



# Friends of the Central Experimental Farm

Spring 2012 Newsletter

Volume 24 No. 2

## The Preston Lilacs



R. Hinchliff

Preston lilac- *Syringa xprestoniae* 'Audrey'

Isabella Preston was a remarkable plant breeder. In her 26 years at the Central Experimental Farm, she transformed it into a more beautiful place, and also had significant impact on spreading beauty throughout Canada.

A special garden within the Ornamental Gardens captures that beauty. This spring marks the seventh year since the Preston Heritage Lilac Collection was created near the southern end of the Ornamental Gardens not far from the

Agriculture Museum's parking lot. The 75 lilacs there have thrived and a splendid display of blooms awaits visitors in early June.

After WW1, the Department of Agriculture saw the need to develop woody and herbaceous plants in response to public enthusiasm for ornamental gardening. Hiring Isabella Preston proved to be a brilliant move in that direction. Originally from Lancaster, England, Isabella had studied and worked at the Ontario Agricultural College (now the University of Guelph), where her work with lilies attracted worldwide attention.

### International fame and many awards

In 1920, W.T. Macoun, Dominion Horticulturist, hired Isabella as Specialist in Ornamental Horticulture. In her time at the Farm, she distinguished herself. Horticulturalists from around the world came to see her plants and to share in her vast store of knowledge. Isabella gained international fame and many awards for her hybrids. In addition to her lilacs, she developed the Rosybloom crab apples that today line Prince of Wales Drive, as well as Siberian irises, roses and lilies.

"After World War II, a Japanese admiral was brought to the United States as part of a friendship promotion program. He was asked if there was any special attraction he would like to see - Niagara Falls perhaps? The admiral thanked his hosts very politely and then answered (in rough translation), 'I would really like to travel to Canada to meet Miss Isabella Preston.' He was a lily enthusiast."<sup>1</sup>

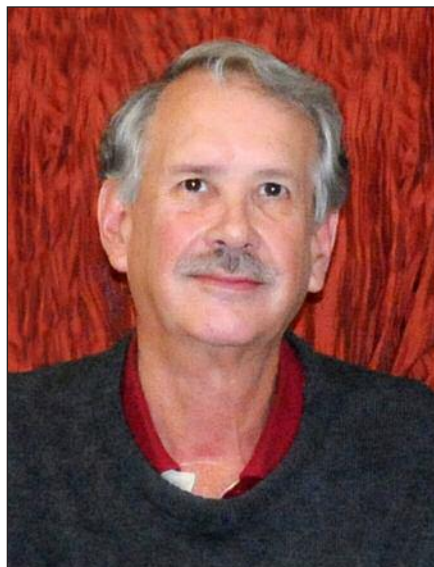
On top of her long hours of painstaking work in a broad range of plant breeding, Isabella wrote many pamphlets and articles, two books, gave radio talks, and conducted dignitaries around the Farm.

<sup>1</sup> Edwinna von Baeyer, "The Horticultural Odyssey of Isabella Preston," *Canadian Horticultural History*, 1 (3), 125-176, 1987

## President's Message

Spring is not far off and we'll soon be in our gardens and yards. Soon, too, the Friends of the Farm will begin another season in the Ornamental Gardens, Arboretum, and Shelter Belt. We hope to see many familiar faces returning and encourage you to urge friends and neighbours to become volunteers and help us in our work in support of the Central Experimental Farm. We are continually looking for new volunteers, not just for our gardening teams but also to help at our many fundraising events held from February through November, and also in the office year-round.

There are thousands of charities and not-for-profit organizations that owe their success to the generous efforts of volunteers. We appreciate that our volunteers have chosen to share their time and energy with the Friends of the Farm, and as we mark National Volunteer Week from April 15-21, we thank them for their commitment and hard work.



Chuck Craddock

We were saddened this past winter with the sudden illness of our long-time Director of Events, Diana Dakers-Ryan. We wish her a full recovery and look forward to welcoming her back to the Farm this summer.

Finally, as I mentioned at our AGM last September and as noted in the winter edition of the newsletter, we are looking for projects for the Friends to undertake in celebration of Canada's 150th birthday in 2017. It may seem a long way off, but it takes considerable time to come up with a list of projects, determine their feasibility, then plan, organize and deliver the selected project(s) that will significantly mark Canada's 150th birthday and bring recognition to the Friends of the Farm. Please send along your suggestions and comments.

I wish everyone happy gardening - whether in your backyard or at the Farm - and I look forward to seeing many of you outdoors at the CEF or at our many fundraising events.

## Mots du président

Le printemps approche et nous serons bientôt dans nos jardins. Bientôt aussi, les Amis de la Ferme entreprendront une autre saison dans les jardins ornementaux, à l'arboretum et dans la ceinture boisée. Nous espérons revoir de nombreux visages familiers et vous incitons à conseiller vivement à vos amis et voisins de devenir bénévoles et de nous aider à appuyer la Ferme expérimentale centrale. Nous sommes toujours à la recherche de nouveaux bénévoles non seulement pour nos équipes de jardinage, mais aussi pour nous aider lors de nos nombreuses activités de collecte de fonds tenues de février à novembre et également dans nos tâches administratives à notre bureau tout au long de l'année.

