

# NEWSLETTER



OF THE  
SIBERIAN SPURIA AND JAPANESE  
GROUP  
B.I.S

THE SIBEROAN, SPURIA AND JAPANESE IRIS GROUP  
of the BRITISH IRIS SOCIETY.

THE AIMS AND OBJECTS OF THE GROUP.

1. Communication between Members in Great Britain and Overseas.
2. A means of exchanging ideas, plants and seeds etc.,
3. To assist beginners in growing Irises and to offer help with problems.
4. To report on Hybridisation.

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The Group's Officers.

Chairman..... Mr. J.Venner, 'Raven's Croft'. 120, St. Osyth Rd. LITTLE CLACTON.  
ESSEX CO16 9NY.

Vice-Chairman..... Mrs. H.M.Goodwin, 42, Tycehurst Hill, LOUGHTON. ESSEX.

Hon. Secty/Treas..... Mrs. Joan Trevithick, 86a, Grantham Rd. RADCLIFFE-ON-TRENT.  
NOTTINGHAM. NG12 2HY.

Hon N/L. Editor..... ----- as above -----

Hon. Seed Distbn. Offr. Mr. David Trevithick-----, address as above -----

Hon. Librarian..... Mrs. J.Hewitt, 'Haygarth', Cleeton St. Mary, CLEOBURY MORTIMER.  
KIDDERMINSTER. WORCS.

Spuria Representative. Mr. A.E.Whittaker, 'Chestnuts', Hilden Way, LITTLETON.  
WINCHESTER. HANTS.

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Regional Representatives.

Eastern Area ..... Mr. Jack Venner\*-- address as above-----

North Western Area.. Mrs. Ruth Conley, 17, Udale Close, AINSDALE. SOUTHPORT.LANCS.

Southern Area..... Mr. Adrian Whittaker, 'Chestnuts', Hilden Way, LITTLETON. WINCHESTER.  
HANTS.

West Midland Area... Vacant.

\*Jack Venner is also the Show Reporter.

These Members have kindly offered their services to be on hand in your area, to help you in any problems that you may have, and to report on the Irises they see. Also to write in about the entries and awards at any Local Show. To date, Members have written in to say how valuable they have found the advice given, all helping to promote the growing of our lovely Irises more successfully... We thank our Experts most sincerely...

EDITORIAL

A Happy New Year to you all and many thanks for all your good wishes... Here is a Poem for you, reprinted by kind permission of the Editor of the 'REVIEW for Japanese Irises USA.

Iris Flowets (Mary McNeil Fenellosa).

My Mother let me go with her,  
(I had been good all day).  
To see the Iris flowers that bloom  
In gardens far away.

We walked and walked through hedges green,  
Through rice-fields empty still,  
To where we saw a garden gate  
Beneath the farthest hill.

She pointed out the rows of 'flowers':-  
I saw no planted things.  
But white and purple butterflies  
Tied down with silken strings.

They strained and fluttered in the breeze  
So eager to be free;  
I begged the man to let them go,  
But Mother laughed at me.

She said that they could never rise,  
Like birds, to heaven so blue.  
But even mothers do not know  
Some things that children do.

That night, the flowers untied themselves  
and softly stole away,  
To fly in sunshine round my dreams  
Until the break of day...

Poignant memories of my Iris Ensata (Kaempferi), which, having flowered for many years, disliked the very dry weather and did not flower at all.... ah well; perhaps this year.....  
Now for news of the Group....

Congratulations and Good Wishes are due to the following Members of our Group:-

To Margaret Owen and the Remontant Group on receiving the Lindley Medal at the Great Autumn Show. (R.H.S.)

To Hilda and Don Goodwin on being awarded the Randall Trophy, which is given to the person or persons, who, during the year have made a valuable contribution to the B.I.S. Shows, which may not have received recognition.

To 'Cass' (G.Cassidy) who was awarded the first Photographic Trophy.

To Nora Scopes on her appointment as Vice-President of the B.I.S.

To Jennifer Hewitt who is now the Editor of the B.I.S. Year Book.

To Brett Tussler who has taken on the task of Treasurer of the B.I.S.

not forgetting Ray Wilson who is now editing the Remontant News. Congratulations to all Members who have received awards at the Shows throughout the year... Well done....

We welcome a new Member Mr. Len Rowding, who lives at Balderton nr. Newark. Len tells me that after some years of growing Chrysanthemums he has turned his attention to his other love, Irises. We hope he enjoys reading our Newsletters and derives benefit from the information that Members are so generous in supplying.

This issue has turned out to be a seed-sowers paradise, not really by design, I can assure you... To those of you who have not only sent in your experiences, but have also backed this up by sending in seeds ... a big thank you... We have printed the seed list on the last page for your convenience. The cost of seeds is now 10p. per packet inclusive of P&P.

The stand at Bingham Fayre made a profit of £25.08p. This enables us to have a Facing Cover.. Also to print more leaflets for distribution.

Keeping the subscription at 75p. until the 30th June 1985, has meant that we were not keeping up with rising prices, so your Committee has decided that the subscription will be £1 per year, from July 1st. 1985. A sum which very many of you already contribute.

More about the July Newsletter at the end of this issue. Happy Iris gardening. J.T.



CHAIRMAN'S LETTER.

Dear Fellow Members. Looking back over 1984, the general impression seems to be that it has been one of the latest Iris seasons for many years. Certainly, with regard to the two B.I.S. June Shows... Late blooming accounts for fewer *Sibirica* exhibits than we had hoped for and there were no *Spuria* exhibits at all. Yet, it was pointed out to me, that in the West Country, *Sibiricas* were unusually early in some gardens and blooms were over before the early B.I.S. Show held in Northampton. Obviously, local weather conditions strongly influence the flowering period.. It just goes to show how diverse climatic conditions are... even in such a small country as Great Britain.

In my Essex garden, beardless Irises performed well, the latest plant to flower being the strange, pale-yellow *Pseudacorus* x *Kaempferi* hybrid 'KIMBOSHI' which bloomed in August... The Tall Bearded put on a good show and their foliage kept in reasonably good condition for many weeks after flowering;- then the rains came... this brought on an attack of the dreaded bacterial leaf blight... According to my experience beardless Irises are completely unaffected by this disease, in fact they seem to be resistant to pests and disease and are generally trouble-free. It is not surprising that the newer forms and varieties are deservedly getting more and more attention from Irisarians.

