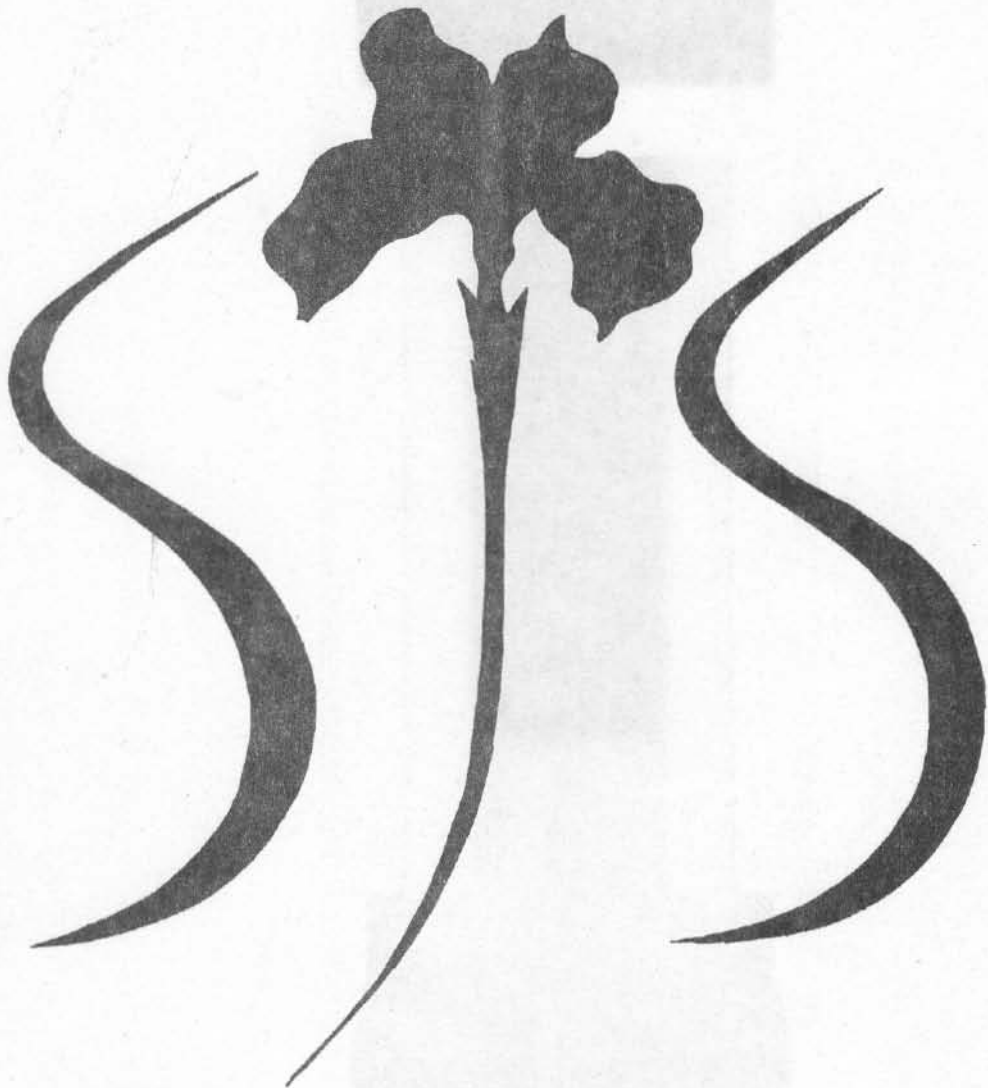


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NEWSLETTER



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

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 help with problems.
4. To report on Hybridisation.

The Group's Officers.

Chairman..... Mr. Adrian Whittaker, 'Chestnuts', Hilden Way, LITTLETON.
(Spuria Specialist). WINCHESTER. Hants. SO2 26QH.
Vice Chairman..... Mrs. Hilda Goodwin, Corner Cottage, School Lane,
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Hon. Newsletter Editor... Mrs. Joan Trevithick, 86a, Grantham Rd. RADCLIFFE-on-TRENT.
NOTTINGHAM. NG12 2HY.
Hon. Secretary/Treasurer. Mrs. Joan Trevithick. address as above.
Hon. Seed Distribution
Officer..... Mr. David Trevithick, 86a, Grantham Rd. RADCLIFFE-on-TRENT.
NOTTINGHAM. NG12 2HY.
Hon. Librarian..... Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt, 'Haygarth', CLEETON St. MARY,
(Siberian Specialist). CLEOBURY MORTIMER, KIDDERMINSTER. DY14 0QU.
Japanese Specialist..... Mrs. Anne Blanco White, 72, South Hill Park, LONDON. NW3 2SN.
Pacific Coast Specialist. Mr. Ray Wilson, 'Daleshead', 100, Blackburn Rd. CHORLEY
Lancs. PR6 8TJ.

Regional Representatives.

Eastern Area..... Mrs. Shirley Ryder, 'Toadshole Cottage', Old Rd. FEERING.
COLCHESTER. Essex CO5 9RN.
London Area..... Mrs. Anne Blanco White, 72, South Hill Park, LONDON. NW3 2SN.
North Western Area..... Mr. Ray Wilson, 'Daleshead', 100, Blackburn Rd. CHORLEY.
Lancs. PR6 8TJ.
Southern Area..... Mr. Ian Smith, 35, Abbey Rd. WESTMOORS. Dorset. BH22 OAX.
South Western Area..... Mrs. Mary Ramsdale, 'Winkfield', Swan Mill Rd. COLYFORD.
COLYTON. Devon. EX13 6QJ.
West Midland Area..... Mr. Philip Allery, 199, Walsall Rd. ALDRIDGE. Nr. WALSALL.
Staffs. WS9 OBE.

I would point out to you that our Group has now been extended to include the
PACIFIC COAST IRISES. many Members will be pleased to see this, there is more in the
Editorial.

SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE £1.50p. per year (1st. July to 30th June). There is a detailed
account under Treasurer's Report. Please, when paying, make cheques out to:-
S.S & J. Group B.I.S.

Due to the generosity of Members we are able to start the Plant Sale scheme again,
see at the end of the N/L, together with the Seed Distribution List.

We welcome any information about your garden, write and tell us, problems you have,
successes, and also if any plants have outgrown their position and you have to part
them, send them in, we will refund the postage. Let us hope that the weather will be
more like the old days, so that the Irises will not suffer. Good gardening.

Editorial.

Kind heart are the garden,
 Kind thoughts are the roots,
 Kind words are the blossoms,
 Kind deeds are the fruits.

As we enter the 1990's it is with great sadness that I have to tell you of the death of Jack Venner, our Chairman since 1984. He did not recover from the stroke which occurred as the July 1989 Newsletter was issued. We sent flowers and a message of sincere sympathy to Peggy his widow, on your behalf. Jack, who was a veteran Irisarian brought his knowledge, wisdom and caring to our Group, making a natural transition from Bearded Irises to Siberians, Spurias, Ensatas, Pseudacorus and others with great enthusiasm. We owe a debt of gratitude for his help and experience in the formation of the Constitution, which was accepted by the Committee unanimously. He gave generously to Members, of his time, plants and seeds, and many have written in to say. To have worked with him was a privilege, he will be very much missed.

Now we have a new Chairman... Adrian Whittaker's days of travelling abroad in his profession are finished, and he has agreed to take over. He knew Jack and admired his work. In welcoming him we will now be turning towards Spuria Irises, because Adrian grows and hybridises them. I well remember the glorious bronze cultivars he brought to our Stand in 1982 (Iris Show), there is no doubt they helped us to win the Bronze Medal we were awarded. He will still carry on as Spuria Specialist, also he has taken up Jack's work with Pseudacorus.

We are extending the S.S & J. Group to include Pacific Coast Irises (Covers will be altered when stocks run out). Ray Wilson has been co-opted on to the Committee and will be the Pacific Coast Iris Specialist, Ray's joy in growing them will soon make these Irises more popular, the colours are really lovely, and they are quite easy to grow. He will still continue as the North Western Representative. Jennifer Hewitt says it is something that was first thought about by Alex Back at the very first meeting, (unfortunately I was in hospital).

Shirley Ryder has agreed to fill the vacancy of Representative for the Eastern Area, and Mary Ramsdale will be the Rep. for the South West, a new Area. Many thanks to you both, we look forward to hearing from you.

We extend a warm welcome to 7 new Members, Mrs. Maureen Gladwin of Bingham, Notts runs a small nursery of Hardy Plants and Shrubs. Mr. Joseph Beattie of Carlisle, who in retirement is studying languages as well as gardening. Mrs. Pauline Brown as many will know is Hugh Humphrey's daughter and is carrying on his nursery at Westcott, Dorking, Surrey. Mr. Edwin Furnival the new Membership Secty. of the B.I.S. has joined, he lives in that stronghold of Rugby Football, Castleton, Lancs. Overseas, Mr. Robert Bauer, Secty. of the Soc. for Japanese Irises. and Mr. John Coble, Slides/Librarian of the same, they both live in Michigan, U.S.A. Finally John and Roger Merryweather of Southwell, Notts. whose family nursery has been established for 150 years. You will find more about the Nurserymen and Women in our new Report called 'Around the Nurseries'. If you have a nursery, write in and let us know, which Irises you grow, and how they have farèd during this last very hot summer. I am very pleased to see that more nurserymen and seedsmen are giving directions on how to grow, where they grow best and anything that makes the effort of growing either plants or from seed easier, do you agree???