Des milliers d'organisations caritatives et sans but lucratif doivent leur succès à la généreuse participation de bénévoles. Nous sommes reconnaissants à nos bénévoles qui ont choisi de consacrer de leur temps aux Amis de la Ferme et nous profitons de la Semaine nationale du bénévolat du 15 au 21 avril pour les remercier de leur engagement et de leur travail.

Nous avons cet hiver appris avec tristesse la soudaine maladie de Diana Dakers-Ryan, qui est depuis longtemps notre directrice d'activités. Nous lui souhaitons de se rétablir complètement et espérons avoir le plaisir de la revoir à la Ferme cet été.

Enfin, comme je l'ai mentionné à notre AGA en septembre dernier et comme il a

été dit dans la livraison d'hiver du bulletin, nous sommes à la recherche de projets que les Amis de la Ferme pourront réaliser pour célébrer le 150<sup>e</sup> anniversaire du Canada en 2017. Cela vous semblera peut-être encore bien loin, mais il faut beaucoup de temps pour dresser une liste de projets, déterminer s'ils sont réalisables, puis planifier, organiser et réaliser le ou les projets retenus qui marqueront de manière importante le 150<sup>e</sup> anniversaire du Canada et seront source de gratitude envers les Amis de la Ferme. Veuillez nous faire parvenir vos suggestions et commentaires.

Bon jardinage, que ce soit dans votre jardin ou à la Ferme, et je compte avoir le plaisir de revoir beaucoup d'entre vous à la Ferme expérimentale centrale ou à nos nombreuses activités de collecte de fonds.

## On the Bus



Don't be left behind! Book now for the Friends of the Farm 4-day, 3-night bus tour of the Gardens of Quebec, July 15 to 18, 2012. Help Reford Gardens celebrate its 50th anniversary, take the ferry to Charlevoix, see Cap à l'Aigle's floral display, dine in Baie St. Paul, picnic at Montmorency Falls, dine in Hudson! All this for the incredible price of \$499, double occupancy. Non-members add \$26. Full details at [www.friendsofthefarm.ca](http://www.friendsofthefarm.ca) in Events schedule or call 613-230-3276 for more information.

Denise Kennedy



## The Preston Lilacs *(continued from Page 1)*

She was the first North American plant breeder to hybridize within the *Villosae* series of lilacs, and produced a whole new race of attractive, Canada-hardy late-blooming lilacs – named *Syringa xprestoniae* in her honour – and popularly known as the Preston lilacs. She named many of them after female Shakespearean characters, from 'Audrey' to 'Olivia' to 'Virgilia'.

Eighty of her late-blooming lilacs are recorded in the International Lilac Register – about one-half were distributed to nurseries and other institutions. Eight others were tested and named by Dr. Leslie at Morden Research Centre, Manitoba. In addition to the late lilacs, Isabella originated eight early blooming *hyacinthiflora* cultivars, seven of which are found in our Ornamental Gardens.

### Site of the collection chosen for its sun, moisture and accessibility to visitors

In 2001, Brian Douglas, Foreman of the Arboretum, and George Vorauer, Activities Chair, Friends of the Farm, initiated a project to rejuvenate and recover Isabella's lost cultivars. Two members of the International Lilac Society played a key role in the endeavour. Bruce Peart, then of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Hamilton, provided invaluable help, especially by donating 19 missing cultivars. Freek Vrugtman, Registrar of the International Lilac Register, continues to provide great assistance regarding contacts and nomenclature.



Isabella Preston

Sandy Best, Dept. of Agriculture/LAC, PA-136938

The site for the Preston Heritage Lilac Collection was chosen for its exposure to the sun, moisture retention and accessibility to visitors, and planting began in the spring of 2005. The collection includes examples of lilacs developed by Isabella as well as those of other originators. Today, there are 75 plants in the collection, including six parent species that have been used by hybridizers to produce *Villosae* Group cultivars.

Isabella's cultivars at the Farm now number 35 and we also have seven of the eight cultivars originated by Preston and Leslie. Other originators represented at the Farm are Skinner and Cumming of Canada, Bugala of Poland, Alexander, Rogers and Yeager of the United States.

The Friends of the Farm lilac team continue to work with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada grounds staff, Pierre Huppé, Jean-Pascal Gratton, Sharon Saunders, and others on this project.

Jean Currie, Maura Giuliani, Joan Speirs



Preston Heritage Lilac Collection, June 2011

R. Hinchcliff

## Voyage en autocar

**N**e manquez pas l'occasion de visiter quelques jardins du Québec avec les Amis de la Ferme du 15 au 18 juillet prochain! Réservez aujourd'hui pour avoir une place dans l'autocar qui vous menera au Jardins de Reford au nord de Rimouski. Ensuite nous irons par traversier en direction de Charlevoix, le Jardin Cap à l'Aigle suivi par une visite à Baie St. Paul. Notre dernière journée sera fêter par un piquenique au Parc des Chutes Montmorency et un souper en groupe à Hudson. Ces expériences fantastiques s'offrent pour le prix raisonnable de \$499, occupation double. Non membres doivent ajouter \$26. Pour plus amples détails, visitez [www.friendsofthefarm.ca](http://www.friendsofthefarm.ca) sous l'onglet "Events" ou bien appelez le 613-230-3276.

Denise Kennedy

# Upcoming Events

For more information, visit [www.friendsofthefarm.ca](http://www.friendsofthefarm.ca) or call 613-230-3276.