We owe much to our Overseas Members for the improvements made during the last decade... Better flower form, better substance, longer flowering periods and such an extension of the colour range (especially with *Spurias*).. We sincerely thank those Members who kindly send plants and seeds to this country...

I ask Members to continue to give their support by sending in articles for the Newsletter, giving us their views and experiences.. In this way we help our hard working Secretary/Treasurer and at the same time help each other, through communication and exchange of information and ideas...

Now that 1984 has passed, I wish all our Members, Happy and Successful Iris growing for 1985.

Jack Venner (Hon. Chmn.)

(Jack wrote this just before the snow came down, the worst they had had in years, we hope there will not be too much damage, and that he and his wife Peggy manage to keep warm. J.T.)

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My Irises

Dr. Roderick Woods.

With snow covering the garden, the children in bed, my wife marking French essays and no Western on Television... there is no excuse for putting off writing about my limited attempts at growing Irises for the S.S. & J. Group....

I cannot really say that Irises dominate my garden at any season, but quite a few do inhabit it, and flower profusely to not at all... Our garden is of shallow, highly alkaline clayey soil (pH 8.75) over grey chalk in Shelford, close to where Sir Michael Foster grew his Irises.. (coincidentally I also work in the Physiological Laboratory which he founded in 1870). Unlike Sir Michael's garden however, ours is at the bottom of the hill and subject to severe radiation frosts in May and June.... 10 deg. cent. in May is not unusual.

We have a particularly low rainfall of under 50cm (20ins) in most years. May to September are often almost rainless, but I do irrigate in May and June, if it is dry. These conditions clearly suit some Irises very well. *I. Lutescens* (*chamaeiris*) forms have to be dug out by the barrowload and seedlings are a pest. *I. Foetidissima* also seeds itself around vigorously, but this is short-lived because of rust, which also afflicts the local wild population...

I would certainly miss the '*Reticulata*' species in their season; and the *Iris Latifolia* forms from the Central Pyrenees, also the forms received indirectly from a garden in Tring, where they have grown for at least 50 years, which are dark navy-blue and pale grey-blue.. or Oxford and Cambridge.. if that is how your mind works...

However, the majority of my Irises are *Spurias* and *Siberians*... Amongst the *Spurias* *I. Kerneriana* must have the best form and number of flowers per square foot of ground. 'Belise' grows fast, flowers profusely and holds it's flowers elegantly... it looks very close to the wild Turkish forms... but I find the larger flowered *Spurias* grow

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rather slowly and do not hold their flowers nearly so pleasantly.... I do, however always welcome the solid yellow of 'Golden Lady' and the intricate colours of 'Connoisseur', 'Marylon Holloway' and 'Driftwood'... I have hopes of enjoying Adrian Whittaker's fine seedling forms, as the pieces he gave to me and also the seedlings from his seed, are all growing away well. I also have a couple of short Spurias collected by a contact in Turkey, which might be useful in breeding when they have settled down... Incidentally I have seen vigorous, healthy clumps of a yellow and a pale Spuria, possibly 'Aurea' and 'Ochroleuca' (now *Orientalis*) growing in abandoned gardens, in the midst of couch and lumps of concrete, which suggests they prefer lack of disturbance and feeding, and possibly flower better with root competition...

My Siberians are of two types:- Ones I have bought, which do not flower, and seedlings from the B.I.S. seed.. which do... Last Summer was one of my best years, with many seedlings flowering for the first time along the rows of cordon apples, which is where they were 'lined out'. I am selecting plants to use in the main garden, based on colour, elegance and compatibility with the remainder of the plants, most of which are wild forms and are not formally arranged in flower beds.. Among the seedlings were several reds, blues and one white, all about 30cm (12in.) tall with horizontal falls and satisfactorily short leaves... These should associate well with low and creeping plants... Among the taller ones with descending falls, I have noted a few good blues and non-fading reds, with good branching. I doubt if any of these plants would merit a visit to a show-bench, but that is not what I am selecting them for..

I also had some seed with *I. Chrysographes* in its parentage, from this some intriguing flower colours and markings have appeared. My favourite is about 75cm. (2ft. 6in.) tall and has long-lasting, soft-looking flowers. The falls, which are relatively wide, hang almost vertically down, and the standards are only just above horizontal. The ground colour is lavender-grey, but little of it shows under the dense purple lines covering all parts of the flowers, and merging to a purple area down the centre of the fall.. The signal patch is yellow, under almost black lines... IN CASE ANYONE IS ATTRACTED BY THIS PLANT I AM SENDING IN SOME SEED LABELLED 'ex FLOPPY PURPLE'

Regarding the growth of these seedlings, they are inevitably treated as apples in terms of spraying and fertilisers, because of where they grow 'along the cordon apples'... The soil is permanently top-dressed with 80mm. (3in.) of scots pine bark-fibre.. Many of the Siberians finer roots are confined to the bark-fibre layer, and avoid the grey greasy stuff underneath.. as with many plants on this soil, I think the deep, aged and normally undisturbed mulch is very important for their health... The Spurias, on the other hand ignore the fibre and revel in the solid soil beneath, I think that they need a 'steppe' or old pasture soil to give of their best.....

Perhaps some more experienced growers would like to comment??? also when do you cut yours down????? Does it effect next years' flowering?????

Roderick goes on to say that no *I. Ensata* seedlings have reached more than 6in. before Chlorosis has set in... no amount of dosing has saved them...

(As these are all questions which Members will like to answer, they are repeated at the end of the N/L. Also seeds of *I. Sibirica* 'ex Floppy Purple' are in the Seed Distribution. Thank you Roderick for your interesting account and also for the seeds. J.T.)

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#### Some Dates for your Diary.

19-20th February

30th Apr-1st May

1st June

11th-12th June

Early Spring (*Reticulata*) Show.

Late Spring (*Median*) Show

Early Summer Show at Moulton School Northampton.

