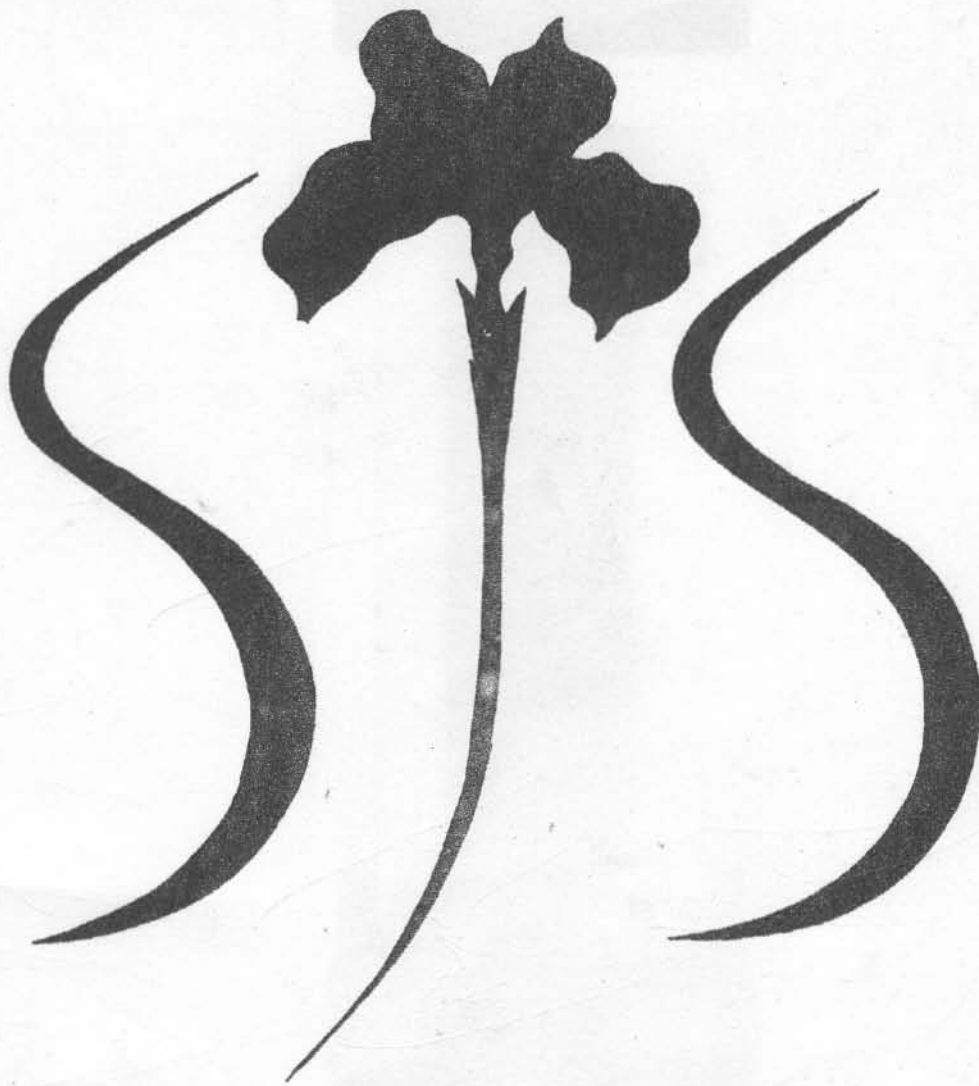


NEWSLETTER



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

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

Newsletter No. 20 February 1987.

The 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 hybridization.

The Group's Officers.

Chairman..... Mr. Jack Venner, 'Raven's Croft', St.Osyth Rd. LITTLE CLACTON.
Essex CO16 9NY.
Vice- Chairman..... Mrs. Hilda Goodwin, 42, Tycehurst Hill, LOUGHTON. Essex.
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Hon. Librarian..... Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt, 'Haygarth', Cleeton St. Mary,
(Siberian Representative) CLEOBURY MORTIMER. KIDDERMINSTER. DY14 0QU.
Japanese Representative. Mrs. Anne Blanco White, 72, South Hill Park, LONDON NW3 2SN.
Spuria Representative... Mr. Adrian Whittaker, 'Chestnuts', Hilden Way, LITTLETON.
WINCHESTER. Hants.

Regional Representatives.

Eastern Area..... Mr. Jack Venner address as above.....
London Area..... Mrs. Anne Blanco White.....address as above.....
North Western Area..... Mr. Ray Wilson, 'Dalshead', 100, Blackburn Rd. CHORLEY. Lancs.
PR6 8TJ.
Southern Area..... Mr. Adrian Whittaker..... address as above.....
West Midland Area..... Mr. Philip Allery, 199, Walsall Rd. ALDRIDGE. Nr. WALSALL
WS9 0BE.

Mr. Jack Venner is also our Show Reporter.

Our Regional Representatives do valuable work in their areas. Their Reports are a great help in furthering our interesting work of research and report. We thank them most sincerely, and look forward to their continued support.

The Siberian, Spuria and Japanese Representatives who, in some cases, 'double up' as Area Representatives, give a lot of their valuable time to help Members in many ways... Thank you, it is greatly appreciated.

We are trying desperately hard to keep the Subscription at £1 for as long as possible. The seed donors are a great help, to them a big thank you. Now we have a plant scheme going, many thanks to those who have already sent in. Payment of Subscriptions promptly would also help, so please:-

SUBSCRIPTIONS £1 per year are payable from the 1st July.

This is your Newsletter, published in February and July, if you have a query a problem or comment to make, do'nt hesitate to write in, we like to hear from you.

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HAS BEEN ARRANGED FOR TUESDAY June 16th at the R.H.S Show (first Day) 1.30 to 2.30pm. Hope to see you there. (Joan).

Editorial.

A verse written by C.S.Harrison, taken from Walter Stager's book 'The Iris'.
 Though her form seems so fragile, yet wondrously brave,
 Away in the Northland where fierce tempests rave,
 She wakes from her sleep in her cradle of snow
 And beams on the world with a radiant glow.
 Away on the plains in the drought and the heat,
 She is cheerfully waiting admirers to greet,
 To her fairy presence must ever belong,
 The tribute of praise and the rapture of song.

I thought, at Christmas, when I looked at a bowl of roses in one corner and a collection of marigolds, pansies, pinks, heathers and clematis in another, I would be able to say 'it is more like Summer than the middle of Winter-- alas! reality has taken over, cold winds, frosts and deep snow soon arrived. I am left now with some very nice pink and white Hellebores, they are early arrivals for 1987.

A word about our patient and long-suffering Printers, Trevor and Stephen of the Christian Duplicating Service, whose offices are in the shadow of the Castle walls, with the statue of Robin Hood standing guard and the oldest house in Nottingham (now a Lace Museum) nearby. Down the road the Brewhouse Yard Museum and the famous old hostelry 'The Trip to Jerusalem' close by. The whole area is steeped in History, in which Trevor and Stephen's work seems to fit like a glove. Our thanks to them for their untiring efforts and support over the years... I think Trevor will become an Irisarian yet.. I hope so..

Due to another rather large Newsletter, I will just have to say Congratulations to all Members who have received awards during 1986. The Beardless Iris Sections at the Shows is certainly growing, I am sure this is a reflection of the expertise and diligence of many of our Members in growing and showing them... they were a real joy and fully appreciated.

We welcome 4 new Members:- Mrs. Jean Harrison who has a small garden in West Bridgford and dearly wants to grow Irises. Mr. Gerald Goddard of Chingford a Member of the B.I.S. who would like to extend his collection of Siberian Irises. Mrs. Myra Geeson a co-partner in the Coach Gap Nurseries, Langar, who would like to grow more Irises. Mr. Paul Oliver Smith of Benchley near Tonbridge, an Alpine enthusiast who is anxious to grow Irises. We hope you will all enjoy this Newsletter, and write in telling us about your own garden, when you have time.

