," the latter is followed. One should be aware that flower color may vary with the type of soil in which the plant is grown and with the age of the plant.

Lilacs which were judged as members of the one hundred best by a poll in "Lilacs for America" are indicated by an asterisk. Not all members of this group
were selected by a unanimous vote. Personal likes and dislikes need to be taken into consideration in the selection of plants for one's own situation. Examination of flowering specimens before purchasing is to be recommended whenever possible.

Each lilac name found in this list is followed by a code number or series of numbers indicating New England nurseries offering this plant for sale. In order to identify the nursery offering the plant for sale, consult the list of nurseries at the end of the article.

**Key**

A. Corolla-tube not or little longer than calyx; anthers exserted on slender filaments; flowers white .......................... 1. *S. amurensis* var. *japonica*

AA. Corolla-tube much longer than calyx; anthers subsessile.

B. Panicles from terminal buds, leafy at base (sometimes lateral in No. 7).
   C. Leaves papilllose, glaucous and glabrous beneath .......................... 2. *S. yunnanensis*
   CC. Leaves not papilllose, green to glaucescent and usually pilose at least along the midrib.
   
   D. Corolla-tube funnelform gradually widened above the middle, lobes more or less upright; anthers below the mouth.
   E. Panicles upright; anthers not reaching the mouth.......................... 3. *S. josikaea*
   EE. Panicles pendulous or nodding, dense; anthers reaching the mouth.
   4. *S. reflexa*

DD. Corolla-tube cylindric or nearly so, lobes spreading.
   E. Anthers reaching the mouth; infl. with 2 pairs of leaves, leaves cuneate at base.
   F. Leaves pilose along the veins beneath or nearly glabrous, glaucescant, inflorescence compact.......................... 5. *S. villosa*
   FF. Leaves soft pubescent beneath, infl. loose.......................... 6. *S. tomentella*

EE. Anthers below the mouth; inflorescence with 1 pair of small leaves or none, often with lateral panicles below; leaves rounded or broad cuneate at base................ 7. *S. sweginzowii*

BB. Panicles from lateral buds; terminal bud usually wanting.
   C. Leaves pubescent at least on midrib beneath; anthers usually violet or bluish gray; corolla about 6 mm. across.
   D. Anthers inserted slightly below the mouth, equaling 1/2 to 1/3 of the tube; brts. usually short-pubescent........................................... 8. *S. velutina*
   DD. Anthers inserted above the middle of the tube, much below the mouth equaling 1/4 or 1 5 of the tube.......................... 9. *S. microphylla*

CC. Leaves glabrous, or if pubescent, broad-ovate and truncate or subcordate at base.
   DD. Leaves entire or 3-9 lobed in No. 14; corolla about 1 cm. across; flowering branches without terminal bud.
   E. Leaves broad-ovate or ovate, subcordate to abruptly broad-cuneate at base; infl. large.
   F. Flowers purple........................................... 10. *S. vulgaris* var. *vulgaris*
   FF. Flowers white........................................... 11. *S. vulgaris* var. *alba*

EE. Leaves oblong-ovate to oblong-lanceolate, cuneate.
   F. Leaves always entire, 4-7 cm. long; infl. large and loose...................... 12. *S. chinensis*
   FF. Leaves 2-4 cm. long; infl. 5-8 cm. long.
   G. Leaves unlobed........................................... 13. *S. persica*
   GG. Leaves 3-9 lobes........................................... 14. *S. lacinata*

DD. Leaves pinnate, with 7-9 leaflets; infl. 3-7 cm. long; flowering branches usually with terminal bud developing into a leafy shoot.......................... 15. *S. pinnatifolia*
1. *Syringa amurensis* (Rupr.) Rupr. var. *japonica* (Maxim.) Franch. & Sav.

A native of Japan, this plant was introduced into cultivation in 1876. The value of this species is in its white flowers which appear approximately three weeks later than the flowers of the common lilac. This species may be grown either as a shrub or as a small tree. When grown as a tree, it reaches heights in excess of thirty feet. When grown with this habit, the cherrylike bark is quite attractive. Caution should be exercised in the placement of this plant because some people find the odor of the flowers to be disagreeable. This variety has been considered to be a distinct species by some workers and, as a result, is offered by several nurseries under the name *S. japonica* Decaisne. This plant is offered for sale by the following nurseries: C1, C2, C3, C4, M1, M3, M4, M9, M10, M11, M12, M13, M14, N8.