Late Summer Show

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#### Note on Iris 'Mirza Citronella'

A seedling of *I. Mirza Citronella* flowered in my garden this year, not at all like <sup>the</sup> form I had years ago, more like Tomas Tamberg description of 'Mirza Dark Form' Smokey-mauve in colour with a very tiny touch of yellow on the falls, rather over-shadowed by *I. Chrysographes* *Rubella* growing nearby, but hauntingly beautiful. J.T.



A Remembrance.

Even as the July Newsletter was going to the Printers, telling you of Win Tallack's illness, on July 3rd, sadly she died. Her passing is a great loss to us all. I can only quote Eileen Wise writing in the 'Mercian' (the Newsletter of the Mercia Group):-

'Win has been smiling at us for as long as I can remember, and I am sure that she can never be replaced in the B.I.S. She became involved in the jobs that meant constant work. From 1969 to 1977 she was Membership Secretary, until her health began to cause problems, and later as Information Officer, she would spend many hours on the B.I.S. Stand helping the general public to know Irises and recruiting new Members, using all her charm, friendliness and experience of Irises.

Mrs. Anne Blanco-White gave an affectionate tribute to Win. at the private service held on July 9th, a kind gesture which will be appreciated by all of us. My memories are of happiness when Win was around, and we all join in sending her husband Gerard our most sincere sympathy. Offering any help we may be able to give in helping to maintain their lovely garden, which is opened each year, for the benefit of the Nursing Association.

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Trevor Nottle's Letter from Australia.

Trevor has been extremely busy promoting his book on 'Old Fashioned Roses', which has now been re-printed. I now have a copy... it opens up many new avenues, as well as containing some delightful Photographs and information.. Nottinghamshire is noted for it's roses, but old-fashioned species are not easy to obtain, although the few I have grow well.

I understand Trevor has also had a hand in a book containing information about Irises, but I am waiting to hear about that.

He writes that his early dwarf Daffodils, Christmas Roses, Camellias and 'Formosa' are all flowering.

We send you all Good Wishes for 1985 Trevor.

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Echoes from the Past.

In 1973 the 'Premier Firenze' at the 'Concorso Internazionale Dell'Iris' was awarded to the only Englishman ever to attain this honour, either before that time or since, his name was Philip Hutchison and his Iris was the beautiful 'Dancer's Veil' whose parentage included 'Rosy Veil', 'Dancing Waters' and a Plicata seedling. It is as popular to-day as it was in 1959, when it was first introduced.

Sadly Philip died in 1978, but his widow Edna, who lives in quiet retirement, recalls what a thrill it was to receive his telegram giving the news. Followed by the letters of congratulations from Dr. Peter Weickmeister and the Committee of the Concorso International, also from the President and Members of the B.I.S.

'Dancer's Veil' had received awards prior to 1973, these included the B.I.S. Bronze Medal in 1961, a Silver and the Josephine Romney Towndrow Trophy in 1963, Highly commended in 1965 and First Class Certificate in 1971, together with the 'Premier Firenze' what an excellent list of awards.

Although this was the highlight of a long career in hybridizing, Philip had more successes to his name, quite a few of them in the Siberian and Spuria Groups. In 1957 the R.H.S. gave an award of Merit for his Sibirica 'Ellesmere' (Caesar x Eric the Red) described as violet with an overall flush of black velvet on the well rounded falls, with the distinction of very long dull-black bracts, which wrap themselves around the stem, at intervals, giving a most striking effect... It is thought that this must come from I. Sanguinea, as 'Caesar' is a descendent... Other Siberian Hybrids include 'Nottingham Lace' (Wisley White Sdlg. x Helen Astor 1959), 'Blue Mere' (Wisley White Sdlg. x Gatineau 1959), 'Purple Mere' (Caesar x Gatineau 1959), 'Violet Mere' (Purple Mere x Blue Mere) which was Highly Commended in 1973, introduced in 1962, violet with pale blue style arms...

Philip, who retired in 1976 after 35 years with Orpington Nurseries and Mrs. Morrell, also introduced two fine Spurias.. 'Ellison' and 'Ticehurst'.

Our Chairman Jack Venner remembers 'Hutch', who was noted for his dry (cont).

humour and quick wit.. (I quote)... 'On walking round the garden at Trotham with Gerald Potter, during an Iris Season in the 60's, I particularly admired a hybrid beardless Iris, believed to be a cross from I. Delavayii... Philip asked me if I would like a piece. I gladly assented, but as it was a very hot day, I asked him 'when was the best time to have it'? ... His quick reply was 'when someone offers it to you' and proceeded to dig up a large clump, in full bloom.. Despite this, it transplanted safely and I still have it to-day. It has only flowered once here in our Essex garden, so I have now moved it to a sunnier, damper spot, in the hope that it will give as good a display as when I saw it in Philip and Edna's garden'.

The sheer fact that these Irises are still around to-day, 20 years later, as much admired as ever, is a Memorial in itself to the dedication and skill of the late Philip Hutchison (Hutch).

We send our Good Wishes to Edna for a long retirement, with many Happy Memories..

Editor.

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### 'Anyone for Hybridizing Spurias'???

by Floyd Wickenkamp, Arizona... With acknowledgement to the Editor of the Spuria Iris Society Newsletter...

Eleanor McCown, in her article in the July 1984 issue of the Bulletin, mentioned some goals which might be strived for in improving the Spurias.. Since there are so few hybridizers involved with Spurias, and so much remains to be done, it is evident that the field is wide open. Perhaps greater and more rapid advances would be made if there were more Spuria 'pollen-daubers'. After all, many of the present popular cultivars were developed by amateurs, as opposed to professional horticulturists and commercial growers.

But, you may ask, how do I go about determining which crosses to make?... There is no set answer.. Many of the popular Spurias currently on the market are of unknown or only partially known parentage, and some are very likely from bee-crosses...

However, the crosses currently being made by the few active hybridizers, i.e. those who register their proposed introductions with the A.I.S., might give the beginner an idea on where to start. Listed below are the 1984 registrations (based on information available to Kay Nelson, A.I.S. Registrar as of 15th August 1984) together with their ancestry where known...

