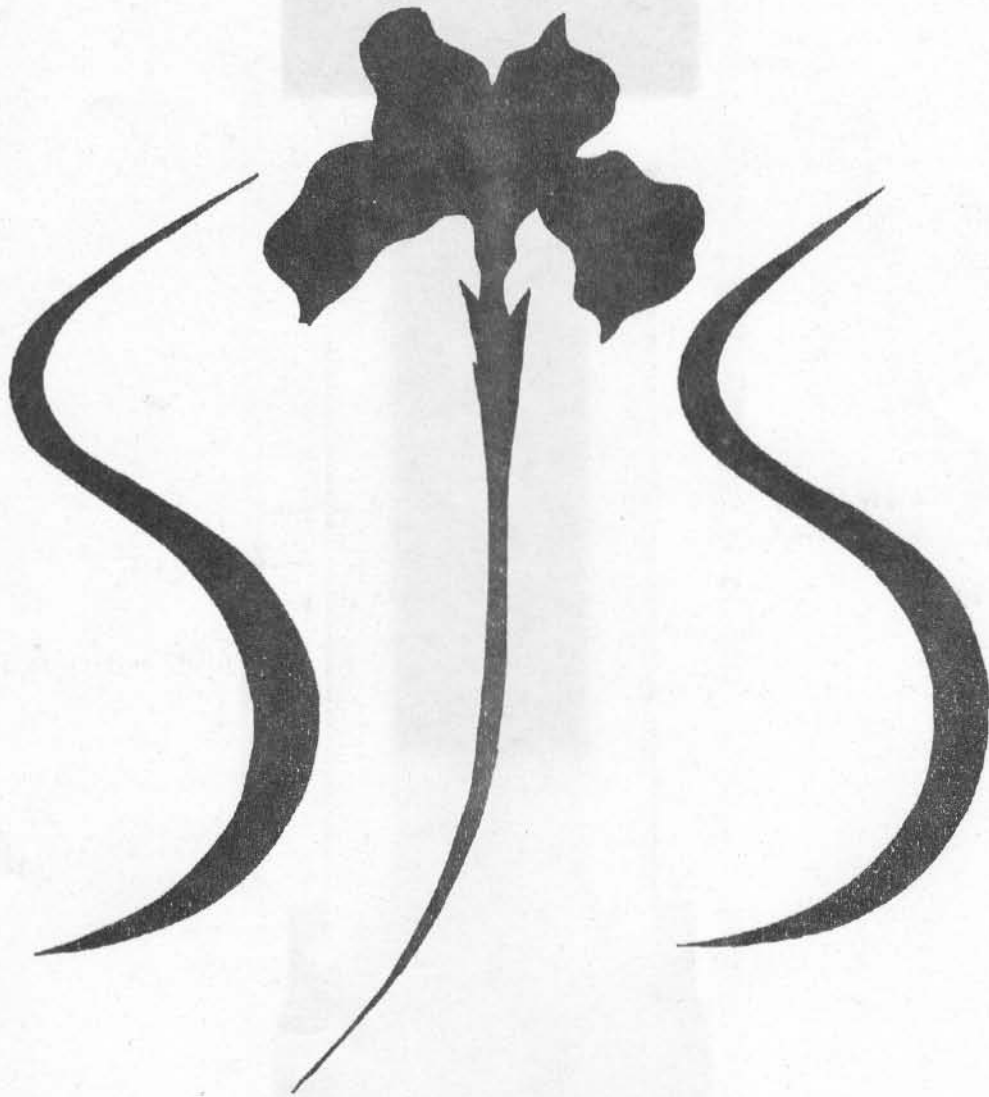


NEWSLETTER



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

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

Newsletter No. 24 February 1989.

The Objects of the Group.

1. Communications 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 help with problems.
4. To report on Hybridisation.

The Group's Officers.

Chairman	Mr Jack Venner, 'Raven's Croft', St. Osyth Rd, Little Clacton, Essex CO16 9NY.
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Regional Representatives.

Eastern Area.....	Mr Jack Venner, address as above.
London Area.....	Mrs Anne Blanco White, address as above.
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Southern Area.....	Mr Ian Smith, 35 Abbey Rd, West Moors, Dorset BH22 OAX.
West Midland Area.....	Mr Philip Allery, 199 Walsall Rd, Aldridge, Nr. Walsall, Staffs. WS9 OBE.

Mr Jack Venner is also our Show Reporter.

We value the assistance given by our Regional Representatives, sending in Reports on Shows in their Area, also any interesting questions they have had from Members in their area. We hope our Specialist will continue to give our Members the benefit of their experience. Thank you all.

