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# Lilacs

Quarterly Journal of the International Lilac Society

## Beauty of Petersburg

Lilacia  
Park



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lacs. Through exchange of knowledge, experience, and facts gained by members it  
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'Beauty of Petersburg'  
Photo by Tatiana Polyakova



# INTERNATIONAL LILAC SOCIETY

## Table of Contents

- 4**  
President's Message
- 7**  
Convention Corner Calendar
- 8**  
Lilac Registry: Registrar's  
2020 Report
- 11**  
'Beauty of Petersburg'
- 12**  
The Truth About Lilac Bushes

- 14**  
Lilacia Park: Designated  
Historic District by the  
National Park Service
- 24**  
S. (Villosae Group) 'Marie  
Rogers': A Unique Lilac

**ON THE FRONT**  
**Snow-covered Lilac**  
Photo by Tom Gober

**ON THE BACK**  
**Snow-covered Lilac**  
Photo by Tom Gober

**EDITOR'S DEADLINE**  
FOR SUMMER ISSUE:  
JUNE 20, 2020  
[Please send photos + articles]

## President's Message

### Dear *Syringa* Enthusiasts Around the World,

Greetings. Happy Year to all; wishing everyone the best of health and prosperity in this leap year of 2020. It is winter once again in northeast Ohio. So far it has been a mild winter, but February can be a changeable month. I was reading my address from a year ago, and was reminded that we had a similar winter; namely, wet but with above average temperatures.



This year marks the 100th year of lilacs in my garden, the Wolcott Lilac Gardens. Last year, I incorporated my gardens to a non-profit organization and I held my first Board meeting in December. We are planning events to celebrate this momentous year, plus several fundraising activities. Next year we hope to start a 5K run. But this year we are going to have a ticketed party in the garden on the evening before Mother's Day. I would love to get your input on events that you have done locally that were successful. I am attempting to establish an endowment fund for the maintenance and future restorations to the house (157 years old) and gardens. I will have the gardens open for tours May 1-4 and May 8-10, 2020.

As I was preparing to write my winter address to all of you, I received an email from a member located in Hudson, WI. It was insightful with ideas for potential fundraising for our Society. Many of his ideas were geared for the convention, but I feel most could be used in our local regions. After I discuss these at the board of director's meeting, I will explain his ideas. Hopefully, we can implement several after the convention.

Ok, now on to some business issues, of sorts. First is the convention, it will be June 4-7, 2020 in St. Georges, Quebec. Claire Fouquet and

the Board of Les Musée des Lilas is hosting and planning this year's convention. Les Musée des Lilas has a collection of more than 600 lilacs with almost 450 that are labeled. They are arranged by hybridizer or country of origin. The city of St. Georges is a short distance from Quebec City which is a true European style city located in Canada. It is recommended that you extend your stay to visit and see the beautiful sites of Quebec City. So, if you are planning on attending, be sure to send in your reservations now.

Also, it is after the first of the year and our membership drive is on. Now, you may securely renew online on the website or by regular mail with the renewal form that was included in the fall "Lilacs" journal. If you have family or friends who might be interested in joining, ask them! You could even buy them a gift membership. The journal is worth the membership alone!

The ILS website is up and running, however, we are still working out a few issues. Please check it out at [www.internationallilacsociety.org](http://www.internationallilacsociety.org). The latest version of the Lilac Register ("International Register and Checklist of Cultivar Names in the Genus *Syringa* L. (Oleaceae)") was released January 1, 2020. It is posted on the ILS website as well. Dr. Mark DeBard, the Registrar, has been actively updating and reviewing new cultivars for evaluation and entry into the Register. Also, check out (if you missed reading it) the 2019 Updated Taxonomy of the Genus *Syringa* L. It was a big project completed by Dr. Mark DeBard. It was published in the Fall 2019 "Lilacs" Journal. The Lilac Database has a final revision. It will be offered for sale at the next convention. This year, in addition to DVD, it will be available in a flash drive format (for an additional cost); ideal for all of us who no longer have DVD drivers on our computers. It will be available for purchase on the website in the near future. The next revision will be in at least five years, as per Mark.