'Arts Alive' (Hager) is from two seedlings with similar ancestry, involving 'Port of Call', 'Farilito', 'Windfall', 'Driftwood' and 'Marilyn Holloway' (itself a cross of 'Windfall x 'Port of Call' ).

'Blue Bunting' (Niswonger). An unidentified Ferguson Seedling x 'Crow Wing' was the pod parent; the pollen parent is unknown.. Likewise the pollen parent of 'Crow Wing' is unknown.

'Concubine' (Ghio). 'Prairie Shadows' x 'Empathy'. Here again the pollen parent of 'Prairie Shadows' is not known. The ancestry of 'Empathy' is well defined involving 'Arbitrator', 'Lydia Jane', 'Pink Candles' and later offspring 'Urbane' and 'La Senda'.

'Destination' (Hager). 'Eagle' x 'Forty Carats'. 'Elixir' is an ancestor of both parents; others involved include 'Driftwood', 'Windfall', 'Yellow Wings' and 'Good Nature'.

'First Fruits' (Hager) is a 'Media Luz' seedling by 'Red Clover', the latter tracing back to 'Driftwood' and 'Windfall', among others.

'Golden Springs' (Wight). 'Char True' x 'Forty Carats'. 'Char True's' parents were 'Two Opals' x 'Monteagle' (both 40 or more years old), while 'Forty Carat's' grandparents were 'Windfall', 'Good Nature', 'Elixir' and 'Yellow Wings'.

'Imperial Sun' (McCown). 'Ripe Wheat' x a seedling involving 'Archie Owen' and an unidentified seedling. 'Ripe Wheat's' parents are not known.

'Kaibab Trail' (Wickenkamp). 'Fergy's Poetry' x 'Proverb'. In this cross, knowledge of the pod parent's ancestry is completely lacking, and the pollen parent's parents are unidentified seedlings.

'Love for Leila' (Wickenkamp). 'Ada Perry' x a seedling whose parents were 'Proverb' and 'Clarke Cosgrave'. 'Ada Perry's' parents were 'Chumasch Chief' and 'Red Oak'.

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'Clarke Cosgrave's' pedigree includes 'Windfall', 'Port of Call' (twice) and 'Farolito'

Looking back at the above nine examples it is evident that almost any combination of parents, which will set seed, is capable of producing above average seedlings; also that certain great parents such as 'Eagle', 'Proverb' and 'Forty Carats' can be depended upon to produce interesting offsprings.

So..... compete with the bees! Make some crosses of your own and see what happens.....

(Floyd has since written to say that he has been concentrating somewhat on the darker ones, since there are already so many yellows and whites. One of his 1980 crosses, a dark blue has created some interest... His 'Son of Sun' is growing very well.

His 'Kaibab Trail' is dark maroon red with gold spot on the falls and the parents should read *Ferry's Poetry* - ~~Proverb~~ cross.... 'Love for Leila' named after his Mother who is 93 years young is a cross out of Ada Perry and McCown seedling.

Thank you Floyd for the details you have sent, valuable information for all who hybridize Spurias. J.T.)

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### 'Grow Along With Currier'

This is a new feature in which Currier has kindly given us permission to reprint Chapters from his book 'Siberian Irises'.

#### Handling Seeds and Seedlings.

##### Care and Planting of Seeds

Pods are harvested when thoroughly ripe, care being taken that they are not left so long that they open and spill seeds. If a stalk is broken before the pod is fully ripe, some of the seeds may mature if the stalk is placed in water, changed daily, or even if left to dry in a sunny window.

Harvested seeds may be planted outside in the fall or stored for spring planting. In areas with mild winters the seeds can be planted outdoors at once. However, in cold areas newly sprouted seedlings would be at serious risk during the winter, and therefore it is best not to plant the seeds outside until October or November to ensure that germination will not occur until spring... Outside planting is done in a prepared seed bed, such as a cold frame or flats placed in a sheltered spot. The seeds are planted about half an inch (1.25 cm.) deep, about one inch (2.5 cm.) apart in rows one to two inches (2.5 to 5cm.) apart.

Many growers merely scatter seeds in small flats or flower pots and cover with soil. A thick mulch is advisable in the North to prevent loss or mixing of seeds from heaving of the soil during frost.

(Currier says he now has a stock of his Books available, direct from his address which is:-

Currier McEwen, M.D.

South Harpswell. MAINE 04079. U.S.A.

Price 7 dollars inclusive Postage and Handling.

I have made a few enquiries at my local bank, and it would appear that at the moment the standing charge is £3, but a bulk order would reduce this, so if you are interested, please let me know. Joan Trevithick.)

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The B.I.S. Year Book 1983 had some beautiful Plates of the Crosses which are now being made of I. Foetidissima, this caused a great deal of interest among Members. I sought permission of Prof. Bowley and the Committee of the Species Group of the B.I.S. and they have kindly allowed us to reproduce these revised Species Notes from the April 1984 Bulletin.

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Foetidissima (Revised Species Note)

Originally classified by Dykes as a sub-section of the Apogon section; then by Lawrence as a sub-section of Section Spathula or the subgenus Iris; by Rodionenko as subgenus Xyridion; and by Mathew as Series Foetidissima of section Limniris of Iris subgenus Limniris.

Synonyms: Gladdon Iris; Gladwyn Iris; roast beef plant; coral Iris; beaded Iris.

Distribution: Wild plants are found in North Africa and northwards to the heavy winter snow line of Europe; east from the British Isles at least to Malta and again on the Chinese side of the Himalayas.

Description: This plant is distinctive in being the only Iris to have 'berries', though not the only member of the Iridaceae.