Due to increased costs, postage etc., the subscription will be increased to £1.50 as from 1st. July 1989.

Newsletters are published in February and July, remember this is your Newsletter, so write in if you have a query, comment or just to say your Irises are growing well, we will do our best to help in any way.

EDITORIAL. Our Hon. Secretary/Treasurer and Hon. Newsletter Editor, Joan Trevithick, has asked me to produce this issue of the S.S & J Newsletter for her. For many years Joan has produced the Newsletter, it has always given encouragement to the newcomer, stimulated the more experienced and, above all, knitted the membership together into a very active Group. Currently, Joan is undergoing a course of medical treatment which occasioned her request for help. That is what friends are for.

This issue will be as near as I can make it to what Joan wanted but, you know, Joan is an hard act to follow. In the meantime our best wishes go to Joan for an early and complete recovery.

Problems rarely come singly for our Chairman too has been ill. Our best wishes to you also, Jack, for a quick return to health.

Most people I know who joined the BIS did so after contact with growers of bearded irises, mainly TB's, however "the other irises" have recently attracted many new admirers who join to make the future of the Siberians, the Spurias and the Japanese Irises more exciting and available to a greater numbers of gardeners. This sort of activity is highlighted by the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens on whose Collections List we see both Spurias (Stephen Anderton) and Sibiricas (Jennifer Hewitt) represented. In the U.S.A., following the example by the NCCPG, in an article in SIGNA Bulletin they are asking members to start Collections, not necessarily of whole groups of varieties but of smaller and perhaps more manageable numbers. The futures of the many irises will thus be more assured.

We welcome into our Group several new members; Mr J R Carpenter of London, Mr & Mrs J P Freeborn of St. Andrews, Mrs Ramsdale of Colyton, Devon, Dr S P Ruffles of the West Midlands, Mr V F Richardson from Cumbria and Mrs Vicki Wong from British Columbia, Canada. We will be glad to hear from you, your hopes and your needs. We will try to help; it's up to you.

A happy and successful year to all our members in 1989.

Ray Wilson.

Chairman's Letter.

Dear Member,

The new Year has started rather badly for the Group, owing to the illness of Joan Trevithick, our Hon. Secretary. Joan had to undergo major surgery last year and is now on a course of unpleasant post-operative treatments that has made it impossible for her to carry out the Group's work at present. During the interim, Ray Wilson, who is already heavily committed with work for the BIS and

other Groups, has manfully taken on the temporary task of producing this abridged Newsletter.

Joan represents the focal point of the Group's activities and for over 10 years has done a splendid job as Hon. Secretary and Hon. Treasurer; no one could be more dedicated. I'm sure you will join with me in wishing her a complete and speedy recovery. Meanwhile we shall do our best to see that the S.S & J goes on.

We hope that members will continue to send letters and articles to Joan as usual. I'm sure this would be helpful to her and be appreciated.

Good wishes for the coming iris season.

Jack Venner.

AN IRIS ON THE SHORE.

Peter Maynard.

Those of you who expect to find the Secretary of the BIS living surrounded by rolling acres filled with irises of every kind are due for a disappointment. When Jean and I left our family home in Harrow six years ago we did spend some time searching for a property set in a large plot which combined all our requirements, but it eventually became clear to us that we were by now irredeemably suburban characters and so it is that we have settled in a quiet example of suburbia by the sea in West Sussex. The total plot size is about 180' x 45' and into this, in addition to a house and a garage, we have squeezed two glasshouses a workshop cum potting shed, several frames for propagation and for plants with special needs, a rock bed a raised bed for the more challenging alpines and now a pondis under construction. The whole is set in a series of beds for herbaceous plants and the lawn gets smaller every year.

The soil here is a light sandy loam which remains workable for most days of the year but does tend to dry out quickly and after a warm spell in late spring or early summer any of the shallow rooted plants require watering. The South Downs rise up about two miles inland from us beginning at Highdown the garden of the late Sir Frederick Stern and some examples of his early TB irises are still growing there together with many of the rare plants and trees described by him in his book about Highdown, "The Chalk Garden". The chalk strata is too far down below ground level to affect our soil which is close to neutrality although small pieces of chalk detritus do turn up whenever the lower levels are disturbed.

Our biggest problem here, without doubt, is the wind and more dangerous still to plant life is the salt spray which the south-westerlies bring. We are living only a few hundred level yards from the Channel and about twice a year at the equinoctial tides the gale force winds blow in. On a bad day the salt concentration may be high enough to defoliate susceptible plants while others may show signs of damage months later. We have attempted to reduce the wind

velocity by erecting several large vertical trellis panels which do not cause the dangerous down-win eddies which are characteristic of more solid barriers like walls and fences. These trellis also give us an extra dimension of garden spaces to accomodate some of the more unusual climbing plants and also produce dappled shade in the summer, an environmental feature which is much missed here since the hurricane of October 1986 swept away many of the small deciduous trees in surrounding gardens.