We need volunteers to fill some open positions. Most importantly, we are in need of a Membership Secretary. Due to her full-time job, a long commute to work, and she is also running a small nursery, Jamie does not have time to fulfill the duties. This position does



require a member in the US. After this year's convention, the Honors and Awards Chair will also be open. If you have any interest in either of these positions, please reach out to me and I will send you the responsibilities for either of the positions.

This year has been a relatively quiet one. As I have stated in the past, the ILS is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2021. Plans are underway for our 50th convention in Rochester, NY. If you ever plan to attend a convention (outside of this year's), then plan on attending the one commemorating our 50th anniversary. Details will be released in St. Georges, Canada at this year's convention. I will be hosting the 2022 convention in Kent/Akron Ohio. Who knows where we might be for the 2023 convention? If you think you might be interested in hosting a convention in your neck of the woods, please contact Karen McCauley, our Convention Planning Chair, for details. Don't forget to renew your membership, power is in numbers! Plus, you can't attend a convention unless you have renewed. Until the spring edition, may your dreams of new lilacs come true!

Sincerely yours,

*Dr. Robert A. Zavodny*

ILS President

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## Convention Corner Calendar

### Up Next: 2020 ILS Annual Convention

#### June 4-7, 2020 Sainte Georges, Quebec

Claire Fouquet and Le Musée des Lilas/The Lilac Museum will be the local hosts in 2020. Registration & hotel information recently published can now be found on the ILS website. Please hurry as registration cut off is April 1, 2020.

#### May 13-15, 2021 Rochester, New York

The ILS was originally organized in New York in May 1971. It's official we will be celebrating our 50th Anniversary in New York. If you are a member in New York and would like to volunteer in any way, your assistance would be greatly appreciated. Please contact our host Bob Hoepfl or Karen McCauley if you would like to volunteer.

#### May 2022 Kent, Ohio

Details will be announced later.

Thank you to all the ILS volunteers that donate their time, and money, to make these events happen. If you would like to host an upcoming convention, please contact me. Thanks for your cooperation.

*Karen McCauley*

Convention Chair

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Phone: 952.443.3703



# Lilac Register: Registrar's 2020 Report

In May of 2019 the International Lilac Society (ILS) was appointed as the International Cultivar Registration Authority (ICRA) by the International Society for Horticultural Science (ISHS), replacing the Royal Botanical Gardens of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. With the approval of Freek Vrugtman, I was appointed by the ILS as the new Registrar. Freek was elected as Registrar Emeritus by the ILS after a 40-year career as Registrar and several years of mentoring me in my new role. Recognizing my late-life interest and still-developing expertise in lilacs, I was delighted when Claire Fouquet, David Gressley, and Tatiana Polyakova agreed to accept appointments as Assistant Registrars. Their help has been invaluable.



The International Register & Checklist of Cultivar Names for the Genus *Syringa* ("The Register") is a worldwide lilac database of almost 3500 entries, with about 2400 known cultivars. Of these, over 1700 have established and accepted names (having been described in the literature) and over 1100 are registered with their name protected by The Register.<sup>1</sup> About 770 of these 1100 were presumed registered at The Register's beginnings in 1953. The ILS has a Photo and Color Database of 1490 different cultivars and taxons.

The ISHS Register system exists as a voluntary, non-statutory system with no legal protection. Its broad authority ultimately comes under the auspices of the International Science Council (ISC). The ISC consists of about 40 international science unions and associations, and 140 national and regional science academies and research councils. These include all major national academies.<sup>3</sup>

From May to January of this past year, there have been 3 major releases of the updated Register. New features instituted this past year include a spreadsheet version for sorting (Claire Fouquet's excellent project), and a Word file with "track changes" from the last edition (available on request). In addition, it has 8 appendices (A-I), covering Registration, Patents, Trademarks, Originators, Registered Names by Date, *Syringa* Taxonomy, Common Names, a Glossary of common botanical terms, and Flower and Bud Color information. Introductory Pages give the details of how The Register is arranged.<sup>1</sup>

This past year extensive formatting and spelling changes have updated the look of the Register. Information on many cultivars has been updated, especially the Russian and Baltic ones through the cooperation of Olga Aladina, Tatiana Polyakova, Igor Semenov, and Natalia Savenko. Hideo Ihara has provided extensive assistance on new Japanese cultivars, and Tim Wood has helped with his new American lilac releases.

