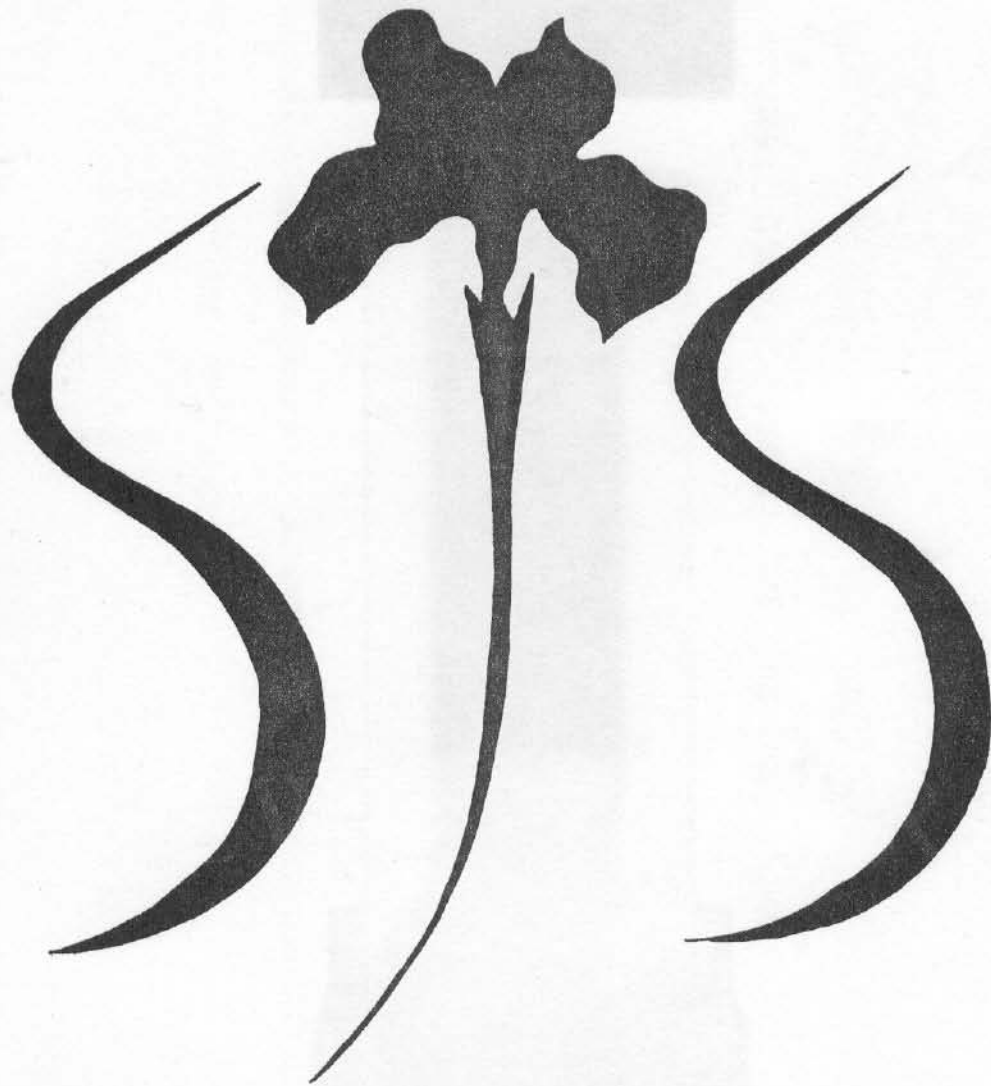


NEWSLETTER



OF THE

SIBERIAN SPURIA AND JAPANESE GROUP
(INCLUDING PACIFICAS AND WATER IRIS)

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 them with problems.
4. To report on Hybridisation.

The Group's Officers.

Chairman..... Mr. Adrian Whittaker, 'Chestnuts', Hilden Way, LITTLETON.
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SUBSCRIPTIONS.

ON JULY 1st 1991 the subscription will be increased to £2 per year (due to increased costs).

To explain the way our Group funds are run, Our financial year begins on July 1st and ends the following 30th June. Which means that SUBSCRIPTIONS are due AFTER JULY 1st. Paid-up Members will receive the July N/L and then the February N/L, but if by then Subs are outstanding, the JULY N/L will NOT be sent out (sorry, but that is the way it works.) It is only by generous donations of plants and seeds to sell that we can operate in this way (take a look at the financial report.) This system was set in 1976. I have to stress this, because there is a mistaken idea that our Year begins on Jan. 1st and it is causing some confusion, let alone work.

Please send all Subscriptions to the Hon. Secty./Treas. do not mark the envelope as Treas. it is not wise. A 'notice of non-payment is always sent!.

I hope you understand these precautions, it has become necessary to make a statement. Enough of business, your letters have been coming in and we have another full N/L. We are due, at the moment to a spell of very sharp weather, so take care of those Irises.

Editorial.

'The generic reservoir of the plant and animal life sharing our world provides us, I believe, with the most perfect survival kit imaginable as we face the unknown challenges of the future. It is impossible to predict which part of the survival kit might one day be needed, yet we allow its contents to be discarded with scarcely a thought or backward glance!..

This is a quote from H.R.H. The Prince of Wales lecture on The Rainforest. I find it very prophetic and great heed should be taken by all gardeners in all parts of the World, we must all do our bit....

It is now nearly 15 years since the Group was first started and a good time to stop.. and take stock of how far we have come... In 1976, 20 Newsletters were sent out, now we are posting well over a 100. Our financial position is sound. Membership is far more widespread, it includes, in addition to Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Holland, Germany, Sweden, many States in the U.S.A. and lastly we can add Estonia. There I have forgotten 'Jean' our good friend in France (sorry Jean).

Members write in about their Irises, their gardens, problems, failures and successes. Specialist growers give their advice generously, so that Members can apply it to their own efforts.. (I find this service unique, you do not see it everywhere).

There is such a thirst for knowledge all the time, that we are steadily increasing our Library to meet demand and help you to understand and grow our Irises.

Last Year our Chairman Adrian Whittaker donated funds to buy Cass & Sidney's book 'Growing Irises'.

Dr. Currier McEwen kindly gave us his excellent book 'The Siberian' years ago and now we must send our most sincere thanks for sending his latest 'The Japanese Iris' with such wonderful colour plates, and so informative.

Your generous donations have enabled us to buy 'The Iris by Fritz Kohlein', which covers, most clearly, all the Irises we study in our Group.

'The Pictorial Book of Iris Laevigata' is Akira Horinaka's latest book on his beloved Laevigatas. Lovely colour plates and partially translated into English.

'Irises' is a Wisley handbook by Sidney Linnegar and Jennifer Hewitt published by Cassells £3.95. A useful book for many first timers as well as Irisians. Good colour illustrations.

We number among our Group quite a few Nurserymen and Women, and Plantsmen and Women, in the U.S.A. and Germany. Here in England Three specialize in Japanese Irises. We have yet to see more prepared to stock many of the New Siberians, which some of us already grow. Spurias, I have rarely seen catalogued. Water Iris occasionally appear.

Here, in this area, I am pleased to say, it is gradually becoming a possibility.. How about your area? and what is more to the point, can anything be done about it?? Once a demand is created, curiosity will sometimes take over. Take along photographs if you have them, otherwise the books have wonderful colour plates. It is such a pity that more gardeners do not see 'yellow Sibiricas', 'deep bronze Spurias', 'magnificent ensatas' let alone 'creamy white pseudacorus' and 'blue and white Laevigatas'... they just do not know what they are missing do they??? so over to you....

Good Gardening.

Joan Trevithick.

Chairman's Letter.

Dear Members,

Because we are generally concerned with growing water loving irises, it is very easy to assume that a pool or stream is absolutely essential. This is far from the truth. If you are able to provide a satisfactory amount of moisture when the plant requires it, then the battle is half won. With the steady increase of interest in the Japanese irises has come the realisation that they are not grown in perpetually flooded conditions in their home country. Myth had become virtually established fact, in the West. We now know better-- but the lesson is there for all.

Discovering how and where a particular plant grows in the wild is the pointer to best cultural conditions for your own plants, but it is only that. Descriptions can be misleading or atypical and cultivars can vary markedly in their requirements from the source species. Soil structure and pH can vary within a few feet in a garden, and some iris cultivars raised in places like California will, against the odds, perform excellently in climates like the U.K. Its a complex picture but part of the interest in gardenong.

There is no simple answer except to get as much information as you can, talk to growers and mull it all over before planting. Many experienced gardeners may move their

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plants several times before settling on the best spot. If a particular iris does not look too happy after a reasonable time, don't automatically assume that it has a poor constitution, or is diseased. It may be that its just the conditions which are wrong. Look at it critically and try to see what might be the cause---experiment...