Despite the proximity of the sea shore and the moderating effect of the large body of water, the temperature can get very low here with an easterly wind blowing from which we get little protection; in the terrible winter of 1985/86 we often recorded night-time temperatures of -15°C . However, in general it is distinctly warmer here in the winter than in central Sussex and we do get a generous allowance of winter sunshine. The rainfall tends to be rather Mediterranean in pattern, it falls in plenty from late Autumn to early Spring after then the clouds tend to scud across the sky to precipitate further inland and we often feel the need to water in late April.

With all these reservations, however, we do manage to grow lots of irises both species and the hybrids together with many examples of iridaceous plants like crocus, romuleas and other bulbous species. The tall bearded hybrids are difficult to grow well as the flower stems are rocked by the wind and the large flowers easily torn although we do struggle to maintain some of our all time favourites like Stepping Out. The I.B.'s and S.D.B.'s however, grow vigourously producing masses of flower early in the season, the siberians and spurias likewise are happy here, forming large clumps within three years and require division soon after if they are to flourish.

What, you have to go already? We haven't talked about the plants yet, well perhaps you will call another day!

Of course, we look forward to hearing more about your garden and the irises, in our next issue! RW.

IN MEMORY.

Mrs Marjorie Brummitt. We were very sorry to hear of the death of Mrs Marjorie Brummitt whose obituary appeared in the 1988 BIS Year Book. Her work with the Siberian and Californian Irises is a fitting tribute to the memory of a great irisarian.

Dr S Hirao. Dr Shuichi Hirao, of Zushi, Kanagawa, Japan, President of the Japanese Iris Society, died suddenly from a heart attack in Kyoto, Japan, on 8th. June 1988. Dr Hirao was internationally recognised as the leading contemporary hybridiser of Japanese irises, and in the preceding year the British Iris Society had paid him its highest honour by awarding him the Foster Memorial Plaque. This personal award is only made to those who by their achievements and assiduous efforts make

a major contribution to the advance of the genus Iris.

We who are involved in the growing and development of Japanese irises in the Western world have much for which to thank Dr Hirao. Not only was he an authority on their history and culture, but his practical help in the gifts of plants and/or seeds gave immeasurable encouragement to all concerned, and a reliable base from which to undertake further hybridising ventures. Despite the many demands on his time, whether as plant breeder, interpreter, or translator, Dr Hirao was always ready to advise and encourage the enthusiast beginner, and I shall treasure the few letters I have received from him.

Dr Hirao was the author of at least two books on Japanese irises; the volume "The Japanese Iris" published in 1970, which he co-edited with Motojiro Kuribayashi, being his most important work. This beautifully bound and illustrated book will remain a lasting testament to his work, and will continue to be a most invaluable book of reference in the libraries of the professional and the enthusiast grower alike.

The American Society for Japanese Irises published a Memorial to Dr Hirao in its Fall 1988 edition of the "Review", and I am indebted to both Dr Currier McEwen and to the Society for the details of Dr Hirao's untimely death. His many hybrid cultivars will long serve to remind us all of a very friendly and talented horticulturist.

P.E.R.

LIME RESISTANT IRIS KAEMPFERI.

Max Steiger.

(Contd. from the July 1988 S.S.&J. Newsletter).

Next summer I bought a very large quantity of seeds, and in 1954 sowing was done by the end of September, once more, as in the previous year, in boxes which I had myself made from orange-boxes.

Since it seemed impossible to grow such a large number of plants indoors, the boxes were placed outside. The late autumn had been unusually warm, and when, at the beginning of December, I happened to visit the garden, which was about ten miles distant, I was surprised to find the boxes covered with an iris turf at least two inches high. Practically every single grain of seed had germinated, and the seedlings showed admirable growth. Thousands and thousands again! Glad as I was to find such a splendid result, I was taken aback by the thought of what I was to do with such a bounty if dire frost should set in. The boxes had therefore to be taken into our home, where we placed them in as cool a position as possible. Nevertheless, growing did not cease, and since the seedlings were far too crowded in the boxes, disease set in. I was forced to transplant, and in no time every half-lighted spot in our living rooms had its complement of Iris kaempferi, merrily growing and growing! Two large tables crammed with further hurriedly-finished planting-out boxes were placed by the windows, and living

in the rooms became hopeless. In spite of all my care thousands of plants were doomed, but I was able to plant out some ten thousand into the open ground in the following spring. All I had was a sandy soil, relatively dry, permeable, and poor in nutritious matter. Thus all I could do was to plant *I. kaempferi* directly by the side of the Tall Bearded irises. Nevertheless, I was relatively successful, the summer being moist and the lime apparently having been largely washed out in the permeable humus-lacking sand. It is true that a great number of plants perished, but thousands had grown strong, although they never reached full flowering size in consequence of their under-nourishment.