2. *S. yunnanensis* Franchet

This species was introduced into cultivation from Yunnan Province, China in 1906. One of the less showy species, it is of value because of its late flowering. Its flowering period bridges the gap between the common lilac and the previous species. *S. yunnanensis* 'Rosa,' a pink flowering form, is offered for sale by C5.

3. *S. josikaea* Jacquin f. ex Reichenbach

The Hungarian Lilac was introduced into cultivation from Hungary about 1880. The flowers of this species are lilac-violet. It flowers at the same time as *S. yunnanensis*, but is slightly more showy. Nurseries offering *S. josikaea* for sale are: C4, M3, M4, M11, M12.

*S. josikaea* has been hybridized with other species in the development of new groups of cultivars. *S. josikaea* hybridized with *S. villosa* gives rise to the hybrid complex known as *S. × henryi*. A cultivar selected from this cross is *S. × henryi* 'Lutece.' This cultivar is offered under the name *Syringa 'Henry Lutece'* by M5.

The hybridization of *S. josikaea* with *S. reflexa* gives rise to the hybrid complex *S. × josiflexa*. 'Royalty,' a purple, single-flowered cultivar, has been selected from this hybrid and is offered for sale by N2.

4. *S. reflexa* Schneider

Originally discovered in Central China, this species was introduced into cultivation about 1882. Flowering at the same time as the preceding two species, this is a distinct and handsome plant with flowers in long, pendulous panicles.

None of the nurseries in the New England region offer this species for sale, although it is attractive and hardy. A hybrid with *S. villosa* resulted in the development of the complex *S. × prestonae*, the source of the Prestonae hybrids. The only cultivar of this hybrid swarm offered for sale here is 'Isabella,' a single flowered, pink form. This cultivar is sold by N2.

Hybridization of *S. reflexa* with *S. tomentella* has produced the cultivar *S. reflexa* 'Pallens,' offered for sale by C1.
5. *S. villosa* Vahl

Introduced into cultivation in 1882 from North China, this species is to be recommended for its dense habit and its late and profuse flowering. The flowers may vary in color from rose-lilac to white. The following nurseries offer this species for sale: C2, C4, M10, M11, M12, M14.


Wilson writes in his "Aristocrats of the Garden": "I saw this plant for the first time on July 3, 1908, on the frontier of eastern Tibet at an altitude of nine thousand feet, and I thought then that I had never before seen such a handsome species of lilac. It had foot-high, broad panicles of pink to rosy-lilac colored flowers and on other bushes they were white. The plants were from eight to eighteen feet high, much-branched yet compact in habit, and the wealth of flower clusters made it conspicuous from afar." Unfortunately, this species has not done well in our collections. One of its shortcomings is its lack of fragrance. The species is offered for sale by C1.

7. *S. szeginowii* Koehne & Longelsh

This lilac was introduced into cultivation in 1894 from northwest China. One of the later flowering species, it is not often cultivated. A cultivar of the hybrid between this species and *S. tomentella* is the single, pink flowered *S. szeginowii* 'Albida.' This cultivar is offered for sale by M12.

8. *S. velutina* Komar

Introduced into cultivation in 1902 from North China and Korea, this species is usually found in catalogues under a synonym, *S. palibiniana* Nakai. The latter name is incorrect and should not be used.

An unusually late flowering, pale lilac, single flowered cultivar of this species is 'Miss Kim.' This cultivar also is of interest because of its dwarf habit and red coloration of the leaves in the autumn. The cultivar is offered for sale by M2, N2.

9. *S. microphylla* Diels

A native of North China, this shrub was introduced into cultivation in 1910. This plant is of interest because of its small leaves. A cultivar 'Superba' with single, pink flowers is offered by the following nurseries: C1, C5, M5.

10. *S. vulgaris* L. var. vulgaris

In cultivation since 1568, the common lilac, a native of southeast Europe, is offered for sale by the following nurseries: C2, C3, C4, C6, M1, M2, M4, M5, M6, M8, M9, M10, M11, M12, M13, M14, M15, M16, N1, N2, R1, V1.

