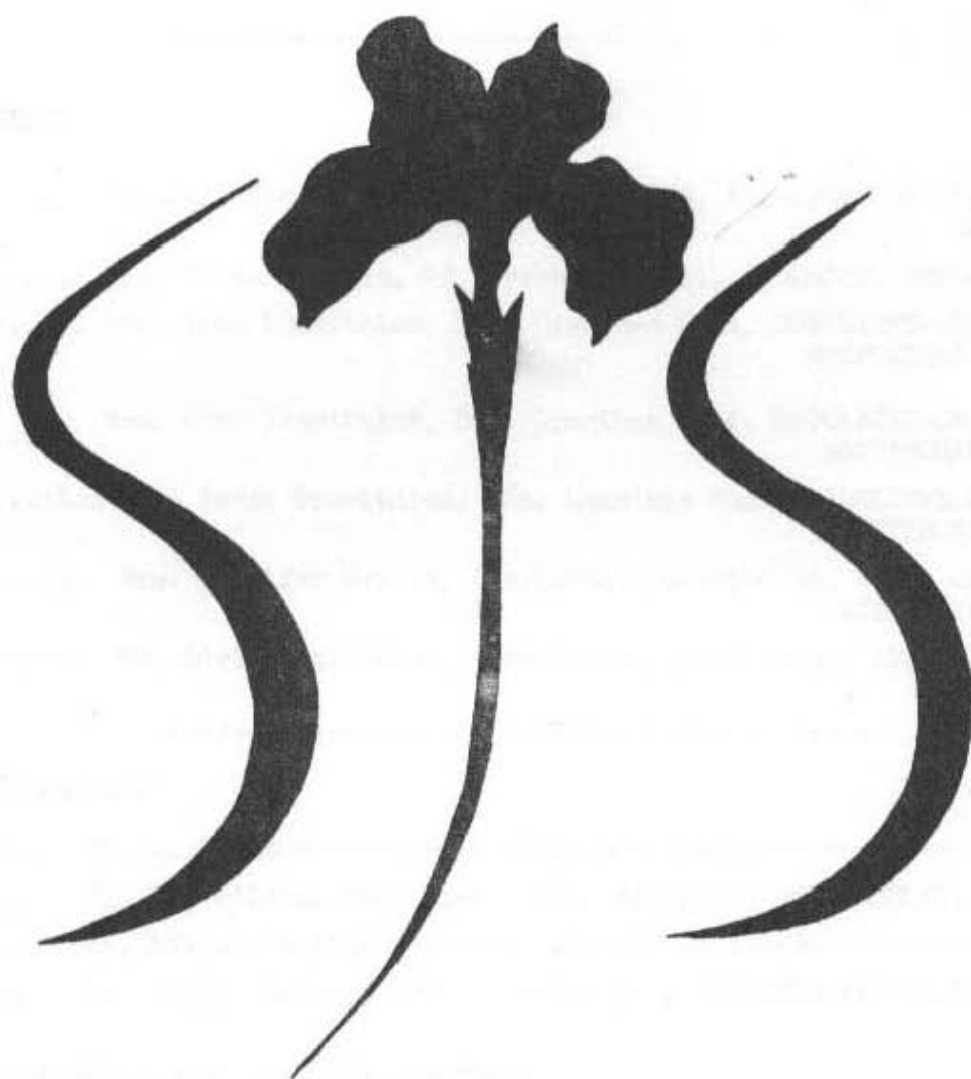


NEWSLETTER



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

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

Newsletter No. 17. July 1985.

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 Hybridization.

The Group's Officers.

Chairman..... Mr. Jack Venner, 'Raven's Croft', 120, St. Osyth Rd, LITTERCLACTON.
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Vice-Chairman..... Mrs. Hilda Goodwin, 42, Tycehurst Hill, LOUGHTON. ESSEX.

Hon. Secty/Treas..... Mrs. Joan Trevithick, 86a, Grantham Road, RADCLIFFE-ON-TRENT.
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Hon. Librarian..... Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt, 'Haygarth', Cleeton St. Mary, CLEOBURY MORTIMER.
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Spuria Representative. Mr. Adrian Whittaker, 'Chestnuts', Hilden Way, LITTLETON. WINCHESTER.
HANTS.

Regional Representatives.*

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

North Western Area.. Mr. Ray Wilson, 'Dalehead', 100, Blackburn Rd. CHORLEY. Lancs. PR6 8TJ.

Southern Area..... Mr. Adrian Whittaker----- address as above-----

West Midland Area... Mr. Philip Allery, 199, Walsall Road, ALDRIDGE Nr WALSALL WS9 0BE.

JACK VENNER is also our Show Reporter.

These Members have kindly offered their services to be on hand in your area, to help you with your problems and to report on the Irises they see, including entries and awards at Local Shows.... Many Members find this very useful and we thank our Experts most sincerely.

REMINDER..... SUBSCRIPTIONS £1 per year are now DUE please.....

EDITORIAL.

A verse from a Poem by Walter Rice called 'Irises' in Walter Stager's Book 'The Iris'.

Irises singing in the pool,
Irises dancing on it's edge,
Amethyst bright and April cool
In among the greening sedge;
Pale as evening under the moon,
Purpling up the roseate dawn,
Fragrant 'neath the delicate noon
Thrilled with pursuit of a leafy faun.

Delightful isn't it, I thought 'how appropriate it was after this cold and wet Spring the brightest spot in the garden is the pond, filled with I. Pseudacorus Bastardii, Laevigata and Ensata (Kaempferi). The Sibiricas have grown tall, revelling in the rain and now this glorious sunshine, particularly 'Dreaming Yellow' which has excelled itself. Other Irises have not been so happy..

News of 'Cass' our popular Secretary of the British Iris Society who has had to relinquish his post, due to ill health, although he intends to continue doing as much as he is able for the Society. We send him all good wishes and hope he will soon be feeling better.

Cy Bartlett and Peter Maynard have taken over as Joint Secretaries. Cy has joined our Group, we extend a warm welcome to him and hope that at a future date he will write and tell us of the Irises he grows in his garden.

We welcome five new Members from the United States... The President of the Siberian Iris Society Harry Kiesel of Littleton Colorado, has worked very hard, over the years for the Society, which this year celebrates it's 25th Anniversary. We are delighted you have joined us and send sincere congratulations on your Anniversary... Perhaps, when you can spare the time, you will let us know about the Siberian Irises that you grow and love please.