Many cultivars have been registered and are waiting to be published. There is a new plan in place for the ISHS to release annual printed copies of new registrations for some ICRA's, including *Syringa*. I plan to submit about 40 new registrations for publication by them this summer.

All the rules governing the naming and registration of cultivars are available in the ICNCP as a free online version.<sup>4</sup> It is the hope of the Registrar that The Register will be consulted before any lilac cultivar name is chosen in order to prevent duplication, and that the cultivar name will follow the rules of the ICNCP, in order to prevent rejection of the chosen name.

The Registrar welcomes any additions or corrections to The Register at any time from any authoritative source. It is indeed a work-in-progress and new knowledge results in frequent changes. If you have any suggestions for improving The Register or its Appendices, please contact the Registrar.



## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> <https://www.internationallilacsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/International-Register-up-dated-January-1-2019.pdf>
- <sup>2</sup> <https://www.ishs.org/nomenclature-and-cultivar-registration/icra>
- <sup>3</sup> <https://council.science/about-us/>
- <sup>4</sup> [https://www.ishs.org/sites/default/files/static/ScriptaHorticulturae\\_18.pdf](https://www.ishs.org/sites/default/files/static/ScriptaHorticulturae_18.pdf)

—  
*Dr. Mark L. DeBard, MD*

Registrar, International Cultivar Registration Authority for *Syringa*  
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Columbus, Ohio USA

## International Lilac Register on the Web

—  
<https://www.internationallilacsociety.org/public-register/>



Home About Us ▾ Lilacs ▾ Membership ▾ Conventions ▾ Meetings & Governance ▾ Contact Us



*A lilac in every garden... the world over!*

The International Lilac Society (ILS) is a group of people who have a common interest in lilacs.

- Do you grow lilacs?
- Sell lilacs?
- Know the DNA sequence of some lilacs?
- Display lilacs for the public?
- Or just like the way they look or smell?

If any of this applies to you, you are welcome at ILS!

48+  
Years

Bringing Lilac enthusiasts together since 1971!

23+  
Countries

Members from all over the world.

25  
Taxons

2600 lilac cultivars (varieties).

100's  
of Publications

Newsletters and Journals available.

## 'Beauty of Petersburg'

—  
by *Tatiana Polyakova*

The story of the lilac 'Beauty of Petersburg' started way back in 2003, when Vladimir Reinvald, the Chief Agriculturalist of the Peter the Great Botanical Garden (St. Petersburg), discovered a branch on a 'Beauty of Moscow' bush with an inflorescence considerably different in color. This mutation was afterwards fixed by grafting, and then for several years was propagated by cuttings and grafting. All blooming bushes had the same characteristics and habit of the initially discovered mutation. Also, throughout this 15-year period, the branch with the mutation that remained on that bush of 'Beauty of Moscow' steadily produced inflorescences retaining the difference. Following the requests of numerous admirers, this new lilac has received the name 'Krasavitsa Peterburga' ('Beauty of Petersburg') because it is not just splendid, but also very harmonious with the atmosphere of this northern city of white nights, rains and fogs. Its buds are light lilac-tinged violet, while the florets are double, light violet, pearlescent, and over 3 cm in diameter. While its form is identical to the form of the florets of 'Beauty of Moscow', the inflorescences are larger and denser than those of 'Beauty of Moscow'. The new cultivar will be a perfect addition to all the already existing beauties from different countries like 'Belle de Nancy', 'Krasavitsa Moskvyy', 'Minskaya Krasavitsa' and 'Schöne von Stuttgart'.



