

THE NEWSLETTER of
THE SIBERIAN, SPURIA and JAPANESE IRIS GROUP
of the British Iris Society

No. 4

January 1979

THE OBJECTS OF THE GROUP

1. Communication between members in Great Britain and overseas.
2. A means of exchanging ideas, plants, seeds, etc.
3. To assist beginners in growing Iris and to offer help with problems.
4. To report on hybridisation.

EDITORIAL

First let me wish you all a happy New Year, and I hope you will all make a resolution to grow at least one new iris, more if you possibly can. For the benefit of our new members we have repeated the "Objects" of The Group. We extend a welcome to our new members and hope they will enjoy reading about our activities and those of our friends overseas; also that they will regard the Newsletter as their own. We will print your requests, problems, methods of growing, in fact anything you have to say.

May I, on your behalf, send our sincere congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. L. Brummitt for their wonderful award of the Hybridiser's Medal from the American Iris Society, the first time it has been won in the United Kingdom, and as we all know, most richly deserved.

In conveying our thanks to Mrs. Doris Hansford Morris for her pioneering work in taking over a most difficult task as Secretary/Treasurer of the Group when everything was "in turmoil" after the death of Alex Back, we would like to send her our good wishes and hope she will continue to give us her support and also the benefit of her very wide experience,

We are printing a list of the Shows, as supplied by the Hon. Secretary of the British Iris Society, Mrs. Blanco White, who points out that the late date of the June Show (26th/27th) may be of interest to us, but we will know more when the Year Book is issued, this is just a preliminary notice.

A word about the Seed Bank, or rather, the seeds in it. We have some of the late Alex Back's Spuria seed, which, if you are prepared to wait, will give you a good start (cheap too) in growing these good garden iris. As one of Sidney Linnegar's "seedlings" I have been growing iris from seed for many years; I bought some packets from Eric Elliott in late spring last year, they have

germinated, have stood outside through all this snow, and are quite all right. We are holding these packets for you until late spring, then we are going to sow them, because we feel they are too good to lose.

Now you will see why they have made me the "Editor" and now "Secretary/Treasurer" of the Group, I like growing iris for the flower alone, even if it does not conform to all the standards "laid down", but I admire tremendously the beautiful flowers produced by the hybridisers, and have great respect for the amount of work they do. Since I have started to edit the Newsletter, I have been struck by the very high esteem in which they are held in many parts of the world. Long may this continue.

Happy gardening in 1979.

Joan Trevithick.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Our Chairman, Mr. Max Davis, sends his best wishes for 1979, and notes with pleasure the increase in membership, also the fact that the finances are looking healthy. He welcomes the President of the Japanese Iri0 Society to our Group, thanks him for his gift of seeds, and hopes that he has fully recovered from his recent illness.

LETTER FROM TREVOR NOTTLE

(New address: 5 Walker Street, Crafers, South Australia 5152, Australia)

Trevor writes, giving us his new address. He has had a very busy time moving all his precious plants, at very short notice. All the valued roses, rare shrubs etc. have been healed in. Only the daffodils have been planted properly as they were in full root-growth when dug from their old beds. The iris have mostly been replanted, the task being completed on the long week-end to celebrate the Queen's birthday. He says: "As our garden is in a heavy rainfall area I have tried a new planting method in an attempt to avoid the problems of rot and lack of rhizome ripening. All of the iris are in long rows on mounds, rather like a potato patch. I have spread the rhizomes across the ridges and just buried the roots in the soil This should allow ample air circulation and sunshine.

My Spurias, Louisianas and Siberians are growing in damper ground and seem to be revelling in the improved conditions after the dryness of our previous garden. Dave Niswongor of the U.S.A. has sent me a wonderful lot of seed from Walker Ferguson's breeding lines for black and pink Spurias, altogether over 500 seeds. The pink line involves "Pink Candles" and "La Senda". The black line is (Ferguson's dark sdlg x Crow Wings) X self. In two years we should have a wonderful display and an exciting time selecting a few for further breeding and introduction, From "SIGNA" I have also about 1,000 seeds from 20 or so modern hybrids which

have yet to be planted. Audrey Wessels in South Africa has promised me seed from her garden and I also have seed from Joan Collins in New Zealand and Ila Crawford in the United States.

If anyone in England would care to do some swapping I am keen to get seeds from SPECIES or from English or European hybrids. I will not be able to send seed back until after Christmas but will do my best to return the favours sent to me.