Also from The Siberian Society we say 'hello' to Carolee Clay who in 1984 became the Editor of the 'Siberian Iris'. Her task covers a very wide area, Peg Edwards who has retired after successfully editing this excellent Publication for 24 years, has a worthy successor in Carolee. We wish Peg 'happy writing' with her book (perhaps you will let us know when it is published), and Carolee 'happy and carefree editing'....

Helen Grier lives in California and is the Editor of the Spuria Iris Society Newsletter.. At the moment she is recovering from a car accident, which has left her with a wrenched back... many of us will have tremendous sympathy with her, as it has curtailed her gardening for some time.

Tom and Ellen Abrega run a Nursery called Chehalem Gardens in Newberg Oregon, We are very pleased they have joined us.

Here, at home Ros and Nigel Colborn have become Members. They have established a Plantsman's Nursery at Careby Manor Gardens near to Stamford... a lovely place of peace and quiet in old walled gardens.

You will find more details of our New Members under 'Excerpts from Members Letters' further on in the Newsletter.... Very pleased to welcome you all, we hope you will enjoy reading the Newsletters and will write in when you feel like it.....

Two apologies.... a complete oversight, Ray Wilson's name and address was omitted from the Member's list in February... very sorry Ray, hope all is forgiven....

Currier McEwin had written in to say that anyone sending for his Book would receive a Signed copy... another omission... sorry Currier....

Our Chairman Jack Venner has been 'in the wars', he has hurt his hip, shoulders and elbows after a rather nasty fall. Manfully he has managed to write his reports... in thanking him we hope his injuries will soon be on the mend...

Ray Wilson and Philip Allery have taken over as Regional Reps. for the North East and West Midlands respectively. We thank Ruth Conley for her support and reports and feel very sad that ill health has made her feel that she can no longer continue. More details under Regional Reps.

To Dr. Bowden of Simcoe Ontario Canada a most sincere thanks for allowing us to reprint his 'A Comprehensive Survey of the Japanese Iris' as shown in the 'Review' of the Japanese Iris Society... also to Bill Ouweneel, who has helped us by contacting Dr. Bowden.

The Seed Distribution has been very successful, dare we ask you to think of us again when you are collecting please, the revenue does help with rising costs.. believe me....

Congratulations to 'Cass' on winning the German Iris Plaque for his vases of Sibiricas, also to Harry Foster for the Spender Challenge Trophy, no less than 20 spikes of Sibiricas in 4 varieties. Ray Jeffs won the Hewitt Trophy with more Siberian Irises.. congratulations.. also everyone who achieved success in this most difficult year....

Joan Trevithick.

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER.

Dear Fellow Members. For most British Iris growers, 1985 will no doubt be remembered as an extraordinary Iris season. The weather, according to Nation-wide reports, throughout May and June, seems to have been much the same everywhere... a mixture of rain, hail and sunshine, with not too much of the latter... Night temperatures have been unusually low, with frost in places. Day temperatures have only occasionally reached a May/June Norm... Yet, despite this, the cool wet conditions have given us a prolonged Iris Season in most places. Damage to blooms, general speaking, has not been too bad, except, perhaps towards the end of June.. For some Members, Sibiricas seem to have flowered late, and they have not grown as well as expected... Botritis has affected many plants... However, from what I have seen 40 chromosome plants such as Chrysographes, have been excellent.. Japanese Irises are enjoying the moisture and growing well with plenty of buds showing... Some American Spurias seem a bit short of flowering fans.

A number of our Members have done well at the B.I.S. Shows this year... This is the subject of a separate Report in this Newsletter.

I trust Members are persevering with the task of growing Irises from seed... Raising new forms can be both exciting and rewarding... the problem, for most of us, is finding room for planting out.

Congratulations to those of our Members who have won awards at Shows.. I offer my thanks to Committee Members who work hard in the background, helping to make our Group a success. Thanks also to Ray Wilson and Philip Allery, who have undertaken the Regional Representative positions, to keep us 'in touch' in their areas.. Best Wishes to Ruth Conley and better health in the future, thanks for your Reports, I hope you will continue to take an interest in our Group... Finally a big thank you, to you, the Members, who send in your articles, providing us with such valuable information... and seeds... of course... All the Best...

Jack Venner (Hon. Chairman).

Anne Blanco White, the President of the British Iris Society, is researching 'the Hybridising of Iris Foetidissima' and has kindly written the following article on this subject

FURTHER TOETIDISSIMA.

One peculiar thing has cropped up during my researches into this plant: the B.I.S. do not mention it in the booklets for beginners, although there are sporadic references in the Year Books. Yet this is one of the most tolerant Irises, eminently suited to the requirement of the smaller gardens, with its double season and leisurely rate of growth. I can only suppose that this neglect and the occasional grudging recognition from other writers is due to the plant being an endemic of Britain. It is, therefore, a wild flower (could it possibly be a weed?) and so does not come within the gardener's competence. Nowadays we are all conservationists and look twice at the nastiest invaders of our flower beds, so perhaps we may become better disposed to the old Gladdon.

Some change has already occurred: faint rumours of curious coloured berries were heard in the past and have now been given reality. There is a fair amount of the white berried form around, but with something so slow growing it takes a long time to get it widely distributed. And, as a result of a letter in the Garden, the yellow berried form has been reported by two people. There is no possibility of confusion with variants of red berries: these are as yellow as Indian corn.

Sadly, it seems likely that, as with the white berries, the yellow berries will only produce red berried seedlings... Curiously white berries come from blue/brown flowers, while yellow berries seem to come from yellow flowered plants. Odder still, when I received the yellow berries I wanted a photograph of all three colours together. There were white berries to hand, but I had to split a red pod open and there was one yellow bead among the scarlet. In all my years of handling pods for Shows, I had never previously found a yellow berry..

When one comes to consider variations in flower colour, only the yellow ones seem to have received attention. Possibly this is because they were 'collected' plants; collection naturally confers respectability from a gardener's point of view. There is Miss Lindsay's form and the Chinese form. I believe the latter to be the one Kingdon Ward found in China. The white form has had no attention at all--indeed, as with the white berries, it was simply forgotten. And the blue forms are generally despised, in spite of the fact that their colours range from grim to delightful.....

Clearly there is room for some selection.....