You will see, at the end of the Newsletter, we are restarting the Plant Scheme again, but with a slightly different procedure this time, more details are given there. This is in addition to our comprehensive Seed Distribution.

Many thanks for your Good Wishes received at Christmas and the New Year..

Best Wishes to you all for 1987, have a Good Iris Growing Year..

Joan Trevithick.

Chairman's Letter.

Greetings to you all for 1987.. My sincere wish is that you find your Irises have not suffered too much in this harsh Winter, and that you will find them flourishing after the snow has gone to provide a wealth of blooms in the Iris season.

Speaking of snow, I hear that very few places in Gt. Britain have escaped the disruption it has caused, and the very low temperatures. The East of England seems to have received more than its fair share. Here in Essex, we have had about 1.ft. of snow, with much drifting and more to come. So much for my boasts.. that snow is rare in East Essex and never more than a light transitory happening.

About Beardless Irises, I thought last year was memorable for the increase in the number of New Siberians at the various Shows. Spurias flowered too late to be shown, but garden visits revealed many new varieties.

Great progress is being made in breeding Siberian and Spuria Irises but what of Japanese Irises? Having found that they grow well for me, I have acquired a number of varieties, which I hope to breed from. A good type will continue to flower for well over a month, so why not try growing them yourselves.

Once again..All Good Wishes.. I hope your last year seedlings will flower this year and be beautiful...

Jack Venner.

Our Garden.

What a place to build a garden! Cold winds, long winters, difficult soil, May frosts, summer droughts--we get 'em all. But so do most gardeners in Eastern England and many have produced magnificent results in spite of the adversity.

We started in 1977 when the imbalance of the previous dry summer was redressed by the wettest spring for thirty years. In those days the garden consisted of a couple of small lawns with straight rose beds and a little vegetable patch. Farm refuse of all kinds encroached on all sides. Today there are more than 2 acres of intensively 'gardened' ground in various enclosures and partitions and a further series of paddocks, nursery and buildings, stretching in all to about thirty acres.

Our coldest night to date was in February 1986 (minus 16 degrees celsius) and very occasionally summer heatwaves have exceeded 30 degrees celsius. Our rainfall is about 24 ins. per annum.. I find it impossible to think of rainfall metrically and most of it seems to fall when we have visitors. Our soil is limestone brash, very alkaline (Rhododendrons are out of the question) and it is stony. It is easy to damage, so we have to take great care not to pad it down too much in damp weather.

Being near to two farmyards, our biggest pest is the house sparrow. Every spring they damage Primulas, all silver foliaged plants. Cherry blossom. Willows, Viburnums and many other plants. Cottoning seems to be the best deterrent, but the sparrows' persistent destruction continues over much of the garden for several months each year.

On the Terrace, laid out in 1974, we have Viburnum Odoratissimum, Clematis Armandii, Dianthus Superbus, Salix Fargesii and Rosa 'Mermaid' climbs vigorously up the stone wall. Clematis 'H.E.Young', C. 'Rouge Cardinal' and C. Texensis 'Gravetye Beauty' grow through a fig tree, they are very beautiful in flower. Here you will find Iris Clarkeii with Delphinium Tatsienense (Chinese).

In the Rose Garden we grow many of the older roses on imported, rich, river silt. Such varieties as 'Penelope', 'Felicia', 'Cornelia' and 'Prosperity', together with quite a few others, several very rarely seen. Not all have been deliberately planted, some have simply grown from seed.

In a small, very dry sight at the foot of the stone built house, on the south side, Regelia-cyclus Iris 'Choine' and 'Vera' have established themselves, together with I. Hoogiana, despite the hard weather.

The gravel area around the front door of the house is devoted mostly to plants which flower in late winter and early spring. Facing East and not particularly warm, it contains Crocus, Snowdrops and a collection of Primula Species. A variety of dwarf Irises grow in the gravel terrace above the scree garden, these include I. Lacustris, I. Lacustris X Gracilipes, and I. Tectorum Alba, they enjoy the stony foothold.

We have constructed a pond to divide the small lawn and creeper-screen from the Elizabethan Garden, which is an ideal spot (damp) to grow I. Sibirica, including some of the newest Diploids and Tetraploids.. I. Sibirica 'Silver Edge' bought from the S.S & J. plant sale last year, flowered in the same season, a lovely thing. Here also I. Graminea the delightful pineapple-scented Iris and I. Chrysographes 'Black Form'.

The gravel path, with its round stones (made by simply mixing cement and pouring it into a home-made mould... cost approx. 40p. each), takes you from the Town Garden and Cottage Garden to the South Garden and the Dutch Garden, here we grow Iris Ensata 'Kaempferi', I. Pseudacorus Bastardii, I. Pseudacorus 'E. Turnip Seed', I. Pseudacorus Variegata, 'Holden Clough' and the flower arranger's favourite 'Gerald Darby' together with Greater Spearwort, Lesser Spearwort, Water crowfoot, Water Forget-me-not and Brooklime... This garden, beyond the deer-proof gate, is relatively new... we hope to extend it to the Meadow, so that wild plants and other wild things will have a permanent home where they can multiply and thrive without disturbance.

(Thank you Ros. and Nigel, those of you who have visited this delightfully peaceful garden know that it has to be seen to be fully appreciated. Since writing this, Nigel has asked me to tell you that it is now open on SUNDAYS and BANK HOLIDAYS only from Easter to the end of September. The Telephone Number is Castle Bytham (078081) 220.)

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HAS BEEN ARRANGED FOR TUESDAY June 16th. at the R.H.S.

SHOW (first day). 1.30 to 2.30 pm. Please try to be there...

More Show Dates are on the next page...

BRITISH IRIS SOCIETY 1987 SHOW DATES.

<u>Early Spring (Reticulata) Show.</u>	<u>February 24th & 25th.</u>	R.H.S. New Hall.
<u>Late Spring Show (Dwarf & Median).</u>	<u>April 28th & 29th.</u>	R.H.S. New Hall.
<u>65th. Birthday Celebrations.</u>	<u>May 27th.-30th.</u>	Cannington College Somerset.
<u>Late Summer Show.</u>	<u>**June 16th. & 17th.</u>	R.H.S. New Hall.

** The Annual General Meeting of The S.S & J. Group 1.30-2.30
16th June.

In Memory.

It is one of an Editors' sad tasks to report the deaths and remembrances of a Member. The saddest time is now, when I have to tell you of the deaths of John Taylor and Brett Tussler, both on the same day December 8th 1986.

John was known throughout the Iris World as a raiser of very beautiful cultivars some of which are, even now, being registered. We remembered his dear Wife Mary in our last Newsletter, she died in May 1986. The whole of the Iris Society mourn their passing. We send our Sincere Sympathy to John and Mary's family and friends and hope they will receive some comfort in the knowledge of the high esteem and love we hold for both of them.

Brett Tussler's death has shocked us all, so untimely and tragic. He has worked tirelessly for the B.I.S. lately as the Hon. Treasurer, supporting it with his knowledge of Computers. Many of you will remember his excellent Stand at last year's Moulton Show of Irises which he had grown from seed.. not an easy task, but carried out with Brett's usual enthusiasm and enjoyment. We send our Deepest Sympathy to Mrs. Tussler and family in your great loss... we will miss him too...

My Current Hybridizing Goals and Efforts.

by Currier McEwen.

To write this article about my current hybridizing goals provides a welcome incentive for me to take stock again of what I am doing. It is important that one does this every year or two to keep one's goals up to date and not to let them become just routine.

