

No. 27

# ARNOLD ARBORETUM

HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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## BULLETIN

OF

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In Bulletin No. 23 something was said of the Chinese *Syringa villosa* and of the hybrids of this plant with the Hungarian *S. Josikaea*, represented by the variety called Lutèce. This variety is just passing out of flower and this year has sustained its reputation of being the handsomest of the late-flowering Lilacs. It is interesting that among the plants of *S. villosa* recently raised at the Arboretum there is one with nearly pure white flowers.

There is a group of Lilacs which bloom even later than Lutèce and its parents; they are not true Lilacs, however, and belong to the section Ligustrina of the genus which differs from the true Lilacs in the short tube of the corolla from which the stamens protrude. There are three species of this group, all natives of northeastern Asia; they are shrubs or small trees, and they produce white, bad-smelling flowers in large clusters. Two of the species are in bloom in the Lilac Group on the left-hand side of the Bussey Hill Road. The earliest of these plants, *S. amurensis*, is not flowering this year; it is a native of eastern Siberia, as its name indicates, and is a small tree with flat, spreading or slightly drooping clusters of white flowers. The second species to flower, *S. pekinensis*, a native of northern China, is a shrub rather than a tree, although it sometimes reaches the height of thirty feet, with numerous stout stems pendant at the ends and covered with bark peeling off in thin layers like that of some of the Birch trees. The long, narrow leaves hang gracefully, and the half-drooping flower-clusters, which are flat and unsymmetrical, are smaller than those of the other species but are produced in great quantities. *S. japonica*, a native of the forests of Japan, is the last of the Tree Lilacs to flower and is a tree often thirty or forty feet high, with a tall, stout trunk covered with lustrous bark like that of a Cherry tree, and a wide, round-topped head. The leaves are large, thick and dark green, and the flowers are produced in large, erect, symmetrical clusters. Like the other species of this group, *S. japonica* loses its leaves early in the autumn without change of color. *S. amurensis* and *S. pekinensis* have not become common in gardens, but *S. japonica* has been quite generally planted in those of the eastern states. It is one of the most valuable plants introduced by the Arboretum where it was first raised from seeds sent in 1876 by the late William S. Clark, the first President of the Massachusetts Agricultural College, and later the first President of the Agricultural College at Sapporo in Japan where this tree is common. One of the first seedlings raised at the Arboretum can be seen in the Apple Group on the right-hand side of the Forest Hills Road going toward the Forest Hills Gate, the site of the first Arboretum Nursery in which this Lilac was planted.

It is unfortunate that it is almost impossible to keep the Locust tree (*Robinia Pseudoacacia*) alive in eastern Massachusetts for any length of time owing to the borer which riddles the trunk and branches of this beautiful and valuable tree. There is now living in the Arboretum only one of the ornamental seedling forms of this tree which are so highly prized and so often planted in Europe, especially in Germany, but it is interesting that this is one of the most abnormal of these forms (var. *monophylla*) in which the compound leaves are reduced to a single leaflet. This variety is spreading rapidly on the bank on the right-hand side of

the Meadow Road beyond the Horsechestnut Group where it is flowering profusely this year and seems able to resist the borer. One of the most interesting Locusts in the collection is a hybrid (*Robinia Holdtii*) between *R. Pseudoacacia* and the Rocky Mountain *R. neo-mexicana* which appeared in a Colorado nursery a few years ago. This is a vigorous tree with pale pink flowers and seems better able to resist the borer than either of its parents. The shrubby Rose Acacia (*R. hispida*) is less often attacked by borers and when in flower it is a beautiful and conspicuous plant. It is, however, sometimes troublesome as it spreads rapidly by underground shoots and so may occupy too much space. Another shrubby Robinia, *R. Kelseyi*, from the southern Appalachian Mountain Region where it was discovered a few years ago, flowers well in the Arboretum and is a desirable and handsome plant. The other arborescent species, *R. viscosa*, the Clammy Locust, and *R. neo-mexicana* suffer badly from the attacks of the borer.

The first of the shrubby Hydrangeas to bloom, *Hydrangea Bretschneideri*, is now in flower. It is a large and very hardy shrub from Manchuria and northern China, and in this climate is one of the most satisfactory plants in the genus. It can be seen in the Shrub Collection, and with it is now flowering for the first time in the Arboretum a variety of the species (var. *setchuenensis*) discovered by Wilson in western China.