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Cy Bartlett saw a very good white in New Zealand; pure blues do occur and should be watched for; yellows vary from buff to brilliant, and could do with a touch of Xanthospuria... Remember if you do try hybridising that these plants are not easy to cross and that you must use the Foetidissima as pod parents to be sure of retaining the berries... Do not waste time on plants of poor quality; short spikes, poor flowers or virus infested... This last should not be confused with leaf miners or with the natural browning of evergreens... Equally, not all viruses have an adverse effect on growth... in order to get a special plant you may have to resign yourself to its presence for a while... It seems that virus can be handed on to seedlings here, probably through contact with the remains of berry flesh, so it would pay to clean the seeds very thoroughly before sowing... The berry is not necessary for germination or seedling growth.

We could do with taller spikes so that the flowers stand clear of the leaves, but not tall, or the collapse rate when loaded with pods will be disastrous... The actual flower should do with tidying up, for they tend to be strappy... We should aim for clear colours, with or without veining and firmer texture so that they don't get bedraggled in a summer storm... think there could even be a possibility of pink forms.

At present these plants are apt to take five years to flower from seed; persistent selection and better growing conditions should improve on that.

The basic distribution of *I. Foetidissima* appears to be the Mediterranean basin in a wide sense... How then did Kingdon Ward come to find it in Yunnan? This plant is used as an identification subject for horticulture students... surveyed dispassionately... doesn't look very like 'an Iris'!!!! It may well have been overlooked in the search for more exotic plants and be more widely distributed than we know... Please... if you, or anyone of your acquaintances are travelling to far away places with strange sounding names, look for this plant with the distinctive smelling leaves... We don't necessarily need seeds or plants, though they would be nice... but we would like news, if possible of flower and berry colour.... Even a photograph would be welcome.

By the way.... if anyone can get me a piece of the 'Chinese' form I should be more than grateful... Kingdon Ward's plants have been lost from Exbury. Typically, the plant will have been acquired by the present owner from a parent or gardening friend, so there should be a history to go with it.

(Anne's address to write to is as follows:-

Mrs. A. Blanco White, 72, South Hill Park, LONDON NW3 2SN. 'Editor!')

IRISES IN NEW ZEALAND.

By FRANCES LOVE.

In New Zealand our weather is dominated by a chain of mountains that runs from half way down the Southern half of the North Island and almost right down the South Island. On the West side there is considerably more rain than on the East... I live on the East in the South half of the North Island, tucked into the lee of our part of the said mountains.

We have had about half of our normal Winter rainfall, in the last two years. This has affected the *Sibirica* blooming... Normally our Winter and Spring rains are sufficient for its needs.

My garden has three levels... in the front dry area, I grow Bearded ones... in the next I have some *Sibiricas* and *Spurias* and at the bottom some more *Sibiricas*, Japanese and *Setosa* Irises. Naturally there was more moisture in this lower area, so that all *Sibiricas* have eventually moved to this area. *Spurias*, I think will stand the second level.

I, myself believe that the best time to shift almost any Iris is when it is in bloom, immediately after that. I did this with the *Sibiricas* and they are looking well despite a massive Summer drought and at times a lack of water, although I did try to keep them watered when I could.

Several years ago I dug out a bed to the depth of 2 feet and lined this with heavy black plastic, then refilled, adding plenty of animal manure, compost and good soil. Here I grow Japanese Irises.... 'Rose Queen' always gives me a wonderful show, as do the Higo's. I just run a hose and saturate the area whenever it looks dry. I don't get as long a bloom period as some people do in the North. I believe that in Auckland, where it is humid with copious rain they bloom from Christmas to Easter. Mine usually last from early December to late January.

Evansias I grow under trees, which is where they seem to be very happy... the shorter ones make excellent ground cover... However, we have found that the ones with bamboo-like canes come back somewhat.. Our Department of Agriculture has found this problem to be 'Fusarium' and

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'Rhizoctoria'!.. They suggest spraying with a good fungicide or alternate fungicides.... I think we need to look closely at these things.. I am inclined to blame drought and overlook the necessity of further investigation... I would say this of other Irises too.

I sometimes think I am silly trying to grow the water-loving Irises here in the East, where we get such long droughts in Summer... This year it has lasted from October to March. The Bearded Irises love this treatment and are not a challenge, they do not, however do as well in wetter areas in the North. Most seasons I have sufficient water to cope. I find that no Iris really minds drying out quite drastically in the early Autumn, which is for us in the Southern Hemisphere January and February. In March, we usually get early rain which revives everything in our area everything, including grass, which has been non-existent for six weeks, just 'pops up' so quickly and so do our garden plants.

In my view most Irises are gross feeders. I use animal manure and compost, with a little balanced fertilizer occasionally.

Louisianas, for which I have also dug out and lined a bed, get a covering of straw for the Winter otherwise the rhizomes would be cut by the frost. The leaves seem hardy, but the rhizomes need protecting.

Most other Irises are quite hardy, with the exceptions of *Speculatrix* and *Munzii*, the I put in the greenhouse for the Winter.

(Thank you Francis, nice to hear from you, we send best wishes and every success in your challenging task. Ed.)

NEWS FROM AUSTRALIA.

Trevor Nottle's letter has been sadly missing from our pages just lately, the reason is that he has been busy writing three books.. no less.

His 'Growing Old-fashioned Roses in Australia and New Zealand' is a delight.. lovely colour plates and useful information about where to plant, how to prune, how to propagate and also to deal with pests. To this is added the background and history, often romantic, making very satisfactory reading for those of us who love these roses.

The 'Cottage Garden Revived' deals with plants which have been grown for over 150 years, many of them to be found in our gardens in Great Britain... Siberians, Spurias and Japanese Irises have an important place, together with Fuchsias, Lilies, Clematis, Paeonia, Mimulus, Agapanthus and many more... There is a particularly beautiful plate of a rare, pale pink form of 'Pride of Madeira' (*Echeium Fastuosum*). The replicas of 19th Century Catalogues I found particularly fascinating... the prices... Almond Trees ... 9d (old pence) each, Cherry and Apricot Trees 1/- (old shilling) hardly believable...

In 'Growing Perennials' Trevor examines and explains Hardy Plants in detail... illustrating with line drawings and coloured photographs... The Iris plates show some of his excellent Spurias such as 'Sky Pilot' and 'David Ruston' (we have these photographs displayed on our Show Stand.), together with some really colourful Japanese Irises 'Imperial Palace', 'Gusto', 'Nishiki-Gi' and 'Sopi No Roi'. Other Irises include *I. Graminea*, *I. x Holden Clough*, *I. Virginica Alba* and *Rosea*. Two lovely clumps of *I. Sibirica* 'Tycoon' and 'Alba'.