Height 30 to 90 cms. Stem 30 cms. or more; slightly flattened in section and usually taller than the leaves; three or more leaves at intervals with flower branches at the nodes. Leaves 30 cms. or more in length; up to 3 cms. in width; evergreen, glossy and with fine longitudinal ribs; old leaves persist; when crushed there is the characteristic odour which gives the plant its name. Flower 5-7 cms. in diameter; up to three flowers on separate short, slender stems at each node; as usually described, the falls, about 5 cms. long and 1.5 cms. wide, are a dull grey/lilac with conspicuously darker veining; the blade is separated from the haft by a constriction; standards and styles are ~~xxx~~ golden brown; standards about 3 cms. long, narrowly obovate; styles about 2 cms. widening abruptly to about 1 cm. Crests small, deltoid; stigmas bifid with two sharp points. Filaments short, anthers long often projecting beyond the stigma; pollen cream coloured. Ovary trigonal with groove at each angle and tapering at both ends. Capsule rounded, trigonal, six ribbed with short beak, 5 cms. or more; hanging clear of the stem on slender branch. Seeds encased in globular 'berry' which is most usually scarlet, rarely creamy white; remain attached after pod has split open.

$2n = 40$

Comments: The tendency for gardening writers to dismiss the flowers of these plants as being of negligible garden value has led to neglect of the various colour forms of flowers and berries. There is a form with variegated leaves which does not set seed as a rule in Britain (although one pod occurred for certain in 1983) while producing pods regularly in New Zealand. The writer was given some of the latter, but the seeds had not developed. It is probable that any seedlings would have plain leaves. Similarly, it appears that the white berried plants produce only red berried seedlings, but more information is needed. This plant seems only to be known from the Isle of Man at present. A yellow berried form has been reported from America but does not seem to be in cultivation and, again, more information is needed.

As to flowers, there appear to be three main colour forms- slate-buff, yellow and white. The white ones have slate coloured veins; the yellow ones may again be divided into pure yellow, probably from North Africa, which can be expected to breed true, and yellow with brown veining; the slate/buff form can give rise to pure blue seedlings, but these seem not to persist and none are known to be in cultivation at present.

Cultivation: This extremely tolerant plant will grow almost anywhere from the sea side by way of chalk lands to heavy clays, but probably would not take kindly to acid heaths. In Britain it accepts any site from shade to full sun, but hotter climates may mean that it should always be in shade or at least not exposed to the sunshine; alternatively more consideration might be given to selection of plants from places like North Africa. The other limit is defined by heavy, prolonged winter snowfall: being an evergreen which does most of its growing in the winter, this plant does not care to be blacked out for several important months.

Nor is it keen on being transplanted and may not flower for a couple of years after moving, when extra humus should be provided to encourage rooting. The best time is spring or early autumn and it should never be broken into tiny pieces. Being a very slow growing plant, such pieces are difficult to re-establish. Apart from that, berry production is a function of light, food and water, and seeds have a high rate of germination with roughly five years of flowering. Anyone disliking the way that the stalks on the outside of a clump fall down, should read John C. Lane's article in the 1983 Year Book; the only wonder is that they can stand up for any time at all, but with a good clump the leaves will support the inner stalks and the others can be cut

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for winter flowers. (Harvest when the pods are beginning to burst; wrap in plenty of newspaper and store in a cool, dry place until needed.)

'Hybrids' No hybrids are known for certain, but it is believed that it may be the pollen parent of *I. Holden Clough*; work is in progress to try and repeat the cross and also to obtain other hybrids. The flower stalk bears a strong resemblance to those of the *Spuria* Irises and also shares with them the characteristic smell.

'Toxicology' The plants contain a glycoside, iridin, which is purgative and irritant. Berries should be kept away from children and care should be taken to destroy plants cleared from banks or ditches if cattle or pigs graze the area, since if they eat the dead or dying material it can prove fatal. Herbalists of old made use of the plant in medicines.

'Pests and Diseases' The variegated form of this Iris seems, not surprisingly, to be prone to virus attack under some conditions, and affected plants should be burnt. Leaves of all plants may be invaded by a leaf miner, which produces characteristic longitudinal tunnels and typical blips; the blips may be squashed to kill the creature, leaves can be removed and burned, or a suitable systemic insecticide can be used. Any treatment should be repeated at least for the second year. Deer will graze the leaves rabbits will eat young leaves, sometimes gnawing right down to the rhizome; voles are partial to the young leaf bases and the rhizomes and will line burrows with the tougher leaves.

( With apologies to Members of the Species Group for repetition, For members of the S.S&J Group who would like to join the Species Group, please contact:-  
Prof. M.Bowley, Brook Orchard, GRAFFHAM, Petworth. Sussex.)

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### Some Seedlings.

Jennifer Hewitt.

The urge to spread pollen around, to see what will happen if one Iris is mated with another, is something that gripped me almost as soon as I joined the B.I.S., got my first Year Book, and read articles written by enthusiastic hybridisers whose enthusiasm was infectious. Nearly 20 years later the infection is, if anything stronger. Indeed, it is almost irresistible but I am now learning that I have to resist it to some extent. As I contemplated 800-plus seedlings, the results of 1983's crosses, I decided that I must concentrate my efforts towards fewer ends. Only 32 pots of seed this year, instead of over 40 - well it's a start. Part of the problem is that there is so much potential among the 28- and 40- chromosome Siberians, I've got got interested in the *Laevigatae* (I hope I have some viable seed of *I. Pseudacorus* x *I. Ensata*), and now the *Ensatas* (*Kaempferi*) are beginning to intrigue me. Obviously I have a 'butterfly' mind, or perhaps it would be more accurate to call it a 'bee' one!

So how far have I got, in terms of Iris World success? Not very far, but instant success is not to be expected and I have been luckier than most people, in being given awards for one of the first Sibericas I raised, 'Clee Hills'. Though it's colour is not eye-catching it does have a good effect as a clump in the garden, due to wide falls which arch downwards. Many varieties of *Iris Sibirica*, both diploid and tetraploid, are appearing, in which the falls (and sometimes the standards too) flare horizontally or nearly so, but I notice that these, unless they are short-stemmed enough to be at the front of a planting where the plants are seen from above, do not get much attention from visitors. Flat flowers on a tall stem just aren't visible from a few feet away.