## Craft and Bake Sale

- April 21 and 22, 10 am to 4 pm.
- Come and see the creations of area artisans and taste delicious baked goods.
- Location: Building 72, Arboretum, CEF.
- Admission and parking are free.

## Rare and Unusual Plant Sale

- Sunday, May 13, 9 am to 1 pm.
- Get what you need for your garden from the many specialty growers and nurseries gathered for this event.
- Master Gardeners of Ottawa Carleton will be available to answer your questions.
- Location: Parking lot at the greenhouses, Maple Drive, CEF.
- Entry fee: Donation for the Food Bank or \$5.



## Historical Walk at the CEF

- May, date and time to be announced
- Join Bob McClelland on this walking tour that showcases the picturesque landscape design, architectural history, and stories of Ottawa's beloved Central Experimental Farm.
- The tour begins at William Saunders Building, Maple Drive, CEF.
- Admission: FCEF members \$12, others \$15.
- To register, call 613-230-3276 or email [info@friendsofthefarm.ca](mailto:info@friendsofthefarm.ca).

## Tours of the Lilac Rows

- May, date and time to be announced
- Enjoy a guided tour of the CEF lilac rows with the Friends of the Farm lilac team. Discover the many lilac varieties on display.
- Location: Macoun Garden, Ornamental Gardens. Free parking at the Canada Agriculture Museum, south of the Prince of Wales roundabout.
- Free admission; donations gratefully accepted. No registration required.



## Fletcher Wildlife Garden Native Plant Sale

- Saturday, June 2, 9:30 am to 12:30 pm.
- Find native plants grown in the area.
- Volunteers and growers available to answer questions and offer suggestions.

- Free admission and parking.
- For more information, email [fletcher@ofnc.ca](mailto:fletcher@ofnc.ca) or call (613) 730-0714.

## Preston Lilac Collection Tour

- June, date and time to be announced
- Take a guided tour of the Preston Heritage Lilac Collection with the Friends of the Farm lilac team. Discover the variety of lilacs that Isabella Preston created at the CEF.
- Free parking at the Canada Agriculture Museum, south of the Prince of Wales roundabout.
- Free admission; donations gratefully accepted. No registration required.

## Peony Tour

- June, date and time to be announced
- Enjoy a guided tour of the peony beds at the CEF. Get tips on what would work best in your garden and ways to keep your peonies happy.
- The tour begins at the peony beds in the Ornamental Gardens. Free parking at the Canada Agriculture Museum, south of the Prince of Wales roundabout.
- Free admission; donations gratefully accepted. No registration required.

## Tour of the Heritage and Explorer Roses

- Sunday, June 10, 1 pm.
- The FCEF rose team will be available to answer your questions. Information on the collection will be available to help you with a self-guided tour of the roses.
- Free parking at the Canada Agriculture Museum, south of the Prince of Wales roundabout.
- Free admission; donations gratefully accepted. No registration required.



## Book Sale

- Saturday, June 16 and Sunday, June 17, from 10 am to 4 pm.
- Come and check out the thousands of books. Stock up for your summer reading.
- Location: Building 72, Arboretum, CEF.
- Admission and parking are free.

## Battling the Beetle (see Page 10)

- Sunday, June 24, 2 pm.
- Join Edythe Falconer in the Heritage Rose Garden. Bring a medium-sized jar with a wide mouth and tight lid as well as garden gloves. Catch your own beetle and discuss strategies to reduce beetle damage. A fact sheet will be available.

- Park at the Canada Agriculture Museum, south of Prince of Wales roundabout, follow signs.
- Admission and parking are free.

## Strawberry Social

- July 1, 11:30 am to 2 pm.
- Come and enjoy a delicious strawberry treat while participating in the Canada Agriculture Museum's holiday activities.
- Admission to the museum is free on Canada Day, the strawberry treat is \$6.
- Visit the museum's website at [www.agriculture.technomuses.ca](http://www.agriculture.technomuses.ca) for more information on the day's events.
- Location: Memory Park, Canada Agriculture Museum. Parking and the main entrance are located off Prince of Wales, south of the traffic circle.



## Gardens of Quebec Bus Tour (see Page 2)

- 4 days, 3 nights, July 15 to 18.
- Visit the Reford Gardens, Cap à l'Aigle's floral display, Baie St. Paul, Montmorency Falls, Hudson, etc. Includes ferry to Charlevoix..
- Visit [www.friendsofthefarm.ca](http://www.friendsofthefarm.ca) for more information on the tour and how to register.

## 10 Mile Cowpattie Relay and Run on the Farm

- Wednesday, July 18, 6:30 pm.
- Join the Friends of the Farm and the Run Ottawa Club for a challenging 10-mile run through the Central Experimental Farm. Get a team together for the 10-mile Cowpattie relay.
- Location: Morningside Lane, CEF.
- Visit [www.ncra-ottawa.com](http://www.ncra-ottawa.com) for more information on the race and how to register.



## Victorian Tea

- Sunday, August 12, 2 to 4 pm.
- Classic tea served under the trees of the Arboretum.
- Bring a patio chair and listen to live music.
- Enter the best hat contest and don period costume (not required).
- Location: Building 72, CEF Arboretum.
- Admission and parking free; formal tea \$6.