New Zealand is celebrating its 150th. Birthday, we send all good wishes for a happy year, especially to our two Members Frances Love (President of the N.Z. Iris Socy) and Paul Richardson (Treasurer). What a delight it was to see Auckland in the Cmn'wealth Games Marathon, so lovely and green, compared to our Winter drabness, but then you have a beautiful country. I do have a few crocuses out and my lovely Viburnum Bodnantense has a mass of pink flowers, but that is all.

Our Vice Chairman, Hilda Goodwin has moved to Suffolk, leaving behind her beloved garden in Essex. She tells me the garden is not so big, and it is flat, with lawns and a patio, but if I know Hilda there will soon be a few Irises around. We wish both Don and Hilda every success in their new home.

There is some rather important news in the Treasurer's Report, which will be of interest to our Overseas Members, we are, however in a sound position, thanks to Members continued support and generosity.

Finally in wishing you a Happy New Year, I would like to give a personal thanks for all your kind messages, I am feeling a lot better, not quite firing on all cylinders, but engine running fairly smoothly, providing the road is good..

Joan Trevithick.

Chairman's Letter.

Dear Members,

Many of you will already know of the untimely passing of our Chairman Jack Venner. Having been asked to take over, I do so with some trepidation, and a sense of real personal loss.

Although I had only met Jack a few times, we did correspond regularly, and during that time I came to value both his friendship and his profound knowledge of the Iris, balanced viewpoint and acute eye. To have had all these talents, on tap, does mean that the Group has lost a most able, kindly and experienced Chairman.

I know that our sense of loss will be echoed beyond the bounds of the Group, the British Iris Society and among his many friends. Our thoughts are with Peggy in her loss.

Though my main interest is in the Spurias, I would like to see more up to date, quality Iris of all types, particularly the water loving varieties, being grown in gardens.

We still have to beat, what I call 'the plain yellow flag' image as the sum total of what the Iris has to offer to the average gardener..... With this thought in mind and knowing that Jack had developed an increasing interest in I.pseudacorus during the last few years, I am endeavouring to keep his work alive.

There are now in existence quite a number of specific and notable variants of the type such as 'Golden Queen', 'Bastardii' and ~~some others~~, which should be preserved. Identification and location of these, before any are lost, is an important task. Additionally, worthy hybrids of I.pseudacorus X I. ensata(kaempferi) have been raised in Japan. In Germany, Eckard Berlin is working with colchicine and producing tetraploids such as 'Beuron', a pale medium yellow, with large flowers, 'Ilengold', medium golden yellow and 'Fahle Ilge', pale greenish-grey yellow, pale markings and large flowers.

So many times in horticultural history have significant variants and and hybrids of many plants been lost forever, and a particular assembly of genes in one individual, or a mutation, can be unique and virtually impossible to repeat, even with the exciting developments in genetic engineering. At the present time, the best insurance would be to locate notable plants and attempt to preserve these to use as reference plants and as sources of genetic material.

I am not personally in favour of any attempt to 'improve' the form of I.pseudacorus, since, when well grown, it is a most elegant plant, and I believe we have a unique chance to allow it to survive in an untampered form. However, a stock of well defined variants and hybrids would assist in the breeding of a wider range of colours and markings in the flowers also stable height ranges. This would almost certainly lead to a race of tough elegant garden hybrids, ideal for a marshy or bog area of the garden. It is my hope that many more will be grown to secure a bright permanent future for this most worthy Iris.

May I end this first letter by wishing everyone a happy, healthy and prosperous 1990 and that you all have a successful Iris growing year.

Adrian Whittaker.

'My Irises'

'But---they don't last very long, and anyway, they take up too much room'

by Mary Fraser.

The last twelve months must surely be on record as one of the strangest periods of time for the dedicated gardener.

My Iris year started in October 1988, when on the 5th, my unpredictable and infuriating Cretan Iris unguicularis produced the first of approximately thirty blooms during the next five months. The mild winter tempted I. ung. 'Mary Barnard' to send up a fountain of rich colour; she too was reluctant to go back to bed. Most of the reticulata Irises were over a full fortnight before the Show in London, though for a very brief space of time they played happily among the early crocus.

The Pacific Coast hybrids also bloomed early, and the yellow forms flowered more profusely than the blue varieties, with the exception of 'Blue Ballerina' who danced madly for four weeks, and 'Lavender Royal'-- a rather large clump anyway, whose flowers seemed more blue than ever and visitors were staking their claims to 'a bit' when the time came.

Among the Spuria Species, Kerneriana flowered for the first time, fragile and dainty; Sintenisii, covered with bloom, looked from a distance, like a cushion of deep blue

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gentians. I.Ochroleuca flowered, but, I think would have liked more to drink, as the lack of rain was getting rather worrying by then. Another enormous blue and white Iris opened and it certainly was not the Halophila it purported to be, when I planted the seed from years ago. Probably the nicest surprise was Spuria Musilmanica which in this, its fourth year, produced three lovely flowers of the palest blue, netted delicately with dark gray and a little yellow.

Among other treasures which flowered were Iris fulva (two blooms), brevicaulis (one startling blue and white flower). Irises forrestii, chrysographes (black and dark red forms) the last, somewhat sparsely, and the lovely little Iris lactea.

But this year, for me, the Siberians were splendid and I do hope they have not flowered themselves to death. Some, acquired the year before, grew fast and several of them produced one or two flowers. Among these were 'Peg Edwards', 'Lady of Quality' (very well named), 'Chartreuse Bounty', 'Butter and Sugar' and the entirely beautiful 'Four Fold Lavender'.

In the greenhouse, Juno Irises nicolai, vicaria, cycloglossa and caucasica bloomed. P.C.I. minzii, I. hoogiana 'Bronze Beauty' and Oncocyclus paradoxa fascinated me. If I include the small and large Bearded Irises, I must have had some kind or kinds of Iris out in every month of the year, except late July and August and even then seedlings planted early in the year, were doing their best to show themselves, including some white unguicularis seeds given to me at the Cannington Convention two years ago. (F.Love).

So you see, I can never understand the resistance to growing these lovely flowers for the reason often given:-

'They don't last very long and anyway, they take up so much room'
(Thank you Mary, I am sure we will all be following your example, Mary is the Secretary of the B.I.S. Species Group.)

Seaways Gardens Update - 1989.

Currier McEwen.

Maine, U.S.A.

Some time has passed since my last article about activities at Seaways Gardens, but this is reasonable as our goals and efforts remain about the same. Among the Siberians we continue to make some progress toward better yellows, pinks and reds but have not introduced new ones. 'Lucky Lilac' remains our best lavender-pink introduction. One of its sisters is somewhat pinker and distinctly more ruffled and round. I expect it will be introduced, but it has been a slow increaser. Among the yellows, we have several that are handsomer and more richly yellow than 'Butter and Sugar', but none hold their color as well for the full four days of bloom. Each year there are wine red flowers showing improvement. This year we saved ten new seedlings from different crosses, all going back to 'Hubbard', one or more of these is a potential future introduction.

Among our white ones I find new seedlings each year that I love, but when compared with 'Harpwell Happiness', 'Ivory Cream' and 'Marshmallow Frosting' I have to ask myself whether they are better, enough to warrant introduction.. Certainly one (T.83/9) will be introduced because it is different - more open in form with frilled edges, ten days earlier than any other white that we have, and it repeats. Probably it will make its bow in 1991.

Perhaps greater progress has appeared among the blues. For several years 'Blue Reverie' has remained our best light blue but we now have three that I like Better and surely at least one is a future one to offer. These are, like 'Dear Delight', closer to true blue, but are tetraploids and taller, larger and with lovely round form. In the medium blue range there are also several I admire, particularly T884/104(1) which is the most impressive Siberian that Shirley Pope and I have seen. We just must wait to build stock, for Shirley cannot safely list a new introduction until she has a minimum of thirty of 'selling size'.

I have been pleased this year with the repeaters. Our only Siberian introduction in 1990 will be a repeater, 'Tiffany Lass', named in memory of Elaine Silverberg whose hobby was working with Tiffany glass. It is a round, rich blue-purple with a lovely blending of brown tones at the proximal half of the falls. Of new ones, I am especially pleased with two (from 'Blue Encore' x 'Harpwell Happiness' in the medium range and two that are extremely dark, one almost reddish black.

Our efforts with the miniatures continue, but slowly. One, a sister of 'Baby Sister', gives promise of being one that will keep its low height of 7" to 9". All others tend, after three or four years to grow about six inches taller and must be dug and replanted to return them to another few years of their 'normal' low height.

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As for our work with the 40 - chromosome group of Siberians (subseries Chrysographes) I have continued my efforts with colchicine. Each year some nice seedlings result but I have yet to achieve a polyploid. I will keep on trying and have hundreds of seeds in the refrigerator just now, awaiting treatment in March.

Turning to the Japanese, the big excitement is the work and anticipation for next year's Japanese Iris Convention to be held in Maine, July 12, 13, and 14. How we hope that some of our S. S. & J. friends can come. I have a bed of Payne Award winners in chronological order, and Mototeru Kamo brought me in 1987, sixty cultivars of Japanese breeders which he selected for me as ones I should have for my gene pool. I have several hundred of other American breeders and, of course, a thousand or more of my own seedlings. It has been a labor of love to try to have everything in the best shape for July 1990. Four other Maine gardens will be on Tour. Kamo will be our principal speaker, there will be a judging class, and the festivities will end with a real Maine clam and lobster bake on our lawn. All we need now is good weather!