With this in mind and turning to I.pseudacorus, my own experience may be of interest. Whilst I.pseudacorus is typically a plant associated with the sides of streams, wet ditches and marshes, I have to grow most of mine in the open garden, because of lack of space, with the exception of one clump in the small pool. The chalk soil is hot, dry and thin. Since Pseudacorus inhabits chalk streams, it is clearly happy in alkaline conditions, so all I needed was moisture and humus. Placing the plants at the bottom of a gentle slope in an area where there is some shade, adding more humus and water as often as possible, I have generally had good results with no failures. However, last year, when that part of the garden dried out, all the flowering was poor, leaf growth was late and stunted as could be expected. I am now incorporating more humus to prevent a repetition. By observation, over the years, I have also noticed that when my cultivation has been wanting they have developed dark brown staining of the bottom parts of the leaves, very similar to that in Cymbidiums when in poor condition. This is something for me to watch for and remedy, but does, I think, prove the point, that it pays to look at plants critically and as regularly as you can, rather than plant and forget.

May I wish everyone a rewarding 1991 in the garden.

Adrian Whittaker.

List of New Members.

We welcome the following New Members and hope they enjoy reading our Newsletter, also that they will take part, by writing in about their Irises and gardens, or anything that would be of interest. Their names are:*

Mrs. Dorothy Cook, 'Southwell Garden Centre' SOUTHWELL. Notts. Dorothy has just opened her Centre, which is on the site of an older one, but I tell you this is a real delight, plants I have not seen for a long time, and a pond in which she intends to grow Water Irises, later I hope to introduce her to some other of our cultivars as they become available, meanwhile, every success with your efforts.

Mr. Alistair Fraser, 'Brackenhurst College', SOUTHWELL. Notts.

There was'nt a lot of time to talk to Alistair when we called, as the new term was just beginning, but I hope to return (when the weather is better) and tell him more about our Group. He is certainly interested.

Mr. Michael Wickenden, 'Cally Gardens', GATEHOUSE OF FLEET, CASTLE DOUGLAS. Scotland

DG7 2DJ.

Michael also stocks unusual plants, and also runs a seed exchange. His catalogue lists about 20 different Irises, and what is more to the point several named varieties such as 'Black Knight', 'Gerals Darby' and 'Holden Clough', as well as some species I. fulva, and I. fulva, I am sure he will be extending his range whenever it is possible, and we wish him every success.

Mrs. P.J.Cole 'Iona', Woodlands St. Mary, NEWBURY. Berks. June has joined us after receiving the leaflet which Ray Wilson has kindly been sending out with the B.I.S. seeds. She enjoys Water Irises in particular, and says there isn't a bed in the garden which has'nt got Irises in it (once the bug bites, June). She is not allowed to let it loose in the pond, but it is so good tempered it will grow anywhere. (It will need a very strong pair of arms and a chopper, if it takes hold, I can tell you..). June writes to thank Ray for the useful tips he gave her on growing P.C.I.'s, they are more settled after very little success previously.

Overseas.

Mr. Mark. A.Cook, 639. Portland Drive, LEXINGTON. KENTUCKY. 40503-2161. U.S.A.

Mark has joined after seeing the notice which ^{was} so very kindly printed in the Japanese Iris 'Review'. (Thank you Clarence). He has also written an account of his garden and the Irises he grows, which you will find, further on in this Newsletter. Thank you Mark, its good to hear about your part of the U.S.A.

Mary Lynne Brown & David Maltby, 54. Stonechurch Rd. E. HAMILTON. ONTARIO. Canada L9B 1A9.

Also joined after seeing the notice in 'the Review'. They have been growing Japanese Irises for some time now, some years more successfully than others. Their location is on the Niagara Escarpment, which is a limestone feature of Ontario. Much modification of the soil is needed to keep one step ahead of the pH battle. Mary goes on to say that they attended the Maine Convention, and could'nt get over the beautiful Irises they saw.

Mrs. M. Knoll, STAADIONI, 28a, TARTU. ESTONIA. U.S.S.R.

Our Vice Chairman has introduced Mrs Knoll, who we welcome most sincerely, and hope to learn more about how, and perhaps which, Irises grow well in Estonia. Looking forward to hearing from you.

My Irises.

by Mark Cook (Kentucky)

I really enjoyed my first issue of the S.S & J. Newsletter, I found it very interesting and informative. About my Irises, I grow Tall and Dwarf Bearded, Siberian, Japanese and Louisiana Irises. Also the following Species:- I. cristata, setosa, versicolor, atroviolacea, tectorum, x paltec, pseudacorus, brevicaulis (Louisiana species), ochroleuca (orientalis), one aril bred and several remontan bearded Irises.

The season starts in early April with J. atroviolacea, in mid-April Dwarf Bearded and later I. cristata. T.B's for the whole of May, together with Siberians and the others listed. The Louisianas bloom in early June and the Japanese until late July. Remontan Bearded start about 1st September to late October or early November, depending on a temperature fall below 20 degrees (f), below which I cannot protect them.

All of these Irises grow well for me in spite of the Iris borer and unpredictable weather. In late March and again in mid-April I spray them all with 'Lindane'. The borer attacks T.B's and I. pseudacorus the most. In Winter the soil freezes and thaws almost daily, which is hard on the roots. Mostly we get down to 10 degrees (f), but it can drop to 30. Alternately it can be as warm as 70 degrees a few days later, we do get some snow. In Spring warm and cold weather alternate, with thunderstorms in between. Snow can fall as late as early May. Summers are hot and humid, most days 90 to 95 degs., a few days it reaches 100 to 110. Fall starts warm and sunny but turns cool and cloudy in November. October can see snow again, but not usually until November. Rainfall at the official weather station here is about 46 ins. per year, but here in the part of town where I live, we get more thunderstorms and about 73 ins. of rain each year.

I also grow Hibiscus Moscheutos, Hibiscus Coccineus, Rose of Sharon, Coriopsis, Blue Flax, Primulas, Chrysanthemums, Japanese Anemones, Cone flower, Centaureas, Daffodils, Hostas, Day Lilies, Sedum Spectabile, True Lilies, Phlox, Dianthus, 4, Exbury Azaleas, a few fringe trees and Dogwoods, a crab apple, Viburnum x Juddii, a European Hornbeam and a Prickly Pear cactus (under an overhang).

(Wow Mark! 73 ins. of rain, your Sibericas and Water Irises must love it. What an interesting garden you must have. J.T.)

My Irises

by Alan Green.

Mansfield.

My garden is of moderate to large size, dependent on my visitors love of gardening, with soil which is a slightly acidic infertile mass of sand, so I am involved in a slow process of conversion. I have lived here for only four years and the garden is in a continued stage of development, with only a slow build up of plants such as Irises, thus giving me only just a little to write about.

Irises are just one of the many types of flowers that I grow, but are certainly one of my favourites. I like mainly Siberians, Spurias and Pacific Coasts.

Due to the limited number of gardens where one can see the above Irises, it is difficult to assess if mine are growing well or otherwise. The majority are Siberian hybrids, purchased a few years ago, from the B.I.S. plant sales, and generally, they haven't flowered. I also have a love of 'growing from seed', with its excitement of waiting for the first flowering season. So I have a number of seedlings at various stages.

My Iris year begins with a few Reticulata hybrids and the odd Juno, before moving on to a nice display of seed grown Setosas in early May, most of which appeared to have suffered badly from the heat of summer. (Hopefully to no ill effect). They were followed by a batch of seed-grown P.C.I.'s. It is a shame that you cannot easily buy named P.C.I. hybrids, since they have such lovely flowers. Until such time I will have to continue with seeds.

'Fourfold Lavender' (seedling) was the first Siberian to flower in my garden, lavender blue blooms on 65cm. stems (measured to base of flower), followed by other various seedlings, some nice, some for the dustbin. Other than 'Fourfold Lavender' was a lovely white, which I liked better than the other two named hybrids, 'Fourfold White' (65cm.) and 'Anniversary' (62cm.)

I only have a few Spuria hybrids, which are settling down after being moved a few years ago. This year only 'Media Luz' flowered, I found it rather a disappointing colour. Since Spuria hybrids are not plentiful, I am growing again from (seed.) Some B.I.S. (cont.)

and some from the S.S & J. Group, which is, of course, not a quick process, with only one seedling flowering namely 'x Archie Owen', sown 1987, good growth with lovely bright yellow flowers on 100cm. stems, this & 'Media Luz' flowered around the end of June.

The only plant to flower late in the season was a Hewitt 40cg. seedling, with reasonable blue flowers, from late July to late August.

Most of my Irises have shown reasonable growth this year so, hopefully 1991 will be a better year...

(Thank you Alan, sorry to say that after two attempts to establish Iris gardens, one at Newark (the ground was later sold) and here at Radcliffe, which was allowed to get so weedy, we had to take them out, I have had to give up the idea of Public Iris gardens. There is a nursery which grows and sells its own P.C.T., namely 'Broadleigh Gardens', but they have not joined us, sad to say. As to growing from seed, I am an inveterate seed-sower, and have been for many years, like you, some good, some not so good, but I have a theory that plants sown and grown in their own environment will often do better than imports, and many have agreed with me. However, keep trying, Best of Luck. J.T.)