(To be continued)

Floyd Wickenkamp writes. December 13th. 1988, We have been having lovely weather here the past two weeks with daytime temperatures running in the seventies. However, there's always a catch, temperature inversions this time of the year cause high pollution levels. At times it gets so bad it becomes really bothersome. Fortunately Sun City is far enough from the centre of town to be somewhat better as regards pollution than Phoenix itself. It is very bad at my mother's place. I keep trying to get her to move out here with me but she doesn't want to leave all her friends. At 96.8 years she doesn't want to have to make a whole new bunch of them. She lives down there with my youngest brother, and they spend about every other weekend with me.

(And now we hear that the cold weather is coming down from Alaska, If I was 96.8 years I would want to keep close to home for a bit!) RW.

THE HYBRIDS OF IRIS LAEVIGATA AND THEIR CULTIVATION. Akira Horinaka.

I am writing a book on *Iris laevigata* part of which will be translated into English. It should be finished in about a years time.

I. laevigata is the true water-loving iris and although the Japanese Irises are more popular some iris lovers find it most attractive.

Cultivation In general, *I. laevigata* is planted in the lake-side in a few inches of water. I, myself, made a pool into which I put some pots and buckets about 25cm diameter (10 inches diam.) in which I plant the iris. Hence, it is not difficult for people with a small garden to grow these plants; it will even grow in a pot or bucket on the ground, if there is about three cms. of water on the rhizome. Japanese irises usually need a somewhat smaller pot, about 18 cm diameter (say 7 inches). So we can all grow these beautiful flowers even in a small space.

I. laevigata and its hybrids I have made crosses between *I. versicolor* and *I. laevigata* easily. Crosses between Siberian irises and *I. laevigata* usually produced seeds with a poor endosperm; only one sound embryo was found which I propagated by means of embryo culture. Also, I hybridised *I. setosa* with *I. laevigata* and managed to obtain a few seedlings; their flowers were similar to *I. setosa* var.

hondoensis, unfortunately I lost them. I propose to try to cross I. laevigata with the Louisiana irises later.

(Clearly this is a very difficult area of research and we await with interest Mr Horinako's future reports on hybridising I. laevigata involving these wide crosses). RW.

From Eberhard Schuster. We had a good bloom with all my irises this year, except for the Louisianas; Red Echo was the only one which came into bloom. But, I have seen a lot of LA this spring; many, many varieties. I got the permit to leave East Germany for a visit to the States. I had a wonderful time there. I started my trip in Texas and travelled around from Dallas south to Houston. After a week in Texas I joined the AIS Convention in Oklahoma City. I made two slide shows for the Louisiana Group and Siberian Group. After the Convention I stayed some days in Kansas, Illinois. My flight back was from Chicago. I met many new friends and I have seen a lot. I will never forget this time.

I plan to come to England soon. Have got the exit permit already and hope to get the entry permit from your Embassy in East Berlin next week. I plan to come with my friend from West Germany with his car. We start in Rotterdam, then to Hull by ferry. The first two days we will be in Harrogate where I will give a slide show to the Northern Horticultural Society. On Oct 21 we will travel to Cleobury Mortimer where we will stay with the Hewitt family. then for the last two nights we will stay in London, travelling home from Shearnes via Vlissingen. It is a short stay in your country and sorry there will be no time to meet you in Radcliffe-on-Trent. My friend has his own nursery too and there will be no time to stay longer. I hope we can meet next time.

(This letter was written on Oct 8 and the report follows his successful visit to England when he attended the Convention in Harrogate on Aquatic Plants). RW.