'Beauty of Petersburg'  
Photo by Tatiana Polyakova

## The Truth About Lilac Bushes

by Tim Bean, reprinted with permission from *Orange Bean Indiana*

“I had an article idea for you,” Chris Orange said. “Think about the old farmhouses you’ve seen, and how often you see lilac bushes.” Chris Orange is the park manager of the Grand Kankakee Marsh County Park in Lake County, Indiana. As sharp as a new razor and a frequent inspiration for articles on this site, Chris is a walking file cabinet of Indiana lore. Also, he’s the brother of the co-founder.

Yes, I had seen lilac bushes frequently on the site of old farmhouses. I thought of several I had seen in a line, usually towards the back of the property. “I’ll bite. I assumed it was decorative,” I said.

Chris shook his head. “Trust me, they didn’t spend much time a hundred years ago bothering with landscaping. That’s a pretty recent thing. Lilac bushes—“

“Lilac bushes or lilac trees?”

“Bushes, usually. The trees get about twenty-five feet tall, the bushes only a dozen or so. And the bushes are more fragrant.” Chris leaned back in his chair and steepled his hands. His degree in education shined through at moments like this. “They’d often plant them for two reasons: One, to mark the grave of a miscarriage or bury placenta after a birth.”

I shivered. My wife and I had endured three miscarriages. I remembered the sympathy cards: a soft lavender. The lilac.

“What’s the other purpose?” I asked.

“Not quite as honorable,” he said and chuckled a little. “You know the smell of lilac bushes?”

I did. I am not a horticulturist and have frequently failed to repair simple patches of grass in my yard, but I do have a lilac bush at the



edge of my property (which incidentally is just over a hundred years old). Few things in nature smell as good as a lilac bush in bloom, and no candle or spray can ever really duplicate the smell.

“They smell good,” I said. “Outhouses,” he said, nodding again. “They’d plant them next to outhouses and when it came time to move the outhouse, as it did when—uh—they got too stinky. Or full. They’d move the outhouse down and plant another lilac bush over the filled hole. Decades later, same thing. Eventually, on old, old properties, you’d see a line of these lilac bushes, usually on the edge of the property. Far away from delicate eyes. And noses.”

I thought about it for a minute. “That would make a good article. But I’d need to substantiate all this.”

“You would. And can. I just ask that you mention me in the article. Make me sound smart. And see if you can squeeze in the marsh, maybe get us some likes on Facebook,” he said.

“I’d be happy to,” I said. And I did.

For those interested in historical examples of the lilac’s use for both outhouses and in commemorating the grave of stillbirths or miscarriages, read The Truth in “The Truth About Lilacs.”



## Lilacia Park: Designated Historic District by the National Park Service

by *Marymae Meyer*

On May 10, 2019, after some ten years of diligent work by Lombard's 11-member Historic Preservation Commission, the plot of land that Col. William R. Plum fondly named Lilacia and which he bequeathed to the people of Lombard, IL in 1927, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the National Park Service. (Lilacia Park Entrance)



What requirements had to be met to achieve this designation? Rita Schneider, President of Lombard's Historic Preservation Commission, explained that the National Park Service requirements for land are quite different from those for historic buildings, therefore, Lilacia Park is considered a "district". Since the subject property must be over fifty years old, the period under consideration was fixed at 1929-1969. Renowned landscape architect Jens Jensen had completed the design in 1930, but the Commission was required to provide a complete historical background of the park, maps and specific documents to align Jensen's plan and the park's footprint, in order to receive preliminary approval to proceed from the Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer. Given the complexities of documenting components such as flagstone areas, benches, structures and objects as well as meeting grant money deadlines, the Commission hired an experienced historic landscape designer and writer to prepare and submit the final application. Once the application was reviewed and approved by the Council of the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office in February 2019, it was finally passed to the federal level for juried approval. What role did lilacs play in attaining this designation? The following is excerpted from the



Lilacia Park Entrance  
Photo by Marymae Meyer

"Narrative Statement of Significance" portion of the registration form:

"The Lilacia Park Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history. The property is significant at the local level in the area of Entertainment/ Recreation. The property donated by Col. William R. Plum in 1927 became the Village of Lombard's first public park and has been home to the annual Lilac Time festival since 1930. Lilacia Park's annual display of hundreds of blooming lilacs of various cultivars, along with the associated Lilac Time festival, have drawn visitors to Lombard for 88 years and form an integral part of the Village of Lombard's culture and identity. The 1927 Plum donation spurred the creation of the Lombard



ÉTABLISSEMENT D'HORTICULTURE

Expédié par

V. LEMOINE ET FILS, A NANCY

Désignation des Colis

Mr William R. Plum, Lombard Hill Doi'

Poids

NANCY, le Dec. 28<sup>th</sup> 1925.

