



# George Landis Arboretum

## NEWSLETTER

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### THE ARBORETUM'S NEW LILACS

This summer the Arboretum registered six new lilac cultivars, of Russian parentage, with the Royal Botanic Gardens of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, which is the international registrar for new lilac varieties.

In 1964 the Arboretum obtained from the Alma-Ata Botanic Garden of the USSR seeds of two Russian cultivars, 'The Cheat' and 'Caprice'. After the usual vagaries of mice damage in the nursery and other woes, the seedlings began to blossom in 1974.

'The Cheat' was one of the hybrids developed by L. A. Kolesnikov, most famous of the Russian breeders. I have never seen it in flower, but there is a description of it in the Russian book on lilacs by Gromov. I have seen some of Kolesnikov's hybrids, and one, 'Glory of Moscow', I consider the most beautiful lilac I have ever seen. 'The Cheat' is described as a large panicle double purple lilac with a bluish cast to the center of the florets. It was named 'The Cheat' because in the USSR test gardens its color varied somewhat from year to year. None of our seedlings have shown this eccentricity.

We have been able to find no information about 'Caprice'. It probably is a double pink-fading-to-blue variety, perhaps with 'Belle de Nancy' in its ancestry.

All of 'The Cheat' seedlings had great vigor, with heavy stems and firm dark green heavy leaves. In flower they impressed at once by the large size of the panicles and florets and their brilliant color, deep red-purple in bud, dark purple when open with a bluish cast to the short inner petals of the double florets. Presumably 'Charles Joly' is in their ancestry, for some of the seedlings show the two-division upright panicle of that variety. After six years of evaluation, we finally selected what we considered the three best for registration. 'George Landis' is a vigorous upright bush, blossoming late and always heavily, with for the most part the two-division panicle of 'Charles Joly', but the average panicle much larger than those of 'Charles Joly'. So far it has never suckered.

'Van Loveland' is a slightly more spreading bush, blossoming early, not quite so dark purple, with a completely differently shaped panicle, many branchlets, the whole huge panicle nearly as wide as tall. It suckers slightly.

'Esperance' has been slower growing. It is still a fairly small upright bush but its huge upright panicles are the largest of those of any of the seedlings, and its color as brilliant as any.

The nearest to these three among the older French hybrids is 'Paul Thirion'.