Shirley and I are introducing two new Japanese irises in 1990 both diploids with 6 falls. The special feature of one, 'Southern Son' (named after a son-in-law) is its color, the closest to true medium blue that we have seen. The other, 'Exuberant Chantey' (named for an exuberant grandson whose hobbies are sailing, rain or shine, and singing), this also is a lovely darker blue that has two branches and 5-6 buds and repeats exuberantly.

I have more comments to add to this already long article.... The first is the decision of the Society for Siberian Irises to start its own separate conventions, like those now held by the Society for Japanese Irises. The latter was an obvious need because the A.I.S. conventions are timed for the tall bearded, a month too early for Japanese Irises to be in bloom. Because the Siberians bloom only a bit later than the TB's they have been sent to tour gardens for A.I.S. conventions but only rarely with success. Usually the convention finds them only in bud; and also, the tour gardens almost exception are those of TB. enthusiasts who know and care little about other types. As an example, Harry Foster had sent a number of his introductions for the A.I.S. convention in Memphis this year, but they were not growing well and none even showed a bud. The happy ending, for me is that Harry had them send those cultivars - plus a Japanese Iris from Philip Allery - to me, after the convention and they will be seen by the many who visit Seaways each year. The first of the Siberian Conventions is scheduled for 1993. Robert Hollingworth, of 124, Sherwood Road East, WILLIAMSTON, MI. 48895, is the person to write to for information.

Turning again to the Japanese Irises, I have been happy to send some this fall for a display at Wisley. Long ago -- it must be 25 years or so --- I asked if Wisley would like some of my Siberian Irises, not for official trial, but merely as a display. That offer was accepted, and I have been pleased to see that, in more recent years Siberians are increasingly accepted for official trial. A few years ago, at the last Cannington gathering, I wondered if Wisley might care to have some plants for a Japanese Iris display. This summer a letter from Peter Maynard said that they were ready with a bed to receive some. Unfortunately, the timing was poor for me, because it was too late to dig plants without setting them back for next year's bloom, and, of course I want them at their best for our 1990 convention. The best I could do was to send some plants of older (but very good) Payne and Marx introduced a few of other breeders including several of mine. Next year, after the Convention is over, I will, if Wisley wishes, send some of my own named diploids and tetraploids and some of the outstanding Japanese 'imports' given to me by Mototeru Kamo.

Also on the subject of Japanese Irises let me record several trends in terminology in the United States. The first is the use of JI's instead of Japs. as an abbreviation. The reason is that during World War II the term Jap. acquired a rather derogatory connotation here. The second is the use of the descriptive terms 3 falls and 6 falls instead of 3 and 6 petals. The reason is that both botanically and in common usage petals is incorrect. This is explained in more detail in two articles by John Coble and me in the fall 1989 issue of The Review and also in the book on Japanese irises I have written (with much help) for the Society for Japanese Irises.

(I sincerely hope we have not been guilty of calling Japanese irises Japs. nor of calling 'falls' 'petals', although some seed were sent in as six petalled, this will be corrected...)

Currier's Book is due out this February, he has had a busy Christmas reading proof and preparing an index. You will find more details and where to send at the end, but there is one more item.

Of my former introductions I was pleased and proud to have 'Blueberry Rimmed' receive

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the 1989 Payne Award and to have 'Japanese Pinwheel' selected as the best liked cultivar in the 'tōmōs'gardens at the 1989 Japanese irises Convention held in Virginia and as leading in the Japanese iris popularity pole.

Further to the paragraph on 'Southern Son' and 'Exuberent Chantey', we also are re-introducing a lovely pink cultivar which was introduced as 'Pink Triumph' by the Marx Nursery in 1956. Apparently Marx lost it and used the same name for a substitute. In 1976 I discovered that the original one is a tetraploid (probably chimera). The remarkable thing is that this appears to have occurred 'spontaneously' in nature. For that reason and to correct the confusion of two different cultivars with the same name, Kay Nelson, A.I.S. Registrar, has encouraged me to re-introduce it as 'Pink Mystery'. The interesting story is discussed in detail in the Spring 1990 issue of the 'Review'. (Currier's Book 'The Japanese Iris' can be obtained by writing to:-

UNIVERSITY PRESS of NEW ENGLAND.

17½, Lebanon St., HANOVER, N.H. 03755. 29.95 dollars plus 2 dollars postage.
0.25 dollars for each additional copy.

Currier a former Dean of Medicine at New York University, has written over 100 articles on irises. He is the first person to introduce tetraploid cultivars, he ranks as an international authority on Japanese and Siberian irises. In it he explains the special love of the people of Kumamoto for the iris. How the Higo iris came to be grown in pots. Also a list of display gardens, nurseries and addresses of hybridizers.)

p.s. a reminder that Currier's Book 'Siberian Irises' can be obtained by writing to:- Julius Wadekamper, 15974, Canby Ave. Route 5, FARIBAULT, MN. 55021.

(make cheques payable to the Society for Siberian Irises,)

The National Collection of Iris sibirica Cultivars.

Jennifer Hewitt.

The National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG) has encouraged the formation of National Collections of many plants, both species and cultivars, with the aim of ensuring that good garden plants are not lost to cultivation because they are not currently popular. The hope is that plants from the Collections will find their way into nursery lists; 'lost' ones may be found; confusion in naming may be sorted out (I think every Collection holder has gained, if they did not already have, experience of this problem); and that, both now and in the future, our rich heritage of garden plants will become even richer.

Collections may be held by individuals, both professional and amateur, and organisations such as botanic gardens, parks departments, collages and nurseries. I was approached in 1986 and asked if I would consider holding the National Collection of Iris sibirica cultivars (Iris species are held by the University of Reading), but was reluctant, as I did not think I had the time, space or energy to add this to my other jobs. It had taken little thought to make me realise that this was potentially a very big Collection indeed. However, Margaret Owen, who had been largely responsible for starting the Shropshire Group of NCCPG and was then its Chairman, suggested that the Group might become the holders of a 'dispersed' Collection, with a number of Members each holding several plants. Such dispersed Collections are already held by some specialist societies and their regional groups as other NCCPG county groups. The Shropshire Group committee agreed that such an offer should be made to the National Collections Committee and it was accepted in July 1986.

Nearly 40 Members have volunteered to hold plants, some with small gardens having just one or two, although most have three and some can cope with more. I deal with the acquisition, growing-on and distribution of the plants and usually try to hand them over in July each year, soon after flowering has finished and when the maximum amount of root growth and production of increase is about to happen, as it is my firm belief (based on experience) that this is usually the best, though not the only, time for moving them successfully. This side of the operation developed steadily until 1989, when I was exceptionally busy with other things and had no time to recruit new holders, contact existing ones, or dig plants - though in such a dry summer this would have been difficult and conditions were not ideal for transplanting.

Since there are over 900 registered cultivars of Iris sibirica and I. sanguinea (mostly, of course, descended from hybrids between these species), plus others which have been named and sold but are not registered, it would be impossible to hold them all - not that all are still in existence. Considering which criteria should be used to justify including any cultivar in the Collection, I felt that we should try to include as many as possible of those which originated in Great Britain; those from any country which had received awards from the R.H.S. and/or B.I.S., the Morgan Award (now Morgan-Wood Medal) in the U.S.A. or other overseas awards of high status; and some which (cont)

originated overseas and had no awards but were of historical interest, of importance in hybridising, or were good garden plants which ought to be conserved. These criteria were accepted by the National Collections Committee. Of course there is some overlap and plants can often come into more than one category.

Acquiring plants has led to scrutinising catalogues and journals very carefully and sometimes tracking down cultivars in surprising places. It is quite likely that many British ones still survive, unnamed, in gardens beyond the reach of B.I.S. and N.C.C.P.G. publicity, even though they are no longer in any nursery, and I have never refused any anonymous plant offered to me, hoping that some 'lost' cvs. may be recovered - always providing that they can be identified correctly. I have had, and continue to have, much help from friends in Britain and Overseas. Some of the older cultivars are still available from nurseries in the U.S.A. and Germany and I have been able to buy them thanks to grants of money from the County Committee, though as news of the NCCIG has spread to other countries, there has been increasing interest in what we are doing and kind people have donated plants, a practical and much-appreciated way of helping us. I already had a number of suitable cultivars which could be divided and more are coming into the distribution each year, while new acquisitions are grown on until they too can be divided, providing that they are correctly named. If they do not fit the often minimal descriptions in the Check List, or those which I have had to find in old catalogues in the R.H.S. Lindley Library, they stay with me until they can be identified. This problem does not usually arise with cvs. registered since 1950 but older ones can be a headache. The A.I.S. classification 'BIM' (meaning light medium blue), for example, tells me only that the dark blue I have under that name must be wrong. It is no help in distinguishing between two unnamed light medium blues. Nurserymen whose enthusiasm led them to describe their plants in great detail have my blessing. If any Member reading this has catalogues or books dating from before World War 2, with good descriptions of any Siberian irises, I would be most grateful if I could be given copies.

The following lists show the cultivars which were in the collection at the end of 1989. Those marked * are possibly wrongly named...

Raised and/or introduced in Britain. with the names of those responsible:-

Barr: Snow Queen (1900), Blue King (1902)*, Superba (1903)*, Emperor (1914).

Perry: Perry's Blue (1912), Perry's Pigmy (1912), Mrs. Rowe (1916), Nora Distin (1923), Thelma Perry (1923), Marcus Perry (after 1950 ?).

Royal Tottenham Nurseries: Blue Celeste (1919)*.

Dykes: Dragonfly (1923), Sibirica Papillon (1923 - this is the correct name, which should be used to distinguish it from a Tall Bearded iris registered as 'Papillon').

Wallace: Snow Bunting (1938).

