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## The Preston Touch

(continued from page 4)  
her first crosses assured her a place in the horticultural hall of fame. Her accomplishments with other plants, in addition to lilacs, marked her as a plant breeder with a magic touch. Just about everything she set her hand to was a turn for the better.  
The *Syringa villosa*, *Syringa reflexa* cross, executed by Miss Preston resulted in a surprising number of new individuals, just about every one of them an improvement on what had been introduced previously. A description of all the named *Prestoniae* lilacs distributed to nurseries will fill a good-sized catalogue, so only a few of those regarded as superior by Ottawa authorities will be mentioned here.

Two of the first named *Prestoniae* lilacs, W. T. Macoun and *Isabella* were judged to have sufficient merit by the well known authority on the lilac, Susan Delano McKelvey, to be described in her book, *The Lilac*. Later varieties were named after heroines in Shakespeare's plays and some of them distributed to nurseries include the light colored *Celia* and *Virgilia*. *Celia* has large loose blooms 10 1/2 inches long and 9 inches wide, drooping at the tips. The bush and flowers make a good show and it is one of the latest to bloom. *Virgilia* has slightly smaller blooms than *Celia* but they are spreading and graceful in habit.  
Among the darker colored varieties is *Bellitent*, regarded as the most ornamental of the group and earned a First Class Certificate from the Royal Horticultural Society in 1946. *Bellitent* grows seven or eight feet tall bearing blooms five or six inches long.  
*Jessica* features very large blooms on a rather open bush. Those who like a dark colored lilac would like *Jessica*.

A variety considered to have sufficient ornamental value to stand by itself in the middle of the lawn was named *Fountain*. It makes a rounded bush six or seven feet tall and is covered with long pendulous flower clusters, resembling a fountain, for about two weeks.  
*Ethel M. Webster*, *Muriel* and *Peggy* are three showy varieties worthy of a spot in most gardens.  
In the past, the lily hasn't been in the same class as the lilac as far as popularity is concerned. The ordinary gardener just hasn't taken to them the way he has with other ornamentals. Lilies need a little more care than the lilac, requiring a cultivated spot in the garden, and of course they don't possess the hardiness necessary to bring them through the winter in the colder sections in Canada. Since the cold areas in Canada are somewhat extensive it's understandable that lilies haven't gained favor on a national scale.

In recent years however the picture has changed, more and more amateur gardeners have been attracted to the lily and you find an increasing number in Canadian gardens every year. The possibilities of arousing interest in the lily brightened considerably with the introduction of *Isabella Preston's* "Stenographer" and "Fighter Aircraft" groups of varieties. Here were two races containing hybrid varieties of unusual merit selected for their ability to withstand Canadian winters. They broadened the

field for gardeners who couldn't previously expect very much from their lily growing efforts. Miss Preston's lilies helped to take the lily away from the fancier and put it in the hands of the ordinary gardener.

Having hit on something outstanding in her early work at Guelph with the *George C. Creelman* lily, Miss Preston clicked again soon after her arrival at Ottawa. In 1931, the first variety raised at Ottawa to receive recognition from the Royal Horticulture Society in England was *Lady Byng*, a late blooming vigorous plant with orange-scarlet flowers spotted with deep purple.

A cross between *Lilium Davidi* variety *Willmottiae* and *Lilium dauricum* produced the now famous group of *Stenographer* lilies. Seven seedlings showed promise of adding something special to warrant distribution to the public. They were named after the girls working as stenographers in the Division of Horticulture at Ottawa. Miss Preston's personal choice among the group is *Phyllis Cox* because of the brilliant color, an orange red that deepens towards the tips.

Probably the most widely distributed and popular of the group is *Brenda Watts*, a tall, vigorous grower with orange red flowers. Although grouped together, the various varieties have their own distinctive characteristics which make any or all of them valuable acquisitions to the home garden. The first to bloom in June is *Lillian Cummings*, a light reddish orange, while the latest one to bloom is *Grace Marshall*, which is of a darker hue. The dark red flowered *Edna Kean* and the orange colored *Lyla McCann* and *Muriel Candie* are other members of the group anyone can grow with the utmost satisfaction.

**Of Interest to Breeders**  
It wasn't long after the *Stenographer* lilies came out that Miss Preston realized they were probably more valuable as breeding stock for further improved varieties than they were for ornamental effect. For out of the *Stenographer* group has come another outstanding race, the possibilities of which are only beginning to be appreciated.

In naming some of the offspring of the *Stenographer* lilies during the last war, Ottawa officials decided to call them after some of the famous fighter aircraft of the last war. *Hurricane* and *Spitfire* grew from seeds of the *Edna Kean* variety. But unlike the parent, and all the other *Stenographer* lilies, on which the blooms face outwards, *Hurricane* and *Spitfire* had something new to offer: the flowers faced upwards. This innovation created a minor sensation since the habit is distinct from any other lily.