Only one other 28-chromosome Sibirica has been named and that is red-purple, 'Marlene Ahlburg'. Marlene did the cross of 'Sparkling Rose' x 'Polly Dodge' and sent me the seed; when I asked her to let this seedling bear her name, I had high hopes for it, but they came to nothing. It is vigorous and free-flowering here and in some other gardens, and I do not know of another Iris quite like it for colour, but the shape is not too good and it has only two buds per stem. Like so many Sibiricas, it is a useful garden plant, but just does not have the qualities needed for awards. However it and its sister seedling, which is redder, are being used for breeding with other reds. This is one of the colour lines along which I am working; others are dark, velvety flowers and pale blues. I am unable to resist dabbling in the 'pink' pool but I am leaving the yellow one alone, though using yellows with other colours, largely out of curiosity. Mixing yellow with pink, blue or purple in a paintbox is one thing,

(cont.)



Iris pigments are something else ! Branching, bud count, form and vigour are, of course highly important, whatever the colour. Remontancy is probably the single characteristic on which I am concentrating most heavily and if I can get seedlings which are reliably remontant here (I am into the third generation, but none have rebloomed yet) Then I'll start worrying about colour, form etc. What is encouraging though, is that Currier McEwen's remontant Sibiricas and the older 'My Love' are now beginning to perform as they should in warmer gardens than this. If it happens that I breed the seedlings and they rebloom in other gardens, I'll just have to grin and bear it.

In 1983 I also registered a number of 40-chromosome hybrids. These had not received any award- they have not yet been put up for judging- but offering them for sale through the B.I.S. Plant Sales Scheme had given a much greater response than I had anticipated and as I wanted to find out how well they would transplant and perform in other gardens, I felt that if I named some which I hoped would do well it would be easier for the recipients to keep track of them and let me have reports. I am very grateful to those who have reported progress so far, and if only the Irises will flower when I can get them to a B.I.S. Show, I feel that some, at least, will not disgrace themselves (and me), if they are fortunate enough to gain entry to B.I.S. or R.H.S. trials. One, 'Cleeton Tiger', had been a bouncing healthy plant here, but not only did it apparently hate travel and refuse to live anywhere else, it also 'gave up the ghost' here at high speed. Of the others, I have some good reports of 'Cleeton Cross', 'Cleeton Moon' (a nice pale yellow with violet-blue speckles), and 'Cleeton Starburst' which is rather a striking bright red-purple with a brilliant yellow signal and quite good substance. Both 'Moon' and 'Starburst' produce some branched stems and have up to 4 buds. I hope to hear well of 'Cleeton Buff' which, though rather a subdued colour, flowers so freely that a good-sized clump makes a fine garden display, and the same is true of 'Cleeton Fancy', which is pale violet with lots of deeper violet markings. Further work is going on with this group; I hope for clearer, cleaner colours (and possibly some new ones), alone or combined to produce attractive markings, increased branching and bud count on the taller stems (where there are only two buds, on shorter stems, the Iris will need to produce lots of stems, every year) and better substance and durability in flowers which must retain a shape which has garden value. Flower size is also important and must be in proportion to the height of the stem. One seedling which flowered this year had a branch, and a nice bright yellow flower, much marked with bright navy blue, excellent substance, neat and smallish with lots of character- but all this charm stuck up on top of a 44" beanpole of a stem. It has been crossed with two other plants and perhaps somewhere all the good characters will come together. I hope. Well, hope is what it is all about, isn't it?

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#### Regional Report for the Eastern Counties.

##### The Newer American Spuria Hybrids.

Jack Venner.

Having acquired 12 of the Newer Spurias from America in 1983, I mentioned in the July Newsletter that I hoped it would be possible to give an encouraging report on their performance during the past season. Trying out some of these newer hybrids was more or less experimental, or if you like a gamble in British conditions, as I particularly remember that earlier American Imports, into this country, grew well enough, but failed to flower; I recall that plants imported by John Fothergill about 20 years ago were kept for a few years and finally discarded for producing nothing but masses of leaves.

It seems to be a different story now and I am pleased to say that all the plants I obtained from America are growing (some better than others). All flowered last July. I hope they prove to be regular bloomers, as they are fascinating and stately plants; at present I see no reason to be pessimistic about their future behaviour. Already I am preparing a 'wants' list, based on information from American sources, that suggest... even better plants are being raised with improvements of the kind that Irisarians appreciate. I have, in the past, generally believed that the natural habit of most Spurias is to be tall, with narrow-petalled flowers, looking far too small atop 5' stems. The trends shown by American hybridists (probably with T.B.'s in mind) is that they are working to improve branching and flower form, and also to create reduction in height. to give us a range of shorter plants; at the same time they are



breeding tall plants, so valuable for background planting, which have much larger, broader flowers...

Here is a brief description of the Spurias which flowered in my Essex garden in 1984. 'Adobe Sunset' (McGown 79), grows to about  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ', has broad flowers, light brown in colour with a gold wash on the falls. My plant produced only one flower spike, but has increased rapidly since flowering.

'Fergy's Poetry' (Ferguson 77). I liked this very much, it had two flowering spikes with many deep violet flowers, a reddish tint and large yellow patches on the falls; it is increasing well.

'Social Circle' (Corlew 79), had large, broad, frilly white flowers, with yellow on the falls. Height about  $3\frac{1}{2}$ '. Some of the stems were kinked, but I hope this is only a temporary fault. It is very vigorous.

'Pink Candles' (Ferguson 69). I had one tall  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ' spike on this variety. I should think that one needs to be highly imaginative to see any real pink in the flowers... The colour, which is darker on the falls, seemed to be a mixture of grey and pale fawn...

'Tiger Blues' (McGown 80), is an interesting variety. My plant had an imposing flower spike about  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ' tall. The heavily tailored flowers were rather small when newly opened, but they gradually expanded to a much larger size. The colour was deep violet-purple with brown lines on the falls. The young fans have grown up so quickly that the plant could be regarded as evergreen.

'Forty Carats' (Ferguson 71). Only produced one fan and a 3' flower of deepest golden-yellow. No increase at all until long after the flower spike had been removed. Now, I am pleased to say four healthy new fans have appeared.

'Protege' (Hager 69). I think this among the best of the tall varieties. It had several bloom spikes about  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ' carrying deep blue flowers, with almost white falls, heavily veined with blue; it looks really grand in the clump...

'Imperial Ruby' (McGown 73). This one sulked for some time, but it is now growing well. It had two bloom spikes about  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ' high, with red-violet floers that seemed to fade all too soon.