L. r. d.  
IMP. A. HUMBLLOT & C<sup>o</sup> - NANCY

1	Syringa Capitaine Perrault	1	10
1	" Henry Floral	1	10
2/1	" Marie Finon		10
2/1	" Maurice Baris		4
	Certificate of plant inspection & postage reduced to		2
		£	3 17

Received payment by cheque with thanks

V. Lemoine & Fils

EL

Sent this day per parcel post to the Federal Horticultural Board.

Nobody grows in Europe a complete collection of lilacs. You have probably the largest in the world: more than the Arnold Arboretum & the Public Parks of Rochester NY.

Yours truly

V. Lemoine & Fils

EL

Lemoine Invoice with Message  
Photo by Marymae Meyer

Park District and created the village's first public park. Lilacia Park is the source of Lombard's nickname, "the Lilac Village." A publication from the annual Lilac Time festival notes: "It is impossible to separate Lombard from its lilacs."

The Lilacia Park Historic District is also noteworthy for the history and influence of the Plum lilac collection, developed on the property by Col. William R. Plum between 1911 and 1927. This was among a small group of lilac collections of similar scope, including those at the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University and Highland Park in Rochester, New York. Plum's work to create the collection included the exchange of specimens with the managers of the other major lilac collections in the United States. In 1925, Émile Lemoine of V. Lemoine et Fils of Nancy, France, the nursery that developed many hybrid lilacs, wrote the Plum's collection was likely the largest and most complete collection of lilacs in the world. (Lemoine Invoice) As Plum's lilac collection grew, he recorded different cultivars and varieties that performed well in the local environment. As he propagated cultivars with desirable traits, (the method to produce new plants from vegetative parts of the original plant, such as the leaves, stems, and roots), the additional lilac inventory fostered the sale and trade of lilacs, the diversity of Plum's collection, even as it evolved through the years, has also drawn interest from hobby gardeners and academics in search to broaden their horticultural understands. Plum received letters from surrounding garden clubs for permission to visit his collection. Joseph Dvorak, author of "A Four Year Study at Lilacia Park, Morton Arboretum, etc." also visited the park. Dvorak studied the collection at Lilacia Park and compared cultivars by floret form, thyse structure, clusters, and flowers, including line drawings. The importance of such a study is reflected with its inclusion on the International Lilac Society's 'Resources' as it (is) one of a handful of lilac materials widely used and is commonly used to aid identifications.

Jens Jensen reconfigured the collection in 1928-29, transforming Plum's nursery-like collection into a public park.



The collection as it exists today contains about 178 lilac varieties and cultivars and 700 lilac plants in total, as well as 25,000 tulips. At its peak, the park featured around 300 lilac cultivars (c. 1940). Despite these changes, Lilacia Park's lilac collection remains a landmark of American horticulture."

The narrative continues to describe the property, its various features and developmental history for some 15 pages. The following excerpt from page 11 will be of note to ILS members as this is the property now owned by ILS President Robert Zavodny:

"In 1925, Col. Plum gifted 50 lilacs to his niece Daisy Wolcott and her husband Duncan Wolcott, who were avid gardeners. They planted them at their home in Kent, Ohio. Following Duncan Wolcott's death in 1930, Daisy opened their garden for public tours in order to raise money. Now known as the Wolcott Lilac Garden, the collection grew to over 200 lilacs and became a local attraction. The gardens remain open to the public during Lilac bloom season and are also available for weddings and special events. The property is listed as a contributing resource to the West Main Street National Register District."