From Mrs Vicki Wong. Hello from British Columbia, Canada! I hope the '89 growing season goes well for you. I am looking forward with great enthusiasm to the new season. I will be putting in two new beds of Japanese irises (approx.) 20 plants and 10 new varieties of Siberians. I have 22 clumps of various Siberians in my garden now and last year I put in my first 5 Japanese irises and my first two spurias. My climate may be a little too wet for spurias but I give all irises a try at least once. I also grow 33 various TB's and will be adding 20 more this summer. I am experimenting with Louisiana Irises also. I put in 5 last fall and this year I will be putting in 3 test beds. Louisianas are not supposed to do well in my area (lack of high summer temperature) but I am determined to get some to bloom for me! I live in a relatively isolated part of British Columbia. Most people in my town grow only the familiar TB irises or the one available unnamed siberian at our nursery. It is for this reason that I seek and join the various iris societies (the Canadian Iris Society; The American Iris Society; The British Iris Society; the Louisiana Iris Society; The Society

for Japanese Irises; and the Society for Siberian Irises) Through these societies I have found many new sources for purchasing irises and most important, friendly people who have sent me much information about growing irises. (as a beginner I need it).

I do hope you will accept me as a member and if you do, I will try my best to make some contribution to the Group.

(Vicki, you are most welcome. Your enthusiasm and willingness to try things out makes you almost an old member already. We look forward to accounts of your progress) RW.

RATHER SURPRISING

Anne Blanco White

This short trip into the history of the cultivars of *I. ensata* in England is really Currier McEwen's fault: in the Autumn he wrote to me, in connection with his new book, about a couple of Japanese irises listed in the *Flore de Serres et des Jardins de l'Europe* of 1888. They were 'Edward George Henderson' 1874 and 'Sir Stafford Northcote' 1880. Currier wanted any further and better particulars I could find and some additional information about the firm of Barr & Sons. So I betook myself to the Lindley Library where Dr Elliott and his assistants patiently dealt with my ignorance of the proper sources to consult.

I started with such of the earliest of Barr's catalogues as are held in the Lindley. They begin with 1900 and, amongst other herbaceous plants, offered 'selections from a very fine Japanese collection':

Five varieties in distinct colours 1/- - 1/6 or 10/6 - 15/- doz.

Extra fine sorts 2/- - 2/6 or 21/- - 27/- doz.

Mixed varieties from above 6d or 6/- doz.

Fine imported clumps including all the finest varieties as received from Japan

9d or 8/- doz.

In 1902 they stated 'we do not name our varieties of Japanese Iris, but our collection consists of the finest forms named in Japan. Numerous testimonials have been received as to the excellence of the strain'. Well, one can sympathise with their reluctance to translate Japanese names and their probable feeling that their English purchasers wouldn't remember them in any case. At all events this went on until 1913 when the entry for irises in the general catalogue was duplicated in a separate iris catalogue and even the Japanese Irises were given individual names as well as carrying the usual innominate mixtures.

This practice continued into 1922 and I didn't follow the catalogues any further.

However, there was no trace of Currier's candidates. At the same time, I had recourse to a B.I.S. Year Book index which did list them and, since my own collection is incomplete, our own library supplied some additional information.

(Incidentally, the 1931 Year Book contains a list of all award winning irises in this country up to that date). 'Edward George Henderson' had an F.C.C. in 1874

while 'Sir Stafford Northcote' got one in 1879. I found that interesting, but it didn't give the names of the raisers.

The Lindley provided an index of awards listed in the R.H.S. Journals and that did surprise me: the R.H.S. clearly had an attack of dishing out awards to these plants in the 1870s and '80s which must have reflected a sudden interest in them and which faded out as suddenly. The range of raisers was very small: Barr, Bull, Gordon, Henderson, Macleay Veitch and Ware. And 13 out of the total of 28 cultivars were raised by Veitch. Veitch? They still have a reputation for having been enthusiastic introducers of plants though I think we mainly associate them now with trees and shrubs. They did have a nursery in Chelsea at the relevant time. At all events, Veitch were responsible for 'Sir Stafford Northcote' while 'Edward George Henderson' was raised by Henderson.

Incidentally, all the awards had been F.C.C.s and the last were made in 1889. There was then a lapse, during which the catalogues had simply lumped the cultivars, until Wallace's 'Morning Mists' and 'Mikado' were given mere A.M.s in 1913 and 1914 respectively.

Naturally, Currier wanted more information about the raisers. Veitch and Barr were easy because they are fairly well documented, but not in as much detail as one would expect. The others were trickier.

The likeliest Gordon of a large selection was George, 1841 - 1914. He was one of the first recipients of the V.M.H. in 1897, was editor of the Gardener's Magazine, president of various horticultural societies, wrote books on various plants and was a member of the Scientific and Floral Committee of the R.H.S. as well as a supporter of horticultural charities. Not irises specifically but with such a wide range of interests quite likely to have had them around as novelties and to have bred them.

Then Macleay is probably Sir George, 1809 - 91. He had been out in Australia and went on an expedition with Sturt in 1829. He retired to England in 1859, living in Surrey and became an F.L.S. in 1860.