11. *S. vulgaris* L. var. alba Weston

The white flowering variety is offered by the following nurseries: C3, C4, C6, M1, M8, M4, M6, M8, M9, M10, M11, M12, M13, M14, M15, M16, R1, V1.

[26]
No species of shrub has produced so many cultivars as has *Syringa vulgaris*, the common lilac. These cultivars have arisen from sports, natural and artificial crosses within the species, and by selection, but not from the crossing of this species with any other. Many of these variants were first developed in France, which has led to the term ‘‘French Hybrid’’ being used for many of these cultivars.

**Cultivars of *S. vulgaris* offered for sale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Double</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHITE</strong></td>
<td><strong>Double</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candeur M6, M12</td>
<td>*Edith Cavell M4, M11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Jan Van Tol C2, C6, M6, M11, M15, M16, R1</td>
<td>*Ellen Willmot C5, C6, M1, M8, M6, M11, M15, N2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Marie Legraye C2, M1, M6, M11, M18</td>
<td>General Sheridan M9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mlle. Fernande Viger M11</td>
<td>Mme. Abel Chatenay M15</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Mme. Florent Stepman M4, M9, M13</td>
<td>*Mme. Casimir Perier M6, M11, M13, M16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Mont. Blanc M2, M16</td>
<td>*Mme. Lemoine C4, C5, M2, M3, M4, M6, M8, M11, M12, M18, M15, M16, N2, R1, V1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primrose (yellow) C1, M11</td>
<td>Princess Clementine M18</td>
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<tr>
<td>*Vestale C11, M7, M9, M18, N2</td>
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| **VIOLET** | |
| Maximowicz M11 |
| *Marechal Lannes M11 |

| **BLUE** | |
| *Ambassadeur M5 |
| Bleuatre M4, M11, M12 |
| *Firmament M3, M8, M11, M12 |
| *Mme. Charles Souchet C1 |
| *President Lincoln C2, M1, M2, M6, M8, M9, M11, M12, M15, N2 |
| *Ami Schott C1 |
| *Duc De Massa M13 |
| President Grey C2, C5, C6, M4, M6, M8, M11, M12, M13, M16, R1, V1 |
| *President Viger M1, M13 |

| **LILAC** | |
| Hugo Koster C2, M11, M12 |
| *Jacques Callot M5 |
| *Alphonse Lavalley C4, C5, M5, N2 |
| *Leon Gambetta M1, M4 |
| Michael Buchner C2, C4, C5, M4, M15, M16 |
| President Carnot M4 |
| President Fallieres C2, M1, M5, M15 |
| William Robinson C2, M6 |

| **PINK** | |
| *Lucie Baltet C6, M4, M8, M11, M13 |
| *Macrostachya M4, M6, M8, M11, M13 |
| *Belle De Nancy C5, C6, M8, M13, M15, N2, R1, V1 |

[27]
Hybrids between *S. vulgaris* and *S. oblata dilatata* form the dilatata hybrids. Members of this complex flower early in the season. Two cultivars of this group are sold in New England. Both are members of the one hundred best lilacs. ‘Evangeline’ is a magenta, double flowered form N2. ‘Pocahontas’ is a purple, single flowered form sold by N2.

Hybrids between *S. vulgaris* and *S. oblata giraldii* form the Giraldii hybrids. Members of this complex flower early in the season. An asterisk indicates plants listed as among the one hundred best lilacs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single</th>
<th>Double</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clark’s Giant</td>
<td>Blue</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Esther Staley</em></td>
<td>*President Poincaire C2, C4, C5, M13, M18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pink Spray</td>
<td>*President Poincaire C2, C4, C5, M13, M18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purple Glory</td>
<td>*President Poincaire C2, C4, C5, M13, M18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer Skies</td>
<td>*President Poincaire C2, C4, C5, M13, M18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunset</td>
<td>*President Poincaire C2, C4, C5, M13, M18</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Montaigne M2</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td>*Waldeck-Rousseau M4, M16, M17</td>
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</tbody>
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MAGENTA

Charles × C2, C6, M1, M3, M4, M8, M11, M16, N2
*Congo C4, M1, M2, M3, M4, M6, M9, M11, M13, M16, N2
*Mme. F. Morel C2, C4, M6
*Reaumur C2, C4, M4
*Rhum Von Horstenstein C4, M4