## Life-Long Learner Loves Lilacs

When she retired in 2000, Maura Giuliani harboured illusions about "having oodles of time on her hands." Nearly a dozen years later, she laughs at her naivety. Her concern is not about filling her days, but finding time to do everything on her crowded agenda. Maura leads a full life, marked by travel and volunteer work. She and her husband Carlo enjoy travelling, with Mexico and Europe favourite destinations. They also volunteer at the Ottawa airport information desk - welcoming out-of-town travellers and directing them to local resources - and "having great fun" in the process. Maura, who has ESL certification, participates in an ESL English conversation group, and, a writer by trade, takes on the occasional "pro bono" writing assignment.

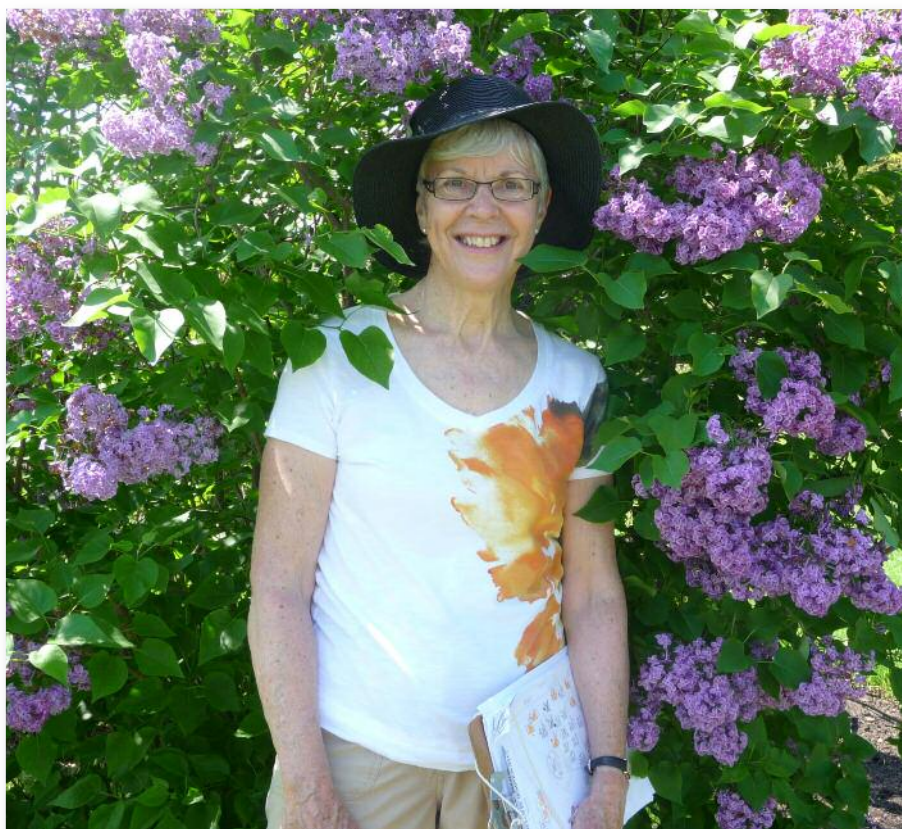
And then there's her life at the Central Experimental Farm. This summer marks 12 years since Maura became a Friends' volunteer, virtually on the heels of retiring as Head of Publications for the Bank of Canada in 2000. "I saw an ad for volunteers, attended an information session, and immediately signed up because I figured I'd have all this time on my hands."

Initially seconded to the Tree Team to help remap trees on the Farm, the self-professed "directional idiot" had great difficulty not only locating the trees but also herself. "I was useless" she says of the experience, which, thankfully, she adds, was short-lived.

In 2001, Maura was invited to join the fledgling Lilac Team. Today, she remains one of four steadfast volunteers - Joan Speirs, Audrey Pullan and Jean Currie - who form the nucleus of the team.

Before moving to Ottawa after their children had left home, the Giulianis owned a 6-acre farm property in nearby Bristol, Quebec, where Maura maintained extensive perennial beds with nary a lilac tree in sight. Her initial lack of knowledge of lilacs, however, made the experience on the Lilac Team "so much more interesting," she says. "It has been a fascinating experience." Maura and Carlo are life-long students and listening to the story of her life, it is clear that Maura revels in new learning experiences.

When she joined the Lilac Team 11 years ago, the lilacs had long been



Maura Giuliani

Polly McCall

neglected. The delight that visitors to the lilac rows experience today is the result of the attention of Farm staff and the Lilac Team's hard work and ongoing maintenance, which includes weeding, pruning, replanting, deadheading, tagging, and even propagating. "We see them through the whole cycle," Maura explains. And when summer ends, and the other garden teams hang up their tools for the year, the Lilac Team moves indoors to update the lilac data base, which Maura originally created - after having to master Microsoft Access - throughout the winter.

In 2009, the Friends hosted the international lilac convention and Maura and her team mates, along with other Friends' volunteers, pitched in to make it a resounding success. A year later, Maura and Joan Speirs (Lilac Team leader) attended the lilac convention in Burlington, Vermont. It is Joan Speirs who Maura credits with the success of the team in rejuvenating the lilac rows and with her own ongoing enjoyment of the work. "Joan is not only a marvellous leader, she keeps impeccable records for all the lilac holdings on the Farm. She is so

knowledgeable and always willing to share that knowledge."

One of Maura's favourite duties is to help with the lilac tours in the spring. Not only do the tours provide an opportunity to explain the attributes of the different lilacs, it puts her in touch with "people who are interested in lilacs and have interesting observations themselves."