One passage which I found rather apt, written in Trevor's engaging and comprehensive style, in the Chapter 'Gleaning Ideas For Using Perennials' and I quote:- 'Nothing is closer to a collector's heart than the possibility of swapping, doing a little horse-trading or otherwise bargaining for some specially desirable plant; so in preparation for this likelihood it is always a good idea to have a few items of 'trade', ready to proffer to the owner of the which is desired... In order to do this the rule is simple... propagate.. propagate.. propagate..

'Growing Irises' is another new Australian book by Graeme Grosvenor, who with his Helen and John Taylor run the 'Rainbow Ridge' Nursery at 8, Taylor's Rd. DURAI N.S.W. 2158. Graeme takes us through Bearded Irises, Louisianas, Californians, Spurias, Siberians, Japanese and Bulbous as well as others. He tells us about photographing Irises, Hybridising, Exhibiting, arranging, sources, Societies and Awards.

With 192 Colour plates, many black and white photographs and diagrams, a most instructive and entertaining book....

The Authors, Scilla Rosenberg and the Kangaroo Press are to be congratulated on such well illustrated, well 'laid out' and clearly defined publications. They are a pleasure to read.

The Address and Details are as follows:-

'Growing Perennials' by Trevor Nottle paper \$12.95; hardcover \$17.95.

'Growing Old-fashioned Roses' by Trevor Nottle paper \$9.95; Hardcover \$ 14.95.

'The Cottage Garden Revived' by Trevor Nottle hardcover \$14.95.

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'Growing Irises' by Graeme Grosvenor paper \$ 9.95.

add \$ 1.50 postage for 1 book. \$1 per book for 2 or more.

Scilla Rosenberg, Kangaroo Press, P.O.Box 75, KENTHURST 2154. Australia.

COMPREHENSIVE SURVEY OF THE JAPANESE IRIS.

By WRAY M. BOWDEN.

The following Thesis on Japanese Irises by Dr. Bowden who has a B.A. in Science, McMaster '41 and a Ph. D. in Biology, Virginia '41, and has taught at several Canadian Universities, where his main contribution in Agricultural Research was primarily in biosystematics of wheat, ry and barley and some other plant groups, is brought to you by courtesy of The Review of the Japanese Iris Society, U.S.A. or rather the Society for Japanese Irises U.S.A. and with the help of it's retired Editor, our good friend Bill Ouweneel. Dr. Bowden has kindly sent a full copy of his work, which I propose to print in serial form in the next 4 Newsletters.)

1. Origin of Japanese Iris.

Some authors have thought that both Iris Laevigata Fischer and also Iris Ensata Thunb. (synonym I. Kaempferi Siebold ex Lemaire) were involved in the ancestry of many hundreds or even thousands of Japanese Iris cultivars, the HANA-SHOBU of Japan, that have been developed first in Japan and later in Europe and the U.S.A. Both species are native in eastern Asia. The leaf-blades of I. Laevigata lack distinct midribs, while the leaf-blades of either wild or commonly cultivated Japanese plants of I. Ensata have prominent midribs. Recent experts on the genus Iris have concluded that these two species of Iris are quite distinct, that I. Laevigata and I. Ensata do not interbreed, and that only I. Ensata Thunb. is involved in the parentage of the garden cultivars commonly known as Japanese Irises.

2. Species Nomenclature.

Several authors, for example, Miyazawa (1929), Mathew (1981) and Bowden (in preparation) agree that Iris Ensata Thunb., published in 1794, has clear nomenclatural priority over Iris Kaempferi Sieb. ex Lem., published in 1858. I. Ensata was based on a specimen collected from wild plant in Japan by Thunberg in 1784 or earlier. I. Kaempferi, a synonym, was based on a Japanese Iris cultivar grown in Western Europe. Miyazawa (1929) published a figure of Thunberg's original type specimen of I. Ensata (meaning sword-leaved) and I have a large photocopy of the same specimen sent from the Thunberg Herbarium, Uppsala, Sweden. Miyazawa also reproduced the 1858 engraving (iconotype) from the original publication of I. Kaempferi Sieb. ex Lem.

The type of specimen of I. Ensata Thunb. was collected from a wild plant, so cultivar names can be listed directly under the species name, for example:- Iris Ensata Thunb. cv. The Great Mogul (or the alternative, 'The Great Mogul'), introduced by Payne in 1958.

3. History of Japanese Iris Cultivars in Japan.

Miyazawa (1929) noted that the first published record of Japanese Iris culture in Japan was 1667. Selected clones began to appear in the early eighteenth Century; and by 1830 there were 114 cultivars (then called varieties). Later, many Japanese plantbreeders produced great numbers of seedlings and selected many hundreds for naming and distribution. Miyazawa made more than 600 cultivar selections from 30,000 seedlings at Kanagawa, Japan. Dr. Shuichi Hirao (1971) stated that a mid-fifteenth Century account is the oldest written record of Japanese Irises in cultivation. By 1755, there were several hundred cultivars in Japan. Hirao described in detail the history of the three main groups of Japanese cultivars: 'Edo' Irises from the Tokyo area; 'Ise' Irises from Central Honshu; and 'Higo' Irises from Hyushu.

Miyazawa (1929) summarized the history of Japanese Irises in cultivation in five countries of Europe and in the U.S.A. Over a long period of more than a Century, from about 1873 to 1983, Japanese Iris cultivars have been imported into the U.S.A. In the 1960's Hirao and Payne exchanged and tested each other's best cultivars. Some of the clones are unique.

4. Characteristics of Japanese Irises.

Bearded Irises are much more popular than beardless Japanese Irises in many American and Canadian gardens. However, gardeners who become well acquainted with Japanese Iris cultivars always enjoy these excellent garden plants. The cultural methods for Japanese Irises are quite different from the methods for growing Bearded Irises; compare the text below (part with Buckley (1977) and Fleming (1979). The shape of the flowers is quite different. Flowers of Japanese Irises tend to be more or less flat and there are singles, doubles and more elaborate flower structures. The colour range varies from white to pale pink, gorgeous blues, violets

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and purples. There are yellow spears or splashes at the bases of the falls and standards. Flowers of Japanese Irises are often large. In my garden, the largest blooms were about 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ ins. across, but in Japan, the flowers are up to 12 to 14 inches across. Flower texture varies from clone to clone and there are beautiful velvets and satins for example. Colour patterns vary widely from rather pure colours to sanding, marbling, veining, stippling and splashing.