My Irises.

by A.B.Higgins.

Royden Essex.

I have a modest plot, 3 years in the making, so far, and the guerrilla warfare with bindweed, couch and children's impedimenta, seems to have a doubtful outcome. The design is the conventional contemporary hotch-potch.. i.e. Gertrude Jekyll meets the Eighth Imperial Tea-Master.

A passion for Hardy Plants means I grow many different species and strains of Primula Geraniums, as well as a very small collection of Water Iris and Dwarf Bearded. The success I achieved from sowing self-saved seed of I.pseudacorus, I.sibirica & I.laevigata coupled with an inability to obtain named varieties of I.ensata, prompted me to respond to the tantalizing advertisement (Garden News).

(Good news, we have 3 Japanese Iris Nurseries, in our list of Members now, namely Norman Payne, Dr. J.A.Smart and Keith Gott, and I understand they are increasing their stock whenever possible. J.T.).

'DRAYCOTT'

by Carol Warner.

Maryland. U.S.A.

The Warner garden, home of Andrew and Carol Warner, is located in northern Baltimore County, Maryland, on a 9 acre hillside surrounded by woods on three sides and open farmland at the back. It is part of the farm on which Carol was raised. The name 'DRAYCOTT', comes from the town in England that was the home of Andy's ancestors. Family history indicates that Captain William Warner of Blockley, Draycott Parish, Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire came to America sometime between 1658 & 1675. His 300 acre estate which he called 'Blockley' covered a large part of what is now Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Colonial and Revolutionary Families of Pennsylvania edited by John Jordan states that Draycott signifies 'secluded spot' or 'peaceful retreat'. For that reason it was selected as the name for our home and evolving garden.

The gardens are planted for landscape purposes and all contain many other perennials mixed with the irises. There is a rock garden in front of the house with dwarf evergreens and rockery plants. A fish pond near the woods in back of the house has goldfish, a few frogs and water lilies. The path from the pond wanders through a woodland wildflower garden which also contains a collection of many varieties of hosta and astilbe.

The garden was part of the tour for the Society of Japanese Irises Convention in 1989 and is a national display garden for Japanese Irises. Most of the J.I.'s are planted in a bed surrounding the deck of the swimming pool. There they are grown in large clumps for landscape value. Many other, more recently planted, are growing in long rows along the front and the back of the vegetable garden. Our soil is naturally acid and a 3-4 ins. mulch of pine needles retains moisture and also adds to the natural acidity. Very little extra watering is required because of the heavy mulch.

Siberian and a few Tall-bearded irises were the first to be grown at 'Draycott'. They are grown in large island beds along with daffodils, peonies, rhododendron and many other types of perennials. In many cases, shrubs and small trees are also included in the gardens. Most are also mulched with pine needles, but areas where bearded irises are grown are left without any mulch.

Our favorite irises are mostly Siberians and Japanese... Siberians of special note this year were:- 'Marshmallow Frosting', 'Sultan's Ruby', 'Reprise', 'It's Delightful', 'Lady Vanessa', 'Cathy Childerson' and 'Shaker's Prayer'. Favorite Japanese irises were:- 'Crystal Halo', 'Ike-No- Sazanami', 'Japanese Pinwheel', 'Cascade Crest', 'Warai Hotel' (cont)

'The Great Mogul', 'Oriental Elegance', 'Hegira', 'Trance' and 'Isi-N-Umi'. The old three fall pink variety 'Rose Queen', is also a favorite each year.

The Warner garden will be one of the twelve gardens on tour this May, during the Convention for the American Iris Society. Other tour gardens are located in the greater Washington D.C./Baltimore area. 'Draycott' has added 130 'Guest' irises from various hybridizers especially for the Convention. Many other new varieties, especially T.B's & I.B's have also been planted. Several types of species irises can also be found in the various beds. We sincerely invite you to attend the Convention and visit our garden. (Carol is the Membership Chairman of the Society for Japanese Irises, and has been a Member of our Group for some time... Thank you Carol, what a lovely garden you have. We send all good wishes and hope you have many visitors. Joan.)

Hard on the heels of Carol's invitation to the A.I.S. Convention came this one from Judy Hollingworth, Editor of 'The Siberian Iris'. This time it is for 1993. Here it is:-

SIBIRICAE IN '93, CONVENTION UPDATE.

The guest gardens are planted for the Siberian Iris Convention which will be held in Michigan in 1993. We have been amazed at the response. Thirty-nine hybridizers were contacted and we had a response from twenty-six. We hope to receive guests from a few more people in the spring. Final figures are not worked out yet, but by my unofficial count these hybridizers have sent 203 different cultivars. Well over half of these are under seedling number or not yet introduced, so if you can join us you are guaranteed a show of the very latest in Siberian breeding.

We have already heard from lots of people planning to attend. It seems that both hybridizers and growers of Siberians have just been waiting for this event to happen. Now we are pondering how we will accomodate everyone who wants to come. Members from England, Germany, Japan and Switzerland have sent their irises, as have hybridizers from eleven states in the U.S. The Fall weather has been very kind with generous rains and no killing frosts yet (October 27th.). Since all the guests were in the ground by Sept. 17th. there should be plenty of time for them to establish their roots before Winter.

The Convention date has been tentatively set for the weekend of June 12th. 1993. We will have five gardens on tour. One will be Ensata Gardens, with which many of you are familiar. Number two is Anna Mae and Ronald Miller's garden in Kalamazoo. The third one will be our garden. All these three will have many Siberian seedlings as well as guests, as all the owners are hybridizers. The fourth garden belongs to Virginia Maynard, a Siberian fancier and ex-president of Tri-County Iris Society. Virginia lives in Dimondale, situated between East Lansing, our Convention Center, and Kalamazoo.

The fifth planting is at the Horticultural Garden at Michigan State University. Ground was broken for this public garden, designed and managed by the Department of Horticulture in 1988. It is being developed at a cost of about 1.5 million dollars in private donations. The official opening is in 1993, and while still new, as gardens go, it should be developing some character by then. It will not be a master planting as originally planned, but will contain at least 180 different Siberians. Plenty to whet the appetite of the many visitors to the garden.

The motto for the state of Michigan is 'If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look around you'. We would like to invite you to come and see our beautiful Siberians and our pleasant peninsulas (two of them) with their 3,200 miles of Great Lakes shoreline, beautiful sandy beaches and pine forests. We are excited by the response to our Convention plans, and we hope to convey that excitement to you.

Judy Hollingworth.

(You have Judy, it sounds a lovely place, and we do hope that your Convention's success will exceed your wildest dreams, and compensate for all the work that you and your colleagues are putting in. Thank you for the offer to bulk-buy Currier's book 'Siberian Irises', I have given details under Treasurer's Report. I would like to also say welcome to your new President Anna Mae Miller, and Tom Abrego your new slide Chairman. (Tom and Ellen have been Members of our Group for some time). I would like to congratulate you on your lovely colour plate cover of 'Dance Ballerina Dance' (Spring 1990). Delightful, together with an issue full of useful information as usual.).

The Japanese Iris Convention, Maine 1990.

by Currier McEwen.

The Convention in Maine this past July was a most happy event and a great success. Some 250 people came and there were some who applied late whom we could not accept because of lack of space at the hotel (Meeting rooms). The Show went well, with lots of entries. Kamo was the principal speaker at the banquet on the first night and Yabuza

(cont.)

Ichie and Shimuzu also spoke at an afternoon session. At all the gardens visited on the next two days the Japanese Irises were beautiful. Here at 'Seaways' we were not yet 'at peak' bloom, but even so there were hundreds of my own seedlings flowering as well as 60 brought to me by Kamo in 1987 and many named varieties of other American breeders.

A happy occasion also was a real Maine clam and lobster bake---cooked under seaweed and served under a huge tent in our field... After lunch, the tent was used for a Meeting and Auction Sale at which the Society for Japanese Irises made lots of money. Some precious interspecies hybrids brought by Kamo and Ichie made astronomical prices!!

Jill Copeland held a Judges Training session in the garden, as the final event. Elizabeth and I had the great pleasure of having our Japanese guests, including Mrs Kamo in our home for two additional days.. It was all wonderful...

(Congratulations Currier to you and Elizabeth, I know it was a great success by reading the accounts in 'THE REVIEW'. No doubt many have thanked you for all the hard work you must have put into the effort, I was so sorry to have missed you when you came over due to my short spell in hospital, but perhaps, next time eh! If Members would like to read articles by Members of the J.I.Soc. and account by Tsutoma Yabuya called 'Studies of the Breeding of Japanese Garden Iris', you can, by sending to Jennifer Hewitt (Our Librarian) for 'Fall 90 Volume 27, Number 2. of the Review of J.I.Society'. Proposed Judging Standards for Japanese Irises were discussed at the Maine Convention Lee Walsh (Editor of the Review) has written to say that they were agreed by the full A.I.S. Board of Directors Meeting, and that they can go into use this Spring. He does not know how soon the new sheets for the 'Judges Handbook' will be printed and distributed, but there should be a notice in the Spring Issue of The Review. (Thanks Lee)

'Siberians from a Berlin Garden'

by Tomas Tanberg.