I will start with tetraploidy. Naturally this continues to be of special interest to me since, in a sense, it started with me for the Siberians. Actually, to be sure the record is straight, I want to remind you that the late Max Steiger started at about the same time that I did. He worked with the 40-chromosome group in 1964 and gave the name Tetrafor to a colchicine induced tetraploid form of I. Forrestii. By that year, I too had colchicine induced tetraploids of the 28-chromosome group but registered none until 1970 when I had second generation tetraploids. Steiger and I started quite independently but corresponded later. I hoped to exchange tetraploids with him, but he was then in his long terminal illness and said that he had lost all of his plants and was not strong enough to grow any of mine. More recently Jennifer Hewitt has told me of some work that Gerald Darby did inducing tetraploidy years earlier. This is of greatest interest. Jennifer has sent me some bits of information, but I am eager to have more if any of our readers can provide it please...

With that historical note taken care of, I will return to my current efforts with tetraploids. The Siberians have now reached the tenth generation of tetraploidy and the Japanese their seventh. This year the new seedlings of both groups were, to my eye, the best to date. I think, however, that this is not due to the advancing generations, but to good fortune in choosing parents in 1983 when the crosses that produced these seedlings were made. So far as the Siberians are concerned, I no longer feel any great urgency about proving the merit of tetraploids. Many others are now using them as parents and other hybridizers in the United States and Germany- and perhaps elsewhere- are using colchicine to develop their own, entirely new breeding lines. Perhaps two thirds of my crosses continue to be among the tetraploids, but I am using colchicine less often than before to try to introduce new features. I still hope, with colchicine, to develop some better pink, yellow and bluer tetraploids, but most of the features I want to see improved already exist, at least potentially, in the tetraploid breeding lines now available.

This is not yet the case with Japanese Irises, I am pleased with my existing whites and reds, but I am eager to see tetraploid pinks- of which, as yet, I have none--
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and also better blues and purples. Also I do not know of other hybridizers except Eckard Berlin in Germany and Bob Bauer in the United States who are working toward tetraploidy in Japanese Irises. Mitsuda and perhaps other Japanese growers did so in the past, but I believe little is being done there, in this way, at present. However, Dr. Hirao reports that he has suggested this effort to several of the younger Japanese hybridizers. I hope they have risen to the challenge and will make great progress.

Having devoted this much space to tetraploidy I must at once emphasize the need to continue intensively with the diploids. Naturally I have a special feeling for tetraploids, because, since 1960 they have been 'my thing', but I want to stress as strongly as I can that I am equally concerned with diploids. Of my four Morgan Award winners, two (Ruffled Velvet and Butter and Sugar) are diploids, and the new Morgan-Wood Medal, established this year for a Siberian that has previously won the Morgan Award, was given, not to one of the tetraploids, but to Butter and Sugar. Also of my three Japanese Irises which have received the Payne Award, only one, Raspberry Rimmed, is a tetraploid. A particular reason to continue intensively with diploids, stems from what I believe is an urgent need not to lose, what I think of as the traditional Siberian form, with its gracefully arching falls and more delicate substance. The greater substance of tetraploids gives nearly all of them a round flaring form and, indeed, since the advent of White Swirl back in 1957, most diploid introductions are round and flaring. As I looked at the display bed at South Harpswell this year, I was impressed again with the lovely contrast my Soft Blue and Chartreuse Beauty gave among the clumps of the others, not only because of their colors but, because of their different, traditional form. I have always had this form in mind in my crossing program, but this year I have determined to stress it still more.

My other goals for Siberians relate to various colors and patterns, miniatures, early bloomers and repeaters. As regards color, it is always surprising to me that the only true spectrum color achieved to date is yellow which, in the 28 -chr. group, is the last to have appeared.. Among blues, Cambridge, Dear Delight, Ira Wood, and Jay Bird show progress toward true blue, but there is still a long way to go. The McGarvey pinks have made real progress in that color class, and in 1985 some 'pink' tetraploids bloomed which have pleased me. The first of these, T₂82/123, from two induced chimeral sisters of Lavender Bounty will, I trust, be ready for introduction in 1988. The red Siberians are still in the wine red category. Ewen, named after my son, was my first tetraploid in that color. The grandchild, Hubbard, I consider my best... but some seedlings from it show further progress, including distinctly green signals which go better with red and pink, I think, than do yellow ones. I am still working toward whites with lots of green in the falls, and now also have seedlings from crosses of my yellow and green breeding lines, which show promising blends of these two colors, especially some with greenish yellow falls and green veins. In the yellow line, I have had hundreds of diploid seedlings from Butter and Sugar but none, as yet, better or different enough to warrant introduction, in my opinion. Until this year, I have been especially disappointed at my lack of progress in obtaining worthwhile yellow tetraploids. As would be expected some have deeper yellow color, but form has been poor and stalks too short. In 1983, Golden Crimping bloomed. It was not only a 'color break' with its rich cream falls and crimped yellow edges, but both it and its sisters have been wonderful parents. Crossed with one of the better of the inadequate yellow tetraploids it gave, in 1986, some seedlings which, for the first time, are promising. I must add that one of the 'sisters', which will be introduced in 1987 as Dreaming Orange, has the richest yellow signals I have seen; not really orange, but on the way. It is my hope that true orange can come from this line of breeding.... One other color, much farther away in subseries Sibiricae, I fear, is brown. Several of my dark blue-purple seedlings have, to my eye, a browning influence in the basal half of the falls. To what degree this can be increased, remains to be seen...

With regard to developments in better flower form, the chief point I wish to emphasize is the importance of not losing the graceful, traditional form which I have already referred to. This will not be easy. Not only are the flowers of round, flaring form the ones which impress the average garden visitor, but they are also the ones the garden judges select for awards. An important goal must be to work toward the improvement of Siberians of all forms.

The remaining goals I mentioned at the start are:- better miniatures, early bloomers and repeaters. The latter two are easily discussed together because, in practice, it is the earliest bloomers which tend to repeat. My first repeaters came by chance, but once I saw them in bloom, long after the main season was ended, (they became

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a goal of high priority. When one realizes that the average period of bloom of Siberian irises is two to three weeks and four weeks is usually the limit, the fact that, in my garden there are now both diploid and tetraploid repeaters which bloom over a period of eight to ten weeks is impressive. I am aware that these repeaters have performed less well in some other gardens and clearly additional work is needed to learn what the factors are that enhance the trait. The genetic role is obvious, but apparently there are environmental requirements as well..

Much effort is needed also to develop miniatures that can be relied on to stay short. The very old I.Sibiricae nana alba and a blue one which I obtained years ago labelled I.Orientalis nana have persistently remained at a height of 6 to 7 ins. but all my own miniature seedlings have, after 3 or 4 years, grown taller. I thought that at last, I had one I could count on, and after 8 years of its remaining at 7 ins. introduced it as Baby Sister in 1986. That seemed to inspire it, because this year one clump of it reached 12 ins.! I have noted repeatedly that if one of my miniatures like Little White, Blue Snippet and some seedlings, grow taller after 3 or 4 years, it can be brought down to the desired height again by dividing and replanting it, but I am determined to develop some that remain short naturally.

Those of you who have seen my list of introductions are aware that I have done much more with Siberians of subseries Sibiricae than with those of subseries Chrysographes. I have not succeeded in inducing any tetraploids from the 40-chromosome diploids I have worked with, but Eckard Berlin and Tomas Tamberg have. I think of Jean Witt, Jennifer Hewitt and others as 'specialists' among those working with diploid 40-chromosome hybrids. In recent years I have had several of unusual gray-lavender color which I like, and one, not introduced, which is a nearly black self. A fault of most of the 40-chromosome Siberians is their bud count of two and correspondingly short period of bloom. My Prairie Warbler, in contrast, has two and even three branches plus terminal and up to nine buds. How this came about is a mystery to me, because it came from two yellow parents having no branches and only two buds. I trust it may be useful for improved bud count...