In Japan, Japanese Irises are grown both as pot plants and as plants in fields and garden beds or plots. In the U.S.A. and Canada, these Irises are usually grown in gardens, but sometimes the plants are in pots outside in the Summer or are grown under artificial lights inside and forced into bloom during the Winter (Bowden 1979a).

5. Garden Areas for Japanese Irises in North America.

On the West coast, Japanese Iris cultivars can be grown well in gardens from California to southern British Columbia. From Los Angeles southward, these Irises are grown best in pots set in pools to counteract the low rainfall and alkaline soil. In the rest of North America, Japanese Irises are usually grown in the open garden, although they are sometimes grown in pots. Large areas of the U.S.A. have suitable climates for growing Japanese Irises. They grow well in the Mississippi valley, the southernmost Great Lakes States, east to Maine, south to South Carolina and Kentucky. In eastern Canada, Japanese Irises are grown more and more in southern Ontario, particularly from Ottawa to the Lake Huron shore and south to Lakes Ontario and Erie. They have been grown at Simcoe, Norwich, Hamilton, Toronto, Cambridge and Ottawa (for the last see Buckley 1977), as well as at other locations. It should be possible to grow these Irises in Southern Quebec and the warmer parts of the Maritime Provinces. The acidic soil of the Maritimes should be ideal for growing Japanese Irises.

(More on this fascinating subject By Dr. Wray Bowden, who lives at 32, Donly Drive, SIMCOE, ONTARIO., CANADA N3Y 4Z8 ,.In the February Newsletter 1986, he tells us about cultural methods)

'GROW ALONG WITH CURRIER'

Continuing our series, in which Currier has kindly given us permission to take extracts from his book 'Siberian Irises'.

'Planting Indoors'

If the seeds are to be germinated indoors, they should be protected from dehydration and stored in the refrigerator at a temperature above freezing-point for not less than three weeks to provide the period of chilling needed for good germination. If the seeds are dry, dusting lightly with Arasan or other anti-fungal agent and placing them in small plastic bags or Saran Wrap with a drop or two of water and then sealing the bags, encourages good germination later (McEwen 1971, 1974c). However merely keeping the seeds in plastic bags in the refrigerator will suffice, especially if they are fresh and moist.

The seeds can be stored until Spring if they are to be kept until warming weather invites putting flats out of doors. A very worthwhile head start can be obtained, however, by sowing seeds in February or even earlier indoors. The seeds are planted in flats, as noted for outdoor planting. A sterile medium such as Jiffy-Mix or similar material in the flats, reduces the risk of loss of seedlings from fungal diseases such as damping off. Furthermore, the entwined roots of seedlings can be more easily separated when such a mix is used in place of soil, and the seedlings suffer less root damage when they are lifted for lining out. Plastic or fiber flats of divided type are even better if space is available for them, for they allow one seed to be planted in each small division within which roots are confined. Subsequent transplanting of seedlings in the Spring can then be done with essentially no setback, since the roots are scarcely disturbed. If one of the synthetic (soil-less) growing mixes is used the seedlings should receive fertilizer. A pelleted slow-release fertilizer may be used, follow the manufacturers directions carefully to avoid injury, or a quicker acting fertilizer dissolved in water may be applied about every ten days during the regular program of watering.

Whatever the kind used, flats can be placed in a sunny window or under lights. If in a window the flats should be turned daily to prevent the seedlings from leaning too far towards the light. Growing under electric lights gives superior results (McEwen 1971). Horticultural fluorescent lights are made for this purpose, but ordinary fluorescent tubes, one of cool white and one of warm light (daylight type) can be used in pairs. Once the seeds have sprouted the lights are turned on for not less than fourteen hours daily, or they may be left on constantly. (If you have enjoyed reading this useful information from Curriers' Book, you can obtain a signed copy by writing to him:-

Currier McEwen, M.D.

South Harpswell. MAINE 04079. U.S.A. Price 7 dollars inc. Postage & Handling.) E

For the second year running the B.I.S. held it's Early Summer Show in Moulton School near to Northampton... The cold, wet weather preceding the Show, and the very early date--- June 1st must have led the most enthusiastic optimists among us to expect very little more than Bearded Intermediates. It was, therefore, a most pleasant surprise for all to find quite a number of Tall Bearded, named varieties and seedlings, on view, thanks mainly to exhibitors from the South and South-West--- those lucky people with gardens that enjoy warmer micro-climates. Sad but hardly surprising there were few beardless exhibits and the S.S & J. had not staged a Stand this year. We also missed the presence of our Hon. Secty. Joan, who was unable to attend.

Cass won the German Iris Plaque for two vases of Sibiricas (5 in each vase). The varieties he showed were 'Cool Spring'; 'Caesar's Brother'; 'Nottingham Lace' and 'Heavenly Blue'. In the same Class, 2nd. Prize went to Mary Tubbs for 'Summer Sky'; 'Dragon Fly'; 'Illini Encore'; 'Lavender Light' and 'Nottingham Lace'. Unfortunately for Mary, two of her blooms were slightly weather marked and you can't disguise things like that. There were a few other various bearded Irises, but the outstanding exhibit was a vase of ten stems of pink, yellow-centred Pacific Coast Irises, shown by Hilda Goodwin our Vice-Chairman, which was awarded the 'Perrier Trophy'. All the individual blooms were clean and without weather damage (a minor miracle)... but one of the most attractive things about this exhibit, was the way the flowers had been staged, a good example of 'it's not what you do with your Irises, it's the way that you do it'.

We were lucky that the Show was held on a fine sunny day and once again we are indebted to Brett Tussler for providing the Venue and organising the event.

Summer Show at the R.H.S. Hall June 11th and 12th.

At the B.I.S. Iris Show, held in the R.H.S. Hall Westminster, a number of our Members scored successes with Sibiricas.... Class 9 called for a tremendous effort on the part of exhibitors... the requirement was for 20 spikes of Sibirica Irises in 4 vases, in not less than 4 varieties... First Prize and the 'Spender Challenge Trophy' was awarded to Harry Foster, one of our Members. He had some fine branched spikes of mixed diploid and tetraploid varieties. To describe all the varieties would take up a lot of space, but particularly appealing were: 'Fourfold Lavender' (tetraploid) with wide flaring flowers, that were not too large; 'Lady of Quality' (tetraploid) a large flowered light blue-- well named; 'Glee Hills' (diploid) raised by Jennifer Hewitt, a very dark mid-blue, which stood out as almost a self colour; and 'Shirley Pope' (McEwen 79) a small flowered purple diploid with a prominent white signal... very different and a real eye-catcher; 'Silver Edge', also in the collection is Harry's favourite tetraploid Sibirica. I have no doubt that many of our Members also rate it as the top in popularity of the tetraploid Sibiricas at the present time....