*Indigofera Kirilowii*, a low shrub from Manchuria and Korea, with racemes of pea-shaped pink flowers, is blooming in the Shrub Collection and on Hickory Path, near Centre Street, and is a hardy and handsome garden plant although little known in the United States. Another charming plant of the Pea Family, *Sophora viciifolia*, has been flowering also on Hemlock Path. This is a shrub two to four feet high with small pinnate leaves and showy blue and white flowers. It is a native of central and western China and appears to be perfectly at home in the Arboretum.

*Clematis tangutica*, which can be found on one of the trellises on the east side of the Shrub Collection, is beginning to open its flowers and will continue to open them for several weeks; they are vase-shaped and bright clear yellow, and as they fade are succeeded by heads of fruits with long glistening hairy tails. As the flowers open gradually during several weeks flowers and fruits appear on the plant at the same time. This Clematis is a native of the extreme western part of China and is one of the best of the hardy vines of recent introduction.

The flame-colored Azalea (*Rhododendron calendulaceum*) has been largely planted on the long slope below Azalea Path and in many of the Arboretum shrubberies, and, although it usually flowers abundantly, this year it has been exceptionally beautiful. Among the seedlings raised at the Arboretum there are plants with flowers of many shades of yellow and orange. Flowering rather later is another Rhododendron of the same region *R. arborescens*; the flowers of this shrub are pure white with bright red filaments and, if they are not so showy as those of the flame-colored Azalea, they are equally beautiful and much more fragrant. There are masses of this Azalea on each side of the Valley Road. The flowers of *R. arborescens* will be followed early in July by those of the Clammy Azalea (*R. viscosum*), a common plant in New England swamps, especially in those near the coast, which at midsummer are made fragrant by its pure white flowers. For three months the different Azaleas of the eastern United States flower in succession

in the Arboretum, and among them are plants as beautiful when in flower as any of the hybrid Azaleas produced in Europe. They are hardier and longer-lived than any of the European hybrids or the species of eastern Asia, and among the many shrubs which eastern North America has contributed to gardens none are more beautiful than these six Azaleas, or Rhododendrons as botanists now call them, which are named in the order of their flowering: *Vaseyi*, *canescens*, *nudiflorum*, *calendulaceum*, *arborescens*, and *viscosum*.

Much of the June beauty of the Arboretum is due to the general use in its plantations of several common native shrubs with handsome flowers and fruits. Thirty years ago most of our native shrubs were unknown to gardeners, but the Arboretum has lost no opportunity to teach the lesson that the best trees and shrubs for the permanent decoration of American parks and gardens are to be found in American fields and forests. Now, therefore, it is a satisfaction to know that the appreciation of the beauty and value of many of our native shrubs is gradually spreading from the Arboretum over the country and that it is now possible to find many of the best American trees and shrubs of eastern America in large quantities in several American nurseries.

One of the best of the native plants which have proved satisfactory in the Arboretum is *Cornus racemosa* or, as it is often called, *paniculata* or *candidissima*; this is a common inhabitant of roadsides and wood borders in this part of the country, and in cultivation it is one of the most free-flowering of all the Dogwoods. It is a round-headed shrub with slender erect gray stems which spread into dense broad thickets, and creamy white flowers produced in compound oblong clusters. The plant moreover is as beautiful in October as it is in June for the flowers are followed by translucent white berries borne on bright red stalks, making this one of the most interesting of the shrubs which ripen their fruit in mid-autumn.

A hybrid of this species with another native Dogwood, *Cornus obliqua*, appeared naturally in the Arboretum several years ago and is known as *Cornus Arnoldiana*. The oldest plants are now ten feet high and nearly as broad, with erect stems, and bear flower-clusters which are larger and handsomer than those of either of its parents. The flowers, however, of this hybrid are its chief beauty for it bears little fruit and therefore in the autumn is less interesting and ornamental than *Cornus racemosa*. The Silky Cornel, *Cornus Amomum*, flowers a little later. It has been much used in the Arboretum but in cultivation is not a satisfactory plant unless it can be given sufficient room for its wide-spreading branches to extend out freely and spread over the ground or over water; for this reason it should be planted as a specimen or on the borders of ponds and streams, for which it is admirably adapted. The purple stems are interesting in winter and the bright blue fruits, which ripen in the autumn, add materially to the attractions of this vigorous native shrub.

**The Arboretum will be grateful for any publicity given these Bulletins.**



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