Mrs. Ilma Tilley of Ivanhoe in Victoria has sent me plants of the Australian varieties "Surf Beach" and "Kyah Gold" and an unnamed seedling of Ken Frankhauser's. Gordon Loveridge of Sidney sent me 10 flowered seedlings which he says are as good as the present American hybrids.

We have now turned our attention to planting trees such as magnolias, rhododendrons, azaleas, camellias (reticulatas, japonicas, sasanquas and others), weeping hollies, an arbour of weeping cherries, copper beeches and other treasures.

The iris seem to be moving along very nicely and I have applied to import some more aril species from the U.S.A. and Israel.

(As you will see I have included the whole of Trevor's letter. I was so fascinated by his description, I just could not leave anything out. I wonder if you will be able to send us some slides, Trevor, when they are in flower. I feel I already know your garden. Best wishes from us all.)

MY IRISES (1) Hilda Goodwin

Reference to some back numbers of the B.I.S. Year Books revealed rather surprisingly that by next year my membership of the Society will have covered twenty years. How quickly the time seems to have passed and yet this period must surely have seen the greatest advance in the hybridization of irises.

Like so many others before me, my interest in irises began with the tall bearded varieties. A few rhizomes were given to me when we first started our garden, one of which, a beautiful scented pale blue, turned out to be *I. pallida*, though it was many years before I discovered this fact. Another interesting one proved to be "Gracchus" which I have been told was introduced some time in the 1890's. I still have good clumps of these after more than forty years, but most of the other "oldies" have had to make room for more modern varieties.

Visits to Chelsea after the war revealed what was going on in the iris world and I learned through Astelats Nurseries of the existence of a British Iris Society. I attended several of the Society's summer Shows, decided to join the ranks and from then on I was completely hooked.

I had already acquired a good clump of *I. stylosa*, as it was then called, and two or three *I. sibiricae* one of which was "Eric the Red". It grew quite well for me and I was surprised

to hear, on showing it at Vincent Square one year, that many people found it difficult. Unfortunately, I was rather too liberal with offers of pieces so that after one very dry summer, I lost most of what remained. However, I still have hopes of building up another good clump. Having started to compete in the *I. sibirica* classes at the Show I looked for some new varieties so that I now have a fairly large collection which includes "Cambridge", "Limeheart", "Nottingham Lace", "Violet Flare", "Dreaming Spires", "Mountain Pool", "Purple Cloak" and "Sea Shadows", all good doers, especially the first four. For some time various B.I.S. members had been encouraging me to try growing more species. Advice and plants from such friends as Mr. Rogoyski, Bernard Venables and Effie Osborn, coupled with visits to gardens such as that of the late Angela Marchant at Bishops Stortford, started me on that path. I began with *I. graminea*, *chrysographes*, *laevigata*, *Japonica*, *versicolor* *Kermesina* and *setosa* *tricuspis*, followed by *brevicaulis* and *fulvala*. The only *I. spuria* in the garden at that time was the one then called *I. ochroleuca* (now *I. orientalis*) but after seeing some very good hybrids at Norton Hall Nurseries, I obtained some unnamed seedlings to try out. Two of those, a yellow self and a blue with yellow signal patch, have done very well and have been exhibited successfully at B.I.S. Shows. I am now growing on some of their seeds. Their chief drawback from my point of view is the space they take up, which is quite a problem in a fairly small garden. P.C.I.s and *I. kaempferi* I find more difficult to grow but I have had a small measure of success this last year or two.

My garden now contains about 50 different species, 20 or so *sibirica* hybrids, 150 T.B.s and about 100 Dwarfs and Intermediates. Originally most of the tallies were grown in the south-facing herbaceous border and the dwarfs on the rockeries, but as the collection increased I have had to filch extra space from the lawns. Most of the *I. sibiricas* and many of the species grow around a small pond with *I. reticulatas* and *I. danfordiae* in troughs. These I have to buy afresh each year since I have had little success in growing them on after once flowering. As you will see from the foregoing, I do not specialise, but just enjoy growing these lovely flowers.

(Hilda Goodwin kindly wrote this article for us, although she had only recently been in hospital. We send her our thanks and hope she will soon be completely well again.)

