Lilacs. The cold wet spring has delayed the opening of the flowers of Lilacs as it has those of other plants, but buds on many Lilacs are now swelling rapidly and there is every reason to believe that many of the plants will be in full bloom by Saturday, the 29th; and that unless unseasonable weather is experienced during the next few days the last days of May and the early days of June will see the general Lilac collection at its best. The large part of the Arboretum collection consists of seedling varieties of the plant which has been a favorite in gardens for centuries, and to most persons the only Lilac—the Syringa vulgaris of botanists. It is now known that this shrub came originally from the mountains of Bulgaria and that it reached western Europe by the way of Constantinople in 1597. The date of its introduction into the United States is not known, but it was a common garden plant here before the end of the eighteenth century and may have been here much earlier. There are specimens in the collection raised a few years ago from seeds of the wild Bulgarian plants. These are interesting because it is possible by comparing them with modern Lilacs to see the changes three centuries of selection and cultivation have made in these plants.

Hardly a week passes without a letter addressed to the Arboretum asks for the names of the best, or of the best six or of best twenty-five Lilacs. There are now one hundred and fifty named forms of the common Lilac in the collection. They are all or nearly all handsome plants, and no two persons ever agree about their individual value. Some persons prefer flowers of one color and other persons prefer flowers of another color; some persons like the Lilacs with double flowers and
others detest them. All the forms of the garden Lilac have practically the same habit and foliage, and the same inconspicuous fruit; they all bloom freely nearly every year, and breeding and selection have not affected their perfume as it has that of so many much “improved” plants, like many of the modern Roses. There is considerable variation in the size of the individual flowers; the double flowers open generally a little later than the single flowers and last longer, but there is really little difference in the time of flowering of all these plants. The size of the flower-cluster varies somewhat on the different forms; it is larger on young plants than on old ones, and it can always be enlarged by severe pruning which increases the vigor of the flower-bearing branches. Choice therefore depends on color, and really none of these Lilacs are “best” for everybody; one color or one shade is “best” for one person and another color or another shade is “best” for another person. Many persons who come to the Arboretum find the old Lilacs which have been growing on Bussey Hill for nearly a hundred years more beautiful than any of Lemoine's recent creations because they are the Lilacs which have long been common in old New England gardens and beloved by generations of New Englanders. A choice of Lilacs being largely a matter of taste in color or of association, it is useless to ask the Arboretum to make selections for its correspondents. If persons want Lilacs their only way to go about getting them in an intelligent way is to come to the Arboretum when the Lilacs are in flower and personally make their selection. The plants are all legibly labelled, and many of the kinds growing in the Arboretum can now be found in several American nurseries.

**Early Lilacs.** The white-flowered *Syringa affinis*, which is usually the first Lilac to bloom in the Arboretum, has no flowers this year. This is unusual for this plant rarely fails to produce an abundant crop of flowers. The earliness and the delightful fragrance of the flowers give this plant value for the spring garden. The variety with mauve-colored fragrant flowers (var. *Giraldii*) is blooming as usual; it is a tall, unsightly shrub, and except when in flower of no decorative value. The flower-buds of the Arboretum plant of *Syringa oblata*, another north China early flowering species, have been killed, but in other gardens near Boston they are uninjured. This is one of the handsomest of the species and no other Lilac has such thick and lustrous leaves which in the autumn assume brilliant shades of orange and red. The flower-buds, however, are too often injured in this climate, although the plant itself is perfectly hardy. By crossing this plant with a double-flowered form of *Syringa vulgaris* the plant known as *S. hyacinthiflora* was obtained in Europe many years ago. It is a large, shapely bush, with good foliage and small clusters of double bluish lilac flowers as fragrant as those of *S. oblata*. This hybrid is now in bloom. A Chinese Lilac discovered by Wilson, *S. pinnatifolia*, is also in flower. The pinnate leaves of this plant make it interesting among Lilacs, but the small white flowers in short clusters are without ornamental value. The flowers of another rare Chinese species, *S. Meyeri*, will soon open; and generally all the hybrid Lilacs, and all the species are well covered with flower-buds.
A Hybrid Shad Bush. In 1892 the Arboretum received from Heinrich Zabel, Superintendent of the Botanic Garden at Zurich, seeds of an Amelanchier which he had obtained from the Simon Louis Nursery near Metz, and called Amelanchier canadensis grandiflora. He considered, perhaps correctly, that his plant was a hybrid between A. canadensis and A. laevis. The leaves are certainly intermediate between those of these species; the flowers, however, are only just now open, nearly three weeks later than those of A. canadensis and ten days after the petals of A. laevis have fallen. The flowers, too, of this plant are larger than those of either of its supposed parents, and larger and more beautiful than those of any Amelanchier which has ever grown in the Arboretum. The Arboretum plants are large shrubs rather than trees, but they look as if they would have formed a single trunk if they had been pruned. Whatever may have been the origin of this plant, or whatever habit it may assume, it is, when in flower, the most beautiful of all the Amelanchiers, and this week one of the conspicuous plants in the Arboretum. Several other handsome and interesting Amelanchiers are also in bloom in the collection on the left-hand side of the Meadow Road. Among them is the species of China and Japan, A. asiatica, and A. vulgaris of Europe, the only Amelanchiers which grow naturally outside of North America. The curious northern A. Bartramiana with small flowers in one or few-flowered clusters, and four or five other species from the northeastern part of the country, are still in flower or are beginning to shed their petals. The Amelanchier collection, however, is by no means complete for several of the western species have not yet proved amenable to cultivation in the east.

