

Garden Spotlight Hulda Klager Lilac Gardens

The Hulda Klager Lilac Gardens, a national historic site, is located in Woodland, Washington. Late April and early May is peak blooming season for lilacs. In 2004, the garden's annual Lilac Festival will be held from April 17 to May 9.

Tribute to a Passionate Gardener

The garden showcases the life work and passion of Hulda Klager, a pioneer daughter who settled with her parents in the Woodland area in 1877 at the age of 13.

In 1903 friends gave Klager a book on hybridizing to pass the time while she recovered from an illness. From it, the young woman taught herself the art of plant hybridization.

Klager first experimented with apples, later turning her attention to lilacs in 1905. By 1910, Klager had developed 14 new lilac varieties and in 1920 started opening her garden yearly to other lilac enthusiasts. By 1930, Lilac Week had become a much-anticipated event.

Klager's success was also met with adversity. In 1922, when her husband Frank passed away, she contemplated throwing out her hand-pollinated plants. At her son Fritz's urging she continued and from these plants some of her most popular varieties were developed.



In 1948 Klager's mettle was again tested when floodwaters swept across the property, destroying all but the largest trees. Then 83 years old, Klager rebuilt her garden, recovering most of her losses from starts brought to her by those who had purchased her lilacs. Just two years later, Klager opened her garden once again for Lilac Week.

After Klager's death at the age of 96 in 1960, the estate was maintained privately until costs became too great. When industrial development threatened the site, the Woodland Federated Garden Club and a group of dedicated volunteers purchased the land and had it declared a state and national historic site. Since 1976, the garden and home have been restored to their former prime, thanks to the non-profit Hulda Klager Lilac Society.



Lilac Week Today

Today, the grounds are open year-round from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

During the annual Lilac Festival some 20,000 visitors are expected to view the site's 100 lilac varieties in full bloom, including several varieties developed by Klager herself. Visitors pay a gate fee of \$2 to enter. Children under the age of 12 attend free with an adult.

The historic home on the property is also be open to visitors during the Lilac Festival. A special collection of table service sets popular in Klager's lifetime will be the featured exhibit in 2004. Inside the home, a history room contains information about Klager and photographs and memorabilia documenting the settlement of the Woodland area.

A quaint gift shop offering lilac-scented bath products, lilac-patterned dishes, handcrafted items and other goods also opens during the Lilac Festival.



A plant sale featuring some 70 varieties of lilacs, including Klager's varieties, and a selection of other showcase plants from the garden offers the opportunity for gardeners to add to their own collections. The lilacs are propagated by cell division from tissue cultures, creating exact replicas of the parent plant.

While lilacs are the focus in Klager's garden, visitors can also enjoy many other interesting plant specimens at the site throughout the year. These include the largest umbrella pine and variegated box elder trees in Washington State, the second largest ginkgo biloba tree, several one-of-a-kind rhododendrons propagated by Klager's daughter Elizabeth Mills, a large weeping cherry tree, several varieties of magnolias, a large doublefile viburnum, some 25 varieties of camellias and more.

The Hulda Klager Lilac Garden is located at 115 South Pekin Road in Woodland, Washington. For more information call (360) 225-8996 or visit the [garden's detailed website](#).