MY IRISES (2) Ray Jeffs

Since I started growing irises seriously (just after the war) I have probably been more interested in the bearded ones but being interested in the whole genus I have always enjoyed seeing other people's species and beardless and have always grown some of them. My first memories of irises were a long row of a sibirica hybrid my father grew on his allotment for cut flowers and sale to a florist. I think it was probably "Perry's Blue" and in about 1926. The fascinating gold veinings were much of the attraction and I must say I find modern varieties lacking the veins sometimes a little dull. Now as to my present irises. Water irises include *I. pseudacorus* "Golden Queen" (so much better than most forms), ditto *bastardii* and *alba* and my most recent acquisitions are from Germany - 3 tetraploid forms which look very flourishing. I have lost most of my collection of *I. laevigata* but have had most of them in the past - they don't stand neglect very well and that hot summer finished off several which have not yet been replaced. I love the red form of *I. versicolor* (*kermesina*) which is most reliable and proof against most conditions. *Iris virginica* is a fine one and is naturalised in a boggy spot together with several old varieties of *I. sibirica*, but I find the oldest varieties make the best clumps in these conditions. The grass is cut down around them after the irises flower and some manure is sloshed on to suppress its growth and to encourage the irises. Of the interesting hybrids "Holden Clough" and "Garald Darby" both do well and make huge clumps. The only P.C.I. that thrives in my soggy waterlogged clay is "Banbury Beauty" whose F.C.C. was very well deserved. *I. foetidissima*, *I. graminea*, forms of *I. spuria* and its hybrids, and *I. xiphoides* which is the only bulbous one which puts up with my soil, all do well. Modern sibiricas include some Brummitt hybrids which do fairly well but "Cambridge" does not like me, being short of stem and reluctant to emerge from its spathes. Some of Dr. Tamberg's hybrids and Dr. McEwen's are as yet too small to flower but I live in hope. I have just started to get *I. kaempferi* (I don't like its new name) to flower but it has taken them two years to recover from the drought year and I thought I had lost the variegated form. When it feels like it the Louisiana *I. fulvala* condescends to flower but our winter conditions are usually too harsh and the buds get killed. I can only grow the forms of *I. reticulata* in two places - one in a rookery and the other in some soil that incorporated masses of boiler ash. Of the Evansias I have a fine collection (thanks to Dr. Ellis) and they all do well in a cool greenhouse in which I grow cacti and succulents. Of them I think "Bourne Graceful" is the queen for colour, form, freedom of bloom and prodigality of buds, not to mention its ease of cultivation and general good looks all through the year.

If I could only grow one Iris I think it would be "Bourne Graceful" (if I had some protection for it) and if it had to be an outdoor one it would be the best form of Iris pseudacorus that I could lay hands on. "Golden Queen" sometimes reaches 8ft in height with six branches and dozens of large golden flowers of rather floppy shape. I hope it will be replaced by one of the tetraploids with their solid substance and large well-flared flowers. However I hope to grow lots more species and hybrids in the future.

SEED DONATION and REQUEST

Mr. Akira Horinaka, the President of the Japanese Iris Society, has joined our Group and has kindly sent us seed of:

Iris laevigata "Orizuru"

Iris setosa (blue-violet)

Iris setosa (red-violet, very rare)

You will see them listed in the Seed List.

He asks if anyone has seed of the following:

Iris laevigata variegata

Iris pallida argentea variegata

Iris pallida aurea variegata

Iris foetidissima variegata

If you can send seed, please send them by Air Mail to this address

Mr. Akira Horinaka,

17, Kitamiomodani,

Minami-Ku,

Osaka, Japan.

We thank you for the seed, and hope you have recovered from your recent illness.

SEIWA-EN, MISSOURI'S "GARDEN OF PURE CLEAR HARMONY AND PEACE"

by John E. Elsley, Curator of Hardy Plants, Missouri Botanical Garden.

(This article is reprinted from The Review, the magazine of the Society for Japanese Irises, by kind permission of the Editor.)

