



TOP 15 SITES

in *Lilacia Park*

1. Bottom of the Stairs | near the Henderson Memorial Plaza of Helen Plum Library

This is one of the entrances of Lilacia Park, a property originally belonging to Col. William Plum and his wife Helen Plum which the library is named after. Plum bequeathed the property to the town and the lilac garden was to be turned into the first public park in Lombard and his home into a public library. The new Lombard Park District board hired Jens Jensen, a noted landscape designer and conservationist, to design Lilacia Park. Jensen and his wife, Anne Marie, would live in Lombard for the next two years overseeing the creation of the park from the Plum estate..

2. Top of the Plaza | near the top of the steps by the Herb Garden & Roses

*The park is filled with many different lilacs today and were first classified by a Susan McKelvey book, *The Lilac: A Monograph* in 1928. This was the starting point for lilac cultivar names. What is a species? Cultivar? Lilac? Well, scientists have identified about 20 different Syringa or lilac species - none of which are native to North America. Species: There are 20 variety of syringa or lilac that naturally occur, i.e. without human interference. Cultivar: The result of human breeding in plants. In North America, we are more familiar with lilacs that have been cultivated by hybridizers who have created more than 2,000 named cultivars of the *Syringa vulgaris*.*

There are 10 varieties or species of lilac in the park and at least 200 various cultivars, totaling around 700 actual bushes or trees.

3. #20 & #22 | trees found on the Lilacia Park Map

There are some very impressive trees in Lilacia Park. #21 the Schwedler Maple, a type of Norway Maple brought back from the Black Forest of Germany by Col. Plum as a seedling and #22 the Ginkgo, a type native to China which is the oldest known tree species. They were each planted here by Col. Plum.

4. Point D | between points C and F on the Lilacia Park Map

The Plum house originally stood here, where the library deck stands today. When the house was torn down, over 200 bushes were lost, including the William R. Plum. Today, Rochester, New York has the largest collection of lilacs in the country and Lilacia Park has the second largest collection. Modernly, the park is not just used for Lilac Time. It is a four-season park that is maintained by the Lombard Park District.

5. Point E | President Lincoln Lilac

William R. Plum was a telegrapher, lawyer and author of fiction and nonfiction. He came to live in Lombard in 1869 after serving in the Civil War. During the war, he served as a civilian operating the telegraph for the army's use. He was stationed in Kentucky and would send messages to President Lincoln in Washington. The army trusted him to hold one of the nine Military Cipher Keys. The honorary title of Colonel was bestowed on him for his dedication to the memory of Union soldiers. The President Lincoln lilac is from Col. Plum's original collection. It is a pyramidal cluster of single flowers in Wedgewood blue. It was said to be Col. Plum's favorite. He is also reported to have said about the lilac "just like Lincoln, not much to look at, but true blue."

6. Oak Meadow | trees found on the Lilacia Park Map

*This area is known as Oak Meadow. Lilacia Park contains many of the nine oak trees native to Illinois including the Shingle Oak: *Quercus imbricaria* which was used to make roof shingles and is in the red oak family of trees with pointy buds and leaves. Other trees include the Black Locust: *Robinia pseudoacacia* which has great spring flowers and many leaflets that fold together in wet weather and at night. Also is the Sweet Gum Tree: *Liquidambar styraciflua* which is an important southern lumber tree that features star shaped leaves, gumball fruit and brilliant red and purple colors in Autumn.*

7. Argentea | found behind the waterfall feature in Lilacia Park

Argentea is the oldest known specimen in the park dating back to 1936. It is a late-bloomer, meaning it will bloom in June.

- 8. Point I | Near the Butterfly Garden**
Notice the stone bench that Jens Jensen laid in 1929 when the park was converted from a private garden to a public space. Flagstone paths have been replaced by brick pavers and other materials to ensure accessibility for all visitors. Jens Jensen, a native from Denmark, came to the U.S. when he was 24 years old and designed many of Chicago's large parks including Humboldt Park, Garfield Conservatory and Columbus Park. Tulips were a very important part of the park design. Jensen chose them because they bloom near the same time as lilacs - almost like an opening act to a play with lilacs being the main feature.
- 9. Butterfly Garden & Flagstone Path | features found on the Lilacia Park Map**
This is a section of the original paths that Jensen created out of flagstone. As times changed, the Park District replaced the paths with brick pavers to make the park ADA accessible. Jensen, a contemporary of Frank Lloyd Wright, used a prairie-style landscape design that combined subtle beauty and conservation. He was very much against the elaborate false ornamentation of the Victorian-style garden and preferred to use native plants arranged in a natural way. The butterfly garden was planted and donated by the Lombard Garden Club. Plants and flowers within the garden attract a variety of butterflies throughout the summer.
- 10. Point J | Council Circles**
Jensen's design included elements of nature. He sought to bring people together in nature and one of the ways he did that was through creating natural circular enclosures for seating. The Council Circles at Lilacia Park were built close to the north side near Parkside Avenue and the Chicago and Northwestern tracks in the original Jensen design. Note the nice view of the pond which is an original feature of the park.
- 11. Point K | Deer at Lilacia Park**
The iron deer, cast in 1888 at a Milwaukee, Wisconsin foundry, is one of Lilacia Park's most beloved residents and is now found on the west side of the park. It originally stood at the Andrews estate on Parkside and Main Streets. When the home was destroyed by fire in 1926 and replaced by the DuPage Theater block, the deer was moved to Lilacia Park. It is a tradition for generations of Lombardians to pose for photographs by the iron deer.
- 12. Near Point L | Michel Buchner & Mme. Casimir-Perier Lilacs**
Around 1910, Helen and William Plum decided to take a trip to Europe. In those days, a trip abroad meant at least a year or more away from home traveling and enjoying the sites. While in Europe, Helen insisted that they visit the Lemoine Gardens in France. The Plums walked through the garden filled with blooming lilacs and were taken by their fragrance and beauty. Helen brought back two varieties of lilacs in 1911, a Mme. Casimir-Perier and a Michael Buchner. These lilacs began the Plum's collection at their home in Lombard. The lilacs are an example of the cultivar, not originals. At the time of his death Col. Plum had over 1,200 lilac bushes.
- 13. Point L | Weeping Mulberries**
Tucked in this corner of the park are weeping mulberry trees, or white mulberry. These are native to Eastern China and were introduced to colonial America for silkworm culture. These trees were planted by Col. Plum.
- 14. Base of the Pond | found on the Lilacia Park Map**
*In 1930, Lilacia Park was a new community-wide excitement complete with festivities, performances, parade and royal court. Elaborate pageants were staged to celebrate a theme each year. Thousands gathered in Lilacia Park to celebrate Lilac Time. The first performance was a play called *The Mother of Dreams*. The first court consisted of five princesses and the first Lilac Queen was Adeline Fleege.*
- 15. The Coach House & Tulip Tree | found on the Lilacia Park Map**
The Coach House was originally part of the Plum estate and was used to store a horse and carriage. The tulip tree stands next to the Coach House with flowers resembling tulips. It is also the largest of the native eastern trees. Although the tree is sometimes called a tulip poplar, it is not a true poplar.



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in *Lilacia Park*



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