Ray Jeffs won the Hewitt Trophy with nice spikes of 'Navy Brass'; 'Tamberg SSTT 88' ('Laurenstuhl'... mid-blue and deep violet; and 'Purpeller', mid purple with deeper veining and mottled yellow and white signal.

'Navy Brass', 'Floating Island' and the creamy yellow and white 'Butter and Sugar' shown by Cy Bartlett, who has recently joined the Group. I found 'Soft Blue' shown by Jennifer Hewitt, a most attractive flower.. Jennifer also had a lovely collection of P.C.I.'s that were awarded a First Prize.

Cass showed spikes of Pseudacorus Bastardii and Ray Jeffs had a fine spike of 'Bea' a yellow tetraploid Pseudacorus.

Mr. Humphrey of Howbeck Rd. Nottingham, as usual had a nice Trade Stand with masses of flowers including P.C.I.'s.

The weather of June 11th. was kind to us, there was only one light shower, in the early part of the day.. of short duration.

Regional Report for the East.

by Jack Venner.

My report this time is restricted to beardless Irises growing in my own garden, plus what I have seen growing locally in front gardens in East Essex. My Iris wanderings were interrupted in mid-June owing to an accident which happened when I used the wrong side of a step-ladder... I made a swift and painful descent and one does not bounce on concrete.. Now healing from hip and shoulder injuries and torn elbows has been fairly rapid... but weeds have taken full advantage of my temporary lay-off from garden chores...

The Iris season has been a long one here.. Those Irises which cannot take prolonged bad weather (mostly T.B.'s) have been shown up. Fortunately, Sibiricas have not suffered too badly, any weather damage being noticeable only on closer inspection. On the whole, I would say, my plants have been shorter this year, probably because I moved them last Autumn. Of tetraploid Sibiricas, the best growers here are:- 'Orville Fay', 'Blue Pennant' the most

(cont)

vigorous of all; 'Yankee Consul' and 'Outset', The growth of 'Navy Brass' and 'Silver Edge' have been a bit gappy but both gave some nice flowers. 'Ewen' has bloomed but seems to be a slow grower. Four years ago I lost 'Fourfold White' with scorch, and this year my two plants of 'S Bounty' (another white tet.) went off in the same manner. I now have only one white tetraploid namely 'Harpwell Happiness', the flowers on this one have lovely flaring, rounded form and the plant looks quite healthy. Most diploids grow rapidly here, but there is, at least one except 'Polly Dodge'. Like many wine-reds it seems to grow inconsistently. Some seasons it does quite well, but it has been poor this year. The creamy-yellow 'Dreaming Yellow' is a strong grower of novel colouring, but it soon fades to white.

I have some fine clumps of Japanese Irises, grown from seed, that will flower this year for the first time. At the time of writing three Spuria flowers have opened; they are 'Prot' a lovely mid-blue shade with close blue and white lines on the falls; Adrian Whittakers 'Harvest Shadows'.. orange-brown... a lovely form.. and one of his seedlings HD2 a large pale yellow.

Sibericas are not seen very often in East Anglia; when a variety is spotted, it is almost certain to be Perry's Blue an oldie that can stand drought and bloom prolifically. The plants are usually about 2½ to 3 feet tall, but this year I have seen them reach 4 feet... moisture-wise they have never had it so good

Now that the T.B's are nearly over, I have a task to remove some Pseudacorus Bastard and Golden Queen seedlings, they somehow arrive, unwanted from seed. I will be saving one or two of the Golden Queen types, as they look different and interesting. Time will tell whether or not they should be propagated and distributed...

Regional Report for the South.

By Adrian Whittaker.

Wisley Visit Early June.

Although no Spurias and few Siberians were in flower, it was interesting to note those cultivars in the trials which had made sturdy growth, and a good number of flower stems coming up... The following were noted:-

Sibericas:- In flower..... 'Polly Dodge'
good growth & stems..... 'Fourfold White', 'Orville Fay', 'Ruffled Velvet'
'Navy Brass', 'Snow Bounty' and 'Violet Mere'.

Spurias:- None in flower.
good growth, adequate flower stems on:- 'Protaga', Monspur 'Cambridge Blue', 'Essay', 'Follow Through', 'Clarke Cosgrave', & 'Shelford Giant'

Both in the trials and in one of the mixed borders Monspur 'Cambridge Blue' was outstanding, both in the excellent growth and the number of flower stems.

Obviously, the cultivars noted are performing well, on well drained, sandy soil after months of cold, wet weather. This, in itself, could point to their suitability as good garden plants for the U.K. climate, if this growth pattern is maintained over a number of years.

In answer to Roderick Woods' questions... (1) When do you cut your Spurias down.... (2) Does it have any effect on next years flowers..... I cannot do better than quote you the passage from 'Cass' and Sidney's Book 'Growing Irises' which is this:-

'There are two groups of Spurias, those which become dormant soon after flowering and those which retain their leaves right through the Winter.... In the first group the three main species are I.Orientalis, I.Crocea and I.Monneri. In the second is Spuria itself, I.Dimetria, I.Halophila, I.Klattii and I.Kerneriana (a dwarf Spuria)... It goes on to say:- the Summer-Dormant become untidy after flowering and can be cut down to the ground in August. The other type should be tidied up regularly by having the dried leaves cut off--- not pulled off...

(Note... This excellent Book, 'Growing Irises' By G.E.Cassidy and S.Linnegar is obtainable by writing to BRITISH IRIS SOCIETY, Hon. Literature Secretary, Mr. Neville Watkins, 31, Larkfield Road, FARNHAM. Surrey GU9 7DB.... Price £7.95 Post Free... such a mine of information. Ed. Oh.. I forgot, if you are a Member of the B.I.S. it is £1 less.....)

North West Regional Report.

Our dear friend and fellow Member Ruth Conley, feels that she can no longer continue, due to the state of her health, we are very sorry Ruth, and we hope you will continue to take an interest in our Group... writing to us when you feel like it, Thank you for all you have done in the past few years, and best wishes to you and your Husband for Good Health in the future. Ruth has named Ray Wilson as her successor, and he has kindly accepted, we hope he will not find it too much of a burden, and welcome him to the fold..... (ed).

West Midland Regional Report.

