

The Preston Touch

By D. W. MacDonald

Canadian gardeners have a wider choice of colorful ornamental plants as a result of Isabella Preston's magical success in raising the quality of the lily, lilac, iris etc.

THUMBING through the seed catalogues you'll find the name of Preston cropping up here and there in connection with various ornamental plants. In government bulletins listing the best specimens of hardy shrubs to brighten up the Canadian gardens you'll frequently see the name, Preston mentioned as the originator of leading varieties.

If you care to investigate further you'll find that Preston links together the lily fanciers in many parts of the world, particularly in Canada, Britain and the United States. Prestonian lilies add a touch of color to the English countryside and more than a few Preston-reared rosy bloom crabapple trees start the early spring color parade in American gardens. Anyone selecting the best of hardy ornamentals for the garden, especially in northern areas, would find it difficult to avoid the Preston influence. The curious would gather that here is an accomplished horticulturist, someone with a special touch and would be prompted to inquire, "Who is this man Preston?"

And that's where the surprises start piling up. For the inquiry would reveal that this widely recognized plant breeder is a shy and retiring Canadian—a retired farmer—his name isn't a man at all but a grand old lady now living quietly in a small Ontario town. Isabella Preston retired to her small home and garden in Georgetown three years ago after twenty-seven useful years in ornamental plant breeding work at the Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa. Over the years her practiced hand and appreciation for merit set the pattern for new garden creations that have brought honor to Canada and to herself.

Not Horticulturally Inclined
A good many Canadians have been known to put around with gardens but as a nation we're not looked upon as great authorities on the subject. The science of gardening hasn't progressed in Canada to the same degree that it has in other countries, such as Britain, where gardening is an art. So it's not surprising that most of Miss Preston's highest honors have come from countries other than Canada. And this in spite of the fact that her creations were selected for Canadian conditions.

The Royal Horticultural Society in England recognized Miss Preston's valuable work by presenting her with the Lady Lily Cup, the highest award given by this world-famous society for work with lilies. She has held this trophy for the past two years.

was never actually shipped to Canada, because of its size. However, her name has been inscribed to record her accomplishments. The Massachusetts Horticultural Society has also honored her for experimental work with lilies by presenting her with a gold medal in 1931.

Among Miss Preston's other prized possessions are the Veitch Memorial Medal in gold from the Royal Horticultural Society for work in raising good garden plants; the Jackson Dawson Memorial Medal from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for distinguished work in breeding hardy woody plants; and the Carter Medal from the Ontario Horticultural Association for horticultural achievement.

Miss Preston holds honorary life memberships in the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, the Canadian Iris Society and the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. If Canadians as a whole have failed to impress as horticulturists, at least Isabella Preston has done more than her share in establishing the name of Canada in the horticultural world.

Isabella Preston's success hasn't been a matter of chance. She started on a career in horticulture at an early age in her native England and hasn't altered her course since. For the most part she has made her own way, after a short training at the Women's Horticultural College at Swanley, this Lancashire lass made her way to Canada and the Ontario Agricultural College at Guelph, Ont. She continued her studies there in 1912 at