Maura also helps at Friends' events when she can but it is the lilacs that command her time and give her the greatest pleasure. As a side benefit, she has formed lasting friendships with Joan, Audrey and Jean and speaks of the joy of working with women who know each other so well and are so easy to get along with. But above all, Maura finds great satisfaction in bringing the lilacs back to life and knowing how much visitors enjoy them. "They are nothing like they were a decade ago - we have been able to do so much and bringing them back has been a labour of love."

Mary Ann Smythe



## You Say “Lilac,” I Say “Mauve”...



White (I) — *S. (Villosae Group)* ‘Hunting Tower’



Pinkish (V) — *S. villosa* ‘Dr Bretschneider’



Violet (II) — *S. vulgaris* ‘Kosmos’



Bluish (III) — *S. vulgaris* ‘Porcelain Blue’



Lilac (IV) — *S. vulgaris* ‘Christophe Colomb’

Do any two persons see colour the same way? When I look down the lilac rows in the Ornamental

Gardens, several of the plantings look distinctly blue to me. Other members of our team disagree. Each plant, however, when newly registered, is recorded on a colour classification scale, called the Wister code. The scale is from I to VII, where I=white; II=violet; III=bluish; IV=lilac; V=pinkish; VI=magenta; VII=purple. Can't you hear the discussions? “No, John, it's not pinkish at all, it's lilac!” or “How can you call that ‘purple’? It's got lots of red in it and is clearly magenta!”

It's a problem that has plagued lilac breeders (and other botanists) for years. In 1928, Susan McKelvey published a book on lilacs that included four Ridgway colour charts of 154 selected colours. These are now out of print. Others have tried to produce colour charts. Most notable are Wilson's Horticultural Society (RHS) Colour Chart of 1939 and 1942 with 800 colours, and the Nickerson Color Fan of 1957 with 262 colours by Munsell.

The latter is out of print but the RHS Colour Chart lives on with several editions from 1966 to the present. This system uses a set of “paint chips” each with a small hole in the centre. The colour strip is placed over the leaf or blossom and is matched by peering through the hole. In all there are 884 different colours arranged in four fans. Unfortunately, the cost of such complete sets of colour samples discourages many from acquiring and

using them, despite the desirability of a common colour code.

To make it all a bit more complicated, the colour of lilac flowers may change with time of day, time of year, location, weather, soil, maturity, etc. Is it possible to be precise? Is that seven-part Wister code good enough after all?

Maura Giuliani and Joan Speirs



Magenta (VI) — *S. pubescens* subsp. *julianae* ‘George Eastman’



Purple (VII) — *S. vulgaris* ‘Etna’



# How to Tell a Preston from a French Hybrid Lilac

**H**ow do Isabella Preston's famous lilacs (see Page 1), created at the Central Experimental Farm, differ from the French hybrids created by Victor Lemoine?

Victor Lemoine (1823-1911) has been called the world's greatest plant breeder. He is the most prolific and revered lilac hybridist. After an apprenticeship with three eminent horticulturists, Victor opened his own nursery in 1849 in Nancy, France. He would work with many plants, including lilacs, in 62 years of plant production before his death. His son Emile and grandson Henri carried on the work of his nursery for another 54 years – all this through three European wars. In all, the Lemoines originated 214 lilacs – singles and doubles – until 1955. About 131 cultivars were released during Victor's lifetime, the remainder by his son and grandson.

Lilacs are characteristically shrubs or small trees, with opposite leaves and florets in panicles (clusters of flowers). Single lilacs have one corolla (circle of petals) with four petals. In double lilacs,



Lemoine lilac — *S. vulgaris* 'Arthur William Paul'

you will see two or more corollas. The latter are the result of mutation or hybridization and are not found in nature.

Leaves of the **French hybrid lilacs**, which are varieties of *S. vulgaris* and *S. ×hyacinthiflora*, are generally oval to heart-shaped with a soft texture. Petals are longer than the tube of the floret. The flowers are delightfully fragrant, showy and are single or double. The plants bloom once a year. In Ottawa, this is usually in May, with the earliest blooming sometimes in the first week.

Leaves of the **Preston lilacs**, which belong to the Villosae Group, are generally elliptical, comparatively large and often of rough texture. The florets are single, comparatively small, with



Preston lilac — *S. ×prestoniae* 'W. T. Macoun'

tubes longer than the petals. They are not noted for fragrance, are frequently profuse bloomers and extremely showy. They are late lilacs, blooming in June in Ottawa and, like many of the Villosae Group, bloom again in late summer.

We encourage you to visit the lilac collection at the Farm and see these differences for yourself. You are also invited to join our team in May for a tour of the lilacs in the rows, including French hybrids, and a tour of the Preston Heritage Collection in June.

Joan Speirs



Lemoine lilac — *S. vulgaris* 'Linné'



Preston lilac — *S. ×prestoniae* 'Lavinia'



There are 85 different Lemoine cultivars in the Farm's lilac collection. The majority are in the Lilac Rows at the Ornamental Gardens, identified by the plaques in front of each lilac that show the originator and date of origin beneath the species and cultivar name.



