ARNOLD ARBORETUM

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Lilacs are late in blooming this year but are now fast opening their flowers, and it is possible that Sunday, the 25th, will bring the largest number of visitors of the year to the Arboretum. The earliest species to flower, *Syringa pinnatifolia*, was in bloom on the 12th of May; this is a small compact shrub with small clusters of white flowers valuable only for their fragrance. *Syringa hyacinthiflora* was in flower at about the same time; this is an interesting hybrid between the Chinese *S. oblata* and some form of *S. vulgaris*. It is a large, well-shaped bush with good foliage and small clusters of double bluish-purple flowers which are extremely fragrant. This plant is worth more general cultivation as an interesting hybrid and for its early fragrant flowers. Although many species, chiefly from China, and several hybrids have found a place in a few gardens, when Lilacs are spoken of it is *Syringa vulgaris* and its numerous varieties which are usually referred to. This shrub was planted on land now occupied by the Arboretum as early probably as 1815 when Mr. Benjamin Bussey built his house and planted his garden along the summit of Bussey Hill. He planted a row of purple and white Lilacs along his garden walk and either the original plants or suckers from them have now grown into dense tall hedges on each side of the path and still bloom profusely.

It is now known that *Syringa vulgaris* 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 as Washington planted it at Mt. Vernon in 1785. The plants raised from seed collected from the wild

plant in Bulgaria are in the Arboretum collection which contains now one hundred and eighty-six named varieties. Hardly a week passes without a letter addressed to the Arboretum asks for the names of the best six or twenty-five Lilacs. All the varieties are handsome plants, and persons rarely 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 dislike them. All the forms of the garden Lilac have practically the same habit and foliage, and the same inconspicuous fruit; they all bloom freely every year, and breeding and selection have not influenced their perfume. 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. There is little difference in the time of flowering of all these varieties. 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. Many persons who visit the Arboretum find that Bussey's old Lilacs are more beautiful than the more recent Lemoine creations because they are the ones which have long been common in gardens and beloved by generations of New Englanders. A choice of these Lilacs is largely a matter of taste and color, and the Arboretum, in the hope of helping some of its correspondents, offers the following fifty as a good selection of these plants. They are all growing in the Arboretum collection where they bloom usually every year and most of them can now be found in American nurseries:

SINGLE VARIETIES: WHITE, *Madame Florent Stepman*, *Madame Moser*, *Princess Alexandra*, *Vestale*; PALE, *speciosa*, *spectabilis*, *Clara Cochet*, *Lucie Baltet*, *macrostachya*; MEDIUM, *Amethyst*, *Charles X.*, *Fürst Lichtenstein*, *Gloire de Moulins*, *Marlyensis pallida*, *Pyramidal*, *Ronsard*, *Saturnale*, *Triomphe d'Orléans*, *Ville de Troyes*; DARK, *Congo*, *Diderot*, *Laplace*, *Marceau*, *Montgolfier*, *Negro*, *Philémon*, *Professor Sargent*, *Réaumur*, *Turenne*, *Volcan*, *Edmond Boissier*.

DOUBLE VARIETIES: WHITE, *Edith Cavell*, *Madame Abel Chatenay*, *Madame Casimir Périer*, *Princess Clémentine*; PALE, *Léon Gambetta*; MEDIUM, *Dr. Masters*, *Duc de Massa*, *Jules Ferry*, *Julien Gérardin*, *Maréchal de Bassompierre*, *Maréchal Lannes*, *Maurice de Vilmorin*, *Olivier de Serres*, *René Jarry-Desloges*, *Desfontaines*, *Gaudichaud*, *Président Fallières*, *Président Loubet*, *Thunbergi*; DARK, *Paul Thirion*, *Violetta*, *Georges Bellair*.

In the next issue of this Bulletin a few notes will appear on some of the other species and hybrids of *Syringa*.

Azalea (*Rhododendron*) *lutea*. This Azalea produced its fragrant yellow flowers here for the first time in 1909 from seed collected by Dr. Schneider on the Caucasus and is only again covered with flowers this year which have been open for several days. It is remarkable that they are uninjured, although those of *Azalea poukhanense* have suffered for the first time, as have the flowers of *Rhododendron mucronulatum* which have been nearly all killed although this northern China deciduous-leaved plant has been growing in the Arboretum since 1885; it was raised from seed collected near Peking and has never before

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