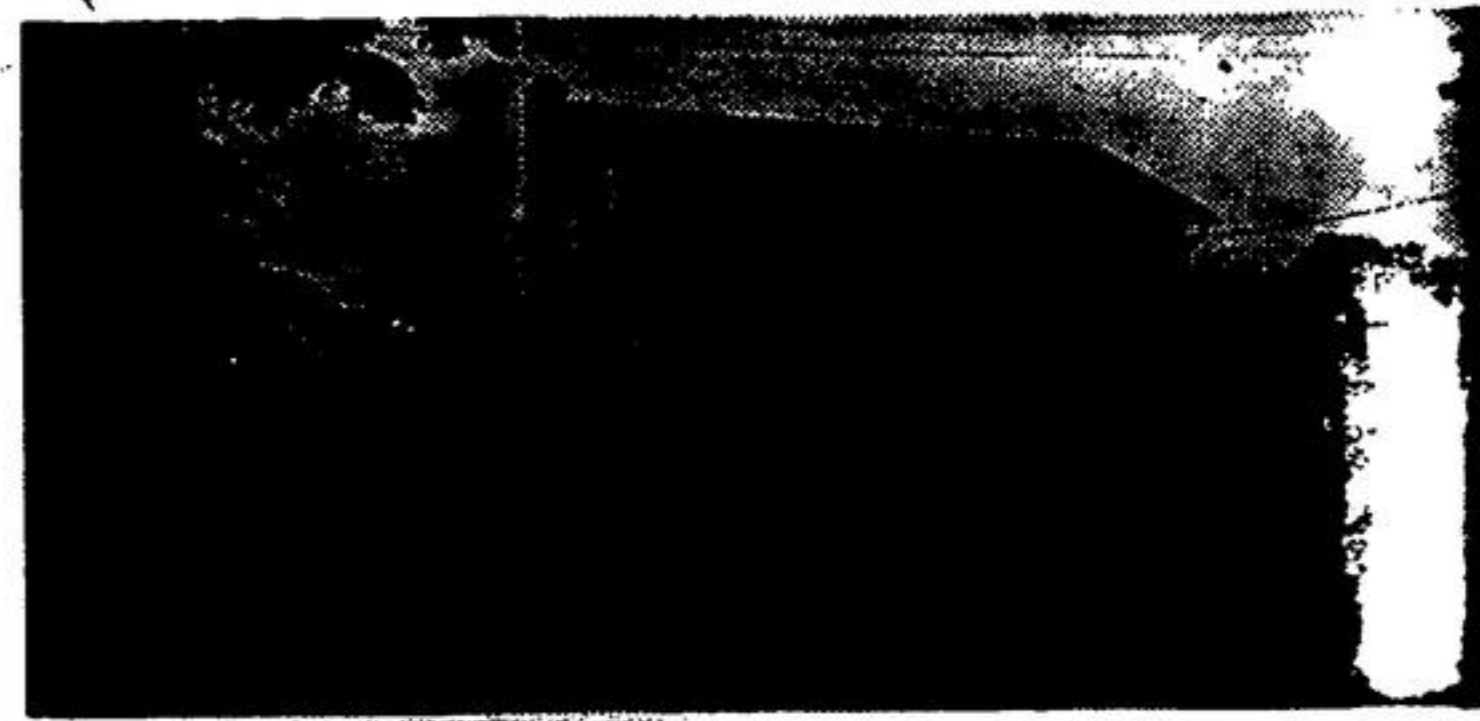
a time when young girls studying agriculture were the pet aversion of the male students.

They paid little attention to this young English girl bent on an exclusively male career. Miss Preston recalls one classmate who treated her with the courtesy of recognition and that was E. F. Palmer, now superintendent of the Horticultural Experimental Station and another of Canada's biggest contributors of improved horticultural varieties.

In spite of the heartbreaks and loneliness of those early days at Guelph Miss Preston pursued her course and later when established at Ottawa, had the satisfaction of having the students who scorned her presence at Guelph seek her



Above: Although retired from official duties, Isabella Preston still cultivates lilies in her home garden. Above left: Rosybloom crabapple twigs are smothered in bloom.



Miss Preston now has her own home and garden in Georgetown, Ont.

when he delegated the task to Isabella Preston back in 1920, by crossing a very hardy Chin species, *Syringa villosa*, with a less hardy type with attractive rosy-pink bloom, Miss Preston raised a number of seedlings, the best of which are known as the Prestonian lilies.

They brought new hope to people living in northern areas where the better types of lilies did not prosper. The new race also extended the blooming period so that now anyone by careful selection of Prestonian varieties can have blooms a week or ten days after the common lilac has finished its show for the year.

Thrive on Prairies

Specimens have done well at Beauval in the Peace River district of northern Alberta and at Brandon and Morden in Manitoba. The well known Manitoba horticulturist, F. L. Skinner, has described Guinevera, a Prestonian lilac, as the finest in the district. Specimens sent to the botanical gardens at Kew and Edinburgh in Britain have aroused interest in the varieties among old country gardeners and many of them have planted these superior Canadian introductions in their gardens. Lilac fanciers in the United States have adopted them because of their valuable and unusual blooming characteristics.

Very few plant breeders achieve success to the same extent as Isabella Preston did with her first crosses. Those who undertake to create new varieties can expect many reverses before finally hitting on something worthy of introducing to the public. In the case of Isabella Preston the results of

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The Fountain lilac (left) was well named because of the drooping nature of the blooms seen in close-up at right

advice in her capacity as the government's leading expert on ornamental horticulture.