Philip Allery has kindly 'taken over' as the West Midland Representative', welcome him... in his letter Philip has indicated that he is prepared to undertake some controlled experiments into the use and benefit of fertilisers and composts. Alternatively we will let us know of his experiments with I. Ensata, he does not subscribe to the view that they can be left submerged or with their roots in water all year through.... I feel a bit reedy when I say... can we hear about both please Philip... they are both questions which have been asked in the past, and I am sure Members would like to know more. We will leave it with you to choose which one you write about first... Thanks for your quick response, it was greatly appreciated. (Ed.)

The Group Library.

Copies of the following American Publications are obtainable from the Hon. Librarian Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt, 'Haygarth', Cleeton St. Mary, CLEOBURY MORTIMER, KIDDERMINSTER Wor

Newsletter of the Spuria Iris Society.

Review of the Society for Japanese Irises.

Journal 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.

Treasurer's Report.

We are now more or less on an 'even keel', providing Subscriptions are sent in as promptly as possible please. The attractive seed list has helped considerably, as also the excellent contributions by Members, Supporters and Devotees of our Siberian, Spuria and Japanese Irises, making, I feel, compulsive reading, many thanks to you all.....

Back Numbers of Newsletters.

Copies of Alex Back's Original Newsletter 1976 (an Historical Document) 20p plus postage

Copies of Newsletters prior to 1975 ... 30p plus postage.

Copies of Newsletters February 1975 40p plus postage.

Excerpts from your Letters etc.

Jack Ashford writes:- 'Warning!.. Don't take a great deal of notice of the conclusions Bret Fussler arrives at, I would hesitate to generalise, like he does, over a 1/10000 shoot, never mind the whole country... In Nairn we have a micro-climate.. Low rainfall, very high sunshine, sheltered.. Because we are so far North, we get much more daylight than you in the Summer months and much less in the Winter. It follows that our growing season is much shorter. This affects drastically Margaret Owen's Remontants.. They send up a second crop of flower spikes, but with the days of October shortening alarmingly.. they do not develop into flower... Sad!!! The shorter flowering season (later start) also means that, in the main, flowers are some weeks later than with you. This could be very interesting for the Showman.. How often do I read that the main flush of blooms is over by Show Day.

One of our most common wild flowers is the Yellow Flag 'Pseudacorus'. It grows in every stream and bog and frequently in the West it flourishes in the salt-marsh, washed twice daily by the tides...

It was in a West Coast village that I saw an amazing display of T.B's, on peat land that must have been very acid. It is in the same West Coast area (just S. of Arisaig) that I saw an Iris, fully 6 feet high, bearing huge seed pods. Not, I think Shelford-- which isn't doing very well with me... but one of these days I am going back to check it out.

Nairn, of course is on the coast, so we are spared the worst excesses of Winter. Frost pockets like Granrown-on-Spey grow Irises well enough, so I think Germanica is quite frost hard. Even so, I have lost one or two, usually the ones I really wanted 'Bordello' for instance.. Light, dry soils let the frost down deep, and when, usually in February, we get a week of -20' then anything that survives is hardy!!! Better it would be, if we were under a deep blanket of snow... Chrysographes and Sibiricas do well, Ensatas in some years.. I try everything, with modest success. A pot of Warleyensis sends up a forest of leaves, but no flowers. Stylosa does well, flowers in April. English Iris are something of a weed. (cont).

That just about sorts me out... My garden is 2 acres of hard work, a question of living with your weeds, rather than fighting against them. Now it is 'all systems go', everything else gets forgotten. Have a good season.

Thanks Jack, do'nt work too hard, it's 'over to you Brett', concerning 'A Geographer Looks at Iris Growing', published in the 1984 Year Book. I personally liked your comment, I quote:- 'Nottinghamshire is a 'bright spot' in the Midlands', it is possible I am a bit biased!!!! Ed.)

Ian Smith of West Moors Dorset wrote that his Spuria seeds are germinating, but he was rather disappointed that there was no sign of life from Eunice Frenkel's specials... perhaps, by now they have 'popped up'... He asks if anyone has a piece of an early flowering Unguicularis to sell, he would gladly buy it...

An earnest appeal to Hybridisers of Spuria Irises, for shorter stems please comes from Ray Wilson and Jack Venner.....

Further News of our New Members in the U.S.A.

Harry Kiesel who has been 1st Vice President of the Society for Siberian Irises, has now become President, after Steve Varner has retired from his term of Office, although I see that Steve is now a Director and retains his position as Historian... Harry writes in his President's letter on the 25th Anniversary that since Linnaeus, the Swedish Botanist first discovered Siberica in 1753, nine more Siberian Species have been discovered and there are now more than a thousand cultivars. Frances Cleveland and Charles Gersoorff each named and introduced more than 40 different varieties, in the twenties and thirties. The late Amos Perry here in England, created almost as many... Now Currier McEwen has introduced more than sixty. No doubt there will be many more to come, as Ben Hager said at the Annual Meeting in Seattle last year, 'We are just on the threshold of some exciting new colours too!!!!'.

Carolee Clay is the Editor of the 'Siberian', taking over from Peg Edwards, who, I now understand has not been well, we send her best wishes for a quick return to good health... Carolee lives near Madison the beautiful capital of Wisconsin, close to one of its 5 lakes; she is the oldest of six children, 3 sisters and 2 brothers--- a blue-eyed blonde, 5ft 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ ins, and weighs 112lbs... She has many interests and hobbies, collecting cook-books, knitting, crocheting and sewing... Her three great loves are... Art, Biology and Sports... fishing, trap-shooting, flying, gardening and horse-back riding (she has 2 Registered Quarter Horses). Carolee really enjoys almost anything connected with outdoor activities... Her Art revolves around a career in the areas of Advertising, Graphic Arts and Printing....

In her 25th Anniversary Publication, Carolee says she would like to hear from Members about their experiences in growing and breeding Siberians.

May I say, congratulations on the 25th Anniversary edition, with its silver cover and attractive picture of 'Pink Haze' the 1984 Morgan Award Winner. Best Wishes to you all for the next 25 years.... I will be publishing more in the February 1986 Newsletter.....

Helen Greer is the Editor of the Spuria Iris Society Newsletter, taking over from our old friend Floyd Wickenkamp in 1983... Floyd is now the Secty/Treas. of the Society, and is busy compiling the Spuria Iris Society's Check List, (details at the end of this paragraph). Helen has been gardening from a very early age, and like myself, is an inveterate 'seed sower' for other interests are Species Tulips and Daffodils, some of which she has hybridised, with the result that 3 have been registered. She stresses the need to keep correct book records, when hybridising, to find the best pollen parents. In her latest Newsletter, Helen asks if anyone has seen any proliferations, in the shape of small rhizomes, which spring off from a node on the flower stalks after flowering, sometimes more than one on a stalk.. The first time this was noticed was in the Summer of 1972!!!