The above excerpts summarize the importance of lilacs in attaining the designation, but the necessary authentication was found in the actual documents, collection records, receipts and other dated materials. Some of the authentication came from old records and some came from the three-year project I undertook in 2008 of inventorying, cataloging, photographing, mapping and building a relational database of the Lilacia Park lilac collection. Among the huge assortment of materials amassed by Lombard Park District through the years and carefully archived by Lombard Historical Society were Lilac Time Catalogs (1934 LLL Catalog) that had been created by a group called Lombard Lilac League which hosted the annual lilac festival after Col. Plum died. Lombard Lilac League maintained collection records until World War II and occasionally printed the inventory list in an annual catalog which became invaluable in determining the continuity of specific cultivars in the collection. Unfortunately, continuity in the League's lilac



numbering system was not maintained, nor did the group map the collection, making it impossible to accurately determine how long any given cultivar had been in a specific location. Then, one day just a couple years ago our historical society's archivist Jean Crockett and I were studying what up to then was thought to be Col. Plum's lilac inventory list. As we moved the pages around on the table to match his directional notes (east, west, etc.), it dawned upon me that this is more than an inventory list, it is Col. Plum's planting map! Of course, before Jens Jensen's plan was implemented, Col. Plum had planted his lilacs in rows, just as this document lists them. (Plum Map p. 1, p.3 and Inset) We found confirmation there in Col. Plum's handwritten record: number 149 Argentea (correctly today: *S. reticulata* 'Argentea') and number 326 pekinensis (correctly today: *S. pekinensis*) are both tree lilacs which still stand today where Col. Plum's record showed them to be in 1926.

While most of us will never need to hire a specialist to prove the validity of our lilac records, this experience highlights the importance of keeping complete and accurate documentation of



172	166	147	136	124	112	100
173	161	149	137	125	113	101
174	162	150	138	126	114	102
175	163	151	139	127	115	103
176	164	152	140	128	116	104
177	165	153	141	129	117	105
178	166	154	142	130	118	106
179	167	155	143	131	119	107
180	168	156	144	132	120	108
181	169	157	145	133	121	109
182	170	158	146	134	122	110
183	171	159	147	135	123	111

306	305	304	303	302	301	300
307	306	305	304	303	302	301
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Plum Map Page 1