Finally to return to my Japanese Irises, all the goals discussed above for Siberians are important efforts for me also with the J.I's. I have been pleased with some white tetraploids with green signals and with some diploids and tetraploids with periods of bloom of six weeks or more. One of these, not only gives repeat bloom, but last year rebloomed in late September.. I am sure that this trait can be enhanced. Thus far I have been disappointed in my lack of progress with miniatures. I now have some with flowers of suitable miniature size, but stalks are too tall. In the garden I think of these as small flower types, but not miniatures. I have been disappointed thus far in efforts to cross successfully some tetraploid I.Pseudacorus given to me by Eckard Berlin with tetraploid Japanese Irises in the hope of obtaining fertile seedlings. Apparently these wide crosses have been successful in the diploids only by using I.Pseudacorus as the pod parent. Unfortunately the tetraploid Pseudacorus have finished blooming before the first tetraploid Japanese Iris has opened. This year I have planted several of the J.I's in pots which I will start indoors, under lights, in the hope of getting enough bloom to use for crosses. If we can obtain fertile yellow hybrids it may be possible to introduce this new color into tetraploid Japanese Irises breeding lines..

Having made all these pious remarks about my selecting goals, let me close by saying that although I do strongly urge the importance of having specific goals to work toward, I still make lots of crosses, just because the flowers are pretty and I certainly do not deplore that!

(Sincere congratulations Currier on being awarded the Morgan Wood Medal for your lovely Siberian 'Butter and Sugar'. All good wishes for your future efforts. Ed.)

Curriers Book 'Siberian Irises' is available from the Library. Also it can be purchased-- personally signed-- direct from:-

Dr. Currier McEwen, M.D. South Harpswell. MAINE 04079 U.S.A.

(Price 7dollars inc. Postage and Handling... a bargain at this time, so I am told by a Member, as the Exchange Rate is good... Ed.)

I found this tip on soil pH. in an old gardening book.. and I pass it on.. If your soil is highly alkaline, use 'Flowers of Sulphur' at a rate of 4oz. per square yard. If neutral 2oz.per sq.yd. Dig first, then dig again after sprinkling (use gloves).Incorporate peat at the same time. Write in and let us know the results.... Editor.

Trevor Nottle's Letter from Australia.

1986 has been quite a good year for Irises. I went to Victoria in May and was able to renew my acquaintance with Barry Blyth of 'Tempo Two' nursery. Barry is our leading grower of Iris and Hemerocallis-- a noted breeder and importer of these plants, he has recently moved his nursery to a new site at Pearcedale, on the Mornington Peninsula, south of Melbourne. The soil is the most incredible black sand. The day I called Barry was digging Pacific Coast hybrids, and the soil literally fell away from the roots as they were lifted off his fork.. Barry is well known for his T.B's. but walking the rows I was really excited to find a good selection of 'Species' previously unknown to me:- I. 'Kiboshi' (yellow), I. 'Cristata' 'McDonald' and 'Alba', I. 'Prismatica' 'Austrina', I. 'Lacustris', I. 'Gerald Darby', I. 'Sylvia' (Evansia). I. 'Bourne Graceful' (Evansia), I. 'Cristata' 'Late Dark Blue'.** (See Editors' Note).

A few days later I called on Rene Coffield at Ballarat and she added Iris Gracilipes 'Alba' to my treasure trove..

The Dykes Medal has been re-instated as an award in Australia, Louisiana x 'Helen Naish' is the first recipient. It is a vigorous white with greenish cast towards the centre and on the hafts. It was raised and released by 'Rainbow Ridge' nursery at Dival (an outer Sydney Suburb). John Taylor was the breeder and his partner in the nursery is Graeme Grosvenor, who wrote the popular book 'Growing Irises'. He is just about to have another book published 'Growing Daylilies'!

Nearly all the Irises I brought home from Victoria went into a new piece of garden, which has been made where a drive-way was taken out. I also put in several clusters of white Dogwoods, two Cherries- P. Serrulata 'Ukon' (the greenish one), a Carpentaria, a weeping Red Maple, some White Azaleas and a few of the new species Camellia hybrids. These are underplanted with Cyclamen Graecum and Africanum, the Irises laced Primroses, Galanthus, Hosta seedlings, Tropaeolum Tuberosum, Helleborus Orientalis hybrids a few Paeonia species and three seedlings of Helleborus Lividus, a real beauty from Crete.

We have had a very wet and cold Winter, with hard frosts and one severe hail-storm-- this day gales have torn up trees in our street, cutting the power and causing much roof damage; still daffodil buds are shooting up--Crocus, Cyclamen Coum and Eranthus are flowering--- Spring is just around the corner.

Kind regards to All.

** Trevor has listed the 'McDonald', 'Alba' and 'Late Dark Blue' as I. 'Crista', I have put I. 'Cristata', as this is the only one I can find in the reference Books, but this may not be so. I know Trevor will confirm this for the July Newsletter. Editor. (Trevor's book 'Growing Perennials' containing much useful information and colour plates can be obtained from:-

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

Price Paper back 12.95 dollars; Hard cover 17.95 dollars.

Graeme Grosvenor's Book 'Growing Irises' can be obtained from:-

Neville Watkins, B.I.S. Publications Officer,

31, Larkfield Rd., FARNHAM, Surrey GU9 7DB.

also from the Kangaroo Press.)

Frances Love's Letter from New Zealand.

I would like to reply to a couple of queries in your Newsletter.

Firstly, the problem of spraying weeds; Here we obtain a smallish paint brush and paint or spray our offending weeds. Whenspraying it is sometimes necessary to invert a plant pot over the plant to be saved.

Secondly we, we have found that in parts of New Zealand where we do get very high Summer temperatures, watering is our greatest killer of Pacific Coast Irises. They do stand a tremendous amount of drought. Occasionally a light sprinkling to wash the leaves, but do not soak the soil, as the roots do not stand the sudden change from hot soil to cold water. Here we can usually have 6-8 weeks at temperatures over 90 degrees. I find P.C.I's do very well planted among the roots of deciduous trees. That keeps them from getting too wet in Winter, allows the sun to filter through and gives a cool canopy in the heat of Summer. They love the leafy compost. When the leaves fall I just tuck them around the plants. Some are 15 years old. Naturally, with hybrids, we get some weak plants which fade out. This must be expected. Hope this helps Trevor Nottle.

(Thanks Frances for your good advice. Ed.)

Paul Richardson's Letter from New Zealand.

Some Thoughts on Spuria Irises.

Generally speaking Spuria hybrids grow very well in this country. The smaller Species do less well, although a European form of I. Spuria has become naturalized in several parts of the country. I suspect that the main reason the smaller Spurias are not grown more successfully is lack of care.. Because New Zealand has a temperate climate with (usually) a more than adequate rainfall, plants just grow, and indeed, are expected to grow. Those that demand a little extra care, therefore tend to fall by the wayside. To be fair, established plants are seldom available from nurseries, so that most species are grown from seed, and thus are more than usually liable to fail if that necessary little bit of extra care is not given. Moreover, growing plants from seed takes time, a lot of time, especially if seed does not come true to the label. Under these circumstances it is not hard to appreciate that a number of years can go by with little results, unless one is prepared to study the plant's needs. From my own attempts and from seeing the results in other gardens. I think that the crucial factor is-- the management of watering in Summer. Losses will occur if plants 'dry out'.