PURPLE

*Diderot C2*
*Charles Joly C2, C5, C6, M1, M3, M4, M8, M9, M12, M13, M15, M16, N2, R1
Philemon M5
*Volcan C4, M11, M13

*Adelaide Dunbar C5, M1, M15, M16
*Charles Joly C2, C5, C6, M1, M3, M4, M8, M9, M11, M12, M13, M16, M17, N2, R1, V1
*Monge M2, M5
*Paul Hariot M5, M16

Much confusion has occurred in the identification of the place of origin of this hybrid species. Wildenow's specific epithet shows that he thought the plant had originated in China. It appears, however, that this plant originated in the Botanic Garden in Rouen, France about 1777. The parents of this hybrid species are *S. × persica* and *S. vulgaris*.

*S. × chinensis* differs from *S. vulgaris* in that it does not develop the stiff upright habit found in the latter, and in the failure to form the heavy branches found in the common lilac.

Several nurseries sell this plant under a synonymous name, *S. rothmogensis* Poir. & Turp. *S. × chinensis* is sold by the following nurseries: C3, C5, M1, M6, M8, M9, M10, M11, M12, M13, M16, R1, R2.

13. *S. × persica* L

This species is of particular taxonomic interest. Linnaeus did not recognize the hybrid origin of this plant and described it as a species. This view was concurred with by most taxonomists until quite recent times. McKelvey held this view in her monumental work "The Lilac." There were some dissenters who were of the opinion that this plant was of hybrid origin. However, these workers were not able to agree upon the parents. Cytogenetic work has supported Rehder's opinion that the parents of this hybrid species were *S. afghanica* and *S. laciniata*.

This plant is extremely showy, bearing pale lilac flowers at the same time as the common lilac. It differs from the common lilac in its smaller size. *S. chinensis* was introduced into cultivation about 1614. Nurseries offering it for sale are: C3, C5, M1, M6, M8, M9, M10, M11, M12, M13, R1, R2.

The white flowered form, *S. chinensis* forma *alba* (Weston) Voss., is offered for sale by M1.


A native of China, this plant was introduced into cultivation before 1620. It resembles *S. chinensis* closely, differing from it in its darker flower color and laciniate leaves. It was long thought to be a variety of *S. × chinensis*. The discovery of the plant breeding true in the wild, disproves this theory.

Cultivated for much the same reason as *S. × chinensis* and for its unique laciniate leaves. It is offered for sale by C1.

15. *S. pinnatifolia* Hemsl.

A native of western China, this plant was introduced into cultivation in 1904. The white flowers are not conspicuous, thus the plant is usually cultivated for its interesting pinnately compound leaves. As one of the first species to flower, it serves to start the season of lilac flowering. It is offered for sale by C1.
Key to Nursery Code

CONNECTICUT
C1. Brimfield Gardens Nursery, Wethersfield
C2. The Hoyt Nurseries, New Canaan
C3. E. D. Robinson Sales Agency, Wallingford
C4. The Peter Cascio Nursery, West Hartford
C5. White Flower Farm, Litchfield

MASSACHUSETTS
M1. Adams Nursery, Inc., Westfield
M2. Dahliatown Nurseries, Middleboro
M3. Littlefield-Wyman Nurseries, Inc., Abington
M4. Heatherfells Nursery, Andover
M5. Cary Bros. Nursery, Shrewsbury
M6. The Framingham Landscape Co., Framingham Centre
M7. Edward Halloran, Inc., Newton Highlands
M8. Bigelow Nurseries, Northboro
M9. Wyman’s Garden Center, Inc., Framingham
M10. Kelsey-Highlands Nursery, East Boxford
M13. Cherry Hill Nurseries, Thurlows and Stranger, Inc., West Newbury
M14. Hampden Nurseries, Inc., Somer Road, Hampden
M15. Corliss Bros., Inc., Gloucester
M16. Marinus Van der Pol, Fairhaven
M17. Eastern Nurseries, Holliston

NEW HAMPSHIRE
N1. Exeter Wild Flower Gardens, Exeter
N2. Landscape Clinic Nursery, Somersworth
N3. Colprit’s Nursery & Seed Farm, Dover

RHODE ISLAND
R1. Forest Hills Nurseries, Inc., Cranston 10
R2. C. Hoogendoorn, Newport

VERMONT
V1. Putney Nursery, Putney

Burdette L. Wagenknecht