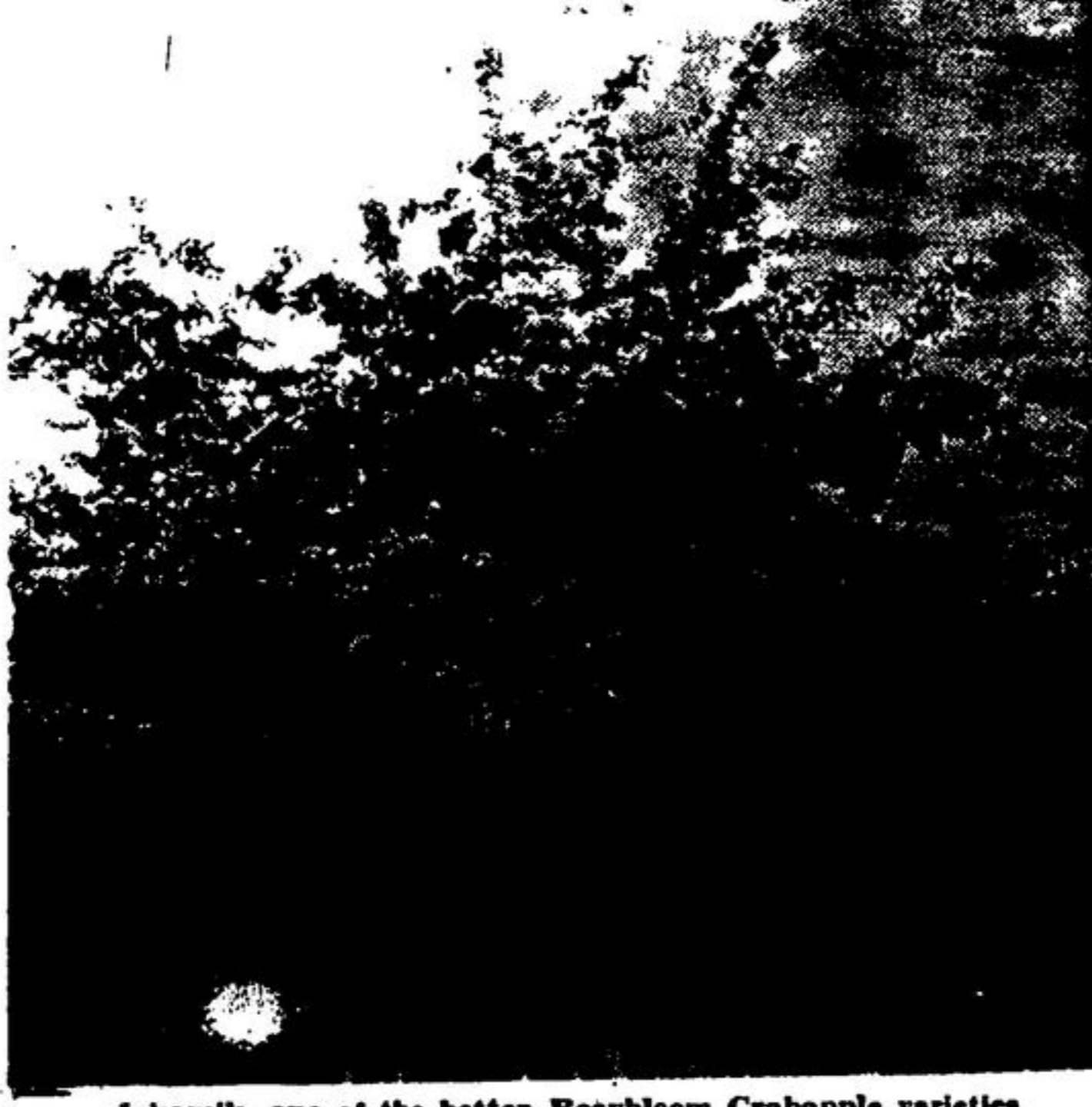
Before going to Ottawa however Isabella Preston worked at the College under Prof. Crowe whom she claims taught her most of what she knows about plant breeding. Employed as student labor for twelve cents an hour this girl made the cross that produced the famous Creelman lily, named after an O.A.C. president, and prized by lily fanciers not only for its white beauty but also as a parent in originating new varieties. The Creelman lily is the parent of many popular varieties today.

In 1920, very few Canadians took sufficient interest in ornamental horticulture to train themselves for positions in that field so it's not surprising that the Federal Experimental Farm Service, seeking to fill a position in ornamental plant breeding work, found that a young

girl was the leading candidate. Isabella Preston consequently left Guelph for the Central Experimental Farm at Ottawa to work under the direction of the Dominion Horticulturist at that time, Dr. W. T. Macoun.