'Looking Glass Eyes' (Niswonger 76). I shall be interested to see what this looks like in a clump. My one 3' stem had a number of firm substantanced flowers with horizontal flaring, rather narrow falls. The colours were a curious combination of slate-grey and very pale yellow. To some, they might appear anaemic-- even lifeless, but there is something cool and restful about these strange flowers, that many Members might consider appealing. I doubt whether there is any other variety of Spuria quite like it; so far it is increasing very slowly.

'Redwood Supreme' (Niswonger 76) gave a good display on 3' stems. The flowers have dark brown standards and broad orange-yellow falls, heavily edged with dark brown. It is rather similar to the much vaunted 'Custom Design' (Hager 81) a variety I hope to acquire in due course.

'Empathy' (Ghio 80). I cannot comment on this one as the bloom stalk was mysteriously broken off... However it sounds interesting, being described as greenish-tan with brown veining and light yellow signals. I hope for better luck with this next July...

'Ila Crawford' (Hager 76). The last and probably the best of the collection... It had four fans, three of which flowered on 3' stems. The flowers were cream with some yellow on the long, flared and curved falls, that had crenulated edges. The several flowers came out at the same time... orchid-like and very long lasting. I was so captivated with this variety, that I began to imagine what a bed of them would look like... beautiful... Now comes the let-down! I have only one fan left and no sign of any new increase.

I hope my description of these Spuria Irises will inspire Members to consider growing them, and also the hybridisers will find the information useful. I have sent in seeds for the Seed Distribution, unfortunately, for this year they are mixed... next year I hope to have time to keep them separate.. You will, however, have a chance to grow several of these lovely Spurias for a modest sum.

Members may be interested to know that in the R.H.S. 'The Garden' Vol. 109 part 12 Dec. 1984 there is an interesting article on the Wisley Spuria Trials by our B.I.S. President Anne Blanco White. With the exception of 'Ila Crawford', the varieties described by Anne are different from those commented on above...

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#### West Midland Regional Reporter

We have a vacancy for this position, as Jennifer Hewitt has resigned. We wish her well in her appointment as Editor of the B.I.S. Year Book. If any Member feels that they would like to Report on Irises grown in their area, also on the S. S and J. awards at Shows, will you please get in touch... thank you.... Editor.

Regional Report for the Southern Counties.Raising Spurias from Seed.

Adrian Whittaker.

The method I use is the result of over a decade of trial and modification. It is simple, gives satisfactory results for me, and will, I hope, be of help to others.

Those of you who have raised seed of other Iris groups and garden perennials should have no trouble. The results are comparable with, say, T.B. seed and the method similar.

Remembering that, in the main, for the Spurias, seed will be scattered from the pods, in the wild, during Autumn/early Winter, to lie on or near the surface of the ground during a cold winter until the site becomes marsh-like in Spring and early Summer, we have some idea of the conditions required i.e. winter chill followed by moist warm conditions.

The condition of the seed at planting is significant, in terms of time to germinate... Well ripened seed will normally take a full year to break dormancy, therefore seed other than your own should be assumed to be in this state, unless obviously very fresh... If you intend to raise seed from your own plants, it is possible to save a year, in most cases, by planting straight from the pod, whilst the seeds are still beige or pale green in colour... Watch the pods carefully, until they start splitting at the tip, then open it up, remove the seeds and plant immediately.

I have tried both putting the seed outside to overwinter and also chilling for several weeks in a domestic fridge at between 2-4 degrees cent... I now, always overwinter outside, since the results appear fractionally better, maybe because the temperature 'cycles' rather than remaining constant.

Seed can be planted, either in a prepared bed or pots - there are valid arguments for both methods... I've settled for pots, since they can be moved around, for example, into the shade if you go away on holiday or into protection, if the winter is really severe and the seedlings still small... The price to pay is the necessity to transplant, which with Spurias can be a little tricky.

Seed is planted  $\frac{1}{2}$ " deep in large pots (or a 4 litre plastic ice-cream container, with drain holes cut in the base), about 15 seeds per pot is plenty since they have to remain in the pot for at least a year after germinating.

After planting, cover with a thin layer of fine gravel/grit to prevent disturbance of the seed by wind and rain. I use 50/50 sand/peat mix... The pots are then placed against a S.West wall and kept moist not wet at all times. If the seedlings dry slightly, at any stage, dormancy can set in, and everything comes to a halt for a year. Pots soon dry out, so light shade can be a good idea in a hot Summer. Once the seedlings germinate, I give a half strength liquid feed every two weeks, until the onset of their first winter.

Mature Spurias generally transplant best in Sept./Oct. in my experience, but if you have planted green seeds in the Autumn you might expect and see some germination the following Spring. Therefore, assuming at least a year in the pots, from germination, you have the choice of planting out the following year in, say, April or September. Any drying out of the seedlings during or after transplantation must be avoided, so choose suitable weather conditions and keep a watch on them after transplanting.

I would expect over 50% germination in most cases... Look out for any small but steady growing seedlings, since these sometimes produce much better flowers than the 'galloping green giants'! Do not forget the labels at all stages... When planting out to the final spot or row, remember that Spurias, generally, do not enjoy a move... Do allow enough room for each one to develop fully in its chosen place.

At present, I am trying out Hydroponics as a means of speeding the growth of seedlings, but although there is some improvement in the rate of growth, the resultant root systems are not really ideal for normal soil culture, later on, as might be expected... It could be a viable technique if you wish to grow the plants to maturity by this means, however.

Good Luck in your seed growing...

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North West Region.

We send congratulations to Ruth and Donald Conley who celebrated their 60 th. Wedding Anniversary on the 19th. July 1984, we wish them many more years of happiness. Unfortunately Ruth has had an accident since then, we hope that she is well on the way to recovery by now, to be ready to tend the Irises that they both love...

Happy gardening to you both. God Bless.

The Group Library.

Copies of the following American Publications are obtainable from the Hon. Librarian  
Mrs. J.Hewitt, 'Haygarth', Cleeton ST Mary, CLEOBURY MORTIMER.

KIDDERMINSTER. Worcs.

Newsletter of the Spuria Iris Society.

Review of the Society for Japanese Irises.