My interest in breeding Siberian irises started with the first flowering of some newer varieties kindly sent by Mrs. Brummitt. They were her 1964 introductions--- 'Cambridge', '8 Dreaming Spires' and 'Sea Shadows'. I crossed these three irises with each other and from a batch of mixed seedlings I selected 'Kobaltblau' (R. 1978), a deep blue of modern shape with good branching, and 'Wiltrud Gissell' (R. 1978), a floriferous light blue. In the R.H.S. Wisley trials for Siberians 'Kobaltblau' got an Award of Merit in 1985.

From the same batch of mixed seed I produced two mid-blue tetraploids by colchicine treatment. One of them was registered and introduced as 'Breiter Start' in 1978. The other one (Chingew) is still a powerful parent for strong stems and upright growth and produced 'Germanet One' (R. 1989) when combined with 'Laurenstuhl' from Eckard Berlin's tetraploid breeding.

Another one of my early tetraploids was 'Wide White' (R. 1979, HC. Wisley 1983), derived from 'White Magnificence' (Kitton '64) X 'Cambridge'. Colchicine treatment in this case resulted in a plant with extremely large and wide flowers, but no fertility at the tetraploid level. Over the years the tetraploid size of this variety has disappeared and today, at least in my garden, 'Wide White' is a wide petalled diploid of normal size.

'White Magnificence' also gave us 'Lilienthal' (R. 1978), which was selected from a batch of 'White Swirl' (Cassebeer '57) X 'White Magnificence' seedlings. Named in honor of the early German flight pioneer, it produces compact and flaring white flowers on well-branched stems.

When Currier McEwen's tetraploids became available I bought a group of five unnamed seedlings of the second tetraploid generation, in order to have partners for my own conversions. Working with only one's own conversions can be a tedious thing, since diploid and/or tetraploid seed may be produced by the plants involved. Checking for tetraploidy and using it by setting seed on pure tetraploids of other breeders is therefore nearly a must for a beginner.

From a cross of two of these McEwen seedlings I selected the extremely vigorous dark blue 'Fanny Heidt' (R. 1980) which later yielded 'Zweites Hundert' with 'Breiter Start' as the pollen parent. 'Zweites Hundert' (R. 1984), a bright mid-blue, large flowered tetraploid, has a nearly classical shaped flower and shows its falls beautifully to a distant observer. I feel more and more that horizontal falls are a severe disadvantage for other than dwarf Siberians. 'Weisse Etage' (R. 1984) is another child of the original McEwen seedlings. It was much admired for its double branching. It is, however, a bit narrow in the hafts of the falls.

In the diploid field I got 'Purpeller' (R. 1980) from a cross of 'White Swirl' (Cassebeer '57) X 'Eric The Red' (Whitney '43). This is a red-blue, strong and early

(cont)

flowering variety. A cross of (Cambridge 'xself') X 'Tealwood' (Varner '59), (not 'Ego' X unknown as given in the registration) yielded 'Annemarie Troeger' (R. 1980 HG. Wisley 1984) showing light mid-blue flowers on tall stems (105-115cm. 40"). This is a Siberian iris with a beautiful clump effect.

A cross of 'Tycoon' (Cleveland '26) X 'Limeheart' (Brummitt '68) resulted in a flower with very wide falls, and when this was again crossed with 'Limeheart', produced a group of so-called 'Pauseback hybrids' (chubbycheeked), with small flowers but nearly overlapping falls. When the best Pauseback was crossed with 'Cambridge', I got two seedlings with extremely wide falls and standards. One of them, a mid-blue with a lavender hue, was named 'Blue Rosebud' (R. 1981) referring to the way the buds opened. It should be noted that those very wide flowers (and I have seen similar cases from other breeders) may have difficulty opening completely due to some interference by the spathes. Quite often only the second flower develops its full beauty.

'Blue Rosebud' when used as the pollen parent on a seedling from 'Dreaming Spires' X self, gave us 'Quiet Shape' (R. 1984), a floriferous dark blue with wide flaring falls and no signal. Like most of the wide-flowered ones it has only two flowers per stem.

In 1982 we repeated the cross that produced 'Blue Rosebud' and treated all the seedlings with colchicine. Among the converted plants we obtained was a very large flowered chimera with wide flaring falls and upright standards, which got the working name 'Big Potential'. Its pollen produced seed on 'Dear Diane' (McEwen '79) in 1973 and all the seedlings were of magnificent size, shape and vigor, ranging in color from light blue to dark blue with hairlines in some cases.

Our breeding line in the light blue color range began with 'Berlin Bluebird' (R. 1986) a pure medium blue from 'Blue Brilliant' (Cassebeer '59) X 'White Swirl'. In addition to very pure color, it is a strong flowering plant with double branching of the stems. When this was crossed with 'Wide White' we got a pure light blue with semi-flaring, wide falls and upright standards. This was registered as 'Berlin Delft' in 1984.

A new purity class of light blue became available with Currier McEwen's 'Signal's Blue', an overlooked beauty but with weak substance and somewhat unreliable vigor. We immediately crossed it with a lighter one of our 'Pauseback Hybrids' and got a clear light blue with beautiful shape. We called it 'Ueber Den Wolken', but due to the fact that it did not multiply as quickly as we would have liked, we did not register it until 1989, when we heard some positive news about it from Currier McEwen. We also showed it at the British Iris Society Show in 1989, and it is now on a lot of want lists. We are trying our best to increase the stock sufficiently for introduction.

From seedlings of the same cross that produced 'Ueber Den Molken' we got a sectorial chimera (SST182) after colchicine treatment. The now separated tetraploid section is pollen fertile and shows big and compact flowers of light blue with a darker centre. We have used the pollen on all light blue tetraploids we could find, but there are not too many. The first seedlings obtained with 'Lady of Quality' (McEwen '82) and 'Blue Reverie' (McEwen '85) will flower in 1990.

In the yellow color class we have selected 'Gelbe Moeve' (R. 1986), a very vigorous selection from 'Dreaming Yellow' (McEwen '69) X 'Butter and Sugar' (McEwen '76) with light yellow flaring falls.

Colchicine treatment of 'Dreaming Yellow' X self seedlings gave us a fertile light yellow tetraploid with greenish throat and ugly shape. When this was used as the pollen parent on white tetraploids with yellow throats, we got a tall and large flowered tetraploid with falls of uniform creamy yellow. The color is, however, much weaker than that of 'Butter and Sugar'. It should be noted that true progress in the yellow color range has been obtained by Marlene Ahlburg in Germany. Her 'Welfenprinz', when shown during the German Iris Exhibition at Frankfurt in 1989, proved to be superior to all earlier varieties with respect to depth of color and shape.

In the wine red color group we have not yet introduced any of our selections. On the diploid level we have got some very floriferous seedlings from 'Appelblute' X 'Wine Wings' (Varner '76). Colchicine treatment of seedlings from the same cross yielded a pollen fertile tetraploid with a deep wine red color. This was then crossed with 'Ewen' (McEwen '70), and 'Reddy Maid' (McEwen '78) and produced a number of vigorous and floriferous seedlings of excellent shape, which, however, all lack the deep velvety color of e.g. 'Hubbard' (McEwen '82). With the exception of 'Ewen' we have not found wine red tetraploid cultivars, so far, that can be called floriferous. A clump of 'Hubbard' has, in five years, flowered only once, but then with eleven gorgeous spikes.

We were for a long time reluctant to register new white tetraploids, due to the insufficient width of the falls of our seedlings. When we noticed that pollen of a converted 'Wide White' seedling on 'Weisse Etage' had produced a white flower of acceptable width we registered it as 'Viel Schnee' in 1989. This plant, when cultivated

well, has a double branching of its very upright stems and up to four buds in the terminal position. With respect to garden value of a Siberian, we think that a high bud count in the terminal position is more important than additional flowers on low side branches which are hidden by the leaves.

Dwarf Siberians have also found our interest. When we tested the effects of selfing Siberians we got 'Cambrita' (R. 1979), a 40 cm. (16") light blue from 'Cambridge' X self. Selfing 'Cambrita' resulted in even dwarfer seedlings. The very rare flowers were slightly darker. Selfing of these plants ended in dwarf weaklings which did not produce a flower at all.

From 'Ego' (McGarvey '65) X 'Blue Rosebud' we got 'Berlin Little White' (R. 1988), a graceful 50 cm. (20") white with wide flowers and some ruffling. In 1989 we registered 'Berlin Little Blue' (TT-seedling X 'Berlin Delft') with light blue, little flowers of semi-flaring type. It is about 40 cm. tall and produces many stems with flowers of delicate shape and color. The three smaller ones I have mentioned are quite different from Currier McEwen's real small ones, 'Annick' and 'Baby Sister', which are derived from I. sibirica alba nana.