Waterer & Sons: Heavenly Blue (1928), Camberley (1939).

Royal Horticultural Society: Wisley White (1940).

Hutchison: Ellesmere (1956), Blue Mere, Nottingham Lace, Purple Mere (all 1959), Purple Cloak, Violet Mere (1963).

Kitton: Blue Cape (1956), Court Ruffle (1963), Japanese White, White Magnificence, White Horses (all 1964).

Brunmitt: Cambridge, Dreaming Spires, Sea Shadows (all 1964), Anniversary (1965), Limeheart (1968), Sea Horse (1972).

Tallack: Canonbury Belle (1973).

Back: Valda (1976), Vee one (1982).

Hewitt: Clee Hills (1979), Marlene Ahlburg (1983).

Bartlett: David Heblitch (1985).

McCarthy: Coquet Waters (1987).

Unknown (possibly Southcombe Nurseries); Southcombe White.

Award Winners.

Dykes Medal (Britain): Cambridge, Anniversary.

Hugh Miller Trophy (Britain): Blue Cape, Nottingham Lace, Violet Mere, Cambridge, Dreaming Spires, Sea Shadows, Limeheart, Anniversary, Clee Hills.

Morgan Award (USA): Tycoon (Cleveland), Eric the Red (Whitney), Caesar's Brother, Tropic Night (both Morgan), White Swirl (Cassebeer), Cool Spring (Kallog), Blue Brilliant, Pirouette (both Cassebeer), Velvet Night (Edwards), Dewful, Super Ego, Ego (all McGarvey), Swank (Hager), Grand Junction, Halcyon Seas (both McCord), Orville Fay (McEwen), Vi Luhn (DuBose), Silver Edge (McEwen), Augury (McGarvey), Ruffled Velvet, Butter and Sugar (both McEwen), Steve Varner (Briscoe), Ann Dasch (Varner), Pink Haze (McGarvey).

Morgan-Wood Medal (U.S.A.--- a higher award which has replaced the Morgan Award, for which some Morgan winners were eligible): Butter and Sugar, Steve Varner, Pink Haze (cont.)

Dance Ballerina Dance (Varner),

Begg Shield (New Zealand): Castlegrace (Nelson).

R.H.S. Awards: Annemarie Troeger (Tamberg), Dreaming Yellow (McEwen), Ewen (McEwen), Fourfold White (McEwen), Gatineau (Preston), Kobaltblau (Tamberg), Laurenbuhl (Berlin), Navy Brass, Polly Dodge and Soft Blue (all McEwen), and many of those already listed. Some have also received B.I.S. Awards.

'Special Interest' Group.

Sibirica Baxteri (collected form, first listed 1912, U.S.A.)

Floating Island (McEwen, one of the first 'yellow' sibiricas).

Fourfold Lavender (McEwen, first lavender-pink tetraploid).

Helen Astor (Whitney-Kellogg, good garden plant, in the ancestry of many red sibiricas).

Lavender Light (McEwen, remontant, fine pinkish colour).

Mitsou (Ziepeke, pink, good garden plant).

Moon Moth (Delany, good blue raised in New Zealand).

My Love (Scheffy, one of the earliest known remontants).

Phosphorflamme (Steiger, good garden plant raised by a famous German hybridiser).

Rejoice Always (Varner, very unusual combination of lilac, lavender, white and blue).

There are probably others which should be in the last group, but three plants of each cultivar (the minimum number considered by NCCRG to indicate that a plant is 'in cultivation'), even spread around a number of gardens, adds up to a fair total, and more are added to the 'eligible' list every year, or older ones are found. New registrations of British-bred Siberians are also added - Harry Foster has promised pieces of his, when they are available - as are further award winners.

To make things more interesting for the holders, and to spread the risk (though very few plants have failed to grow or been lost for other reasons), they have one plant each of different cultivars. Progress is supposed to be reported to me each year, so that I can compile reports for the National Collections and county committees, but few holders remember to do this. However the county committee had the bright idea of including a report form with the newsletter in autumn 1989 and quite a number have been completed and returned.

My other responsibilities to NCCRG and the Collection include keeping records; making detailed descriptions and getting accurate colour slides of each cultivar, and preparing herbarium specimens of all of them, to provide a permanent identification source. This all takes a lot of time at an already hectic period of the year, and at present is far from complete. (I have yet to embark on the herbarium specimens.) There should also be explanatory literature for holders and visitors, but so far I have only managed to provide holders with brief information on their plants. Other commitments, in June and the rest of the year, do not allow much time for catching up on all this. It is all interesting and worthwhile, but very demanding, and I am now hoping to find a Shropshire member who will take a share in the work.

I am also hoping that S.S & J. Members may be able to help in finding some cultivars not yet traced. They are listed below, under the names of their raisers and/or introducers, and any information will be warmly welcomed.

Brimmitt: Delicate Spray... Bunyard: Geraldine Alba...

Bing: Thorpe Aquamarine, T. Azure, T. China, T. Dainty, T. Elf, T. Glory, T. Purple, T. Ringdove, T. Sapphire, T. Tracery, T. Triumph, T. Turquoise.

Christie: Halcyon... Dykes: Kingfisher... Kelways: Consul, Florrie Butler.

Kitton: Bickley Cape, Canford, Court Violet, Court White, Jimmy's Gem, Snowfall, White Rabbit.

Perry: Blush White, Duchess of York, Florrie Ridler, Lady French, Lady Godiva, Lord Northcliffe, Marie Corelli, Mrs. Bavan, Mrs. Grey Hill, Mrs. Logan, Mrs. Perry, Mrs. Saunders, Nurse Cavell, Peggy Perry, Peter Pan, sibirica atropurpurea, sibirica Blue Bird, sibirica King George, sibirica minima, sibirica nana.

Perry's Hardy plant Farm: Roger Perry..... Randall: The Gower.

Spender: Atlantis, Helicon, Heliodore, Ianthia, La Blanchefleur, Winander.

Wallace: Avocet, Blue Poll, George Wallace, Heron, Kestrel, Kingfisher, Blue Lacewing, Ladybird, Margaret, Mayfly, Melisande, Nymph, Oberon, Oread, Penelope, Snowball, Thisbe, White throat, Woospecker.

Waterer: Bracknell, Swinley.. Yeld: Deerfold, Florella, Frances, Lady Annot, Vesper.

(Thank you Jennifer, a very interesting account, I am sure that, in like manner and with a common interest, Members of the NCCRG would like to hear of our work over the past 12 years. Accounts, reports and interests by Members at home and overseas, a lot of time and endeavour has been put in. Let us hope that they will join us, so that a full liason may be formed. Perhaps the committee could have another 'bright idea' and include one of our leaflets in their next Newsletter. J.T.)

A BAKER'S DOZEN OF JAPANESE IRISES.

By Clarence Mahen.

For the past several years the Society for Japanese Irises has been holding conventions around the U.S. This has been a wonderful development; it has afforded Japanese iris aficionados the opportunity to see hundreds of varieties, new and old. Many of us have learned a thing or two by attending these conventions and touring the gardens in Summerville, South Carolina, Kalamazoo, Michigan and Washington, D.C.

One of the conclusions I have reached as a result of attending these conventions is that American and Japanese hybridizers are making real advances in improving the quality of Japanese irises. A second conclusion: Some of the older Payne, Marx, Rich and Hazzard cultivars are still unsurpassed. Finally, I have also, rather sadly concluded that some of the cultivars that have been the most popular are not the most outstanding varieties.

If I were starting over with Japanese irises, and could only grow a baker's dozen, which ones would I choose?? What a question!! I think many of the cultivars on my list will not be widely known. All are excellent growers, with great vigor and the ability to increase rapidly.

At the head of my list is an older single that should be in every Japanese iris collection. It is the iris which convinced Japanese hybridizers that something unique in the development of Japanese irises was happening in the U.S. In its class, there has never been a subsequent introduction to improve on Arlie Payne's THE GREAT MOGUL, the classic maroon single.

A couple of years back my friend Carol Warner, currently Treasurer of the S.J.I. brought a superb stalk of THE GREAT MOGUL to the Washington, D.C. show. I thought I would never see anything like it again. For some reason, probably limited space, I did not acquire THE GREAT MOGUL right away. Two years ago, after I had seen its magnificence again, this time at the Kalamazoo convention, I bought a plant. And what a bloom stalk it gave me for the Manassas, Virginia show this past year!! Only God could create such beauty. THE GREAT MOGUL's clean form, clarity of color, great size and noble bearing constitute the standards by which other irises are judged.

Another, older Payne variety which deserves much more popularity than it has achieved is LILAC GARDEN. It is a double that has mulberry shading over a lighter ground with a lighter edging. Its primary virtue is that it is very beautiful. But it also has several other significant assets. LILAC GARDEN has excellent branching and a high bud count. Its substance is better than 99% of Japanese irises. Finally it blooms very late, at the same time as DANCING WAVES and YUHO, thus giving us an extra week or two of bloom season.

In Japanese, TAGA SODE means 'geisha's sleeve'. The late Dr. Hirao chose this name for an exquisite iris which he introduced in Japan in 1957. The J.I. check list describes TAGA SODE as fuchsia boldly veined white with white styles. The styles are white and it certainly is boldly veined white, but I see the basic color of TAGA SODE as maroon, rather than fuchsia. Regardless, this is a wonderful garden iris and a wonderful show bench iris. Its form is clean.. its coloring most dramatic. It grows well, blooms profusely and, in general, has no faults that I have detected.

