Lilacs. The word Lilac as most persons understand it means the plant with purple or with white flowers of old-fashioned gardens, and this Lilac, the *Syringa vulgaris* of botanists, and its numerous varieties are the most popular shrubs which can be grown in northern gardens, and the flowers of no other plant bring so many visitors to the Arboretum. This Lilac reached western Europe at the end of the sixteenth century by way of Constantinople and Vienna; and until a few years ago Persia was believed to be its native country, now, however, it is known to be a native of the mountain valleys of Bulgaria. It is not known when this plant first reached America, for there is no authentic record of it in this country before 1785 when Washington planted it at Mt. Vernon. It probably came much earlier for the colonists often brought favorite plants with them from their English homes. The wild form of *Syringa vulgaris* was raised from seeds sent to the Arboretum from Bulgaria in 1896. The flowers are purple and resemble those of the purple Lilac of old gardens but the flower-clusters are narrower with less crowded flowers. There is no record of the date of the first appearance of the white-flowered form which was first described in 1623. In the Arboretum can be seen good examples of the Lilacs of old New England gardens on the eastern slope and near the summit of Bussey Hill where two long rows of them were planted more than a century ago on each side of one of Mr. Benjamin Bussey’s garden walks.

The improvement of the garden Lilac dates only from 1843 when a nurseryman at Liege in Belgium raised a plant with small double flowers. Nothing is now known of the origin of this plant but as it was called *Syringa vulgaris azurea plena* it was probably a seedling of the
common Lilac and not a hybrid. By fertilizing the flowers of *Syringa vulgaris azurea plena* with the pollen of varieties of the common Lilac, Lemoine produced the first important double-flowered Lilac, *S. Lemoinei* and others, and by again crossing these with forms of the common Lilac the double-flowered Lilacs of recent years have been made. By the crossing of varieties and by careful selection the flowers of the common Lilac have been gradually changed in size and in color in the last thirty years, but unfortunately the flowers of many modern Lilacs have lost a good deal of the fragrance of the old-fashioned Lilac, which, once enjoyed, is never forgotten. There are too many varieties of the common Lilac now cultivated. Some of them with different names given to seedlings in different nurseries and often in different countries are identical, and others are so much alike that they can only be distinguished by close comparison. It is important to cultivate them all in the Arboretum for study and comparison, but in a private garden everything that is best in the forms of *Syringa vulgaris* can be found in not over a dozen of the single-flowered and a dozen of the double-flowered forms. The Arboretum does not undertake to name the twenty-four best varieties. The selection must be left to the person who is going to plant them for no two persons agree about Lilac-flowers. There are already between one hundred and sixty and one hundred and seventy named varieties of this Lilac in the Arboretum collection. The flowers are fast opening, and the best way for persons living in the neighborhood of Boston to make their selection is to study the Arboretum collection, and make notes on the color and size of the flowers and the size and shape of the flower-clusters.

In planting Lilacs it must be remembered that plants on their own roots are superior to those which have been grafted on other varieties of the common Lilac, for Lilacs produce many root-suckers. These often grow vigorously, so that a person who buys a fine named variety may in a few years find that the suckers from the root on which it was grafted have overpowered and killed his named variety, or that he has a bush producing on different branches flowers of his original purchase and of the stock. Nurserymen also use the Privet as a stock on which to graft Lilacs. This is a better stock than the Lilac for if it produces suckers they are easily recognized and can be removed, and if the grafted plants are set deep Lilac roots are soon produced. Privet-stock is strongly advocated by many good growers of Lilacs but others still believe that the best plants are raised from cuttings which can be made in winter from hard wood, but best from the soft wood taken in late June or early July. No one should ever buy a Lilac plant grafted on the root of another Lilac.

The Persian Lilac, the *Syringa persica* of botanists, was known in England as early as 1658. This is a beautiful, hardy plant with slender, drooping, wide-spreading branches, narrower leaves than those of the common Lilac, and small fragrant, lavender-colored flowers in short compact clusters. There is a variety with white flowers and another with laciniately lobed leaves. For many years it was universally believed that because Linnaeus had named it *Syringa persica* this plant was a native of Persia or of some country adjacent to Persia. Meyer, collecting in China for the Department of Agriculture of the United
States, found in 1915 quantities of a Lilac covering hillsides in Kansu. Plants raised from seeds of this Lilac have flowered and proved identical with the lobed leaf form of Syringa persica and as the plants have grown stronger they produce branches with the entire leaves of the type of the species. Since 1915 the Arboretum has also received dried specimens of this Lilac collected in Kansu. As a specimen of a wild plant from Persia is not to be found in the large European herbaria, there is every reason to believe that the Persian Lilac is a Chinese plant, brought from China to western Asia and Europe just as the Peach and other Chinese plants found their way westward.