Our most important problem during the last years is the lack of space in our garden. Our 1,500 square meters are too small for multiple activities in the field of beardless irises. So it can happen that promising selected seedlings cannot be replanted for propagation and finally dwindle away at their original planting site. With the increasing speed of developments we therefore have to throw away older plants without mercy.

Generally speaking, however, Siberian Irises are a constant source of pleasure and excitement for us and we look forward to better and better varieties in the future. We will certainly try to participate in the improvement of this valuable and reliable garden perennial.

(This interesting account is reproduced by kind permission of Judy Hollingworth Editor of 'The Siberian Iris'. We are very grateful.)

Spuria Iris Culture.

by Ramona Howard, Region 17.

If you grow Tall Bearded or Bearded varieties successfully, you can grow Spurias. They are not as difficult to grow as some other beardless species and cultivars. They prefer a neutral to slightly alkaline soil. Spurias must have good drainage and prefer full sun, but will tolerate partial shade, especially in areas that have extremely high temperatures in the Summer. Most of the garden hybrids have a late summer-dormant period and a drying-off period during July through August, which is beneficial. Too much moisture combined with Summer heat causes a rot that takes the new growth in both the summer-dormant and summer-green types also. In some very dry areas you may need to water through July, but hold back on the water during August, and it should be withheld in established clumps until fall growth begins. Foliage of the summer-dormant types can be cut back to the ground for garden neatness after it has died down, about the 1st. August without harming the plant growth. This can be removed when completely dried.

Spurias are very heavy feeders and will reward you with superior plants and flower stalks if you incorporate plenty of barnyard manure and/or commercial fertilizer into your soil. If fertilized annually, clumps will persist and bloom for years--10 to 15 year clumps are not unusual, and eventually spread as much as 5-6 feet.

It is best to transplant in the Fall and water well until they start to grow. Once established, Spurias are drought-resistant. Heavy irrigation in the Spring increases growth and bloom. When they are dug to be transplanted, be sure to keep the roots and rhizomes moist. This is most important, as they will not tolerate drying out, or being out of the ground as some bearded types will.

Planting depth depends on type of soil. If you have heavy soil you will need to plant at least one inch deep, and in light sandy soils--two or more inches deep. Space them far enough apart to grow in the same location for several years. As Spuria Irises are very temperamental, in that they resent being transplanted and usually do not bloom the first year after planting.

The second year you will be rewarded with several bloom stalks. Although the Fall is generally thought to be the best time for transplanting, they may be transplanted at other times if you are careful not to let the roots or rhizomes dry out. Spuria iris clumps may be left in the same location for years, but remember they will need to be well fed so that the quality and quantity of bloom will continue to be good.

Virus affects some Spuria irises and can be worrisome, although it is almost never fatal among the named cultivars and seldom is very debilitating under good cultural conditions. It causes some disfigurement of the plant, petals and texture. There is no

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known cure, but resistance must be bred into the Spuria plant by using virus-resistent parents, and making careful selections of seedlings for future breeding. The only serious disease is mustard seed fungus or crown rot which also affects Louisianas, Bearded Iris and Daylilies. Soaking rhizomes in 5% sodium hypochlorite solution and thoroughly mixing Terrachlor into the soil before planting are effective control. Also dust or spray annually in the Summer for prevention, as it is much easier to prevent than to get rid of once your irises are affected. The mosaic caused by one type of virus, has symptoms of a light green-and-gold streaking and mottling of leaves. In some varieties the plant may be stunted, buy, hopefully, a variety that is so susceptible would not be put on the market. Evidence of the mosaic infection may be striping in the foliage, dark flecking or watermarks in the flowers and distortion of petals.

Why not try some of the inexpensive varieties of Spuria Irises to start with, and do remember to plant them where they will get lots of sun and have good drainage. It really is as easy as growing Bearded Irises. It might take a little more food and water, but the results will be worth it... They make excellent cut flowers and last well in water, and your flower arrangements, so your efforts will be well rewarded...

Spurias In South Carolina.

by Ruth Wilder. Reg.5.

I can truly say I have learned a lot since moving the Spurias from Alabama to South Carolina almost three years ago. I had to plant in pots since we had a severe drought in S.Carolina that Summer. I wrote an article that some of the plants were really pitiful when I put them in the ground. Now I know the reason for their lack of growth. Due to the good intentions of my new neighbors, those pots of Spurias were getting watered at least once a day, but usually twice... Those poor pitiful plants were almost drowned. After they had time to dry out, some of these plants began to grow, and they have done quite well since then.

Red clay is a problem. I have added much gypsum, dehydrated manure and some sandy loam, so the soil is much more pliable now. I have them in full sun and they also have good drainage. In the past two years, I have added at least a dozen newer Spurias, but have lost two of these. One was lost by the presence of a hungry chipmunk and the other just seemed to fizzle away.

I do not have the problem of too much water in the Summer in this area, since we are rather dry. I am pleased with the growth of the Spurias, and last year, I had quite a few bloom stalks. On checking this year, a lot of new growth is showing.

In Region 7, in February, I had the opportunity to attend a Spuria Judges School. Not only did they have a good training session, but we had the opportunity to see some of the new introductions. I have my list started for this year.

Since Regio 5 is having the 1992 Convention in Atlanta it would be nice to see Spurias in some of the Southern Gardens that will be on tour.

More on Spuria Summer Rot

by Ben R.Hager.

We used to have a lot of trouble with the 'mysterious illness' described in the Fall 1988 Newsletter (The plant is growing normally, with a nice new fan developing, when, without warning, the leaves turn yellow and die. On digging the rhizome, it is found that the growing tip has disintegrated and is now a pulpy mass of fibers. Usually the remainder of the rhizome is unaffected and may already have new shoots developing, but occasionally the whole rhizome is ruined.), but we have not had very much trouble with this since we figured out what was causing it....at least in our conditions. We called it 'Summer Rot', because it occurred in the period between flowering and Fall transplanting. Of course it was at that time that we found the damage and it was too late to do anything about it. Most of the time the increase was not harmed and would continue to grow, so the plant was not lost, but we certainly had problems filling orders.

It was also about this time that we began soaking the rhizomes in Benlate before planting and worked Terrachlor Super X into the soil. Whether these two operations had any effect on the 'Summer Rot' we still don't know, because we decided that the rot was caused by summer irrigation. The combination of summer heat and moisture, seemed to be the causative agent.

We then began withholding all irrigation from mid-June/ early-July until Fall digging time before we irrigated again. For us this was about mid-August because we dug at this time to fill orders to be shipped to the coldest areas. It worked. Even this short period of complete drying out seemed to have the effect of controlling summer rot. We now get only an occasional rhizome that is damaged... (cont.)

The native ground of most Spuria species is described as marshy spring conditions, with complete drying out in Summer. This is probably why all of the 40 chromosome spuria iris go into dormancy in the Summer, but it is equally important to dry out the summer-green types in the Summer. These latter maintain green foliage throughout the Summer months but have no active roots growing during this period.

We have theorized that this may be the problem in colder and/or summer rain areas that get growth of plants but little bloom. The plants have lost their growing point where the bud is formed for the next year's bloom stalks.

When water is furnished to the plants in the Fall there is an immediate response of vigorous root growth, and irrigation must continue from that point until Winter arrives. This is so, even with our mid-August irrigation. However, it would be reasonable that growers who do not ship the iris to the more Northerly and Eastern climates, should hold off the first irrigation until the First of September or even later in the areas with long Summers. Or it might be that a period of complete drying, even a fairly short one, is all that is necessary. Areas with Summer rain will not be able to guarantee such a drying period, of course, so the alternative is to give as complete a drainage condition as possible, raising the planting up on ridges is one of the best ways of doing this, but it is possible that shallow planting would not be advisable as with T.B.'s since the beardless iris do require covering if not deep planted.

Raised beds are not the answer to drainage problems in most cases, since all that is being done is raising the level of the soil and putting a wall around it, unless the bed is tilted so that the water runs off; *or the soil is* so porous that it cannot hold fertility.

(These three articles are reproduced by kind permission of Charles Jenkins the Editor of the Spuria Iris Society Newsletter. Also hoping to answer some of the enquiries you have sent in. J.T.)

Regional Report from the East.

by Shirley Ryder.

Well, not a great deal to report from the South of the East, except to say that my Spurias do seem to have survived the drought, and apart from the casual nibbling of rabbits seem to be doing quite well. but I had to steal the grass whilst my husband is away as I wanted more room...unfortunately, rock hard ground this year, so I could'nt do it. I had thought that because of the weather I would at least have a good seed year, but it was'nt to be. When I went to harvest the Spuria seed, I found the pods to be inhabited by a small worm, which had feasted on the seed and left only dust. Does anyone know what it is?? Incidentally, before it became obvious that I would not be able to add to my Spurias (see explanation below), I spent a lot of time trying to decide what I would buy from a catalogue. Now I find that whilst all new introductions have information as to their colour, when it comes to the older ones it is assumed that it is known, so I consulted our Secretary, who pointed me to 'The Spuria Irises-Introduction and Varietal Listing 1985 (James Foreman) which is to be found in the Library. (The name threw me, but now I know where to look). Joan also tells me that she hopes to publish a list of the most popular Spurias in the July Newsletter, and other information. (I look forward to that).

