Now is Lilac time in the Arboretum. On a sloping bank on the left hand side of Bussey Hill Road, entering from the Forest Hills Gate, several hundreds of Lilac bushes are putting forth their blossoms. Of the twenty-eight recognized species of Lilac twenty may be seen growing there and with them about 150 named varieties that have originated in gardens. There also may be seen the parents of the Common Lilac with the improved varieties which have resulted from the skill of plant breeders in France, in Germany, and in this country. The Lilac is the favorite flowering shrub of the people of this part of America and every year they flock in thousands to the feast of blossom the Arboretum affords. Perfect hardiness, suitability to the climate, abundant blossoms, and pleasing fragrance are the attributes of this most excellent plant. The flowers may be single or double, pure white or varying in color from pale lilac-purple and almost pink to rich shades of purplish crimson; in some they are nearly blue. The shades grade imperceptibly into one another and the English language is not rich enough to define the color tones exactly. Neither do the different color charts help much since without having one in hand to match the blossoms the terms employed are meaningless. The flowers, hundreds together, are borne in more or less upright thyrsoid panicles each often a foot or more tall, and in a well-flowered bush every shoot terminates in a cluster. Forms of the Common Lilac are exceedingly numerous and every year sees them added to, although it is doubtful if many are real improvements on existing sorts. In no flower does personal taste play a more important part and the only way to make a satisfactory selection is for those interested to visit the collection and jot down the names of the sorts that most appeal to them.

Lilacs are of simple culture but they demand a rich, well-drained soil. The so-called French hybrids, which are selections and seminal variants of the Common Lilac, in particular will not flourish in a situation where the roots are waterlogged during the winter months. Good air and root drainage are essential; they love a rich loamy soil and enjoy lime. If the latter be naturally absent, it can be added in the
form of bonemeal. This and well-rotted cowdung are the best fertilizers. So soon as the flowers are past they should be cut away so as not to hinder the growth; at the same time any pruning necessary to keep the bushes shapely should be done. If, however, the plants through neglect become thin and scrawny, they should be cut to the ground in the early spring so that they may enjoy the advantage of a full season in which to grow. Such treatment is drastic and should not be undertaken except when necessity demands and it must be remembered that for the bushes to recuperate, a couple of years at least will be necessary. With such severely pruned Lilacs, cultivation and feeding will hasten their rehabilitation. The Common Lilac has been a favorite flower with western people for several centuries. It was first found in cultivation in Constantinople so long ago as 1554 and about 1563 was carried to Vienna from whence it spread throughout Europe. How or by whom it was taken to Constantinople is a mystery and it was not until 1828 that it was discovered in a wild state. This was in Banat in western Rumania; in 1841 it was found on the mountains of Bulgaria. It was one of the earliest flowering shrubs brought to this country but, here again, when and by whom it has been impossible to discover. Evidently its beauty and fragrance impressed itself on early observers who exerted themselves to cultivate it for their own delectation.

*Syringa oblata*, of which there are three varieties (*affinis*, *Giralddii*, *dilatata*), is the first Lilac to open its blossoms. The plant to which the name *S. oblata* belongs was first found in gardens of northern China and was introduced into cultivation by Robert Fortune in 1856. This Lilac is characterized by its compact dome-shaped truss of lilac-purple blossoms which usually get injured by late frosts. The variety *affinis* has white flowers and is also commonly cultivated in Chinese gardens. The variety *Giralddii* is a wilding with lilac-colored blossoms borne in loose open clusters. The variety *dilatata* is native of Korea and is perhaps the most pleasing form of the species. It is of graceful habit with slender branchlets and bears in abundance lax panicles of lilac-pink, long-tubed blossoms. *S. oblata* in all its forms is remarkable for the large size of its broad leathery leaves, which in the autumn assume rich tints of vinous-purple. Crossed with the Common Lilac (*S. vulgaris*) it has given rise to a race known as *S. hyacinthiflora*, of which there are a number of named forms. They are all of vigorous growth, tall in stature and open their fragrant blossoms before those of the Common Lilac. The typical *S. hyacinthiflora* may be seen in the middle of the Lilac group and half a dozen or so named varieties of this hybrid race are growing above the Forsythias.

*Syringa pubescens* has the most pleasantly fragrant blossoms of any Lilac and the large bush on the left of the walk near the center of the collection fills the air for some distance. This is also a native of northern China and was first raised in the Arboretum from seeds received from Peking in 1882. It is a free-growing, free-flowering shrub with erect, rather slender stems, small leaves and large clusters of pale lilac,
long-tubed but rather small flowers. No Lilac is more floriferous and none more deserving of a place in gardens.

Syringa pinnatifolia is an oddity. It has small Ash-like leaves and lateral pyramidate clusters of tiny white flowers. It blossoms about the same time as S. oblata and on account of its un-lilac-like appearance attracts much attention. In itself it has no special garden value but to the hybridist on account of its distinct pinnate foliage it may be of value. It is native of the high mountains of the principality of Mupin, in western China, where it was discovered in 1904 by E. H. Wilson, who introduced it into cultivation.

Syringa Meyeri is a slender stemmed shrub of compact habit, and one of the first of the Lilacs to bloom. The flowers are more or less reddish lilac-colored and are borne in upright lateral and terminal clusters, forming large panicles. It is known only as a cultivated plant in gardens of northern China. A peculiarity of this Lilac is that in early autumn it bears a more or less abundant second crop of blossoms.

Syringa persica, the so-called Persian Lilac, is an old favorite now not so often seen in gardens as its merit warrants. It blossoms after the rank and file of the Common Lilacs are past when its slender shoots are transformed into flowering plumes of pale rosy purple or white. It is a spreading floriferous bush of medium height with small leaves. The type has entire leaves, but there is a form in which the leaves are incised (laciniata) and another with white blossoms. The specific name of this Lilac is misleading, since its native home is the province of Kansu in northwestern China. When or how it reached Persia, where it has been cultivated from very early times, is quite unknown though probably it was carried by early travellers across Asia by the old trade routes which linked China with Persia and the valley of the Euphrates.

Syringa chinensis or S. rothomagensis as it is often called, the Rouen Lilac, is the oldest of all hybrid Lilacs and in the opinion of many good judges the most outstanding member of the tribe. It is a cross between S. vulgaris and S. persica, which appeared as a natural hybrid about 1777 in the Botanic Garden at Rouen. Its sudden and mysterious origin gave rise to all sorts of false stories, not least being that it came from China, which egregious error gave rise to its specific misnomer. It is a long-lived bush and attains a large size, specimens 20 feet tall and 30 feet through being known. No Lilac flowers more abundantly, and old specimens in bloom resemble a tumbling mass of blossom. As in other Lilacs, so in this, the flowers vary from nearly white to reddish purple. Its constitution is as sound as that of the Common Lilac itself and much greater than that of a number of species and a host of the so-called French hybrids. The influence of the Common Lilac is shown by the vigorous habit but the narrower leaves, slender branches and abundant flower clusters are inherited from S. persica.

E. H. W.