## Five Generations of Farm Memories

Courtesy of Gary Palen



Robert Palen at floral sundial by the Observatory

**W**ally and Gary Palen have Farm blood in their veins. Not only was the Central Experimental Farm virtually a neighbour when they were growing up, but their grandfather Robert, father Walter, and uncle Tom White, all worked at the Farm. The connection doesn't end there, however. Gary was employed at the Farm between 1981-1983, and Wally volunteered with the Friends of the Farm in 1991.

Ottawa-born, Wally and Gary grew up on Hilson Avenue, next to the Palen homestead in an area called Laurentian View, which didn't become part of the City of Ottawa until 1949. Across the street from their home was Hilson Bush. "It was a rural property at the time," explains Wally. "Wild animals roamed through the woods."

The Palen brothers aren't certain about the exact nature of their grandfather's or father's work at the Farm. "I think they were both Farm labourers and gardeners," says Gary, who produces a photo of his grandfather in overalls in the middle of a floral sundial, which he planted and tended, outside the Dominion Observatory. Gary fondly recalls a trip to the Observatory with his dad when he got to "push the big

button that rotated the dome. It was amazing to see the moon up so close. Looking through that telescope opened up the wonders of the night sky to me."

### Forging life-long links with the Farm

There were many family visits to the Farm, many memories in the making. "It was a yearly treat for us," Gary continues, "when our mom (Agnes) and dad would take us to see the spectacular Mum Show. Dad also took us regularly to tour the Arboretum and to visit the rock garden and other ornamental floral displays, as well as to visit the farm animals."

Tom White, who was married to their father's sister Gladys, also helped forge their life-long link with the Farm, says Gary. "His property adjoined ours, and we often helped Uncle Tom with transplanting tasks in his large glass greenhouse. He fostered our own love of gardening." At the Farm, Tom worked in the greenhouses and in the Ornamental Gardens. He also worked with the scientists who were breeding different flower varieties and was deeply involved in the lilac breeding program. "He really loved that part of his work," Wally adds.

In 1980, Gary left his career as an experimental neuropsychologist because of ethical concerns over the killing of laboratory animals. While looking for a job to support his wife and two young children, he drove by the Farm, recalled his family's connection and said to himself, "maybe this is the place for me." And it was. Soon after, Gary was weeding the wheat fields, laying sod, pruning plum trees, and doing all the other tasks assigned to Farm labourers. He recalls thinking how "healthy his work was - being outdoors in the fresh air, looking up at the blue sky and seeing the birds flying by. I was very grateful to the Farm for the opportunity to work there." Come winter, the Manager of the Ottawa Research Station (at the Farm), having seen Gary's educational background on his employment application, invited him to join the Personnel Unit to update job descriptions for the technical staff. For several years, Gary moved between farm labour work and office work in Building 55, across from the Agricultural Museum, near Maple Lane.

When he retired from the federal government in 1991, Wally joined the Friends of the Farm. It was an easy choice, he says. "Where else would you want to do volunteer work? It had been such a big part of our lives, and it was a chance for me to give something back." Wally helped with



Marie Elizabeth Poirier, wife of Robert Palen, at Ornamental Gardens

Courtesy of Gary Palen



remapping the Farm: "It was fun but a lot of work" and also volunteered in the gardens: "It was a great experience and I learned a lot about gardening, especially how to prune." His time as a Friends' volunteer was short-lived, however, as he spent most of his summer at the cottage upon retirement and it became too difficult to make the weekly trek into the Farm.

### Keeping the connection

Not surprisingly, Gary and Wally also introduced their own children to the Farm. The families visited the greenhouses, walked through the Arboretum and Ornamental Gardens, and tobogganed in the winter. Gary's daughter Holly has special memories of the Farm and says that it is "amazing to have such a wonderful greenspace in the middle of the city." She and her husband Norman often walk and cycle through the Farm. Last summer Holly became a member of the Friends of the Farm and is excited by the prospect of taking her son, Angus Stirling Palen Walker, to the Agriculture Museum and for walks through the



Richard Conway

The Palen family - Gary, baby Angus, Holly, Wally, Mary

Ornamental Gardens. "I know he's still a baby," she laughs, "but I feel a real connection [with the Farm] and I want to keep that connection strong."

Mary Ann Smythe

## Volunteer! Another way to enjoy the Farm!

**H**ave a hand in keeping the gardens beautiful by joining one of our weekly garden teams, assist with office tasks, work at the mammoth June book sale, bake for the fundraisers, work a shift at the craft sale – there's a job to suit everyone's interests.

A few hours a week or a few hours a year - your time is important to us.

To become a volunteer or for more information, go to [www.friendsofthefarm.ca](http://www.friendsofthefarm.ca) and click on "Become a Volunteer" or telephone 613-230-3276.

Jeannine Lewis

## Être bénévole! Une autre façon de participer aux plaisirs de la Ferme!

**C**haque bénévole y trouvera une occupation à sa mesure : entretien des jardins pour en conserver la beauté; travail au sein de l'équipe de l'Arboretum; aide relative à la mise en place d'un nouveau brise-vent; partage de tâches administratives; tri des livres en préparation de la vente en juin; cuisson de pâtisseries en vue d'activités de collectes de fonds; quarts de travail lors de la vente de pièces artisanales!

Une contribution de quelques heures seulement par semaine ou par année suffit, car nous savons à quel point votre temps est précieux.

Pour devenir bénévole ou pour obtenir des renseignements, veuillez consulter le site Web, à l'adresse [www.friendsofthefarm.ca](http://www.friendsofthefarm.ca), et cliquer sur Devenez membre ou communiquer avec nous, au 613-230-3276.