A seedling of *Lyla McCann*, *Typhoon*, also has the characteristic of facing upward. The color varies among the *Fighter Aircraft* group. *Typhoon* and *Hurricane* are red while *Spitfire* is a flaming scarlet.  
*Mosquito* is another member of the group arising from the *Edna Kean* hybrid but it has drooping flowers rather than the upright habit. *Corsair* is similar to *Hurricane* except for color, the blooms are yellow flushed with red.

A yellow-flowered group of seedlings from the *Stenographer* group has already attracted atten-

tion with two named varieties, *Coronation* and *Sovereign*. *Coronation* is considered a most important development in lily breeding at Ottawa and is believed to be the forerunner of a new valuable race. Many unnamed seedlings from this parent still on trial at Ottawa, may find a place in Canadian gardens. They display many desirable features along with the bright yellow blooms such as the upward facing habit of some of the *Fighter Aircraft* group.

In 1945, *Coronation* won the acclaim of both the Royal Horticultural Society and the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. Although not quite as hardy as the *Stenographer* lilies, *Coronation* has a place in the general garden because of its yellow color. It stands about three feet high blooming in late June or early July. It has borne up to twenty flowers on a single stalk. The variety increases very rapidly from bulbets or scales.

In the *rosybloom* crabapples, Miss Preston developed one of the most colorful groups of shrubs you could wish for in any garden. The well shaped small trees start their annual show early, early in May in some years, with a mass of bloom ranging through various shades of pink and red. Then through the summer the striking purplish foliage continues to attract attention to this highly ornamental garden specimen. In the fall, the trees provide a brilliant show of autumn colors and the ruddy colored fruits certainly don't detract from the spectacle.

**Lawn Specimens**  
The *rosybloom* crabapples already brighten up the lawns and surroundings of many homes across Canada and the United States through the growing season and no doubt more will appear as Miss Preston's work becomes more widely recognized. One of the showplaces of the continent can be found along Ottawa's famous driveways when the *rosybloom* crabapples lining the streets burst into bloom for a ten-day period in early spring.

Dr. Macoun laid down that Miss Preston should cross *Malus pumila* with *Malus baccata* in search of something portraying the best features of both. In 1920 it was felt that there was a need for plants with coloured foliage to add variety to the shrubby border, something that would be hardy enough to be of use to the majority of Canadians. The popularity of the *rosybloom* proves that Dr. Macoun and Miss Preston achieved their aim.

The colourful shrubs were not developed without difficulties. The fruit of the parent stocks on the grounds of the Central Experimental farm, Ottawa, proved too attractive and some of Miss Preston's early work was swallowed up by the hungry passers-by. Many proud owners of Ottawa *rosybloom* crabapples find them useful as well as ornamental since the fruit makes highly flavoured jelly and preserves.

The *rosybloom* crabapples developed at Ottawa all bear the names of Canadian lakes. Some of the more outstanding in the group include the early blooming *Athabasca* and *Cowichan*, medium early *Amisk*, *Eric*, *Muskoka*, and *Temiskaming*, the late *Makamik*, *Seugog* and *Huron* and the very late *Sissipuk*.

In Miss Preston's opinion *Cowichan* is probably the best early one, blooming profusely every year and bearing a good crop of fruit suitable for jelly. *Cowichan* makes a spectacular show in the autumn.  
*Eric* is a mass of bloom in the spring but unfortunately does not flower every year nor is the fruit altogether satisfactory for jelly. *Makamik* is considered the best as an ornamental flowering tree and can be depended on to bloom every year.

Miss Preston also applied her talented hand to improving the performance of iris varieties with many of them becoming popular among iris fans in Britain as well as the United States and Canada. She regards the large pale blue *Gatineau* Siberian iris as useful in the flower border and as cut flowers. Other

hybrid varieties that have been distributed are: the dark *Kenogami*; *Matane*, white; *Matapedia*, white; *Pickanock*, violet; *Rimouski*, white, and *Skeena*, violet in color.

Her work with roses wasn't considered outstanding but just the same, a number of creations were judged worthy of introduction because of their hardiness. *Algonquin* is very effective as an ornamental growing to a height of ten feet and spreading eight feet across; the bloom is rosy pink. Something very unusual appeared in the *Micmac* variety, a deep purplish red foliage, much richer in color than the foliage of any other rose at the Central Experimental Farm. Dr. Macoun was very anxious to dev-

elop a variety of this type, however about the time *Micmac* was about ready to bloom he died.

The above makes a pretty imposing list of ornamentals developed by any one person or institution. The record as all the more remarkable when you consider that the originator, *Isabella Preston*, accomplished the feat in her own practical way without benefit of highly scientific methods of plant breeding in use today. Miss Preston's education was of the practical rather than the technical type— even so her results overshadowed many of the more scientifically designed programs. Undoubtedly, *Isabella Preston* has a special charm or touch necessary to produce results with plants.