I. Graminea is the one small Spuria that is really easy to grow. In most areas it will happily thrive in a sunny border, quickly gathering a 'lawn' of self-sown seedlings around it. I. Sintenisii seems to want a sunny position that does not 'dry out'. In most gardens it tends to be short lived. I. Kerneriana is usually grown from seed and provided the young seedlings do not 'dry out' in Summer it seems to be happy enough in the border. A few Spuria subspecies such as Maritima and Halophila are grown by a few of the keener Species Folk, and to the best of my knowledge, will grow well enough, if treated in the same manner as Kerneriana.

Incidentally, Jean Stevens in 'The Iris and its Culture' says, 'I. Kerneriana' was introduced into cultivation by the plant collector, Mr. E.K. Balls, from his expedition to Armenia in 1934-35. From seed sent out by Mr. Balls. I. Kerneriana first flowered in New Zealand in 1936'. The New Zealand Iris Society kept in touch with Mr. Balls, who had retired to the North of England, until his death in October 1984. He was well into his 90's and had kept active enough to plan a trip to Australia the previous month.

(Due to the shortage of space, Paul's letter, which I felt was rather important, was held over from the July N/L. to give it more space. Since then he has written to say he is being urged to register his Forrestii crosses. In 1984/85 he sent seeds for inclusion in our Seed Distribution, I bought some and I now have one of his beautiful crosses flowering, I love it, and like Paul says, I am taking great care of it. At the moment it is not as big as the photograph he sent for the Stand. However I have hopes it will show some improvement this year. Thank you Paul.

Now I have an apology to make to both to both Frances and Paul for an error in their Titles, they are the President and Treasurer of the New Zealand Iris Society respectively, unfortunately I moved them to Australia in the Members' List Feb. 1986, very sorry, I will not let it happen again, apologies all round. Ed.)

Spurias at FIESTA PHOENIX-87. Guest Iris Committee.

by Floyd Wickenkamp.

Spuria admirers who attend the National Convention in Phoenix next April will have the opportunity of seeing many of the newest cultivars in bloom in the tour gardens. These include the latest offerings of such hybridizers as Ben Hager, Eleanor McCown, Dave Niswonger, Gene Gaddle, Henry Rowlan, Marion Walker and Floyd Wickenkamp.

While the time of the Convention (April 14 to 18) may seem unduly early for Spurias, our experience, during the past several seasons, is that 'peak bloom' occurs about the 3rd. week of April, and this past year saw good Spuria blooms during the entire month of April.

Most of the Tour Gardens will have at least a few Spurias.. A number of them have fifty or more varieties. Floyd Wickenkamp's garden devotes more than half of the bed space to Spuria Guests, older varieties and Floyd's seedlings, some 200 clumps in all.

Ben Hager's Spurias will be much in evidence, since Ben sent a total of 49 rhizomes, including many of his new and, as yet, unnamed seedlings, as well as his recent introductions and registrations.

Among the Named Guests are:- (descriptions paraphrased from the A.I.S. Reg. Books,)

'AMBER RIPPLES' (Niswonger-81) Pale blue standards, amber falls with pale blue edges.

'ARIS ALIVE' (Niswonger-84) Lavender self, yellow signal.

(cont.)

- 'BLUE BUNTING'(Niswonger-84) Standards dark blue-purple, falls dk. yellow with bl.-pl. rim
 'BLUE LASSIE'(Niswonger-79) Blue with white infusion on falls, yellow signal.
 'BURNT TOAST'(McCown-86) Deep velvety brown self, orange signal.
 'CHOCOLATE DIP'(Hager-86) Deep velvety brown, rayed orange signal.
 'CINNAMON STICK'(Niswonger-83) Standards maroon brown, falls maroon heavily speckled gold.
 'CINNABAR RED'(Niswonger-80) Deep mahogany-red self; deep yellow signal.
 'COBALT MESA'(Wickenkamp-86) Dark violet-blue self, small gold signal.
 'DESTINATION'(Hager-84) Deep orange self.
 'DUSTY TRAILS'(Wickenkamp-84) Medium yellow blend, peppered with tiny brown dots.
 'EVENING DRESS'(Ghio-84) Blackish blue-purple, touch of yellow on style arms.
 'FIRST FRUITS'(Hager-84) orchid pink self, small yellow signal.
 'GILDED CHALICE'(Hager-80) Lemon-yellow self.
 'HEADWAY'(Hager-86) Large orange-yellow self.
 'HIGHLINE CORAL'(McCown-87) Ruffled lavender-pink shaded brown-yellow in throat.
 'IMPERIAL SUN'(McCown-84) Glowing sulphur-lemon to golden-orange in center of falls.
 'JANICE CHESNIK'(McCown-83) Heavily ruffled tawny-gold self
 'KAIDAB TRAIL'(Wickenkamp-85) Dark maroon with large signal of full yellow.
 'KITTE PEAK'(Wickenkamp-87) Standards medium blue-violet, falls deep blue-violet shading to chocolate-brown, bright yellow rayed signal.
 'LOVE FOR LEILA'(Wickenkamp-86) Deep violet self, small brown and gold signal.
 'MEGATREND'(Hager-86) Standards mid violet outside, inside white overveined in violet to solid border, falls mid-yellow bordered mid-violet.
 'MISSOURI STREAMS'(Niswonger-83) Light blue self, yellow signal.
 'MYSTIC MESA'(Wickenkamp-86) Standards cream with dark violet edging near base, falls cream shading to gold in center, lavender style arms.
 'MYSTIFIER'(Walker-Abrego-86) Ruffled lemon-yellow self, white style arms with yellow midribs.
 'NORTHERN MUSE'(Walker-Abrego-85) Rich blue violet self, small gold signal.
 'NOW THIS'(Hager-83) mauve-purple with brown influence, small veined yellow signal.
 'PERFECT SPRING'(Hager-85) Lavender standards, gold-bronze falls edged lavender yellow signal.
 'RUSSIAN BLUE'(Niswonger-83) Blue self, veined yellow signal.
 'RUSSIAN WHITE'(Niswonger-83) White self with small yellow signal.
 'SATINWOOD'(Niswonger-83) deep brown with orange infusion on falls.
 'SPICED TEA'(Niswonger-84) Light brown standards, bright yellow falls with light brown rim.
 'SUNSET ETCHING'(Gaddie-85) Veined bluish-levever, gold signal.
 'TERRA NOVA'(Walker-Abrego-85) Golden brown self, bright gold signal.
 'TIGER BLUES'(McCown-80) Blue-lavender self, brown veined yellow signal.
 'TRANSFIGURATION'(Hager-86) Deep velvety violet changing to medium blue-violet, signal brown changing to bronze.
 'VINTAGE YEAR'(Niswonger-80) Standards blue-purple, falls purple, yellow signal.

In addition to the introduced (or about to be introduced) cultivars listed above, there are among the 'Guests' numerous numbered seedlings.. Some of these look very promising and might well be noted during your garden visits...

(Thank you Floyd for giving us a preview of these cultivars, they sound very beautiful and, no doubt, will make 'FIESTA PHOENIX 1987' a resounding success, we wish you everything you wish yourself, good weather and a 'feast' of blooms.

Since writing this account, Floyd's I. Spuria 'Son of Suns' has been recommended as the most popular Iris. All the Best and Good Luck with it.)

If you want to know more about these Irises with such a variety of colours and delicate shading, the Spuria Iris Society of the American Iris Society have published a list--- we have a copy in the Library, but you can send for one yourself by writing to Floyd and sending a remittance to :-

Mr. Floyd Wickenkamp,
 10521, Bellarose Drive,
 SUN CITY. AZ. 85351 U.S.A.

The Spuria Irises--Introduction and Varietal Listing--1985 (Editor James J. Foreman.)