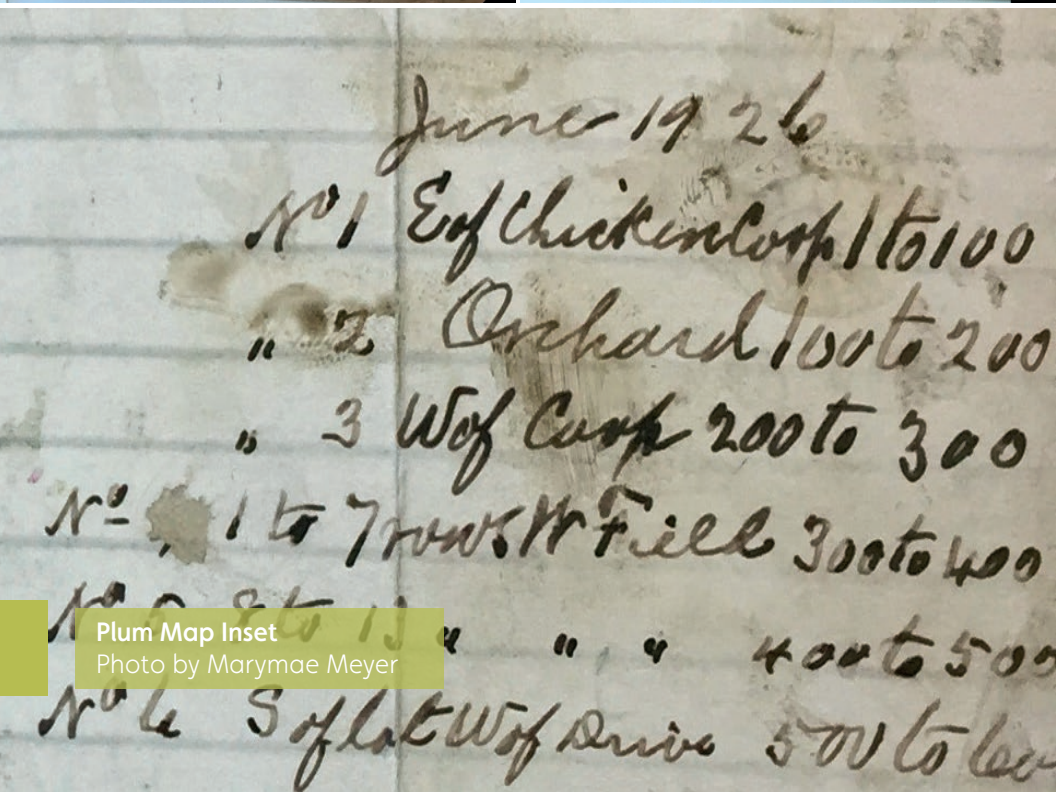
Plum Map Page 3

Photo by Marymae Meyer

Photo by Marymae Meyer

plant records. When I began my volunteer project of cataloging Lilacia's collection in 2008, the inventory was kept in an Excel spreadsheet just as many collectors find it convenient to do, yet Excel is designed for working with numeric values and calculations. I opted to use Microsoft's database program Access, a system designed to capture large amounts of information and which is especially useful for tracking inventories. At my urging, the park district hired a professional database builder with hopes of completing the project in time to introduce it at our 2011 ILS convention in Lombard. Numerous corrections and delays made it increasingly clear that the person I was working with did not understand the project, but we ran out of time and the problem culminated with the embarrassing discovery that, upon attempting presentation, it was an earlier, faulty version of the program that had been provided, so display was impossible.

Determined to bring the idea to fruition, I enrolled in classes, eventually achieving intermediate level as a Microsoft Access database builder. I programmed the fields to ensure that botanical names are automatically properly formatted upon entry, and created drop-down menus to select repetitive data such as originator names, floret shape, bloom time, etc. Because Access allows attachment of photos and other documents, creation of reports and labels from the database, all information, documents, photos, etc. pertinent to each specific plant is contained within one record. In our database, the alpha-numeric bed location is the constant; i.e., our planting beds are identified as A, B, C, etc. and the locations within each bed is numbered. So, even though there are numerous plantings of the cultivar *S. vulgaris* 'President Lincoln' within the park, each has its unique identifying code. When our municipality's IT manager learned of my project, he told me that Access is compatible with the village grid program that locates elements such as stop signs, fire hydrants, etc. In about five minutes time, we were able to run the Access program through the village system to produce the first mapping of our lilac collection into the village grid. The versatility of the program enables many various displays, including by bloom time and by color. The map



Plum Map Inset  
Photo by Marymae Meyer



plus a printout of the current lilac inventory became part of the Commission's application. (Lilacia Park populated map)

Our record keeping has come a long way from Col. Plum's rudimentary handwritten documents, but I have often wished I could tell him how very much he and his documents contributed to the lilac world as we know it today. Though I am no longer actively involved with the collection, I consider it a privilege to have had the opportunity to study the local history and to learn from ILS members such as Freek Vrugtman, the late Joan Speirs and Owen Rogers. One thing I learned from them that I would like to pass on to other ILS members is the importance of making it a habit to use the species name of a lilac as well as its cultivar name. Not only because in botany, the species describes what Mother Nature made generally different about a plant, so much of a lilac's heritage is contained in its full name, but because we are setting an example for those who follow us. And, reference to a given plant by its botanical name gives respect to growers who go through the lengthy and involved scientific process of breeding, naming and registering the name of their hybrid lilac – a process that can take as long ten years.