Fifty years ago the species of Syringa known in this country were Syringa vulgaris, S. persica, the Hungarian S. Josikaea, the Himalayan S. Emodii, and the Chinese S. oblata and S. amurensis, and two hybrids. Now there are twenty-seven species growing here with a few varieties and nearly all the known hybrids. In addition to these are a few species or perhaps forms which have been described by botanists but not yet introduced into cultivation. Of the twenty-seven species now in this country, twenty-two have been introduced by the Arboretum. Among these Arboretum introductions there are several beautiful and important garden plants. Among them for many persons the best is

**Syringa pubescens.** This is a tall shrub with erect stems, small leaves and broad clusters of small, pale mauve flowers with a long slender corolla-tube. For their fragrance which is more pungent and delightful than that of the flower of any other Lilac, *Syringa pubescens* should find a place in every northern garden. Plants in the United States have failed to produce seeds and as this species has proved unusually difficult to increase by cuttings, it has remained one of the rarest Lilacs in American gardens. It can, of course, be increased by grafting and sooner or later fertile seeds will be found on some of the large plants growing in the Arboretum. *Syringa pubescens* has been growing in the Arboretum since 1883 where it was raised from seeds sent here by Dr. Bretschneider from Peking.

**Syringa villosa** is another first rate garden plant for which the United States is also indebted to Dr. Bretschneider. It is a large, round-topped bush from ten to twelve feet tall and wide, with large, broad, elliptic to oblong leaves, bright green and dull on the upper surface and pale below, a broad or narrow cluster of flesh colored or nearly white flowers which have the rather disagreeable odor of those of the Privet. In spite of this drawback *S. villosa* is a good garden plant; the habit is excellent; it flowers freely every year and the flowers do not open until those of most other Lilacs have faded.

**Syringa Sweeginzowii** is a native of northwestern China and came to the Arboretum by the way of St. Petersburg. It is a narrow shrub with slender erect branches, narrow leaves and long narrow clusters of slightly fragrant flowers, flesh-colored in the bud and becoming white after opening, with a long slender corolla tube. The relationship of this Lilac which flowers profusely every year, is with *S. pubescens* but it is a smaller plant blooming ten or twelve days later and the flowers are much less fragrant. As it grows in the Arboretum, *S. Sweeginzowii* is one of the handsomest of the Lilacs of recent introduction.
Syringa Julianae, one of Wilson's discoveries in western China, is another plant which deserves a permanent place in American gardens. It is also of the same group as *S. pubescens* with the same shaped flowers with the long corolla tube, but they are arranged in a short broad cluster and are much less fragrant. Their beauty is increased by the contrast between the violet-purple of the outer surface of the corolla and the white inner surface of its lobes.

Syringa tomentella, or as it has sometimes been called *S. Wilsonii*, another of Wilson's Chinese discoveries, is a tall fast growing, hardy shrub with slender arching stems forming an open broad head. The leaves resemble those of *S. villosa* and the flowers which are produced in large open clusters are of the palest rose-color with a long slender corolla-tube.

Syringa microphylla, although by no means one of the handsomest of the new Lilacs, is interesting because it blooms every year in October as well as in June. It is a native of north-central China and is a narrow shrub with slender erect stems and small leaves and small pale rose-colored flowers in small narrow clusters.

Syringa reflexa which resembles *S. villosa* in habit and foliage differs from all other Lilacs in its narrow, cylindric, pendent clusters of dark rose-colored flowers. It is a native of western China where it was discovered by Wilson. It is a hardy, vigorous fast growing shrub which promises to grow here to a large size. As a garden plant it is chiefly valuable for the unusual shape of its drooping flower-clusters.

It is too soon to speak of the value of the recently introduced Korean species, *S. velutina, S. dilitata* and *S. formosissima*, which are perfectly hardy in the Arboretum and have already flowered sparingly in the Arboretum.

A Hybrid Lilac. The first hybrid Lilac appeared in the Botanic Garden at Rouen in 1810, and was the result of the crossing of *Syringa vulgaris* and *S. persica*. It is one of the most valuable of Lilacs. It grows quickly into a bush ten or twelve feet high and broad of rather open habit, and is very hardy and blooms freely every year. In shape the leaves resemble those of the Persian Lilac but are broader. The flowers, too, resemble those of the Persian Lilac, but are longer and produced in massive clusters sometimes two feet in length and so heavy that the slender branches can barely support them. The flowers are reddish purple and there are forms with darker red flowers and with nearly white flowers. This Lilac has often been called *Syringa rothomagensis*, but unfortunately through a misunderstanding of its origin the oldest and correct name for it is *Syringa chinensis*.

Early Azaleas. The pink flowered *Rhododendron Vaseyi* from the Carolina Blue Ridge is now blooming near the Meadow Road, and the Japanese *R. Kaempferi* now makes a blaze of color on the southern slope of Bussey Hill.