Those two seem to me to be probables. Thomas Softly Ware, 1824 - 1901, is almost certain. He was a nurseryman at Tottenham, Middlesex, around 1857, and was noted 'for being able to name plants' which I take to mean that he had the sort of botanist's memory which can identify a plant's genus and supply its proper name to desperate owners.

Bull is likely to be William, 1828 - 1902, with a nursery in the Kings Road, Chelsea, close to the Veitch one. He, too, specialised 'in new and rare plants' but particularly in orchids. He became an F.L.S. in 1866 and was also given the V.M.H. in the same year as George Gordon.

It really seems likely that all these people knew each other and took up these new and spectacular flowers at the same time and that their enthusiasm

waned as age overtook them. A new generation of breeders probably account for the re-emergence of awards in the second decade of the following century.

Pesel and Spender suggest that the loss of interest in these plants was due to the motor car replacing the horse and its byproducts. If so, then the upsurge in riding and driving horses should encourage their return. Myself, I wonder - could it have been the loss of gardeners for various reasons which meant that the garden owners had to do all the dirty work themselves? Nowadays we just get down to it. All the same, there is a stud not far from us in Sussex. I don't know precisely what it breeds, but any time I drive past there there are a number of reconditioned Land Rovers lined up for sale alongside a magnificent, steaming dung heap. Makes me wonder. (Anne, do you think it has anything to producing prtocin from oil? It might be difficult to get the fibre though!) RW.

REPORT FROM THE SOUTH. It is getting near the end of 1988 as I sit writing this report (and still suffering from an over-indulgence of Christmas Fayre). Trying to recollect highlights from the past year is not an easy task as the weather pattern produced quite an uneventful iris season for me. Nothing failed altogether but nothing did very well either. About a fortnight ago some of my sibiricas started showing the tips of their new shoots and as if to give me a seasonal gift, two sibiricas seeds poked their little shoots into daylight on Christmas Day. The very mild weather so far has obviously started things off a bit earlier than usual so let's hope it's a good omen for a bumper 1989. Good Health and a Happy New Year to you all. Ian Smith.

REPORT FROM THE WEST MIDLANDS. Members of the West Midlands share my concern on hearing of the recent illness of our Chairman, Mr Jack Venner, and of our Editor/Secretary/Treasurer, Mrs Joan Trevithick. We wish you both a speedy recovery to good health.

The continuing unreasonably mild weather since the sharp frosts of late October 1988, is now a matter of concern. Spring growth in Japanese and Siberian irises, as well as Spurias, is already well advanced and it is possible that this growth could be seriously damaged in the event of extreme frosts during February. Protection of young growth is still advisable, but it would seem prudent to maintain a watchful eye under the frost cover. Choose a sunny, dry day and ensure that the cover is not harbouring pests ready to attack the new shoots as they emerge. During the past week I have found small slugs and thrips attacking the Japanese irise, and the aphid infestation in a heated greenhouse reached a dangerously high level this month before being brought under control. Prompt action now may prevent too many losses later.

Experiments with commercial composts are continuing and I hope to be able to comment further in the next Newsletter. Certainly the use of dried cow manure granules as a surface dressing/mulch for Japanese irises, recommended by the late Dr Hirao, is proving successful, particularly for pot grown specimen plants. There are some disadvantages: my dog considers the granules a delicacy, whether as an appetizer or after-dinner treat it matters not; the blackbirds love to scavenge under the mulch, scattering the granules, making a protective collar a necessity; the smell when the granules are watered and then later disturbed leaves one in no doubt at all of their origin; and their commercial cost at local nurseries is relatively high. For all that my first impression is that their use substantially improves plant vigour and depth of colour in the bloom of pot grown plants. This hypothesis will be further tested during the next two growing seasons.

I have yet to use cow manure granules as a soil conditioner because I have insufficient information on the risk of fermentation and rot. In its place I am using composted farmyard manure or spent mushroom compost, with added minerals and trace elements. Experiments involving all three materials will be undertaken and commented upon.

With others, I have been invited to comment on the question of judging Japanese irises. My view is that members of the appropriate B.I.S. Committee will shortly have available to them all that is necessary if they wish to prepare guide lines for judging these beautiful irises, in which there is growing interest.

In 1984 the New Zealand Iris Society published "Know your Irises", which provides excellent guidelines for Assessing, Judging, and Showing irises and seedlings. Some years ago the American Iris Society published a new Handbook for Judges and Show Officials. Then the Spring 1988 Edition (Volume 25, Number 1) of the Review of the American Society for Japanese Irises contained some informative comments on the A.I.S. Handbook, and a personal opinion on judging Japanese irises by its experienced editor, Mr Ieland M Welsh. All these documents are available for study and discussion. To all that we can confidently add the eagerly awaited publication of Dr Currier McEwen's book on Japanese irises, With such material at hand it should be possible to produce simple guidelines, helpful to both judges and competitors alike.