Journals of the Siberian Iris.

The Genus Iris... subsection Sibiricae... B.I.S.

Alphabetical Table and Cultivation Guide to the Species. B.I.S.

Please include Postage when requesting items....

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INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st. DECEMBER 1984.

	£		£
16.2.84. Newsletter and Postage	32.59.	Subscriptions	49.50.
12.7.84. ditto.	40.27.	Donations.	6.95.
12.7.84. Receipt Book and		Seeds etc.	10.60.
Seed envelopes	5.45.	June Show.	14.30.
12.7.84 Donation to B.I.S.	5.	Bingham Show.	25.08.
Surplus	37.02.	N/L's	13.90.
	<hr/>		<hr/>
	120.33.		120. 33.

BALANCE SHEET as at 31st. DECEMBER 1984.

	£		£
Accumulated Fund	47.05.	Interest	3.14.
Surplus for year.	37.02.	Cash in Bank.	67.03.
	<hr/>	N/L's	13.90.
	84.07		<hr/>
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Total Cash in Bank £ 70. 14.

Treasurers Report.

As a result of the profit from the two Show Stands, we are now able to have a Facing Cover in common with quite a number of other Groups. Also more leaflets were needed.

Prices have risen again, I was astounded when I bought a new Receipt Book to find it had jumped from 84p ( 6 years ago) to £2.45p. Even then I had a job to find one. The same is so with seed envelopes, envelopes, paper... oh! everything. I hope you will not find the rise in the Subscription too much of a burden... I will do my best to give 'value for money'. Your letters certainly suggest that you want to know more and more about these beautiful new Irises. Remember from the 1st July 1985 the Subscription will be £1. Thank you...

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Back Numbers of the Newsletters.

We have copies of Alex Back's Original Newsletter 1976 available.... This is fast becoming an Historical Document;-

Price 20p. per copy plus Postage.

Copies of recent Newsletters are available, but previous years are becoming scarce, so if you would like to obtain any of them please send in as soon as possible;

Prices 30p. per copy plus Postage.



( 15 )

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B.I.S.Publications. Mr. N.Watkins, 31, Larkfield Rd. FARNHAM. Surrey.

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#### Some Later Items.

Eberhard Schuster has kindly sent me a copy of his book, some excellent photographs, at present I am busy (when I have a moment) translating, but Eberhard is hoping to publish an English version. He tells me they have had night temperatures of 20 degrees centigrade, and lots of snow. Do hope it is a little warmer by now, as it is here....

To repeat Dr. Roderick Woods questions:-

- (1) When do you cut your Spuria Iris down ??
- (2) Does it have any effect on next years flowers??

I too would like to pose a question ' what sort of company do your S.S. and J. Irises like to keep'??? do they like shrubs, hardy plants ?? will they tolerate all kinds of plants around them... have they any likes and dislikes????

When Geoffrey Smith showed Irises in his programme 'The World of Flowers', I noticed that in Italy when he investigated the Irises grown for 'Florentine Iris', he made a point of the fact that they were grown in between the rows of vines. No doubt they would benefit from the attention given to the grapes. If more attention was paid to the plants around our precious Iris would we get better results ?????

Which leads naturally into the next question, what kind of fertilizer do you use ?? is it the same one for every Iris species and hybrid. Do they respond to natural compost?

I could go on, but I think it would be better if we devote some time in the July Newsletter to this subject, it is such a shame to germinate the seed, only to lose the seedlings later ....

One final rather mundane point, will you please check your address in the list, if the Postal Code is missing will you please send it in when you write.... We do like to keep up to date, all done by human effort, not by computer.

Bye'

J.T.

The Seed Distribution.

Packets of seeds are now 10p each, including Postage and Packing.

Some seeds are in short supply, these are marked (s).

Others, of which we have a moderate amount, are marked (m)

The rest are plentiful.

If you order the seeds marked (s) or (m) please give alternatives.... It is best to order your seeds as early as possible please...

Section Laevigatae

I.Laevigata (blue) I.Pseudacorus (deep yellow). I.Pseudacorus Bastardii (pale yellow).

I.Pseudacorus 'Sulphur Queen' var. Bastardii. I.Pseudacorus 'Golden Queen' var. Superba.

I.Versicolor (m). I.Virginica (in variety)(m).

I.'Gerald Derby'(m).

Series Kaempferi (Ensata)

I.Ensata 'Dunkelvioletter Saint' (m).

Series Tripetalae

I.Setosa (m) I.Setosa 'Saville Garden Form' (m).

Section Lophiris.

I.Milesii (s).

Series Sibiricae.

Chr. I.Chrysographes Mixed I.Chrysographes Rubella (s).

I.Clarkii (s). I.Chrysofor (s). I.Chrysographes x Forrestii (s). I.Forrestii(s)

I.Wilsonii (m).

Sib. I.Sibirica (28 chrs.)(s) I.Sibirica Mixed(m). I.Sibirica I.N. Yugoslavia (s).

I. Sibirica 'Blue Burgee' (s). I.Sibirica Alba(s).

do 'Dragonfly'(s)

do 'Dreaming Yellow'(s).

do 'Floppy Purple'(m).

do 'Francis James'(s).

do 'Marilyn Holmes'(s).

do 'Nostalgie' 40 chrs. (s).

do 'Orville Fay'(m).

do 'Ruffled Velvet'(s)

do 'Sally Kerlin'(s).

do 'Silver Edge'(s).

do 'White-blue'(s).

Section Xyridion.

I.Halophila (s). (Sp). I.Orientalis (Ochroleuca)

Series Spuria.

I.Carthalinae(m). I.Spuria 'Shelford Giant x bee' (s).

I.Spuria Cultivars Bee Pods (s).

I.Spuria Mixed (J.V.) including 'Adobe Sunset', 'Fergy's Poetry', 'Social Circle', 'Pink Camdles', 'Tiger Blues', 'Forty Carats', 'Protegé', 'Imperial Ruby', 'Looking Glass Eyes', 'Redwood Supreme', 'Ila Crawford'.

I.Spuria mixed including 'Violet Bloomfield', 'Aurea', 'Academus', 'Yellow Seedling' (H.G.).

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