If you would like the Spuria Iris Society Check List, here are the details:-

'The Spuria Irises-- Introduction and Varietal Listing-- 1985.

James J. Foreman, Editor.

Address to send to:-

Floyd W. Wickenkamp,
Treasurer, Spuria Iris Society,
10521, Bellarose Drive,
SUN CITY. AZ. 85351. U.S.A.

The cost is 5 dollars post paid. Cheques made out to the Spuria Iris Society.

(p.s. Helen would also like to hear from you, about Spuria Irises.)

Tom and Ellen Abroga have a small Nursery called 'Chehalem Gardens', P.O.Box 693, NEWBERG, OREGON, 97132-0693... Starting 3 years ago, they now grow about 90 varieties of Siberians, 70 varieties of Spurias and 70 varieties of Japanese Irises, which they grow because they like them (what better reason)... The potentials of Spuria Irises fascinate them, so they are making an extensive effort to hybridise, after doing a little with Sibericas... All good wishes in your efforts Tom and Ellen... Ed.

Ros and Nigel Colborn run their Plantsman's Nursery at Careby Manor Gardens near STAMFORD, Lincolnshire PE9 4EA... They are open from April-September, on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays and Bank Holidays. They grow over 600 plants and shrubs, including Old Fashioned Roses and Irises. At the moment they have Irises such as Clarkei, Foetidissima, Graminea, Pallida, Pseudacorus, Pseudacorus Variegata, Sibirica 'Emperor' and mixed, Sintenisii and Tectorum 'Alba'. They hope to extend this in time.... All these are in a beautiful old Manor Garden setting... We wish them every success....

A further letter from Ian Smith:- who tells us that the soil in his West Moors Wimborne home is very sandy with some peat and free-draining... not ideal for Sibericas, but Spurias seem to be doing well. Early this year rhizomes that he brought from his old home, were increasing and producing 12" shoots, he will be pleasantly surprised if he gets a flower spike.

A disused cesspit has provided a bed for the Sibericas. The sides were partly demolished leaving a concrete 'tray' buried about 4 feet underground. Filled with old turf, rotting leaves and earth over the top, this means that the Sibericas can have a drink whenever they want one. Last year although only a few flowers appeared, they were the best that Ian had ever grown.

The Chrysographes seem to like it without much attention, they bloomed quite profusely. I do add a bit more sedge-peat to the soil, some well-rotted compost and well-rotted stable manure, spread around the plants, also a light sprinkling of bonemeal, twice a year,, that is all they get.

(In answer to my question in Feb. concerning the Irises growing in the vineyards of Italy as shown by Geoffrey Smith.) Ian tells me that in Italy, it gets very hot and so a lot of Irises, whether for 'orris' or for flowers, are grown in dappled shade; so growing grapes in the Iris fields kills 2 birds with one stone.. One gets a bit of shade for the Irises and a secondary crop with the grapes. It is the same in the famous Iris Gardens in Florence, where the International Competition for T.B.s is held, the whole gardens are dotted with Olive Trees; a protection for the Iris and a nice crop of Olives....

(Thanks Ian, nice to hear from you.. All the Best... Ed.)

News from the Species Group.

Prof. M.Bowley has resigned after 12 years as Hon. Secretary, to spend more time in her garden, we send her good wishes and good weather too, for her to enjoy it. Her successor Mr. S.Anderton who lives at Belsay Hall, BELSAY, NEWCASTLE-on-TYNE. To whom we extend a welcome.

Many thanks for your kind appreciation of the new Cover, which David, who is an Artist designed for us, we are glad you liked it. (Ed.)

We are now getting quite a substantial list of Plantsmen (and Women) in our Group, so I thought it would be a good idea to make a list, you will find it on the last Page together with the seed list, and form to send in your Subscription.....

One final word, gradually I am receiving answers to my question about composts and fertilisers, I suppose a lot depends on the type of soil in which you grow your Irises, but I would stress it is important to Members who are growing our Irises for the first time. Old experienced 'hands' will know their 'likes' and 'dislikes', so we must make an attempt to pass on as much as we can. Philip Allery has offered to study this in depth, we will be most interested to read about his findings.

There was also the question of 'the company they like to keep', I think I'll start the ball rolling by telling you of the shrubs and plants my Siberian Irises seem to enjoy being with. There are many smaller Berberis Species, dark in colour, as a foil for the paler shades, and also smaller Potentilla Species as a foil for the darker shades... Dwarf Azaleas look well to underplanting... well I love pansies, in all shapes sizes and colours. Polyanthus look good with the early flowering Irises. Later Heuchera and Saxifrage make an excellent contrast. Avoid invasive ground cover plants, they just don't like it... Over to you!!! Bye!!!! J.T.

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A reminder that when THREE notices of non-payment of subscriptions have been sent, you will not be receiving your next Newsletter... Sorry!!!!

To,

Mrs. Joan Trevithick, 86a, Grantham Rd. RADCLIFFE-on-TRENT, NOTTINGHAM NG12 2HY.

Herewith my Subscription for 1985/86.....
 (Name and Address)

.....

The Seed Distribution.

Packets of seed are 10p. each, including Postage and Packing.
Our seed list is attracting New Members, so we do hope you will support us by sending in as many as you can possibly spare please.
This list is very much depleted, because of popular demand...

Section Laevigatae.

- I. Laevigata (blue).
- I. Pseudacorus (deep yellow)
 - do Bastardii (pale yellow)
 - do 'Sulphur Queen' var. Bastardii.
 - do 'Golden Queen' var. Superba.
- Iris 'Gerald Derby' I. Versicolor. I. Versicolor var. 'Kermesina'.

Series Tripetalae.

- I. Setosa.

Series Sibiricae.

- I. Chrysographes (mixed).
- I. Sibirica 'Alba'.
- I. Sibirica x ex 'Floppy Purple'.

Series Xyridion.

- I. Orientalis (Ochroleuca).

Series Spuria.

- I. Spuria (mixed).

Please send your orders to:-

Mr. David Trevithick,
86a, Grantham Road,
RADCLIFFE-ON-TRENT, NOTTINGHAM. NG12 2HY.

requisite seeds as follows please.....

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Name and address:-
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