Mitsuda Yoshio's (last name first, Japanese style) ASHI-NO-UKIFUNE, introduced in Japan in 1969, has only recently become available in this country. The flower is a very large double of color and pattern most dramatic. ASHI-NO-UKIFUNE has white petals veined dark maroon, with dark maroon styles and anthers. The color contrast almost takes one's breath away,

This past year Currier McEwen's 1988 introduction JAPANESE PINWHEEL soared to the top of the S.J.I. popularity poll. Not since the tall bearded iris BEVERLY SILLS was introduced has any iris cultivar made such a spectacular entrance into our gardens. 'Spectacular' is the right adjective to apply to JAPANESE PINWHEEL. A single medium wine, both standards and falls are outlined with a silver edging. This is the most gorgeous tetraploid Japanese iris yet to be introduced.

The best performing iris in my garden for the past couple of years has been Sterling Innerst's HEGIRA. It is a white double, striped with a beautiful shade of blue. The gold signals add to the overall effect. Two years ago I took Best Specimen in the Towson, Maryland show with a stalk of HEGIRA -- back in garden there were half a dozen stems as good as the one I took to the show. The flower is very large, but the single greatest asset of this beauty is its substance. It can withstand 70 mile an hour winds and slashing rain without incurring any apparent damage whatsoever.

'Quiet loveliness' describes Adolf Vogt's LILAC PEAKS. A double white with light violet veining, the 'personality' of this prettiest of cultivars comes from the contrast of its light lavender styles. A clump of LILAC PEAKS, suitably located in the landscape can transform a garden site into a tranquil retreat from the hustle & bustle of daily life. Its clean form and soft but clear coloring are its outstanding attributes.

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Lorena Reid's FRECKLED GEISHA truly merited the Payne Award it won in 1987. A very ruffled double, the purity of its white background offers the perfect playground for wine 'freckles' and edging. Usually I find simple forms to be the most elegant, but in the case of FRECKLED GEISHA ruffling becomes a refinement that causes me to equate this cultivar with the word 'elegance'.

Two double wine coloured cultivars that I have trouble choosing between are going to result in my list of favorites being greater than a baker's dozen. YUSHO, a cultivar imported into the U.S. by George Bush (my dear irisarian friend, not the President) has light white veining. If I had to choose between this excellent^{cy} and Dr. Hirao's NARTHIRO, I would probably choose the latter. Huge flowers, purity of color, and good substance are some of its assets. It is ruffled and, to my eye, refined. Dr. Hirao named this wonderful iris after one of the most beloved heroes in Japanese literature.

Sterling Innerst is certainly one of the most talented hybridizers working toward improved Japanese irises. His IPSUS, in dark blue-purple, and ANYTUS, pure white of superb substance, are both excellent. In addition to HEGIRA, his recent introductions JACASTA, IAPETUS and CAPANEUS are all first rate. But having to choose, after HEGIRA, I like IAPETUS best. Wonderful substance, wonderful form, ruffled, very large and very chic. Double, with a light ground, sanded and veined purple. Bluish-purple halo and red violet styles.

Among the double whites, I prefer the Marx cultivar SNOWY HILLS over all others. This is a really difficult choice because ANYTUS has a little better substance. Both of these clean, white irises produce excellent stalks. For me SNOWY HILLS tends to produce larger flowers.

I have long searched for a single white cultivar that is really outstanding. There have been none that can compare with excellent singles in other color classes. This year I finally saw a really excellent single white. It is Hirao Shuichi's seedling SH-30. As a tribute to the great work of the late Dr. Hirao, this iris will soon be registered and introduced under the name SHUICHI HIRAO. It has large flowers and such charm.

Finally, to complete my baker's dozen list, there is the I. ensata form known as 'Rose Queen'. It is most unfortunate that there is so much confusion over the name of this iris. The iris which the A.I.S. recognizes as ROSE QUEEN is a cultivar with 6 falls introduced by Frank Lilly in 1915. During the 1930's a single form under this name was sold in the U.S. by Hosea Waterer and in England by Maurice Prichard & Sons. This unauthorised use of the name belonging to another cultivar created confusion. Then there is the iris recorded in the 1939 Checklist as Laevigata 'Rose Queen'..more confusion.

No one I know has ever seen the double ROSE QUEEN. The lovely small form of ensata lavender pink in color, being grown, shown and sold in this country is a single. We get around the name problem by entering it in shows as a species form, i.e. I. ensata 'Rose Queen' form. For many years it has been my favorite iris. To my eye, the only irises which come close to matching its simple elegance are I. setosa alba & I. prismatica.

I fear that many of the cultivars described in this article may not yet have been imported into Great Britain, or in any event may not be widely available. Perhaps my descriptions and enthusiasm will help to rectify this. The thought that anyone should not share in the beauty of these wonderful irises would be very sad indeed.

(Thank you Clarence for your glowing account. I share your love of 'Rose Queen' which I grew from seed, as you say, under the name of Laevigata, put it in the pond, it lasted for two years, then expired. All I have is a lovely photograph, it certainly was a large beautiful rose pink iris, much mourned. J.T.)

Trevor Nottle's Letter from Australia.

Our Iris season was very mixed. A bad invasion of thrips spoiled the T.B's but the Spurias and Japanese Irises were lovely, the latter especially so, now that the clumps have expanded to a good size. You may recall that I poisoned them several years ago, when they became infested, heavily with a particularly pernicious form of couch grass... They flowered until after Christmas and on Christmas Day drew many favourable comments when we had people in for drinks in the morning. The Siberians were devastated by the thrip too, but the Evansias, being early were safe. The thrip drifted on the wind from the northern districts, and there was nothing we could do to prevent them. Even cut-flower growers, spraying every day, had trouble keeping flowers blemish free.

I was pleased to find a self-sown I. chrysographes in flower in the seed pots. I have marked it and will plant it out in the winter.

We were far from both the earthquakes and the bush-fires. My wife and children accompanied their Grandmother to a newly bought farm in New South Wales, which was near the fires, but I stayed home and so missed the excitement.

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Incidentally, we had I. graminea in flower on Christmas Day too. Just two, late, last blooms, but none-the-less pleasing, to see and smell.

Our Summer so far is very, very mild though dry, so the garden looks in good heart and less brown than usual at this time. The weather certainly seems to be out of its usual pattern. We haven't seen much of the gales you have recently had--news pictures & T.V. show trucks and schools blowing away, but no news of gardens, forests, trees etc. as we saw last time. I dare say 'The Garden' will eventually arrive bearing more sad news about damage to lovely (and famous) gardens.

The garden here is slowly changing from a very sunny one to an increasingly shaded environment. Eventually we will have to get more seriously interested in Hostas and other hardy shade lovers. Until then we will continue to enjoy beds of Spurias and sun-loving perennials.

I am fiddling around the edges of a new book on plants with a past and expect when autumn arrives I will really settle to it, and hopefully get it out in time for Xmas. (Good to hear from you Trevor, there has been quite a lot of storm damage, and sadly deaths from trees and buildings falling. Adrian has lost the glass in his greenhouse and part of his fence. The South and South West seem to be affected & parts of Wales. We hope that you have all managed to survive without any damage. Let us know!!! Best wishes Trevor with your new book..)Ed.

Speaking of books there is a reprint of the Chesapeake and Potomac Iris Society's book by George M. Reed The Iris of Japan available, but the supply is limited. It costs 5 dollars plus 1 dollar shipping. (I bought dollars from the bank & sent them Registered) Write to Clarence Mahan, 7311 Churchill Rd., McLean, VA. 22101. I suggest you write to Clarence first. It is a very good little book, full of information.

Spuria News.

Floyd Wickenkamp.

Our 'Classic Iris' program in the Spuria Society is going well. I have recently acquired a number of pre-1960 ones, including a big clump of PREMIER which Bob Brooks of Cordon Bleu sent to me for the program.

BETTY MY LOVE (named after Floyd's late wife) has been extremely popular in its first year. We got so many orders we had to cancel a couple as I had run out of mature rhizomes. There should be plenty next year though.

SON OF SUN is still leading the Spuria popularity poll, but owing to troubles with our popularity poll we have not had a chance to make an accurate count. We now have a new President Maxine Perkins P.O. Box 404, Mesilla Park N.M. 88047 we look forward to continuing our work.

(Floyd has since found that he has been able to fulfil his orders, each year he receives more and more requests, and to think he almost didn't introduce it because he thought it was not good enough. Best wishes to your Mother who you say is 98 years 'young' in March. Take care!).

Around the Nurseries.

If you want something done, ask a busy person!

Pauline J. Brown.

As I recall, it all began in the Spring of 1977. I was, at that time lambing 100 or so ewes, our Suffolk Punch mare was about to foal, free-lance conference organising in between and we had only moved to Westlees Farm several months earlier. We were 'camping' in a mobile home since the house needed major works before we could move in (not to mention the farm buildings and farmland generally). Then... my father V.H. Humphrey -- Iris Specialist, announced his intention to retire. It seems that a family 'quorum' had, in my absence, elected me as 'nee Humphrey Specialist Designate' '!!!'

Enthusiasm from daddy, bless him 'you have plenty of land for them and they're very undemanding'. Enthusiasm from husband 'at least you can put them to bed at night' not like the animals' and 'its much more ladylike than hauling sheep about'. Enthusiasm from me?? flattered - yes, apprehensive - definitely. Could I say no?-hardly. Must keep it in the family and couldn't hurt daddy's feelings. He has loved irises for so many years - mummy would attest to that!!!