By Surface Mail anywhere--5 dollars post paid.

By Air to Europe-----7 dollars 75 cents post paid.

By Air to Aust. & N.Z.----8 dollars 50 cents post paid.

Five copies 28 dollars post paid.

A Comprehensive Survey of the Japanese Iris.

by Wray M. Bowden.

(Continuing Dr. Bowden's Thesis, which is reproduced by kind permission of the Editor of the 'Review' of the Society of Japanese Irises U.S.A.)

8. Growing the Hybrid Seedlings.

Several methods can be used for growing the hybrid seeds. I have used two methods. In the first method, the seeds were sown directly in the acidic soil of the Japanese Iris plot in the fall. The seeds overwintered there and germinated well the next May. Vogt (1983) recommended this method. I obtained better results with a second method. The hybrid seeds were stored in the fall in a refrigerator at about 44-48 deg. F. In early May of the following Spring, the seeds were planted in pots of commercial planting soil. Growth was slow at first, but by July, the seedlings in the pots had much wider leaves and the plants were thicker than the seedlings in the garden plot. Experience has taught me to use dilute solutions of ferrous sulphate in the pot soil, and I think that some peatmoss should also be used. I dilute the ferrous sulphate at the rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoon in each gallon of water. Each pot should be watered well with the solution to cure or prevent chlorosis. This second method eventually produced many vigorous hybrid plants. The new hybrid seedlings began to bloom the second year after germination. Most of my hybrid seedlings are from 12 lots of crossed seed sent to me by Dr. Hirao in the fall of 1979. I have selected the best clones for testing I am also testing a few clones from my own crosses:- 'Right White' X 'Werley Pink'; and 'Chiyodaja' X 'Galatea' and reciprocal. Beginning in July 1984, I plan a modest program of crosses and will specialize on some of the excellent blue colours, and possibly the pinks..

(Dr. Bowden's address is 32, Dinley Dve., SIMCOE, ONTARIO, CANADA. N3Y 4Z8. In July we will continue with this most interesting Thesis, about Plantbreeders and Nursery sources. Our sincere thanks to Dr. Bowden.)

Iris Species for Shallow Water.

by Eberhard Schuster.

The last part of Eberhard's interesting article:-

Iris Pseudacorus is called 'Yellow Water Flag'. The species is native to Europe, West Asia and North Africa, the plants have 2-3 cm. broad, sword-like foliage up to One metre and more high and large yellow flowers. Falls are lined brown, standards are small and upright. The rhizomes branch freely. They are rosy tinted with anthocyanin pigments. The following forms are available in culture and commercially:-

'Double' (Flore Pleno)- a double form, looks more curious than beautiful.

'Golden Gigantea'-introduced from Siberia, up to 2 metres or more high, deep yellow.

'Golden Queen' (syn. var. superba)- deep yellow without marking on falls.

'E.Turnipseed'- cream white.

'Alba' - pure white, much smaller in size, dwarf form.

'Claret Cup'-dark red violet.

'Kermisina'-deep purple.

'Rosea'-soft pale rose, smaller in size.

'Stella Main'- pale blue.

'Oliver Pease'- red purple.

'Mint Fresh'- white veined red.

'Mountain Brook'- light blue, blooming earlier.

'Vernal'- clear orchid pink.

'Version'-pink, dwarf growing.

'Wild Wine'- dark red.

I. Versicolor and its forms has generous branching, numerous buds and graceful flowers. Therefore, they are excellent garden plants. In recent years, ^{crosses} made by Dr. Tamberg (West Berlin), of I. Versicolor with I. Laevigata (Versi-Laev, hybrids) are available. They combine the best qualities of their parents, free-blooming, with larger flowers than I. Versicolor. A cross of I. Versicolor with I. Pseudacorus is available in England too. A form in about the same size as I. Pseudacorus with yellowish flowers lined blue. The flower form is more like I. Versicolor.

Iris 'Gerald Darby', surely a hybrid with I. Virginica, is a hardy variety for shallow water too, here in our German climate. It is a strong grower with elegant flower stems high above the top of the foliage. The case of the foliage and the flower stems are coloured purple; a decorative garden effect. The flowers are blue, they look like Iris Virginica.
(cont. over.)

All these Irises are absolutely hardy here and can stand in shallow water all year round. Other Species, e.g. I. Ensata, I. Virginica, I. Setosa and I. Chrysographes do not suffer if they stand in shallow water for a while. But, they are not true water Irises. There is a group of Irises too, for shallow water, which we should not forget. I mean the Louisianas :- I. Fulva, I. Nelsonii, I. Giganticaerulea, I. Brevicaulis and the many hybrids. They need special care in our German climate, but it is possible to grow them here with success. I. Brevicaulis is the only hardy species among them. All the Iris Species and Varieties for the Water Garden are the most important ones in my Collection...

Regional Report for East Anglia.

by Jack Venner.

About Iris Pseudacorus.

Iris Pseudacorus is widely known as the common yellow pond flag, often featured in pictures and paintings of rural scenes. It has been touched upon in many articles about Irises, and for most people that is about it! But, I feel there is a lot more to this virtually indestructable Iris than one might think.

Some years ago, at my former home in Bexley, I decided to give this Iris a try, and obtained the varietal form 'Golden Queen'. In very porous, sandy soil, over gravel, it did not grow particularly well, which is not surprising since, in the wild, the common form is usually found growing in shallow water. However, when I moved house to Essex, it romped away on the moist clay soil and gave masses of flowers over a long period. Later I acquired P. Bastardii, the variety with creamy flowers, this has grown well and flowered abundantly.

Three years ago, I neglected to collect the seed pods, the result was Pseudacorus seedlings up everywhere, even among the T.B.'s. I allowed most of them to reach the flowering stage, to see if any of them differed in any way from the parents. The Bastardii seedlings were, near enough, look-alikes, but 3 forms from 'Golden Queen' were interesting enough to save. One of them I labelled 'V form 1', it was a massive plant with leaves nearly 3" wide at the base. The flowers had narrower falls than 'Golden Queen', but they flared out, making them look larger. 'V form 2' had flowers similar to 'Golden Queen', but again with narrower semi-flaring falls. 'V form 3' produced many flowers on a shorter plant, this one lacked the boldness of the other two, but it was growing in less than ideal conditions, against a low brick wall, and may not have fulfilled its potential--I moved it last year, in early Autumn to a more favourable site. One thing I noticed about all three was that the small, red-brown, spear markings, so noticeable on the falls of 'Golden Queen', were either very faint or absent altogether. However, the flowers of each plant had a semi-circle of markings surrounding the hafts, resembling a necklace. On 'Golden Queen' these markings are absent, or so indistinct as to generally pass unnoticed. I have been very pleased with these three forms. In the last two years they have bloomed over a long period, but, caution, they need plenty of room in which to grow.

I am now growing other forms of I. Pseudacorus that are, not only, distinct, but may be useful in breeding. They are as follows:-

I. P. Mandschurica - grows 3-4ft., has narrow leaves, flowers seem deeper coloured, possibly some orange pigment, 'necklace' very pronounced-almost black.

I. P. Nigrastem - an unnamed variety sent to me by Ben Hager. It is in fact a typical yellow-flowered Pseudacorus, but with dark purple stems, I call it Nigrastem for convenience.

Dave Niswonger's Seedlings (selected)-said to have larger, superior flowers and to be much less vigorous than most forms. I can vouch for this description, mine flowered on a single fan, but, at present, no rhizome increase at all, whether this will be so, remains to be seen.

I. P. Variegata - is fairly well known. Grown for its bold and impressive foliage, rather than its ordinary yellow flowers. These leaves tend to turn completely green after flowering.