Here the work began in earnest for Miss Preston, she was given a list of plants to work on and then left to her own resources to produce the results. The idea was to originate ornamentals sufficiently hardy for prairie and north country farmers to dress up their home grounds. Miss Preston's touch has given them a wider selection of hardy ornamental plant material to make their gardening efforts more effective.

Although the common lilac and the French hybrids are widely grown in Canada they are by no means perfect. They can be improved considerably and that is what Dr. Macoun had in mind



Macamik, one of the better Rosybloom Crabapple varieties bays off in profuse bloom and striking purplish foliage

Mrs. John McClure Much Feted Before Marriage

Mrs. John L. McClure, Georgetown, the former Ethel Hutchinson, of Cheltenham was guest of honour at several happy affairs previous to her marriage on October 20th.

On Thursday evening, October 18, Mrs. William A. Hutchinson entertained at a trousseau tea in her daughter's honour. Pink candles accented the attractive dining room table, which was centred with panicles and delicate rosebuds. Mrs. Wm. H. Henry, Mrs. H. Devereaux, Mrs. D. C. Carruthers, Mrs. T. A. McClure, aunts of the bride and Mrs. James Eccles poured tea for many friends, relatives and neighbours. During the evening, assisting in the dining room were Miss Shirley Giffen, Miss Doreen Bowes, Miss Joan Townshead and Miss Irene La Rose. The upstairs rooms were in charge of Mrs. Lloyd Williamson, Mrs. Norman Smith and the bride's sister Miss Anna May Hutchinson.

Others who entertained for the bride were: Miss Doris Taylor, of Brampton, who was hostess at her home, when a number of school mates and friends came in honour of the bride. Mrs. John McCulloch helped to spend a pleasant evening with the showing of her colourful pictures of her recent trip through

the western provinces. Miss Doris Taylor and Miss Mary McClure pulled in a gaily decorated wagon, with a miniature bride and groom, along with many beautiful personal gifts.

Mrs. Wm. A. Taylor, mother of the bride, served a delightful luncheon. On October 13th, a community shower was held in Home United Church. Here, the bride received many beautiful and useful miscellaneous gifts. During the afternoon Mrs. George Bowes very capably acted as chairlady. Mrs. Gordon Cation recited a very humorous poem, "The Rose of Tralee." Assisting the bride opening the gifts were Mrs. B. Wanless, Mrs. L. Williamson and her sister Miss Betty Hutchinson. The bride used three song titles to sum up her thoughts for the lovely gifts received, "I'll Be Seeing You," "Thanks for the Memories," and "May the Good Lord Bless and Keep You." The ladies of Home Church concluded a very delightful and sociable afternoon with a delicious luncheon.

Prior to her leaving the Toronto teaching staff, the teachers of Queen Victoria School, held a party in the auditorium which was attractively decorated for the occasion. The bride received a lovely gift from the staff. Also an electric tea kettle was presented from the pupils of her classroom at a surprise party, along with many other useful gifts.

Assess Teerers \$50 Halloween Damage

Five teenagers who admitted breaking windows and doing malicious damage to the high school building on Halloween were ordered to make restitution to the board of \$50 at a meeting of North Halton district high school board in Georgetown last week. The five appeared at the board meeting and were ordered to pay the damage the next day or further measures would be taken. Board members censured the youths, none of whom are high school students and a warning was issued that in future the board would not be so lenient with offenders.

Continuing a program of modernization at the Georgetown school, new desks and chairs will be ordered for one classroom. The lavatories were examined by the board, and while there was agreement that they are in deplorable condition, it was thought wiser to leave any major alterations until next summer, recommending to next year's board that the improvements be budgeted for.

Donations of \$5.00 each were voted to the Poppy Funds in the three district towns, Acton, Milton and Georgetown. Two requests to re-route buses to come nearer pupils

homes were turned down, the board explaining that it was impossible to do this in the middle of the school year. A Camobellville boy, David Allen, was granted permission to attend Guelph Collegiate for a vocational course.

H. M. Moyer, school attendance officer, discussed his work with the board. Satisfaction was expressed with the job he is doing. A request from the Milton attendance officer for a raise in salary was turned

down. The secretary was instructed to inform Brampton high school board that North Halton is holding that board responsible for payment of fees for two Norval sisters attending Georgetown, and Milton schools, because transportation to Brampton is not available for them within two miles while Georgetown and Milton buses pass their door. Brampton has so far refused to accept responsibility for payment of their fees here.

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WINTER PARKING RESTRICTIONS
Motorists are reminded that no motor vehicle shall be parked on any street in Georgetown from
MIDNIGHT TO 6.00 a.m.
from December 1st to March 15th