Jeannine Lewis



The Friends of the Central Experimental Farm is a volunteer organization committed to the maintenance and protection of the Ornamental Gardens and the Arboretum of the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Membership in the Friends of the Farm costs \$25 per year for an individual and \$45 per year for a family, \$20 Seniors/Students. Membership fees support the many projects of the Friends of the Farm.

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# Japanese Beetle – Both Beauty and Beast



They readily multiply ...

It is such a beautiful beetle – a handsome insect with coppery wings and shiny green torso bedecked with little white dots along each side and on its rear tip. But, unfortunately, the Japanese beetle (*Popillia japonica*) is as destructive as it is beautiful.

Once a stranger in a foreign land, it has now made itself at home in North America. Accidentally transported with a shipment of Japanese irises in the early 1900s, the Japanese beetle has become an energetic colonial force occupying territory throughout the eastern United States as far as the Mississippi River and extending well into eastern Canada.

In the northeastern states alone, it costs more than \$45 million annually to cover plant damage and control of its depredations. Its tastes are eclectic, encompassing more than 300 different plant species. It defoliates and defecates making plants more susceptible to fungus infections.



They mess up our gardens ...

The Japanese beetle has invaded the rose gardens at the Central Experimental Farm. While Farm staff and Friends volunteers do their best to control them, it is a constant battle and, currently, victory is not in sight – except, perhaps, for the beetles. We strive to keep plants as healthy as possible, hoping that new research will come to our rescue. Several American universities are conducting research, much of it in the direction of biological control.

When the beetles first appeared we didn't understand their true potential. But now it is clear. For four years we have been picking them off the plants and yet the infestations keep increasing in severity. Because the rose gardens are a monoculture and because beetles can fly for many miles, even if we succeed in killing one batch more will fly in and replace them in order to enjoy their favourite munch.

Handpicking is labour intensive and time consuming. Time spent harvesting



Photos by R. Hinchcliff

We are obliged to gather and destroy them

beetles is time not spent on other garden maintenance tasks. Setting pheromone traps proved counterproductive so they were removed. Nematodes, organisms that attack beetles in their larval stage, are tricky and expensive to apply. In Japan, milky white spore exists in the soil and preys upon the grubs of the beetle keeping populations under control. However, the spore doesn't work in our climate and, even if it did, it would be too costly to use. So we fall back on handpicking.

In the meantime, we want to provide public education so that everyone recognizes the enemy when they see it and destroys it before each female lays some 80 eggs annually, the next year's generation of grim reapers. We hope that many of you will visit the Rose Gardens on Battle the Beetle Day, June 24, 2012 (details on Page 4). Awareness is the first step; after that comes action.

Edythe Falconer

## NEW MEMBER REGISTRATION FORM

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ POSTAL CODE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 PROVINCE: \_\_\_\_\_  
 TELEPHONE #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 FAX #: \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

## INTEREST IN VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

YES ☐

NO ☐

## TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP

FAMILY .....	\$45/year
ADULT .....	\$25/year
SENIOR/STUDENT .....	\$20/year
BASIC CORPORATE .....	\$250/year
NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION .....	\$25/year
INDIVIDUAL LIFE .....	\$200
SENIOR COUPLE LIFE .....	\$250
DONATION .....	\$ _____
<b>TOTAL</b> .....	<b>\$ _____</b>

Please make cheque or money order payable to: "Friends of the Farm." A receipt for income tax purposes will be issued for all donations of \$10 or more.

We are located at Building 72 in the Arboretum. You can visit us or mail this part of the form with your payment to:

**FRIENDS OF THE CENTRAL EXPERIMENTAL FARM**  
**Building 72, Central Experimental Farm**  
**Ottawa, ON K1A 0C6**

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Email: [info@friendsofthefarm.ca](mailto:info@friendsofthefarm.ca)

Website: [www.friendsofthefarm.ca](http://www.friendsofthefarm.ca)



## Something New in the Explorer Rose Garden

The winter hardy roses developed by Dr Felicitas Svejda of the Central Experimental Farm at Ottawa have a new home. Over the last few years, the area of the Ornamental Gardens south of the roses has gone through a metamorphosis of sorts; removal of overgrown and unkempt hedges has given rise to a grander view of the gardens. Years ago, we decided that the steel frames that accommodate the roses were too industrial and did not convey the bucolic scene which is more in keeping with our gardens. The Svejda roses were spread about the garden and I wanted to consolidate the group as a noteworthy homage to their hybridizer.

I remember working for Dr Svejda, prepping the rose cuttings for the mist beds, bundling them for their winter cold treatment and, then, in the following spring, laying out tiny rose plants in row upon row in our nursery. I also recall the continuous weeding of these small plants. Work would begin Monday at one end of the field and by Friday hopefully it was finished so the cycle could start again the next week. I learned a lot about patience working that endless field.



Explorer rose garden, November 2011

That was then, this is now. My team installed a new fence last November. We transplanted the roses from the existing frames to the new fence and relocated the surplus to the other rose garden. This new structure and bed will encompass all of Dr Svejda's Explorer roses. It will be chockablock full of roses so no place for weeds...right!

The Friends of the Farm's Explorer rose team and visitors alike will find the layout easier to work and to stroll about.