One last moan about the weather. I couldn't actually work my soil until mid-November, so I had to wait until then to get my bulbs in...now I wish I hadn't bothered....They've all been dug up and eaten. First of all I thought it was the rabbits and I moved my rabbit cages in, then last week I changed my mind because quite a high pot on my terrace had been stripped, so I thought it must be rats. I spent the day placing land drains with sachets of Warfarin inside, but up until yesterday, none had been touched. My husband caught the culprit red-handed yesterday... an enormous cock pheasant.. Well.. I have no defence against pheasants, not being of the shooting fraternity, so I have come to the conclusion that they are a far worse pest than anything that I have had to deal with so far. At least the rabbits, most times, the root and the rats will only take things like bulbs, but the pheasant is a combination of the two. I was so distressed at all the damage, I was on the point of giving up gardening, being of the opinion that when a hobby begins to cause more pain than pleasure, then is the time to retire. Last week I was storming round the house saying 'that IS IT'.. when there was a knock at the door and there was a kind neighbour bringing me a present of four bags of two-year old horse manure. Oh, marvellous I thought, just what I need for my new Spuria bed next year!

I realise that I have not discoursed very much on Spurias, but that is because, as yet, I do not have the wherewithall. To make it more interesting in the future, I would welcome any other Members in the East giving me their contributions. So if you have

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anything to include in the Eastern Report or would like me to visit and make notes myself, please get in touch (0376 70642).

Happy 1991 to all Members, and may this be 'it'--the perfect gardening year. (Thank you Shirley, so sorry to hear of your troubles, perhaps bird-scarers will keep the beastie away, it certainly will get fat on your plants and bulbs, such a shame. All the Best to you for 1991, and hope Members in your area will respond to your invitation)

Regional Report from London.

by Anne Blanco White.

Too much rain in spring is no substitute for too little rain in autumn and, once again, this looks like being the situation in the South of England for 1991. In Sussex, at all events, we were 2ft, short of water before Christmas and 18ins. in London. The situation is slightly less bad at the time of writing, with a total rainfall of something like 6 inches since then. On my grounds in 1990, after a drought in 1989, the sibiricas performed poorly and the ensatas simply went on strike--even the ones in the stream bed. I'm reasonably sure this was because what rain we did have in the autumn of '89 was quite inadequate to compensate for the water losses of that summer, so the plants failed to make fresh roots until late into the autumn, and those roots were inadequate to provide enough power in the spring for flowering. It seems to me that when the autumn rain does come it could be a matter of some importance carting any surplus water from the house to the beardless irises. Given that the ground is damp from artificial watering, they will be able to benefit from what little does come their way.

And that reminds me of another interesting point: someone, and I cannot remember who, told me that the portable irises which she had sunk in a small pond repeatedly showed signs of extreme stress during the summer. When they were removed from the pond and put in a shady place, for a time, they recovered their vigour. The only solution that we, manning the Show Stand, could offer was that a shallow pond can get positively hot in weather such as last summer's. The plants are not keen on that and also they exhaust the oxygen in the water. Taking them out meant that fresh air got round the roots and they could replenish their internal supplies while using the water in the compost. A possible solution to such a problem is to stir up the water in the pond, in the evenings to refresh it a little, and even to throw a shelter net over the plants during the day to give them some protection. It would be interesting to know if any of you have had this problem, and what you did about it?? (There do not seem to have been fish in this pond. Possibly an aerator as is used in fish tanks could help where there is no fountain, but free-standing electrics can be dangerous in the garden.)

The early summer show at Wisley had lovely displays of sibiricas from Jennifer Hewitt's cloud-capped heights, Harry Foster's cow invaded wet-lands and Tomas Tamberg's unwall'd Berlin. The J.I.C. had a good haul for the next replanting of the trials. Plants south of Watford had finished flowering, though one visitor to the late show in Westminster produced a bedraggled specimen for identification which proved to be 'Mrs Rowe'; its second flower opened very nicely for the Wednesday.

Spurias did better than the other plants; the spring rains seem to suit them probably because in their natural situations it is winter rains and melt-waters which tend to supply their habitats. Mrs. Brown of V.H. Humphrey, brought some lovely spikes to the late summer show and several were selected for trial. My own favourite was a smallish dark blue flowered plant with soft orange trimmings, clearly labelled 'halophila' by the supplier. There had been a nice clear yellow I. halophila on show at Wisley.

There were two visitors at Westminster who kept coming back to stare at the Spurias which were magnificent. They had never seen plants like them before. On the other hand, they said that they had seen ensata irises being sold as cut flowers in continental shops and were surprised not to find them over here. Perhaps they will turn up soon, though certainly spurias have been sold in shops over there for years and there is no trace of them here yet.

The new bed at Wisley for ensata irises shows every sign of being a success, although a number of the plants which were sent in autumn 1989 were in very poor condition on arrival and simply died. However, Currier McEwen was able to see them in Autumn 1990 and seems happy with their general condition. The presence of a fine healthy I pseudacorus of no outstanding merit could only be deprecated. 'True to name on leaving....' several plants put up a spirited attempt, a late season display in October, and one had a truly magnificent spike with a very high bud count. Next year should give a better idea of the general quality and performance, for Wisley, at least, were in a position to supplement rainfall with direct supplies of water at the roots.

It is important that plants sent to any trial ground shall be in the pink of health. (cont.)

The gardeners will always do their best to keep them going, but where large numbers of plants have to be placed at the same time, it is the healthiest which will establish soonest and that does pay off in the coming years. When you know your seedling has been selected and that it is going to be planted in the coming autumn, then it must have most favoured treatment through the previous summer, and it must be carefully packed so that it travels well, and arrives in good condition. And it pays to be reasonably generous with the plant material too. This is your best route to the Miller and Dykes awards.

I was able to visit Norman Paynes's nursery in Surrey this summer. Its astonishing how many ensatas can be grown in a fairly small area, and that includes a lot of his own seedlings as well. Part of the garden close to the house is a small display area with a relatively long, narrow pond and mini-waterfalls to show what can be done in a small space. The falls and the carp saw to any aeration that was needed. The remainder is given over to nursery beds. Many of the newer plants were showing discomfort, but the well established ones were in good condition, and of those flowering at the time of my visit, the ones which particularly took my fancy were 'Caprician Butterfly' (Marx), 'Mist Falls' (Marx), 'Sorcerer's Triumph' (Marx), and 'Narabiro' (Hirao).

(Thank you Anne, I expect, by now, you have had this welcome snow, it should fill up the reservoirs a little.)

Regional Report from the South West.

by Mary Ramsdale.

From almost perpetual gales we moved into a three day cold snap, frost doesn't normally stay with us all day, but this was reluctant to leave, and with the vagaries of our present climate I'm becoming resigned to frequent changes, none it seems, for the better. Frosts are a worry, for although most of my tender plants are tucked up against walls, prolonged cold will certainly affect them, and I'm crossing my fingers tightly, as all the evansias are now outside, apart from I.wattii, and it would be a blow to lose them, even if they don't flower as well as I should like.

After another summer of drought, and an extremely mild and prolonged Autumn, the dying down process didn't begin until well into November, when I switched to Xmas festivities, so doubtless my next problem will be slug activity as they have a bonanza of uncleared top hamper to wax fat on and multiply in. Fingers crossed again for some clear dry weather, so that I can catch up.

I still have nothing but admiration for the way the Sibiricas and Spurias have coped with the excessive dryness, and again I've used the formula of treating with foliar feeds to supplement the woefully scanty watering, with good results. Flowering on all the Irises was surprisingly good, considering their recent transplanting, and one plant that produced a prodigious amount of bloom was the little Spuria I.sintinisii. Has anyone tried to cross this floriferous little plant with something taller, I'm sure there are 'Capabilities' there.

The seed lists of the Societies I belong to, earn my gratitude, and I donate seed myself. The big snag with such seed is, of course, that it is very rarely collected from plants grown in isolation, so the results of sowing it vary from extremely interesting to the extremely irritating. (I once nursed a pot of Moraea irisiodes seedlings for 3 years till they bloomed, and proclaimed themselves I.foetidissima). Three years seems to be about the waiting time for them to bloom. This wait is made easier, of course, if you sow annually. This year was a 'curate's egg', I.'Myddleton Blue', I.imbricata and I.chrysographes were just what they should have been, I.lutescens Blue Form wasn't, and I.latifolia and I.setosa White Forms weren't either, and all the seedlings of the white seeded form of I.foetidissima disappointed me with orange pods. I.setosa seems to be a very variable species indeed, and so I keep trying, for a good white, and a dark blue dwarf form. Maybe this year the Spurias will show me their colours.

