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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.

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