I have not seen any plants of P. 'Sulphur Queen', but those I have grown from seed, have flowered and proved to be disappointing. Cy Bartlett brought some seed back from New Zealand of cream coloured forms growing alongside their rivers, I do not know quite what to expect as they have not yet flowered.

Ben Hager has a miniature form about 30 ins. tall with abundant foliage (grassy). I do not have this. Another I would like to grow is Pseudacorus 'Alba'. Pictures I have seen, show most attractive, pure white flowers with broad flaring falls. Distribution seems to be very limited. Has any Member got this please??? (cont.)

No article on I.Pseudacorus would be complete without mention of the 68 Chromosome tetraploid forms raised in Germany. P.Beuron seems to be the best of them. Ray Jeffs gave me three plants, I find that they are vigorous without being rampant. The flowers have rather narrow falls, which flare almost horizontally, giving them the appearance of a greater size. Strangely the leaves seem narrower than most diploid forms.

Pseudacorus will hybridize with other Irises; 'Holden Clough' being the best known hybrid for 3 reasons:-(1) its strange yellow flowers, heavily striated with purple-brown. (2) its amazingly rampant growth. (3) not least, the ongoing controversy regarding the identity of the pollen parent. Hybrids from Pseudacorus (34 chrs.) with Ensata/Kaempfer (24 chrs.) are generally unsatisfactory. They are mostly pale lemon, the shape shows some of the Japanese influence, but the Pseudacorus seems to dominate. The foliage is extremely chlorotic in spring to mid-summer, later turning from white to green. I have one of the best known 'Kimboshi', about 2 ft. high, flowers in late July, it is really nothing more than a curiosity.

If I have omitted commenting on other forms, it is because I do not know them, or an older form, sadly lost to cultivation. I read that out of a large planting of Pseudacorus seeds, a few seedlings had produced an exceptional amount of red-brown colouring on the falls. If correct, they must have borne some resemblance to T.B.Variegatas. I must confess that I have not seen any, and I know of no-one who has; However, perhaps you have if so, perhaps you will let our Hon. Secretary know please.

It is a pity that this Iris in its forms and varieties is, to a large extent, neglected. The soil requirements, certainly do not hamper its growth, heavy, sandy, rather acid, all except chalk, but always plenty of moisture. The colour range is, perhaps rather limited, but it is pest and disease free, and produces large quantities of seed. There can be little doubt, that in the hands of the hybridiser with plenty of space, great patience and careful selection, many improved forms of varying heights could be produced for growing in the garden and also the show bench. Why not 'have a go'...

Regional Report for the South.

by Adrian Whittaker.

Those of you who grow Spurias in the U.K. will, doubtless have experienced the adverse effects on flowering during two years, with generally less sun and warmth than we have had previously. I have noted, in my own garden, some of the Species are more reliable, in terms of satisfactory flowering, than their offsprings. I am thinking in particular of I.Orientalis. It would, I think, be useful information for Members of our Group, if others growing Spurias in North West Europe and similar climates, could write in with their own experiences of particularly good performers, so that good 'stock' plants could be identified and recorded for the future.

Generally, most Spurias, once established, grow well here and survive the Winters with no problems, but a primary aim should be the cultivation of plants which also give a good floral return for care bestowed. It is worth saying again that better garden results must accrue from Spurias bred particularly to suit this climate, rather than random selections.

If one looks at the climates of the areas where Spurias are native, there is little to suggest that they should be expected to do particularly well in N.W.Europe, so we must breed and select from the best candidates available. To do this-- factual information is of the greatest importance..

Thinking about Spurias in the garden, ants are a common problem. My own impression is that some plants are chosen by the ants in preference to others. They appear to be attracted by the nectar, but other factors may be at work. Perhaps others have made more detailed observations which they may like to write in and share with us...

Regional Report for London.

by Anne Blanco White.

Anne is concerned in case Members are confused by the use of the terms I.Kaempferi and I.Ensata in her last Report. I.Kaempferi is now a synonym of I.Ensata and, although we are likely to use I.Kaempferi to refer to the more splendiferous hybrids, this usage is incorrect. (I am afraid I have been guilty in the past Anne, sorry).

SPURIA TRIALS. Members of this Group should note that these trials are continuing at Wisley and will be replanted again in four years time. We shall then need MORE VARIETIES to plant out. That means we would like to see more plants at the J.I.C. in the intervening years.

As to the qualifications of the plants themselves, this must depend to some extent (cont.)

on the breeding. The smaller Spurias do tend to have fewer flowers than the big ones, so probably three flowers to a spike for them, but certainly four for the taller forms. We will be interested in anything the size of 'SHelford Giant', but it is a bit of a joke in the average garden. Do take advantage of the open seedling classes in shows, where possible, to get your plants discussed by the Judges. Try to avoid petals so overlapping that the flower looks more like an overblown *Ensata*, and make sure that they do overtop their leaves.

And, I nearly forgot, if anyone can let me have a piece of *I. Spuria* 'Wadi Zemzem' I'd be grateful. Perhaps they would get in touch with me.

In the July 1986 N/L. Anne mentioned the development of a strain of Japanese Irises in Germany called 'CARE', calcium resistant, as Currier has now confirmed in the 'Review' of the Society for Japanese Irises. He agrees with Anne, that they should be tried again, and also supplies the name of the grower as the late Max Steiger. In the 1960's Currier had a number of these plants, both in New York and Maine, unfortunately they were gradually lost, but he would like to hear from Members of the S.S. & J. whose soil conditions are alkaline, and are interested in trying an experiment, he will gladly provide seeds.

Regional Report for the West Midlands.

by Philip Allery.

Mr. John Taylor of Moreton-in-Marsh. All West Midland Members will feel a deep sense of loss at John's passing. A well-loved and respected Member of our Group and a past Chairman, he was an international figure in the Iris world, so I leave it to others, better qualified to prepare his obituary. I particularly shall always remember his kindly encouragement to a newcomer.

Mr. Brett Tussler of Moulton. News of Brett, who was the B.I.S. Hon. Treas. and who also died on the same day Dec. 8th. came as a great shock to many of us, who, although we were not in close contact with him, remember his very successful organising of the Moulton Shows, and like our Editor has said, I too remember the superb display of seedlings and plants grown from seed, offered in the seed list, he created in 1986, an encouragement to us, that such excellent results are possible.

Registrations- 1986 Year Book-Corrections:-

I would like to take this opportunity to correct my error in the registration of 'Aldridge Parasol' a Japanese Iris. To describe the standards as 'pinnate' is inaccurate and misleading. My apologies to all concerned. Philip Allery.

Hybrid Sibirica Varieties for the Beginner.

This article was promised in a recent newsletter. Although such recommendations are influenced by personal choice, I have taken the prudent course of consulting Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt, the Group's 'Siberian Specialist' and Harry Foster, another leading grower in the West Midlands.

The Varieties recommended are:-

C. White - v. 'Anniversary'; c. Yellow - v. 'Dreaming Yellow'; c. Lavender - v. 'Lavender Light'; c. Pale Blue - v. 'Soft Blue'; c. Turquoise blue - v. 'Cambridge'; c. Mid blue - 'Silver Edge'; c. Dark medium blue - v. 'Orville Fay'; c. Red - v. 'Helen Astor' and c. Reddish purple - v. 'Ruffled Velvet'. Many of these varieties, or suitable alternatives, should be available for purchase under the B.I.S. Plant Scheme this year.

When planting Siberian Irises a carefully selected and well-prepared site, taking account of their growing needs should result in a rewarding display of these elegant and graceful hybrids. Really I cannot do better than recommend the beginner to read Dr. Currier's 'Siberian Irises'. This excellent publication covers most aspects of Siberian Iris culture, with added reference to sources for further study.