I was very impressed to hear of the care with seed raising, I'm afraid I take much less. All seed I sow, including Iris, get the same treatment, sown in a gritty compost during February, (chilled first for three weeks if they have a provenance where chilling would be normal), then into a cold greenhouse. For Iris I sow into large oblong margarine tubs, pierced at the base, naturally. This gives me a little breathing space when everything germinates at the same time, the extra depth allows good root development. I get around 80% germination, though I sometimes have to wait a long time for this, and produce far more plants than I can accomodate anyway. With rare or particularly desirable seed I use a little bottom heat, but, quite honestly, this does not seem to bump the figure up much, if at all. The only factor that, I think, really affects sowing is the age of the seed. Fresh seed does seem to germinate well, (and if

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it is thinly sown, and a little copper used in the watering solution to prevent damping off, overwintering is successful. As hardened seed coats really need chipping for good germination (see this year's Year Book!) this might be an answer. I've often wondered whether Iris seed has the same odd germination factor as Daphne. Ripe seed of Daphne will not germinate until the following year, but if you sow seed before it ripens, it comes up like mustard and cress. It has another advantage too, the birds don't get there before you do. Birds don't eat my Iris seed, but mice very often do, and a grub (name unknown). I have, in the past lost potted seeds too, from mice, so watering with a copper solution is a twofold precaution.

I hope this year to meet some of the Devon Members of our Group, and any visitors to this area would be welcomed.

(Thanks Mary, maybe you have the same seed bug as Shirley, perhaps our Specialists will come up with the answer??? Haven't met it myself, at least, not yet..fingers crossed.)

Regional Report from the West Midlands.

by Philip Allery.

Extended periods of high temperature and drought following late Spring frosts brought with them many problems for the iris enthusiast. With the exception of Pacific Coast Irises, those beardless irises in which Group Members have an interest were severely affected where it was not possible to maintain an adequate water supply. Bloom was not so prolific and seed pods did not set as well as had been hoped. Silk weed growth in my garden pool is now becoming a problem. So is a marauding heron!

During the autumn I increased my stock of J.I.'s, importing some excellent plants from Shirley Pope, and acquiring some good old favourites from Norman Payne. The tetraploids received from Shirley are to be used for hybridising.

September and October brought some excellent weather conditions but in all it was a difficult period with late autumn frosts and, more recently, blizzard conditions. In the West Midlands this has dashed hopes of another mild winter. The recent extremes in rainfall may help regional reservoir levels, they are still dangerously low for this time of the year. Water conservation is a high priority, but an even higher priority at the present time is to protect tender plants from the severe frosts we have been experiencing.

The past six months have included an eventful trip to the U.S.A. at the invitation of Dr. and Mrs. Currier McEwen, whom I first met at the Cannington Jubilee Celebrations in May 1987. The visit was timed to include attendance at the Japanese Iris Convention held in Portland, Maine from the 12th. to 14th. July, inclusive. This Convention was dedicated to Dr. Currier McEwen, without whose enthusiasm and experience in hybridising, Maine would not have been able to host the Convention...

Here Philip has given a detailed account of his trip, unfortunately, as it is 13 pages long, it has had to be severely edited. If you would like the full account please send a second class book of stamps £1.70p. and I will have it photocopied for you.

'On arrival I was met by the McEwen's who took me to 'Seaway's Gardens' their attractive home in South Harpswell, Maine. An idyllic location in Merriconeag Sound, where wild roses grow in profusion. Near to the house Sibiricas are grown. Here, 'Cleeton Starburst' was happy in its new location, although it had been a bad year for Sibiricas. J.I. 'Aldridge Parasol' was among those from Kamo Nurseries Japan, in two large plots. I cannot say enough about the friendliness of both Currier and Elizabeth McEwen.. We were able to reciprocate when they visited us, here in England in October last.

I spent two very enjoyable days at 'Seaway's Gardens', most instructive, observing Currier at work in his garden, where a 10-12 hour day is not uncommon in the summer months despite temperatures in the upper 80's(f). I consider myself very privileged to have received, at first-hand, advice and instructions on various aspects of the cultivation and hybridising of J.I.'s, including the induction of tetraploidy and the use of a microscope to examine pollen as a means of identifying a chimera. Now to put this advice into practice.

The Sheraton Tara Hovel in Soutj Portland was the venue for the Convention on the following day, here I met James and Jill Copeland, Harold and Dorothy Stahly and Leland M.Welsh (Editor of the review, Society for Japanes Irises), my room mate at the hotel and guide for the second week in Michigan.

The Maine 'Japanes Iris Show' (the first) was held the next day, the recently J.I. 'Kalamazoo' (Hazard '89), displayed by Russ and Joan Moors, won 'Queen of Show', 'White Parachute'(McEwen '81) and 'Ol' Man River'(McEwen '87) displayed by Shirley Pope shared the runners up position with 'Forest Bound' (? 'Frost Bound) displayed by Peter Young. The theme was 'Welcome to Maine', with the best arrangement won by Peter Young.

(cont.)

for his interpretation of Summer Artist Colony.

The Show opened to the public in the afternoon. Mrs Shirley Pope, Chairman of the Convention, and now President Of the Society for Japanese Irises, and Mrs Evelyn White, the Registrar, with their team of ladies, gave everyone a warm welcome.

During the afternoon and the following day, the S.J.I. held its meeting with Chairman Clarence Mahan. This is a fast growing Society, nearly 600 Members, some 250 attending.

Thursday afternoon ended with a lecture by Dr. Tsutomu Yabuya of the Laboratory of Plant Breeding, Faculty of Agriculture, Miyazaki University, Japan. The subject was 'Flower Pigment Analysis' and 'Interspecific Cross-Breeding. Being a layman myself, the valuable contribution of Dr. William L. Ackerman which appeared in 'the Review' Fall 1990 edition, made a valuable contribution to our understanding. Afterwards I met Clarence & Suky Mahan, Freda Hazzard and Lorena Reid. At a 'Welcome Banquet' Mr. Kamo was the guest speaker, there I also met Koen Engelen from Belgium, a nurseryman.

On the Friday, a coach tour was guided by Mrs. Shirley Pope, and we met Virginia Burton Publicity Chairman, and Carol Warner, Treasurer of the J.I. Society, also Rosalie Figge, a senior judge.

Private house-plots and gardens in this part of Maine are much larger than in the U.K. The Convention J.I. Awards for these gardens went to 'Oriental Eyes' (Vogt) with 'Hotarubune' (Hirao) and '86J-1-2' (Aikken) as runners-up in the 'Favorite Guest' Iris class. 'Trance' (Warburton) with 'Oriental Eyes' and 'Japanese Pinwheel' (McEwen) runners up in the 'Favorite Garden' Iris class.

During the evening I met Anna Mae Miller, President of the J.I. Society, who kindly invited me to visit her garden in Kalamazoo, Michigan. A similar invitation came from Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Yunger, this enabled me to visit the former garden of the late Arthue Hazzard, in whose memory a J.I. Memorial Garden is being planted at Norfolk (Virginia) Botanical Gardens. In which area Mrs. Freda Hazzard now lives.

On the Saturday morning tour I met Adolph Vogt, Howard Brooklin and his daughter Lu Ann, with whom I had an interesting discussion on growing J.I.'s in pots. The highlight was the visit to 'Seaway's Gardens' and its breath-taking, panorama. Here Jill Copeland ran a training course on 'Judging Japanese Iris seedlings'.

After lunch, the marquee was then the site of the most amazing plant auction I have ever witnessed. Clarence Mahan, assisted by another Member, acted as auctioneers, Mr. Kamo had donated two plants each of the first two known fertile inter-species crosses, and other Members had donated J.I. plants, they were sold for 400 and 650 dollars each. Mrs. Kamo's fine pieces of artwork were also donated. Within two hours the auction raised sufficient money to ensure repayment of the 5,000 A.I.S. Foundation loan, raised to meet the 15,000 dollars (in part) cost of publishing 'The Japanese Iris', without any strain on the Society's resources.

Due to an industrial dispute, transport for the second week was going to be difficult, but Currier enlisted the help of the Michigan Members, who kindly offered help with transport and accomodation. On the second day, it was my 70th. birthday, Hal and Dorothy Stahly, who had given me a seat in their car on their return trip to Grand Blanc, Michigan. took me to see the Niagara Falls, where I saw the barrel, still there after the disastrous trip. Hal and Dorothy were kindness itself and I do thank them most sincerely.

On once more, this time to the spacious home of 'Lee' Welsh in Kalamazoo, and also James and Jill Copeland in Mattawan, where James is head of Wolfe Lake Fishery. 'Lee' has several acres of land which he cultivates for commercial purposes, his speciality being pot 'mums' for the late Autumn market. His plantings of I.I.'s were in beds in an expanse of lawn fronting the road. Lee is an accomplished cook and after drinks and some classical music, we enjoyed a well prepared meal, with lively conversation before travelling on.