May 5, 1977, heralded the dedication at the Missouri Botanical Garden, St. Louis, of North America's largest traditional Japanese garden, a 13.5 acre development christened by its designer, Professor Koichi Kawana, Professor of Art and Lecturer in Environmental Design at the University of California - Los Angeles, Seiwa-En, "Garden of Pure Clear Harmony and Peace". The traditional Japanese dedication ceremony was graced by such notable dignitaries as Japanese Ambassador Fumihiko Togo and Mrs. Togo from Washington, D.C., Japanese Consul General and Mrs. Kiyoshi Sumiya from Chicago and Mayor and Mrs. Setsuji Iwamoto, from Suwa, St. Louis's sister city in Japan. Other

officials and representatives of major contributors to the garden present included the National Endowment for the Arts, The Japanese World Exposition Commemorative Fund, The Missouri Arts Council, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and many individual donors. The new garden is constructed around the 4.5 acre lake and includes four islands and two waterfalls. An authentic Japanese Tea House, a gift from Missouri's sister state of Nagano, Japan, dominates the largest island, which is itself joined to the mainland by two traditional bridges, a Dobashi, or earth bridge, and a Taikobashi, or drum bridge. Other significant elements incorporated into the project include a dry landscape garden, where white sand raked in specific patterns is indicative of water; a series of distinctively styled stone lanterns; a viewing arbour strategically situated along densely planted red-leaved Japanese plum trees; an extensive pebble beach and traditional boat dock. Along part of the southwestern lake shore is the unique zig-zag bridge called Yatsubashi, a name meaning eight bridges and referring to a place in Mikawa Province, Japan, where in the tenth century a single river branched into eight channels. Each channel was crossed by a bridge around which grew masses of Japanese irises. Professor Kawana has emulated this feature by constructing eight wooden planter boxes situated between the main angles of the redwood bridge and planting each with cultivars of Japanese iris hybrids. Through the generosity of Mr. Adolf J. Voight of Louisville, Kentucky, we received in 1976 a selection of his iris hybrids which, having become established in parts during 1976, were forced into flower early and provided a display of blooms during June, 1977. These plants will now be utilised in other parts of the garden. We have now installed a permanent planting of twenty iris hybrids planned by Mr. A.H. Hazzard of Kalamazoo, Michigan. The cultivars utilised are Sky and Water, Azure Perfection, Calico Print, Foralpha, Prairie Velvet, Prairie Indigo, Prairie Chief, Premier Danseur, Prairie Star, Prairie Edge, Gossamer Threads, Veined Artistry, Strut and Flourish, Storm at Sea, Veiled Vanity, Ruffled Brocade, White Chiffon, Forbeta, Mahagony. In addition to the Japanese irises, the new garden has enabled us to incorporate a range of new plants not included to any extent in the botanical garden. These include specially trained specimens of Japanese Black, Scots, Austrian and Mugo pines, the Japanese umbrella pine, *Sciadopitys verticillata*, several forms of the Japanese Maple, *Acer palmatum*, and two cherries, the pink double flowered *Prunus serrulata* "Kwansan" and weeping Higan Cherry *Prunus subhirtella* "Pendula".

An impressive planting of the Japanese Holly, *Ilex crenata*. "Convexa" and the American *Ilex glabra* will both one day form excellent hedges. Other shrubs and ground covers extensively utilised include magnolias, azaleas, especially some of the Kurume cultivars, *Euonymus alatus*, noted for its brilliant display of fall colouration; quince; both the American and Asian dogwood, *Cornus florida* and *Cornus kousa*; several different crabapples; Korean lilac, *Syringa velutina*, a delightful species especially suited for small gardens; dwarf bamboo, *Sasa pygmaea*; and several different leaf form cultivars of the excellent Asian plants, *Liriope muscari* and *Liriope spicata*; Lily turf and Monkey or Mondo Grass, *Ophiopogon japonicum*, the latter three being first class ground cover subjects. The Missouri Botanical Garden extends a warm welcome to members of the Society of Japanese Irises to visit St. Louis and enjoy this new development as well as the many other features to be seen at America's oldest botanical garden.

BRITISH IRIS SOCIETY - LIST OF SHOWS FOR 1979

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------|
| February 20/21 | Reticulata Competition |
| April 3/4 | Decorative Competition |
| May 1/2 | Dwarf and Median Competition |
| May 22-25 | Chelsea Show |
| May 26-28 | Cannington Weekend and Show |
| June 26/27 | Late Show |
| July 10/11 | A.G.M. |

THE GROUP LIBRARY

The following publications are available on loan - please refund postage.

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Newsletter of the Spuria Iris Society | Fall 1976, Spring and Fall 1977 |
| The Review, Society for Japanese Irises. | Oct, 76, April and Oct. 77, April 78 |
| The Siberian Iris (Journal of Siberian Iris Society) | Fall 77, Spring & Fall 78 |
| The Genus Iris - Subsection Sibiricae – B.I.S. | |
| Alphabetical Table and Cultivation Guide to the Species – B.I.S. | |
| Siberian, Spuria and Japanese Group Newsletters 1 - 4 | |

Please apply to the Librarian:.