The Buckeye Collection on the right hand side of the Meadow Road beyond the Lindens is in good condition, and the southern species recently introduced by the Arboretum into gardens will all flower well this year. Buckeye, it must be remembered, is the name by which American Horsechestnuts (Aesculus) are popularly known in the regions where these plants grow naturally. From the Horsechestnuts of the Old World they differ, except the California species, in the absence of a gummy exudation on their winter-buds. As in previous years the earliest of these American plants to bloom is the form with leaves of seven leaflets of the so-called Ohio Buckeye from western Missouri (Aesculus glabra var. Buckleyi). The flowers of another yellow-flowered species, Aesculus arguta, a small shrub from central Oklahoma and northern and central Texas, will soon follow. This interesting little plant is related to the Ohio Buckeye, from which it differs chiefly in the nine narrow leaflets of the leaves and in its small flowers. Beautiful interesting flowers will open on Buckeyes and Horsechestnuts during and several weeks.

Rhododendron (Azalea) Vaseyi. This species of the southern Appalachian Mountains, which after the Rhodora is the first of the American Azaleas to open its flowers in the Arboretum, is in bloom. The pure pink flowers appear on the leafless branches, and in delicacy and purity of color are not surpassed by the flowers of any other plant. It is only within comparatively recent years that this Azalea has been
known to botanists or has found its way into gardens. It is perfectly
hardy; the flower-buds are not injured by severe cold, and in time it
will grow into a tall usually rather narrow shrub. There are no large
plants yet in the Arboretum, but many small ones have been planted
during the last two or three years on the sides of the Meadow Road
and by the pond at its junction with the Forest Hills Road.

**Malus theifera**, one of Wilson's discoveries in western China, with its
long spreading and irregularly ascending branches has such an unusual
and picturesque habit for a Crabapple that it is easy to recognize at
any season of the year. When covered with its innumerable clusters
of rose-red buds and pale rose-colored or nearly white flowers it is one
of the handsomest of the Asiatic Crabapples. Judging by the behavior
of several plants in the Arboretum, they flower only on alternate years.
Last spring the largest specimen in the Peters' Hill group was covered
with flowers; this year it has not produced a single flower-bud. The
plant on the southern slope of Bussey Hill and a younger one in the
group on the left hand side of the Forest Hills Road are now covered
with flowers and are objects of interest and beauty.

**A New Crabapple.** Flowering branches of a remarkable new Crab-
apple have been sent to the Arboretum from a garden in Brookline.
It is evidently a hybrid, and there can be little doubt that one of the
parents is the curious variety of *Malus pumila* from Turkestan and
southwestern Siberia known in gardens as *Malus Niedzwetzkyana*; the
other might well be *Malus floribunda*. Of this species it has the slender
branchlets and the pubescence on the young leaves which soon become
nearly glabrous and green. The bark and wood are tinged with red and
thus show the influence of *M. Niedzwetzkyana* as does the red juicy flesh
of the fruit which ripens in October and is about an inch in diameter.
As a garden plant the value of this new hybrid is in the color of the
flowers which is dark rose-red, and much more beautiful than that of
the flowers of *Malus atrosanguinea*, which is the common red-flowered
Crabapple of gardens. The flowers are fully an inch and a quarter in
diameter and are produced in as great profusion as those of *Malus
floribunda*. In habit the three plants of this hybrid which are known
resemble *M. floribunda* and are as hardy. The handsomest of all the
red-flowered Apples which have yet been seen, this hybrid promises to
be an important addition to garden plants. Unfortunately nothing is
known of its history beyond the fact that the Massachusetts Nursery-
man who sold them to their present owner bought them as *Malus
Niedzwetzkyana* from some one whom he has forgotten.