What could I do but commence preparing the ground in readiness for 'the Great Iris Move'. First came some of the Bearded, followed later in 1987 by Spurias, Sibiricas, Species, Pacific Coast and Japanese. Then the balance in 1988 with dribs & drabs in between of foetidissima, unguicularis and other wondrous things. Many hours (all hands on deck) were spent planting many thousands of plants and as father quite rightly pointed out, enthusing me more, we have a decent sized pond so we will be able to plant more water iris. And our soil is so right for the isises compared to his heavy clay.

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(Even though he did manage to work miracles on it.)

Daddy continued to run the business for the first twelve months or so, until all the stock had been moved and some of the new stock had re-established. I have now just come through my first season (an iris Debutante already?), having produced my first catalogue last year, and a supplementary list for the coming season, now that we are more sure of what has become established satisfactorily. I have even exhibited at a number of shows and daddy loves to help with these - says it keeps his hand in. Thank goodness, I say. But seriously, A whole world of beauty, colour and interest has unfolded before my very eyes and when all the irises burst into bloom, I forget how 'undemanding' they all are for the remainder of the year and I know I'm hooked. Even my needlework these days, when I find the time, takes on irises, irises and yet more irises.

(Best of luck Pauline, you have a good tutor!)

Propagation of Iris ENSATA 1989.

Norman Payne.

1989 was my first year of growing these plants for sale. I had imported plants from the U.S.A. in the previous three years, growing these on with tender loving care, I had 800 plants in over 30 varieties. I felt that I had enough to offer 21 varieties for sale.

They grew better once I had realised that a dry winter and spring were responsible for slow growth in March and April. Plenty of watering helped, but the dryness stopped a lot of plants from flowering. To make things worse, the ban on hosepipes, later in the year, meant that I had to use the watering-can, and each plant needs an inch of water every week.

In August I was able to post off all my orders and then heaved a sigh of relief, that I had not disappointed any of my customers.

I could now get on with other work, such as finding room for 1989 imports from the U.S.A. The list for 1990 will be ready in May with 37 named varieties, some fairly new ones: RASPBERRY RIMMED (tetraploid) single, white with raspberry edges. CAPRICORN BUTTERFLY double white with prominent purple veining. SPRING TIME SNOW single white, unusual because it blooms in late May.

I have found that some varieties make a large clump quicker than others, a few that I have noted for quick growth are:- REIGN OF GLORY: ROSE PRELUDE: DAME FORTUNE: BENITSUBAKI: NARAHIRA: SORCERER'S TRIUMPH: WORLD'S DELIGHT and SPRING TIME SNOW.

Some that take longer to form a large clump are:- VALIENT PRINCE: HOZAN: THE GREAT MOGUL and FLYING TIGER. I am now working on the 1991 list. Hopefully it will contain over 50 varieties.. well! that is the plan, so much depends on the weather, all we can do is keep our fingers crossed. Good luck to all in the 1990 season.

(Good luck and good growing to you Norman.)

Melrose Gardens Stockton CA. U.S.A.

Ben Hager writes that he has been very busy (Nov.89). Stockton is over 80 miles from the epicenter of the earthquake they experienced. He and Monty Byers were out looking at the fall blooming bearded iris, they didn't even notice until their attention was called to look at the near-by trees. They were doing a graceful, swaying dance, we then realized what was going on.

The only one who was really affected was Joe Ghio, Santa Cruz. This is very near the epicenter. From what I hear He is O.K. although with lots of damage to property.

That was a little one. They keep warning us to get ready for the BIG one. I should live so long. Maybe tomorrow? California doesn't really belong to the North American continent and keeps trying to get away. I don't blame it..

(Pleased to hear you are O.K. please convey to Joe Ghio our commiserations.)

Maureen Gladwin's Nursery, Long Acre, BINGHAM. Notts.

Maureen has lovely shrubs and Hardy Plants, also delightful Wishing Wells and Herb Wheels which her husband makes. I hope she will soon add irises to her list.

John & Roger Merryweather. Southwell.

Continuing in the footsteps of their forefathers, they have 150 years of gardens behind them. At the moment extensive alterations are in progress, they have some bearded irises, our Group will introduce them to Sibiricas, Spurias, Japanese and Pacific Coast beardless. Years ago, at Newark Show, they gave great help in setting up the British Iris Society stand... I was very grateful. (J.T.)

We would like to hear more about the Nurserymen and Women in our Group, so please write in and tell us of the Iris you are stocking, and we will feature this. It is an excellent way of getting our Irises more well known. All the best to you all...

Regional Report from the East.

by Shirley Ryder.

When I was asked to do this report from the Eastern Regions, I was reluctant to do so because I am not in possession of enough plants to make it interesting for the Group. This is not because I choose not to have them, but because Essex is such a very dry spot that I am precluded from having Japanese at all, and have only as many Siberians as I am prepared to water every day. I thought that the only way I could do it successfully would be to contact everybody in my area and do a conglomerate report, and, time permitting, I do plan to do this in the future. To this end I went through the membership list and couldn't help but be struck by how many members we have living in the Nottinghamshire area. Could this be the Gardeners' Valhalla I've been looking for? Whenever two or three are gathered together at Vincent Square, the subject always turns to 'where is the best place to garden, but I can never remember that anyone suggested Nottinghamshire. Perhaps they are keeping it a secret!

I initially joined the Group because I am interested in *Spurias*. Having fallen in love with them in Australia where they grow so many, I couldn't understand why so few seem to be grown over here. I thought it must be because they were difficult. However, spurred on by the fact that I grew 2 or 3 species of *Spuria* successfully, I invested in 8 plants last year which I imported from the U.S.A. Despite the drought I managed to make a nice new bed for them and a kindly neighbour acquired some manure for me.

Looking forward, with great anticipation, to their arrival... when they came they certainly were in beautiful condition, so I just put them to soak overnight. When I went to plant them the next day, one of them was covered in what looked like gungy custard, although I could see nothing wrong with it. However, I persisted with my examination and peeled back the first layer of leaf, and to my horror I was staring at an enormous hole in the rhizome which was occupied by an equally large creature. I persuaded it out with a skewer and it turned out to be about 2 ins. long, pink & white and moved like a caterpillar. I despatched it, and then sat down & wrote to my supplier, who replied immediately. 'You have just seen your first Iris Borer' he told me, and sitting here with practically the whole of my acre filled with Iris, the very name struck terror in my heart. He went on to tell me that there are usually about 5 to a plant & as they move forward munching towards each other, when they meet, one will eat the other, until there is only one left. They have to spray annually to control them, and he was most apologetic that I had received an escapee. Of course it could not have survived over here, and it was a very interesting experience, so perhaps, when I have a moan about conditions here, in the future I shall learn to be more thankful, in that we don't have Iris Borers to contend with.

All goes well with my 8 at the moment, apart from having their foliage chewed off at the top by marauding rabbits which have moved in because of the drought. They try everything new that I put in, but as I still have the plants left, fortunately they would not seem to be quite to their taste.

To sum up 1989 in this area, I could just say DRY. The T.B's of course had a fantastic year, I have never had so much bloom. The Siberians, with the exception of 'Soft Blue', flowered hardly at all despite daily watering, but I suppose if you grow many kinds of Iris it must always be this way. I do hope that next year will be the year of the Siberians though, as I am still quite worn out with 4 hours watering every evening. I rather fear it won't though, as I have just heard that the reservoirs in Essex are practically empty even though it is now December, and plans are afoot to divert water from the River Ouse to relieve the situation. So, even if it starts to rain now and continues all through the Winter, we will still be drier than normal next year! (Thank you Shirley, the rain Gods must have heard you, seeing all the floods, but they say it will only partly fill the reservoirs. We are so used to our 'green & pleasant land'.)

Regional Report from London.

by Anne Blanco White.

It really has happened: the special bed for forms of *I. ensata* has been planted at Wisley. We must be grateful to Currier McEwen and Philip Allery in particular for providing the bulk of the plants. But do remember that this is not even an invited trial: it is an experimental planting to see if the system will work. Everything depends on whether the plants thrive on this site under these conditions. The staff at Wisley will certainly do their best to ensure success. Mercifully there has been a fair amount of rain this winter to help the plants settle in, because a pint of rain seems to be worth a gallon of irrigation water. Nevertheless, reservoirs in the south are still seriously depleted and Wisley may find itself short of water this summer. Let us hope, in spite of slugs, that we have a wet spring down here.

The chances are that flowering will be poor this year, but 1991 should give us a
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better chance to assess the flowering qualities of the plants. The J.I.C. certainly hopes to use this opportunity to arrive at judging standards for its future use and, with luck, judgement training sessions will be able to include ensatas as well as the other irises. Wisley soil warms up early and the plants below the Rock Garden are usually in flower with the T.B's.

What we need now are serious efforts on the part of growers to do some breeding on their own, also to select other plants for consideration by the B.I.S. judges as well as the J.I.C. If this Wisley planting is successful, and if we can show that there are plants coming forward, then there is a much better chance of getting a Trial established. Philip Allery has hoisted the banner, it's up to the rest of you to start practising a chorus of 'Excelsior'. If you are doubtful about your criteria, there is written material available to help you. Basically, you need a good proportion of spikes to the clump: two flowers at the top of the spike and at least one branch preferably with two buds; the top flowers must overtop the leaves, and stem length should allow the branch flowers to be clearly visible; petals need rich texture, compare them with a good modern T.B. if you can; and where petals are heavily ruffled they must open easily of their own accord. Don't be afraid to produce your seedlings at shows because the quickest way to find out if you are on the winning track is to discuss them with other iris growers and to listen to their criticisms. And the proper response to those who 'can't stand those blousy dinner plates' is 'well, dear, you'll never make an Awards Judge'.