Mrs. J. Hewitt, Haygarth, Cleeton St. Mary, Cleobury Mortimer, Kidderminster.

SEED DISTRIBUTION 1979

The following seeds are available at the moment:

SPURIA

5 large packets collected from the garden of the late Alex Back, probably from assorted species . . . , . , . . . , . 25p per packet.

Spuria 2 (A.B.) Pale blue, yellow signal . . . , . . 1 packet @ 5p.

Spuria orientalis (ochroleuca) . . . , . . . , . . . 5 packets @ 5p each.

Spuria (unknown origin) , , . . . 1 packet @ 5p.

This is the last time these Spuria seeds will be offered.

LAEVIGATAE

Iris pseudacorus bastardii . . . 5 packets @ 5p each.

SIBIRICAE

Iris delavayi 5 packets @ 5p each,

Iris "Mirza Citronella" , 5 packets @ 5p each.

Iris sibirica hybrid (28 chromosome mid-blue) . .12 packets @ 5p each.

SPURIA

Iria gramlnea , , , 7 packets @ 5p each.

The following are from Mr. Akira Horinaka, all 1978

Iris setosa (blue-violet, collected Hokkaido) . .15 packets @ 10p each.

Iris setosa (red-violet, very rare)15 packets @ 10p each.

Iria laevigata "Orizuru" 2 packets @ 10p each.

These will have to be sold on a "first come first served" basis.

Would you kindly add the postage when you send for seed.

Seed Distribution Officer

Mr. E, Elliott, 27 Nelson Street, Cotmanhay, Ilkeston, Derbyshire, DE7 8PA.

THE GROUP'S OFFICERS

ChairmanMr. M.E.. Davis,
29 Fairlawn Avenue, Meole Bruce, Shrawsbury, Salop.

Hon. Secretary/TreasurerMrs. G.J. Trevithick,
86a.Grantham Road, Radcliffe-on-Trent, Nottingham.

Hon. Editor..... Mrs. G.J.. Trevithick.

Hon. Seed Distribution Officer Mr. E, Elliott,
27 Nelson Street, Cotmanhay, Ilkeston, Derbyshire.

Hon. Librarian Mrs. J. Hewitt,
Haygarth, Cleeton St. Mary, Cleobury Mortimer, Kidderminster, Worcs.

Please note change of Hon. Secretary/Treasurer.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please send the new Secretary/Treasurer your subscription for 1978/79 if you have not already done so. Our year runs from June 1st-May 31st and the subscription is still only 50p. However there are some people who expressed interest in the Group and are receiving the Newsletters whose subscriptions have not yet arrived. Please send them soon, or this will be the last Newsletter sent to you.

NEXT ISSUE

In the next issue of the .Newsletter, due in July 1979, we are hoping to compile and print a list of nurserymen who stock the Siberian, Spuria and Japanese Iris species.

HORTICULTURAL TERMINOLOGY - The Inner Meanings

(This first appeared in "The Siberian Iris", the journal of the Siberian Iris Society of the U.S.A. We thank the Society and their Editor for permission to reprint this entertaining list. Can anyone add to it?)

Artistic: peculiar

Bargain: I went without shoes to buy it/It was left over from the auction.

Choice: I have it and you don't, nyah, nyah.

Clone: variety, only more elegant.

Commercial: some people will buy anything/I can't afford it/the originator
Didn't give me piece.

Commonplace: I didn't think of it first.

Cultivar: see clone.

Difficult: takes too much work.

Dog/real. Dog: it stole Best-in-Show from mine/someone else's prize seedling.

Easy: I sweated blood to make it grow.

Effective in the garden: doesn't look bad. at twenty feet.

Expert: doesn't really know any more but is organised, and has slides.

Fanatic: someone who prefers TBs, Medians, etc.

Fancier: anyone who appreciates Siberians.

Figment of Someone's imagination: I haven't seen it yet.

Fine Show Specimen: only two stalks on a three year clump/very gawky/ the
colour clashes with everything else in the garden.

Grooming: blow off the dust/go over the whole thing with a camel's hair brush.

Needs improvement: he really should know better than to introduce that.

Normal season: average/never experienced in living memory,

(Sorry, no room for more - will be continued in the next Newsletter.)