We have our work cut out this spring - removing and relocating the irrigation system, removing the metal frame, topdressing, sodding and planting the last few roses slotted for the new Svejda bed.

My team is pumped and raring to go and, with the support of the Friends of Farm volunteers, we say "come on April."

Sharon Saunders  
Lead Hand, Ornamental Gardens  
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

### Ideas for 2017?

Do you have any ideas for projects or activities for the Friends of the Farm to commemorate the 150th year of Canadian Confederation? If so, please send them to Eric Jones at [eric.jones086@sympatico.ca](mailto:eric.jones086@sympatico.ca), or leave a message for him at the Friends' office.

### Des idées pour 2017?

Vous vient-il à l'esprit des idées de projets ou d'activités que les Amis de la Ferme pourraient entreprendre afin de commémorer le 150e anniversaire de la Fédération canadienne en 2017? Si oui, veuillez les communiquer à Eric Jones, à [eric.jones086@sympatico.ca](mailto:eric.jones086@sympatico.ca), ou lui transmettre un message téléphonique au bureau des Amis.

## Master Gardeners Lecture Series

Sign up for individual lectures or the entire series. Lectures are held from 7 to 9 pm, Building 72, Arboretum, Central Experimental Farm. Individual lectures: \$12 FCEF members, \$15 others; series: \$40 FCEF members, \$50 others.

### April 3 – All From a Little Seed! by Rebecca Last

If you have struggled to get seeds to germinate, pick up tips and tricks for successful seed starting, whether annual flowers, vegetables or some trickier perennials. The presentation includes a "show and tell" of several types of equipment that can be used to start new plants from seeds.

**April 10 – Low Down Delightful Dirty Earth by Edythe Falconer**  
Learn how to create your own earthy delights, maintain and build

your own soil wherever you grow, from pots, lots, gardens, patios or penthouses. Let us save our living earth!

### April 17 – The Beauty of Annuals by Diane McClymont Peace

Not all annuals work well in a border – find out which do and which don't. The presentation also includes annuals for sun, shade, dry and moist conditions; colour, height and texture that work well together; and tips to ensure long-lasting blooms and healthy plants.

### April 24 – Creating Winter Scenery in Your Own Yard by Julianne Labreche

Find out which shrubs, perennials and grasses to plant for winter interest in your garden and see photos to illustrate the choices. The purpose of the selected plants is to create interesting colours, shapes and textures that will stand out when covered with snow.



# Lilacs in the Garden

**L**mmigrants seeking a bit of beauty in a raw, often harsh, land introduced lilacs to Canada. Lilacs have been beloved from those earliest pioneer times to this day. With beautiful, fragrant flowers, the plants are effective in the garden landscape and, generally, do not require a lot of care.

## Enjoy your Lilacs

Expand your bloom time by choosing varieties of lilac (*Syringa*):

- *oblata* and *×hyacinthiflora* are the earliest bloomers
- *vulgaris* overlap *×hyacinthiflora*
- the Preston lilacs and varieties of *meyeri* and *pubescens* bloom later
- tree lilacs (*reticulata* and *pekinensis*) bloom last
- and then there are the repeat bloomers, such as BLOOMERANG™ or 'Cinderella'.

## Enjoy a range of colours:

- from white through violet, blue, lilac, pink, magenta, purple, and bicolour.

## Choose from a wide range of sizes:

- from miniature, such as 'Palibin', 'Prairie Petite' and TINKERBELLE™, to full tree size. The Japanese Tree Lilac 'Ivory Silk' is popular as a street tree in Ottawa.

## Their needs are few:

- ample sunshine
- well-drained soil (lilacs generally don't like wet feet, although the Prestons thrive in damp ground).

## Don't worry:

- lilacs are survivors. Just keep them watered for the first year while the roots are getting established.

## But watch for their enemies:

- lilac borer in older trunks
- scale, which is treatable
- mice and rabbits.



Paul Bertrand and Joan Speirs at the Friends' tour of the Preston lilacs, June 2011

Photos by R. Hinchcliff

## Maintaining your Lilacs

**Pruning after bloom time** can help keep your lilac healthy and at a size with which you are comfortable. The lilac will not suffer from removal of up to one-third of the plant.

### Remove old, main trunks close to the ground with a clean saw:

- to eliminate a dead or unproductive stem
- to get rid of lilac borer
- to bring lilac down in height.

Branches that are dead (or rubbing) should be removed.

### Deadheading (removal of spent

blossoms), except where necessary for young or stressed plants, is basically cosmetic. Use secateurs to snip off just before the first pair of leaves.

**Suckers** are designed by nature to be the next generation. Some lilacs sucker readily, others do not. Keep the strongest if renewal is your aim. They will replace older trunks you wish to remove.

**Scale** is treatable with horticultural oil. Apply when the plant is dormant before bud break and again in early summer. Consult a local nursery or the Internet for material and guidance.

**Rodents and rabbits** enjoy nibbling on the succulent bark of lilacs. Paul Bertrand and other lilac team members have built wire cages of small mesh, which have been effective in protecting young lilacs in the Farm's nursery.

## Buying Lilacs

Local nurseries have many varieties. When choosing a plant, look for:

- a healthy, upright stance
- undamaged bark
- soil that is not dried out and causing droop.

Jean Currie, Maura Giuliani, Joan Speirs



Friends of the Farm lilac tour