When I asked what the historic site designation means to the future of Lilacia Park, Sarah Richardt, President of Lombard Park District Board of Commissioners, answered, "The Lombard Park District is honored to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Although there are no special requirements for maintenance, it does put a level of scrutiny on the Park to do the right thing historically and for the lilac collection. The Lombard Park District has had a long history of caring for Lilacia Park and will work to maintain and grow the historic collection of cultivars in the future." So, while the designation may be more prestigious than it is functional, the timing of the recognition could not have been better as 2019 also marked Lombard's 150th anniversary of incorporation.





## S. (Villosae Group) 'Marie Rogers': A Unique Lilac

by Bill Horman

Psst! Here's what I know about 'Marie Rogers', a unique lilac cultivar. It is believed to be the first member of the *Syringa Villosa* Group to have numerous radial double (multipetaled) flowers. Radial double means that it displays all petals on the same plane with more petals than four per flower. The petal count varies from flower to flower. Ten petals on one flower has been observed. It seems that the higher the number of petals, the more likely the flower will display an increase in reproductive parts. I don't know whether the abundant pollen is fertile. Flowers with high numbers of petals are apt to produce more pollen than fewer petaled flowers, giving multipetal flower a rich yellow center, bringing to mind a bicolor flower.

I look at the pollen-rich flowers of 'Marie Rogers' and instantly think of miniature Easter lilies, because 'Marie Rogers' flowers also display a very long funnel-like corolla tube between the petals and its attachment to the rest of the stem. Open flowers have a diameter likely less than, but close to, that of a garden pea. The corolla tube length is approximately three times the flower width. Each flower petal ends in a single point, tending to recurve a bit the longer it is open. Flower buds sometimes display a faint lilac or light purple color, not usually on all the bud or corolla surface, but only in a small area, fading soon after the bud opens.

There is an airiness to the panicles as the cluster of flowers are not crowded with other clusters, since the distance between clusters increases as all parts of the panicles mature. Panicle stems are medium green color, as are the leaves of 'Marie Rogers', and the leaves seem noticeably larger than those of the Villosae Group generally. The flower buds are singular at a stem end, and they are of medium to dark brown color. Once the flower buds are fully formed and dormant, as in winter, they are noticeably large, nearly



'Marie Rogers'  
Photo by Bill Horman



spherical, reminding one of a royal crown, since the outer parts of the bud seem to be of scale-like identical parts, each with one short protruding point. I'm pretty sure, now 8 months since I observed the second year of consistent generous blooms on my 7-foot-tall 'Marie Rogers' lilac, that there is a pleasing delicate fragrance of the flowers, but not as robust as that of *S. vulgaris* which blooms a little before 'Marie Rogers'. Every fall the leaves become a pleasing yellow color.

'Marie Rogers' is a seedling that sprouted in the garden of the late very active ILS member Walter Oakes in Maine. He was given the seed by the widely loved Dr. Owen Rogers, who bred lilacs where he was a professor of plant science (University of New Hampshire, Durham). He named the lilac after his beloved wife, Marie; now both are luxuriating in heaven's lilacs. Owen, when first shown the new seedling in Walter's garden, exclaimed "This is what I was looking for!" As Owen's health began to fail, I called to ask what I could do for him. "Get Marie Rogers into commercial production" was his response. I accepted the challenge to help make his wish a reality. Many other ILS members also did not hesitate to help anyway they could. I was very fortunate to receive a 'Marie Rogers' lilac at the auction of the 2013 ILS annual meeting in Madison, WI. So far at least three other active members are associated with propagation of 'Marie Rogers'. I am happy and privileged to have played a small role in increasing the likelihood that 'Marie Rogers' will become readily available. I don't know how many copies of 'Marie Rogers' are gracing gardens and landscapes today, but I am hopeful that everyone will have a chance to enjoy this special, unique, wonderful lilac.

I am pondering...is the lilac a tetraploid (perhaps exposed to colchicine which sometimes doubles chromosomes)? Should 'Marie Rogers' be patented and/or trademarked? Would possible royalties go to the estate/family of Dr. and Mrs. Rogers?

If you would like to comment or ask questions about 'Marie Rogers' or wish to write your experience with it, please feel free to contact me and/or the ILS.

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'Marie Rogers'  
Photo by Bill Horman



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'Beauty of Petersburg'  
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