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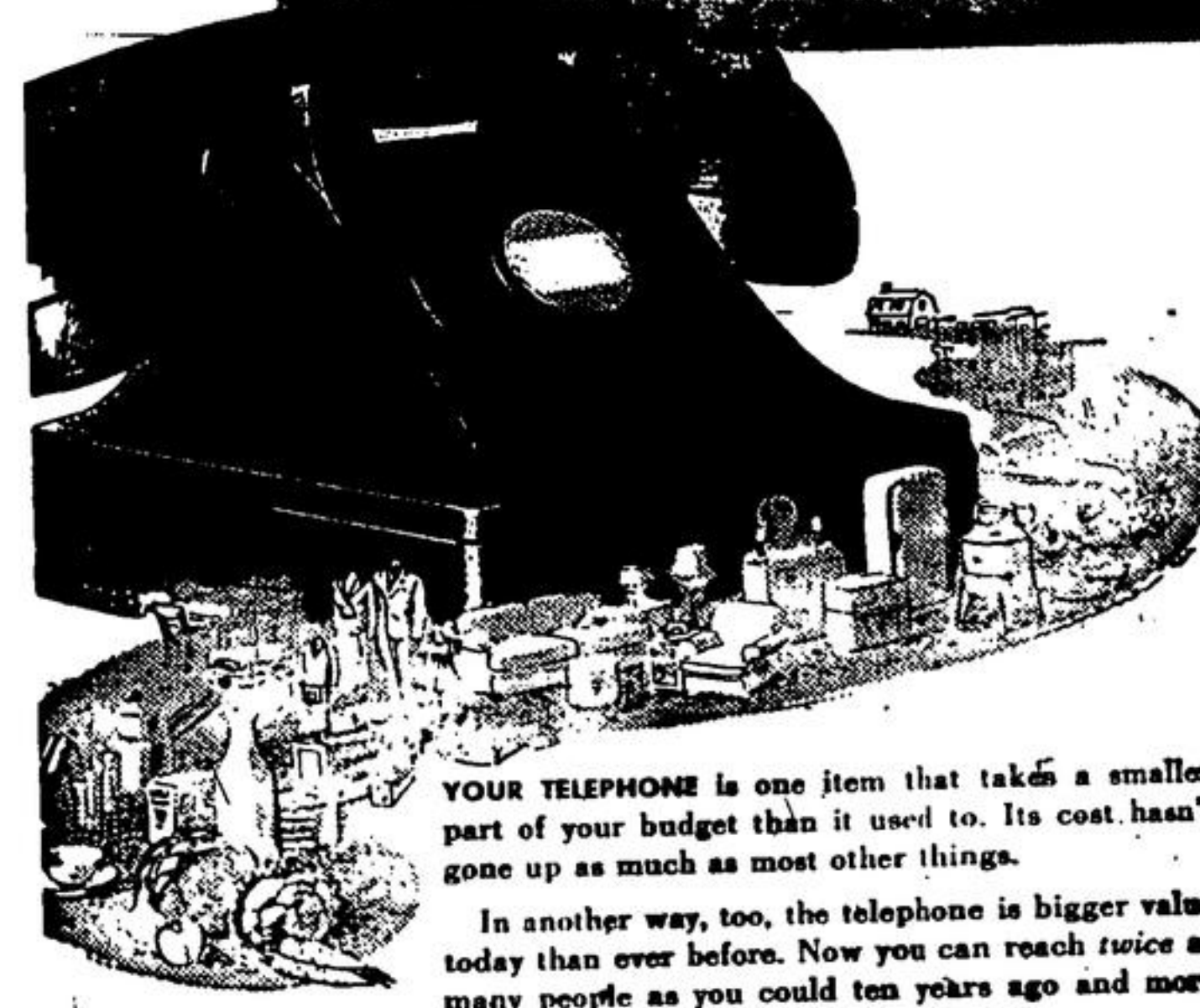
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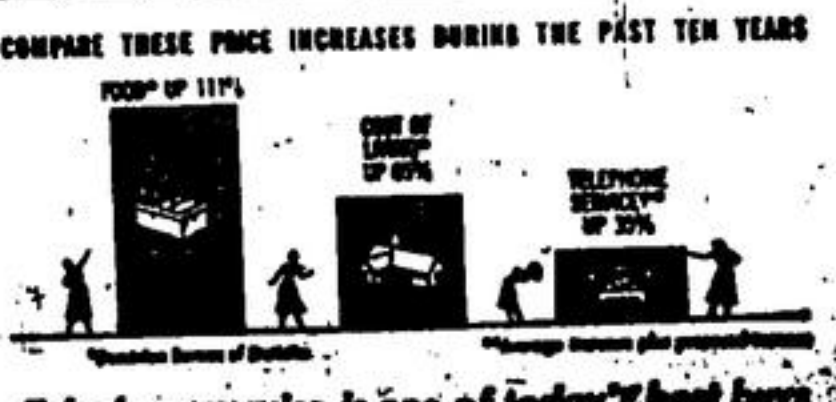


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**POULTRY BREEDERS SHOW AT ROYAL**  
Several local fancy poultry breeders have had good success with their showings at the Royal Winter Fair.  
Included in the exhibitors were Corey Herrington, Percy Clark and Son, Clarence Spence, Gordon Spence and Harvey Lusty.  
Mr. Herrington was judging the his sixth consecutive year at the Royal. He handled the Ancona Club meet as well as judging Asiatics and American birds.

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