Meantime plants which flowered so miserably last year made a fine recovery as soon as ever a little rain came again. Probably the best thing now is to follow Dyke's advice and fertilise heavily over the next month, if you haven't done so already. He preferred a strong liquid fertiliser, but that rather depends on how much rain you have been having. After all, the point is that the plant should grab what you have bought at such expense, not that it should leach away to undeserving causes. Do you have a rain gauge? Why not? Go out and buy one now. Seriously, though it is an enormous help in gardening to know whether there really was as much rain as you thought. All too often it seems as if there has been heavy rain for days on end, and it turns out that there was all of a centimetre, which doesn't go far when everything is growing at once.

South of Watford, things are looking less appalling than they seemed last autumn. Sibiricas are beginning to move and losses seem likely to be less disastrous. The ones which are critical are those which had to be replanted in the autumn of 1988 & never really got started during the winter drought. There was rain in the spring, but it didn't really compensate and clumps seem distinctly ragged. Spurias, on the other hand, seem quite content, at present, and are growing away well. Chances are that this will be a bumper year for the cultivars and the larger species. My impression is that the smaller species, especially I. graminea in exposed places, are unhappy, but they will come about. The ensatas are moving along, but with the persistent warnings from the water boards it would be as well to have plenty of mulch material ready for use if it warms up and dries out. The mulch in this context helps to keep the soil under it cool, and plants with a cool root run will survive hot weather droughts much better than those where the heat penetrates the soil. I remember a sequence of hot summers in the late '30s when the dewponds on the downs dried up. Our local newspaper in Sussex this winter had an interview with the Water Board spokesperson who said 'yes, they were grateful for the heavy rain in early December; a nice Christmas present, and now people could NOT use their hoses now'. He wasn't joking, and neither am I. Precautions which prove to be unnecessary are never a waste of time.

Regional Report for the North West.

by Ray Wilson.

Generally 1989 has favoured the North West, Spurias have flowered as well as expected with the best results from the dwarf varieties; Sibiricas which were newly planted are coming along nicely - most came from Clarence Mahan - having spent the winter in pots to protect them from the worst of the weather. The J.I.'s some from Clarence and others from Philip or from seed did not do as well, because they were too dry, however a friend on the edge of Bowland Forest at 600 ft. had a J.I. in bloom in spring & again in September.

This really has been an all change year. Once the bearded irises had bloomed we re-organised the beds, reducing the stocks of bearded irises drastically, to make more room for the beardless irises and other hardy plants. Whilst the changes have been going on I have noted that a lot of Pacific Coast hybrid seedlings have not been happy in a bed previously used for arils, even though the pH had been reduced to 6.5 to 7 by the addition of loads of peat. Other seedlings in a bed free from lime have done well. I need to re-do the aril bed completely. When my new bed is completed it will be planted with those seedlings which survived an earlier disaster, due to drying out whilst I was

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ill; plants from Gordon Loveridge's seeds, three year old plants now; plants bought from Joe Ghio this year and plants promised. My Ghio plants are:-

Bottom Dollar 13 in. gold with a deeper gold signal 1989; Butano 13in. golden apricot, red brown on shoulder 1989; Ego Trip details unknown; Idywild 18in. white washed with blue 1988; Junipero 10 in. henna to rosy tan 1989; Laguna Creek 18in. red lavender with 'munzii' turquoise flush on falls 1989; Los Californio 18 in. purple with gold sunburst signal; Mists of Time 15in. white, washed with light blue 1989; Munras 15in. lemon yellow 1988; Rare Reward 14in. orchid, deep-red, violet falls 1989; Stroke of Midnight 16in. black, standards slightly lighter 1989; Upper Echelon 22in. multi-branched, rusty orange-mahogany 1989. This year I also obtained Quintana, a lovely yellow flower and quite dwarf... Following Maureen Foster's practice, all this acquisitions have been potted in a mixture of peaty soil, Cambark 100, and grit; they will remain in the cold greenhouse until the root system is sufficiently well established (probably late spring).

Nora Scopes has quite a few Pacifica introductions. Mary Fraser is intent upon increasing her collection. Bob and Eileen Wise are keenly interested in hybridising for better form with multi-branched stems... (Thank you, hope you are feeling better Ray.)

Report from the South.

by Ian Smith.

With Christmas & New Year celebrations now well past and the dull, rainy mid-winter weather preventing anything being done in the garden; time to reflect on the glories (or disasters) of the albeit early season of the previous year, and idly dream that this year will be the best season ever; that from the batch of seedlings, one will produce a bloom so beautiful that it will take your breath away...

But back to reality... Last September, the R.H.S. at Wisley called in all the Sibiricas that had been selected for trial during the past 2 years, for the start of the new trial. As I had two seedlings raised by my Swiss friend, Thomas Burge, which had been selected, I duly took the required three plants of each to Wisley and handed them over for planting. In November, I was fortunate enough to be able to pay another visit to Wisley and I was pleased to see the new trial area planted out. Having already seen cut spikes of almost all the new seedlings selected, I will be most interested in seeing how the plants develop.

With the mild weather prevailing in the South, plants are already showing signs of life. Some Sibiricas and Ensatas are showing new growth. Unless there is a cold spell during February, it looks like an early season again, like last year.. Wait for the lamentations in the next issue!! In the meantime, a rather belated Happy New Year to you all and best wishes for success in the forthcoming season...

(Thanks Ian, storms are already upon us.. Congratulations on being appointed Chairman of the Ferndown and District Association, no doubt its 300 Members will appreciate your experience and knowledge. Do any of them like Irises as well??).

Report from the South West.

by Mary Ramsdale.

Watching for the emergence of plants as Spring starts to warm the soil, is, for me one of gardenings greatest pleasures. This year I will be checking with even greater interest, and more than a touch of anxiety. They've been through a lot. Split & potted in 1988, a long stand through the wettest summer for years, the move, an equally wet stand through the winter as we dug beds for them, and no sooner had we planted them.. four months drought. It says a lot for the resilience of Iris that I lost only three and that was probably my fault.

My new garden in East Devon consists of around an acre, split into 2 parts, one facing North, the other South. The soil is a stony, free-draining Greensand, as different from the cold, heavy boulder clay of Essex as chalk to cheese. The Northside garden was originally a Victorian kitchen garden, shaded for part of the day, the good rich soil long grassed over. Here we cut the beds and borders for hardy plants, & in with them went the sturdier Iris, Spurias and Sibiricas, forms of versicolor, Crocea, Ochroleuca, monnieri, longipetala, Monspur and graminea amongst them. Who says Siberians need boggy soil?? Not I, any more, they had the absolute minimum of water, & not only survived but increased... To compensate for lack of water, I foliar fed by spray, shrubs and plants, a ploy I've used before, it seems to help.

On the Southside it was a different story. Just narrow beds here, topping walls, very, very dry and very, very hot. Once couch grass, brambles, ground elder & bindweed had been removed, winter planting started. The soil was impoverished, so in went forms of Tectorum (Seagold to keep them well fed) Pallida, trojana, imbricata, kochii,

(cont.)

variegata and aphylla, albicans, florentina and all related hybrids and species with rhizomes that would positively enjoy a baking. Here too went the P.C.I.'s the Broadleigh hybrids, dwarf bearded cvs bits & pieces I'd no room for elsewhere. Where I thought nothing else could possibly grow, went the Iris unguicularis forms, and their increase was nothing short of amazing to me, as I've always found transplanting a hazard in the past. I. fulvala spread embarrassingly in Essex, I made the mistake of thinking it would be the same here, but it so disliked the heat, it almost expired; it made a cautious recovery when transplanted to a shadier, though not damper spot.

There is a sunken garden here and the banks seemed to be ideal for I. melitta, pumila attica forms, cristatas, gracilipes, verna, kerneriana and ruthenica. I had always grown these very tinies in pots and taken them inside for the winter. Now short of cover, I risked them. I. verna didn't last more than a few weeks, my fault, I do know how much water it needs, and I will not, if I ever get the chance, make the same mistake again. In the pond itself went Gerald Darby and the golden form of I. pseudacorus to keep me busy in the future, and large pots for water iris such as laevigata and delavayii.

Another risk I am taking is with the evansias. Again, I have always grown these in pots, but they're taking their chances outside too; tucked up against a south wall. So far they are fine, even though we have had sharp frosts; though they have been mean with blossom in the past. I don't want to be without them.

All I had left now was the rootiest and roughest wall top, shaded too. No prizes for what to put there, the forms of I. foetidissima were tailor made for it. Now I'm watching with interest those grown from B.I.S. seed, will I have the white-seeded form at long last?? Only time will tell!!!

I look forward with great interest to gardening here, I only wish there were some enthusiasts to yarn with, (why aren't there more down here I wonder) but at least I can pass on my growing experiences through this Newsletter to form part of a National picture. One last worry, an echo of Anne Blanco Whites' -- my irises are growing -- but will they BLOOM -- watch this space !!!!!

(Thank you Mary, I hope they do bloom for you. Dr. Smart has the Marwood Hill Gardens at Barnstaple and Dr. Marion Wood now lives at Wembury, perhaps they are not too far away to meet them and have a chat, all the best. J.T.)

Regional Report for the West Midlands.

by Philip Allery.

New Year greetings! It would be remiss to start this report without reference to the sad loss suffered by the Group in July 1989 in the death of our Chairman, the late Jack Venner. Jack and I had a common interest in Japanese irises, and I will miss his wise counselling and experience. Members of the Group thank Adrian Whittaker for taking over the office of Chairman, and wish him every success.