If the B.I.S. would like the Group to prepare these guide lines on its behalf, then I suggest a small working party under the direction of our Chairman, who has considerable experience of growing Japanese irises. Several senior B.I.S. members have similar experience in this field, so the formation of a small Working Party should not prove difficult. The greater part of this work could be undertaken by postal "robin", and reported on in the February 1990 Newsletter, with an interim report in the Autumn 1989 issue.

With best wishes for a successful iris season.

Philip E Allery.

Report from the North West. Growing plants is a chastening experience. You think you know it all, it seems to be working perfectly, then you discover that you didn't know it all and it isn't working perfectly. So you learn; you don't start at the beginning again but just a little bit beyond - and you get big-headed all over again. And, so it goes on until, as experience gained painfully is applied gratefully, we grow plants better and they, in turn, respond. It has been something like this for about 8 years now with bearded irises until I now accept that in this climate the problems to be overcome are such that the returns do not warrant the effort to grow TB's etc., and expect to get show blooms at the right time in the Spring and rebloom later in the year. I will still keep some, you never let go completely, but I do know what I am likely to get; yes, a chastening experience again!

However, there have been many consolations along the way. I discovered many new plants (new to me that is) among the irises and perhaps, more importantly, I discovered many new friends. The Siberians, Spurias and J.I's do so much better here than the majority of the bearded, and the Pacificas are superb. As the bearded go so space is generated into which the new plants will go. But, of course, I can never have enough for all the plants and so my scheme involves encouraging friendly nurserymen to grow them, then we all gain. As these new, often only new to us, are seen and appreciated so more people will want to grow them. Somewhere along the line I am in for another chastening experience! Even so, 1989 is going to be exciting.

Ray Wilson.

Adrian Whittaker writes. At last time to write! Firstly we both hope you are making progress and are comfortable. Remember, Joan, you have a lot of friends on your side thinking about you.

I've been backwards and forwards all year and have seen little of the iris other than some of the TB's in May and a couple of the late Spurias in early August. By all accounts they were really good this last year and the seed set on the sibiricas supports this.

Unfortunately, by the time I came from my last trip in the year it had been scattered before it could be collected. I did, however, cross some of the remontan TB's in May and did eventually recover three pods from what should be worthwhile crosses.

It is interesting that I am finding crosses from known remontants do appear to germinate better than, and way ahead of, others which are not known remontan, at least with the method I use. It is fairly simple but with me works better than anything else for TB's and Sibs, but doesn't offer any obvious advantages for Spurias. If you're interested; I soak the fully ripened seed for about 2 weeks in water at room temperature, changing the water as often as I remember. After which the seed is placed in damp vermiculite in plastic bags and put in the fridge for about 3-4 weeks, then bring back to room temperature again.

Some seeds start to germinate almost immediately. It's then a bit of

a fight to keep them going at the same rate, as I haven't got a heated greenhouse, and the house can get like Kew unless you're careful! At the moment I have 20 or so I Do X Actress potted up and about an inch high from a start in early December which quite pleases me. I'm quite keen on good orange TB's and have been using 'Glendale' as a possible parent for a year or two. Although it produces full pods germination is either non-existent or very poor at best, so I may have to try other combinations this year on.

It's the old story isn't it - the most promising are usually the most difficult. I think overall I prefer the red and orange TB's to blue shades but I'm fully aware that I've chosen to try a difficult colour group, at best.

My other quick project spread over a fortnights lunchtimes when I was back briefly in October was to organise a scree bed out of a bit of tatty derelict ground alongside the main building at work. They wouldn't allow me enough money to do the job properly but I but I did get a good, well drained rubble base put in, topped off with path gravel. Pockets of peat mix well with an alpine in each completed all I had time for then. About $\frac{1}{3}$ haven't survived (the rabbits ate some of these) but the rest, mainly saxifrages and sedums, look quite at home. The big surprise was that all the auriculas failed (species). I'm quite interested in the older cultivars in the primula family and have also grown some ordinary auriculas from seed. These have proved so tough so the failure of this planting was most unexpected. The H. orientalis seedlings which you sent me a yaer or two back are grown into well established plants now and are a real show at present - full of flower. I think they are a really valuable garden plant for this time of year and really most trouble free once settled in.