(Philip has just taken over as Secretary of the Remontant Group, if you are interested please write to him, his address is 199, Walsall Rd. ALDRIDGE. Nr. WALSALL WS9 0BE. Best wishes in your new appointment Philip. Ed.)

Composts and Manures.

I have promised comments on this subject, but an interim report only is sent at this stage. My own limited experience of the special requirements of Iris seed germination suggests that whether soil-less composts are described as 'General', 'Multi-purpose' or 'Improved', there is usually some benefit from the addition of $\frac{1}{3}$ by volume of a mix of horticultural sharp sand and fine crushed horticultural quartzite in equal parts. This is not an original idea and does not apply to the same extent to John Innes soil-based composts. However, I am now adding $\frac{1}{3}$ by volume, of horticultural sharp sand to J.I. composts and will report the results. Whatever compost or other medium is used (cont.)

it must be sterile. Both the reduction of moisture-retaining capacity and the disturbance of the trace element balance, must be taken into account when modifying composts.

Many Members of this Group have far more experience than I have, and probably germinate seed on a much more extensive scale. Surely it is possible to establish standards for composts to be used for the germination of seeds of Iris Species and their hybrids in which Members of the Group have a particular interest. The characteristic size and shape of these seeds differ. To what extent is there a difference in their germination medium requirements? Comments please!!!

The Group Library

Copies of the following American Books and Publications are obtainable from the Hon. Librarian:- Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt, 'Haygarth', Cleeton St. Mary, CLEOBURY MORTIMER KIDDERMINSTER Worcs. DY14 0QU.

Siberian Irises by Currier McEwen.

The Spuria Irises--Introduction and Varietal Listing-1985. Editor James.J.Forman.

Newsletters of the Spuria Iris Society.

Reviews 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.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st. DECEMBER 1986.

12.2.86 Newsletter and Postage	56.93	Subscriptions	56.25
Covers	5	(commuted Subs.)	25
Leaflets	3.10	Donations	3.16
Receipt Book	3	Interest	4.43
Expenses (photographs		Seeds	12.30
materials etc)	19.15	Plants	31
Postage(including pcls.)		Lit. & N/L sold	4.35
and Stationary	15.35	Coffee Morning	
R.H.S.Room (R.H.S.Show)	6	profit	28.50
18.7.86 Newsletter and Postage	50.14	Moulton Show	
Postage (inc. pcls.)		profit	60.14
and Stationary	16	Stock:-	
		Newsletters	10.70
		Covers	4.20
	174.67	B.I.S. Lit.	2.40
surplus	44.26	Leaflets	1.50
commuted Subs.	25		
	<u>£ 243 93</u>		<u>£ 243.93</u>

Accumulated Fund	£ 56.81	Interest	£ 3.94
surplus	44.26	Cash in Bank	72.84
commuted Subs	25	Interest	49
		Cash in Res.A/C.	30
		Newsletters	10.70
		Covers, Leaflets	
		& Literature	8.10

£ 126.07

£ 126.07

Total Cash in Bank & A/c. £107.27.

Signed.. Jack Venner Chairman.

Treasurer's Report. In thanking everyone who has helped to make this balance look healthy, I must still ask you to pay your Subs. as promptly as possible please. Profits are soon swallowed up by rising prices. You have the satisfaction of knowing that your

(cont.)

efforts in sending seeds and now plants, when we get started, have enabled us to keep the Subscription at the £1 level for another year. I would point out in the Account that the figures of seeds, plants and literature sold, do not include those of sales at Shows etc. these are in the overall profit.

Back Numbers of the Newsletters:-

Copies of Alex Back's Original Newsletters (now an Historical Document).. We still have some available. Price 20p per copy plus 13p. Postage.

Newsletters:- July 1981.. February 1982 and February 1983. Price 30p. plus 13p

Newsletters:- February 1985.. February 1986 Price 40p. plus 13p.

Member's Letters.

Marlene Ahlburg wrote at Christmas, rather sadly, I thought, that the reason she cannot grow Spurias and Japanese Irises is because they are on an end-moraine of yellow sand and pebble, more than 4 ins. deep. Even Bearded Irises are not happy on this. Siberians, which Marlene grows from seed, will grow, but they have to be watered quite heavily. However, help is at hand; her son's garden is pure peat, so they should grow for him. Knowing our English climate to be milder and wetter than her area in Germany, no doubt we will understand her difficulties. On the credit side, however, Lilies, Pulsatillas, Alliums even Hellebores like the dry Summer conditions. Hybridising her Siberians, from her own breeding line is Marlene's main preoccupation... One day she will find that one magical one.. every hybridisers dream. (Best of luck from us all. Ed.)

Carolee Clay wrote last year that she was moving to a small farm, and was in the process of transplanting about 1000 Irises. She was very impressed with Den Hagers 'Edith Wolford' at last years convention. Yellow ruffled stands and dark, lilac-lavender falls, very ruffled. It was the smash-hit of the Show, and won the Presidents Cup. The runners up were 'Chico Maid' (Luhn), and 'Fragrant Lilac' (Hager). The 'Cook Cup' was won by 'Dusky Challenger' (Schreiner), runners up were 'Colortart' (Inerest) and 'Sea Wolf' (Aiken). Now I have not heard from Carolee since this July letter, I am wondering if she has gone down under that load of Irises ... I hope not... come in Carolee, wherever you are, let us know your news (Ed.)

Helen Grier is not too well, we hope she will soon be feeling better. She writes that she is continuing her hybridizing program of her Spurias. She has one half-acceptable clone from 'Pink Candles', which she hopes will improve. It is alongside 'La Senda' both 1960 introductions, by Ferguson, still most distinctive in their color : class (La Senda-rosy lavender pink with light yellow on falls and 'Pink Candles' pale orange (salmon), falls violet blend giving a gray cast.). A more rounded type is 'Betty Cooper' (McCown), light violet, lightly streaked pale yellow, falls light violet border with strong orange center, heavily veined brownish purple, ruffled, slight fragrance, also 'Barbara's Kiss' (McCown), violet lightly streaked pale yellow, falls strong violet bordering orange-yellow signal, veined brownish purple, ruffled..

(This account of Helen's Spurias in her garden is so interesting, that I am going to continue it in July, so that I can give it more space. They sound lovely and I only wish we could see more growing in this country, don't you ??)

With the aim of Finding out more about Sibirica, Spuria and Japanese Irises... their requirements and how well they grow around the World, We would appreciate it, if you could take time out, to let us know how it is with you, how do they grow in your 'neck of the woods', and any comments you like to make, tips etc.

We will pose a few questions in each Newsletter and then gather it all together and give you the benefit of the results.

- (1) Do you grow Siberian Irises..... Yes.. No.. If you do, please say if you have any of the newest diploids and tetraploids.....
- (2) Do you grow Spuria Irises..... Yes... No.. If you do please say if you have any of the newest hybrids.....
- (3) Do you grow Japanese Irises..... Yes... No... If you do, please say if you have any of the newest hybrids.....

(more in July,)

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.....
.....
Name and Address......
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I.Spuria-- 'Harvest Shadows' (vs). 'Golden Lady' (vs). 'Violet Bloomfield' (s). 'White and
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As a trial this is planned on a 2 tier system:-

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(2) There will also be a 'Plant Exchange'-- if you see one in the N/L and have an equivalent one to 'exchange', then this can be done, with a Postage adjustment either way.

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We hope that when you make a request for inclusion in the Newsletter, you will send a small donation to cover costs (stamps will be accepted).

At the moment we have a small number of the following:-

I.Sibirica 'Nottingham Lace'..... 85p. each plus postage.

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(large plants)

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