In the West Midlands early bloom was good, but later the Siberian and Japanese irises were spoilt by the dry heat. The driest and warmest summer since records were commenced brought with it a salutary reminder that positive steps must be taken to conserve rainwater; now, as always, a very precious commodity. The 'hose-pipe' ban, in some areas of the West Midlands was not lifted until mid-November, so the routine of 'watering the garden' must now be considered in a very different light. It would be very interesting to hear of labour-saving ideas thought up by Members. I am relocating my Japanese iris beds with easier watering in mind. Anne Blanco White (President B.I.S.) has drawn our attention to the absolute need for composting and mulching, it is advisable to take heed as it may seriously affect growth & bloom of S.S & J's.

While mentioning weather conditions in the W.M. I should pay tribute to the excellent show results at National level achieved by Jennifer Hewitt and Harry Foster who continue to overcome the caprices of our weather and dominate the show classes for hybrid siberian cultivars. I always look forward to seeing the results of their recent hybridising work. Among other plants 'Silver Edge', a firm favourite of mine, should have a place in every herbaceous border where soil conditions can be made suitable. Beginners starting to hybridise with this cultivar as a parent may well have some exciting results.

From my point of view the most exciting development since the publication of the last Newsletter, has been the creation, at Wisley of a demonstration plot for Japanese irises. Cultivars sent by Currier McEwen included 'Eternal Feminine' (1986); 'Katy Mendez' (1989); 'Ol' Man River' (1987); 'Returning Tide' (1976); 'Royal Burgundy' (1989); 'White Parachute' (1981). all these are Currier's own introductions, on the dates given.

Currier also sent 6 cultivars of fairly recent introduction by other breeders, which included 'Lasting Pleasure'; 'Royal Fireworks' and 'Wine Ruffles' all introduced by Ackerman in 1981; Rogers/Marx's 'Periwinkle Finwheel' (1983); Shook's 'Beyond the Horizon' (1985); and the late Dr Hirao's 'Hekito'. To these were added the older

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'Fashion and Fancy' (Payne 1964); 'Emperor's Robe' (Marx 1957); 'Gusto' (Marx 1954); 'Valiant Prince' (Marx 1958); 'Flying Tiger' (Payne 1950); 'Magic Opal' (Payne 1961); 'Rose Adagio' (Payne 1968), multi falls; and 'Sultan-Isshoku', a Japanese import.

I sent several seedlings, some of Currier's tetraploids, and some diploids of my own raising. 'Virginia B' (Hazzard 1972), a cultivar which can re-bloom, was also sent. Other growers in this country also sent cultivars for this demonstration plot, and more will be added this autumn. This is an exciting step forward in making Japanese irises more popular in this country. I will be reporting from time to time.

(Thank you, perhaps we can hear more about the compost that Members use for the July N/L)

The Group Library.

Copies of the following American Books & publications are obtainable from the Librarian Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt, 'Haygarth', Cleeton St. Mary, CLEOBURY MORTIMER, KIDDERMINSTER.

Siberian Irises by Currier McEwen.

Worcs. DY14 OQU.

The Spuria Irises-Introduction & varietal Listing 1985. Editor James. J. Foreman.

Newsletter of the Spuria Iris Society.

Review of the Society for Japanese Irises.

Journal of the Siberian Iris Society.

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

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

All back numbers of the S. S. & J. Newsletters.

Please include Postage when requesting items.

Treasurer's Report.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 1989 (Including 1988).

	£		£
29.1.88 Newsletters & Postage	67.57.	Subscriptions	198
Postage	8	Donations	19. 78
Seed Envelopes	5	Interest	(88) 2. 84
Postage & Stationary	20		(89) 3. 86
Postage on parcels.	10	do Res. A/C	(88) 1. 60
21.7.88 Newsletters & Postage	74. 40.		(89) 2. 18
Postage on parcels	10	Seeds	61. 15
Postage & envelopes	5	Plants	122. 45
Postage on parcels	7.50.	N/L's sold	5. 60
1.3.89. Newsletters & Postage.	54.	Stock:-	
Postage	5.	N/L's	29
1.8.89 Newsletters & Postage	66.99.	Covers	3
Postage	5	Leaflets	. 50
Stationary	5		
Postage on parcels	10		
Postage	5		
	<u>358.46</u>		<u>449. 96.</u>
	358		
Surplus	91. 50		
	<u>£ 449. 96</u>		

Accumulated Fund	£133. 40	Interest (88,89)	£. 70
Surplus	91. 50	Cash in Bank	138. 88
		Interest (88, 89)	3. 78
		Cash in Res.	43. 04
		N/L's, Covers etc.	32. 50
	<u>£ 224. 90</u>		<u>224. 90</u>

Total Cash in Bank £145. 55 plus £45. 72... £190. 27.

signed... Adrian Whittaker.

This is a two year balance. As I have said in previous years, over half the sum in the bank will be paid out to print the February N/L, leaving a further amount to be paid for the July N/L. We try to run this Group on an economical basis. Many thanks are due to
(cont).

Members who send in their Subscriptions ~~in~~ promptly, donations, seeds and above all plants for sale. We get more interest on early Subs. (Bradford & Bingley B.Soc.) We keep the Subs. as low as possible and endeavour to give Members a good service.

To B.I.S. Members Overseas, I would like to emphasize that our Subscription is £1.50 not £2 as stated on the B.I.S. renewal form. Also our financial year runs from 1st. July to 30th. June, this has been so for 12 years. To make quite sure you all know the position with regard to your Sub. you will find a slip telling you of the expiry date.

One further point, in view of difficulties for some Members Overseas (rate of exchange etc.) we are instituting a system of Sponsoring on a Reciprocal basis (eg. seed exchange, periodicals and others). For the time being, this will be done through the Group, and will be limited to two Members sponsored, in the interest of accounting and contacts. Some Members are sponsoring already, so to assist anyone considering action you will find * against the sponsors same and * against the recipient, in the Member's list. Write and say if you are willing to take part in the scheme. The Sponsor will be notified when the subscription is due, and the recipient when it is paid.

Back Numbers of the Newsletters are available:-

1976 copies send 35p. in stamps. July 1981, Feb. 1982 at 45p. Feb 1985, July 1986, Feb. 1987, Feb. 1988, July 1988, Feb. 1989, July 1989 all at 65p in stamps.

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LAEVIGATAE.

I. avigata 'Alba'(s) and Mixed(s).

I. pseudacorus 'Bastardii'(p), 'Golden Queen'(p), 'Alba'(s), 'E.Turnipseed'(m), 'Variegata'(s), 'Cream Forms'(vs).

I. Versicolor mixed(p). White with blue veining(s), 'Rougette'(s), 'Rosea'(vs), 'Claret Cup'(vs), 'Cat Mousam'(s), kermisina (vs).

I. Virginica(m), 'Contraband Girl'(vs).

Ensatae(Kaempferi)

I. Ensata mixed(m), 'Ruby Red'(vs), American Tetraploid Varieties(m) N. Paynes's ensatas(m)

Tripetalae

I. setosa(s), ssp Hondoensis(s).

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I. Mirza Citronella.

I. chrysographes Dark Form(m), Hybrids(s).

I. chrysographes X chrysofors mixed (p), I. chrysographes X forrestii (vs). I. delavayi(m)

Series Spuriae

I. orientalis (p) I. kerneriana(m), I. musulmanica(vs).

I. spuria mixed(m), mixed American Hybrids (s), 'Adobe Sunset'(s), 'Imperial Ruby' (s), 'Violet Bloomfield'(m).

Series Californicae.

Pacific Coast Iris mixed (m). (These come easily from seed).

Series Foetidissimae

I. foetidissima 'Citrina' (p).

odd one out... I. milesii (m).

Those marked (vs) very small, (s) small, (m) medium, (p) plenty to supply. For (vs)&(s) please order an alternative.

We have had good reports of our seed germination from last year, keep up the good work.

Plants for Sale.

I. sibirica 'NIKLASSEE'(Lake Niklas), tetraploid, dark blue (Tamberg). (Only a few).

do 'GOLDKIND' (Gold Child), medium dark blue, yellow signal (Tamberg).

do 'ELEMENEY' dark blue and white.

do 'SOFT BLUE' remountant (Currier McEwen).

These plants came in October from East Germany (many thanks), some were beginning to shoot, they were potted up and put into a frame. In your interest, they will not be sent out until this bad weather is, hopefully over, say around April.

We also have I. delavayi (dark purple, likes moist conditions). (not too many).

The sibiricas are £2 each and the delavayi £1, if you would also like I. pseudacorus

'Bastardii'(pale yellow), I have some in the pond to lift... £1.

Postage would be nice, say a little towards costs, leave it with you.

Very little space for more, and I have some Members letters, Helen Grier has written about her Spurias, we are thankful that they did not suffer the earthquake in their area. David Dixon has been to the U.S.A. and South Africa and has sent pictures of Dietes which look really gorgeous, I want to hear more, and I expect you will too. I am afraid they will have to be 'continued in our next' as they say, that is the July Newsletter. Thank you all for writing in, one day I will catch up, in the meantime have a good Iris year, and watch out for these terrible storms, maybe we have got used to calm waters.

Before I go, there is just one thing to put right:-

Mrs. F. Jones (sorry I do not know your Christian name) joined our Group as the N/L was going out in 1989, and was not properly introduced, we welcome you, and hope that you will write and tell us about your garden & the Irises you grow, please.

Finally Ben Hager's Book 'The Iris' can be obtained from Thames & Hudson, 30 Bloomsbury St. London WC1B 3QP. 146 illustrations, 73 in colour, 144 pages price £24. Looks Good.

Bye! Bye!...