With regard to the year ahead, I expect to be more or less free at least on a regular basis, from spells abroad after the middle of the year. With regard to my involvement as a Group officer I would prefer to leave things as they are now, just in case the work load does not reduce as I expect, in the hope that I can still find enough time to justify me carrying on as Spuria Rep., at least.

It's so frustrating, not being able to do the things you want - but work has got to take preference, unfortunately.

(With regard to your procedure for seed germination, I soak for 1-2 days then keep in damp 'perlite' for 4 weeks at 70°F, then peel (I often peel before putting in perlite). Spurias usually require two soakings due to the nature of the seed coating and the pithy covering on the seed. Chilling for 4 weeks followed by keeping at 70°F usually starts the germination quite quickly). RW.

TREASURERS REPORT. Joan is unable to provide a detailed report in time for this issue of the Newsletter. She gave me the following information representing the current position.

Balance in the bank (inc. £2.84 interest)	£95.93	
Reserve account (inc. £1.60 interest)	£43.54	Total £139.47.

NEW NURSERYMAN MEMBER. Norman Payne of 84 Whatley Avenue, Merton Park, London SW20 9NU, a member of the Group and the B.I.S. will be issuing a Plant List soon. He is a very keen Koi Carp keeper and grows and wants to sell Japanese irises which goes, he says with everything Japanese for enthusiasts of these most elegant fish. He expects to have about 20 or more Japanese irises on his list and would hope to start shipping in September of this year.

If you are interested why not give him a ring on 01 435 2700.

LIST OF MEMBERS

British Isles.

Mr P Allery, 199 Walsall Rd, Aldridge, Nr Walsall WS9 OBE.
Mr J Ashford, 'Edenvale', Sandown Farm Lane, Nairn, Scotland.
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***Please see that your address is correct, where necessary please notify of the
code number.

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Seed Distribution List

Contact Mr D Trevithick.

All seeds are charged 25p per packet.

LAEVIGATAE.

- I. laevigata bluish violet with stippling (s)
- I. " Snowdrift (s)
- I. " semperflorens & Monstrosa mixed (p)
- I. pseudacorus Bastardii (p)
- I. " Golden Queen (p)
- I. " (p)
- I. " alba (s)
- I. " E Turnipseed (m)
- I. " plain yellow no signals
- I. " variegatus (m)
- I. " cream forms (m)
- I. versicolor mixed (m)
- I. " white (s)
- I. " Rosea (vs)
- I. " Rougette (p)
- I. " Cat Mosam (p)

TRIPETALAE

- I. setosa (m)
- I. " Hondoensis (vs)
- I. " Pallas (m)
- I. " Savill Garden form (s)

SIBIRICAE

- I. sibirica mixed (m)
- I. " delavayi (vs)
- I. tetraploids.
 - Regency Belle & Blue Reverie X Unknown (vvs)
 - Silver Edge X bee (vs)
 - Fourfold White X bee (vs)
 - Blue Pennant X bee (vs)
 - Violet Joy X Unknown (vvs)
- I. diploids
 - Baby Sister X bee (vvs)
 - Blue Forty X bee (vvs)
 - Lavender Bounty X bee (vs)

SIBIRICAE (contd.)

- I. sibirica Outset (vs)
- I. " Orville Fay (m)
- I. " Perry's Blue (vs)
- I. " Polly Dodge (vs)
- I. " Fourfold White (vs)
- I. " Wiessemprincess (vs)
- I. chrysographes (vs)
- I. " X I. chrysofors (p)
- I. wilsonii hybrid (m)

SPURIAE

- I. orientalis Mirzacitronella (vs)
- I. kerneriana (vs)
- I. spuria mixed (p)
- I. Tiger Blue (s)
- I. Bold Horizons (s)
- I. carthaliniae (s)
- I. Protoge (vs)
- I. EveningDress (vs)
- I. Clarke Cosgrove (vs)
- I. Media Luz (vs)
- I. Cobaltthesa (vs)
- I. Imperial Bronze X Archie Owen (vs)
- I. mixed hybrids (vs)
- I. musulmanica (vs)

Seeds are in short supply, so alternatives please. (vs) - very short supply, (s) - short supply, (m) - medium supply, (p) - plenty.

Please send your requests for seed to:-

Mr D Trevithick, 86a Grantham Rd,
Radcliffe-on-Trent, Nottingham NG12 2HY.

Further seeds are likely to become available at a later date and an up-dated list will be in the next Newsletter.

Final Notes. I have just been able to keep within my allotted space, Phew! Please don't forget to send in your contributions for the next issue to Joan. She will be looking forward to hearing from you.

Best Wishes for 1989,

Ray Wilson.