Kalamazoo is to be the centre for the 1992 Japanese Iris Convention, and Lee was keen to show me the hotel venue and the city's various facilities. During my stay the Kalamazoo Flower Festival was being held. Lee had staged a well illustrated static Iris publicity display on behalf of the S.W. Michigan Iris Group. Highlights of the Show were the collection of orchids, and the imaginative flower arrangements. Sadly too late for Irises, only one entry.

On to 'Ensata Gardens', at Galesburg, Bob Bauer and John Coble had not yet arrived home. Extensive plantings of J.I.'s. About $\frac{1}{2}$ an acre is lined out, and with early, mid, and late season bloom, flowering lasts for about five weeks. The early blooms were over, but I was fortunate to see a few late-flowering in bloom. No mechanical tools are used, all digging is by hand tools. Well landscaped, perennial beds set in lawns near the house. Natural stone and water features, an ideal setting for Japanese Irises.

Finally a return to 'Seaway's Gardens', after a 'Trip of a Lifetime'.
(Thanks Philip).

The Groun Library

Copies of the following B.I.S. Publications, American Journals and now Books, are obtainable from:-

Mrs, Jennifer Hewitt, 'Haygarth', Cleeton St. Mary, CLEOBURY MORTIMER.

KIDDERMINSTER. Worcs. DY14 OQU.

Publications.

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

Cult of Irises. (Beardless). (B.I.S.)

Guide to the Pacific Coast Iris. (B.I.S.)

Irises for the Water Garden. (B.I.S.)

Know Your Irises. (New Zealand Iris Soc.)

Raising Irises from Seed No.2. (B.I.S.)

The Genus Iris.. Sub-section Sibiricae.(B.I.S.)

The Spuria Irises-Introduction & Varietal Listing 1985. Editor James.J.Foreman (U.S.A.)

Journal for the Siberian Iris Society.(U.S.A.) (Twice a year.)

Newsletter o f the Spuria Iris Society (U.S.A.)(Twice a year.)

Review of the Society for Japanese Irises. (U.S.A.)(Twice a year.)

All Back Numbers of the S.S& J. Newsletters.

Books.

Siberian Irises by Currier McEwen. (U.S.A.)

Growing Irises by G.E.Cassidy and S.Linnegar. (Gt. Britain.)

The Japanese Iris by Currier McEwen.(U.S.A.)

The Iris by Fritz Koochlein. (Germany. In English.)

Thank you to all those who sent in donations for the Book Fund, as you see we have been able to buy Fritz Koochlein's 'The Iris', also we are indebted to Currier McEwen for donating 'The Japanese Iris' Book.

Please include Postage when sending for items. Books, of course will cost more.

Treasurer's Report.INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st. DECEMBER 1990.

	£.		£.
13.2.90 Newsletters & Postage	71. 53.	Subscriptions	176. 50
9.3.90 Postage & Stng.	20	Donations (inc.Book)	24. 34
16.3.90 Postage	5	Interest	5. 00
11.4.90 Postage & Postage on Pcls.	20		4. 87
27.4.90 Postage on Parcels.	10	do. (Reserve)	1. 73
18.5.90 Postage	10		2. 27
25.5.90 Receipt Book.	3	Seeds sold.	69. 20
25.5.90 B.I.S.Literature	13. 10	Plants sold.	126. 02
15.6.90 Postage & Postage on Pcls.	39. 50.	Literature & N/Ls.	22. 55
28. 6.90 Postage on Parcels	15	<u>Stock</u> N/Ls	35
12.7.90 Postage	11	Covers	5
20.7.90 Postage	8	Leaflets	0. 20
27.7.90 Newsletters & Postage	89. 51	B.I.S. Lit.	6. 50
3.8.90 Postage	5		
31.8.90 Postage	10		
11.9.90 Postage on Seeds	10		
27.10.90 Postage	10		
31.12.90 Postage	5		
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	355. 64.		479. 18.
Surplus.	123. 54.		
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	479. 18.		

Accumulated Fund.	192. 37.	Interest.	9. 87
Surplus	123. 54.	Cash in Bank.	198. 52
		Interest.	4. 00
		Cash in Res.	46. 82
		N/L's, Covers, Lit. etc.	46. 70

315. 91

315. 91

(cont)

Total Cash in Bank.. £208. 39.*plus £60. 82. Reserve.

(This total includes the Book Fund money, which has now been reduced to purchase the Koohlein Book, and of course as usual will be reduced to pay for these Newsletters.)

signed. Adrian Whittaker.

The conversion of Overseas Subscriptions continues to be a headache. To give yo an idea, 6 dollars sent from the U.S.A. translated into £1. 93. (£1 handling fee). Another 10 dollars with a Money Order purchased in the U.S.A. cost 3 dollars, 13 dollars in all. However there is a light at the end of the tunnel, I notice That Clarence Mahan 'The Iris Pond, 7311, Churchill Rd. McLean, VA. 22101-2001, in his 1991 price list, has a note to British Customers. It says:- We now have an account with a British bank and will gladly accept cheques payable to 'C.E.MAHAN' for British pounds to preclude your having to pay currency conversion charges. If you wish to include payment of your dues to the American Iris Society and its section societies with your order, we will be pleased to pay your dues at no extra charge if you add the correct amount and so specify. Found cheques can only be accepted if they are made payable to 'C.E.MAHAN'. I hope this will prove to be the answer.

The following back numbers of the Newsletters are available:-

The original 1976, 20p. July/81, February/82, 40p.

Feb/85, July/86, Feb/87, Feb/88, July/88, Feb/89, July/89. 50p. plus postage.

Also there are one or two B.I.S.Publications still available.

ONE OR TWO SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE OVERDUE. Don't forget if these accounts are not settled I regret you will not be receiving your July Newsletter.

Your Letters.

More about Akira Horinaka's new Book.. 'IRIS LAEVIGATA.' Jennifer Hewitt has written to say:-- This book, in an English translation, covers the history of the species and its cultivars in Japan and other parts of the iris world, classification, natural distribution, and modern cultivars. There are about 120 colour illustrations. It is priced at 60 dollars (U.S.) plus 8 dollars(U.S.) for surface postage or 18 dollars (U.S) for airmail. Those wishing to buy it should send a Money Order for the appropriate amount to: * AKIRA HORINAKA, 3-9, Tanimachi 6 chome, Chuo-Ku, OSAKA. 542, Japan.

News of G.E.Cassidy (Cass) one-time Secretary of the B.I.S. Kath, his wife, writes that he is not at all well, we send him our good wishes, and tell him to take care...

David Dixon (Tyne and Wear) has been to Poland in 1990, and now is going to Hungary, we hope he has a good trip, and look forward to hearing from him when he gets back...

Eberhard Schuster has given a talk to the Species Group. I was very impressed by the number of Siberian Irises he grows. Best wishes in your efforts.

Jean Peyrard in France has written to say he is intereted in the Dwarf Japanes Irises, not too many about Jean, but I expect there soon will be.

Two Members, Jean Harris (West Bridgford. Notts.) and Ide le Hayze (Holland) wrote about crinkled leaves and a flower on newly planted Siberians, with a short stem. On reading Ben Hager's account of watering Japanes Irises, I wonder if the dry weather at the wrong time is to blame... what do you think???

I address this to Joseph Beattie (Carlisle), you must be wondering why I have not printed your account of your garden, so sorry, it went 'down' among a pile (what a pile) However, I will print it in July, and more if you like to send an up*date.

Eileen Wise writes that their new beds have been planted with dwarfs and medians. The I. unguicularis has born 50 blooms, in its small area, and I. typhifolia has remoted four times since last October, so it will probably die of exhaustion. Hope not Eileen.

Helen Grier (California) writes about watering problems in her area, even the P.C.I's resented it, except one that she has had for 15 years. Helen also sent me a lovely issue of 'Fine Gardening', lovely colour plates in an article on P.C.I's, thanks very much... beautiful. Take care.

Tom and Ellen Abrego (Newberg. OR.) have sent their catalogue. They list 52 varieties of Siberians and 43 varieties of Spurias. All orders must be received by 28th. Sept.

All this time, more in July. Keep those letters coming.

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 (Please let me know if there are any mistakes in your address.)
 B. Charles Jenkins 418-A Cayuga St. SALINAS Ca 93901 USA

Just a little space for two items.

First.... You are still sending in donations for the Book Fund, which seems to be quite a success, so we will carry on buying more in when possible. If you have any preference, please write in, or if you have a spare copy, perhaps you would like to donate it... Members are hungry for more information, which is good isn't it???

More about Philip Allery's Trip to America, he will be giving a talk, with slides to the West Midlands Group later on. There will also be an account in the B.I.S. Year Book later on this year.

CONTACTS OVERSEAS.

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 Secty. West Midlands Group. Mr. A. Sedgwick, 37, Cheltenham Rd. LONGLEVENS. GLOUCESTER. GL20JS.
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Seeds are 25p. per packet, 9 packets if £2. ordered. All inclusive of Postage. We also have a special selection of Spurias and Pacific Coast Irises.. see below.*.
 Please send to:- Mr. D. Trevithick, 86a, Grantham Rd. Radcliffe-on-Trent. NOTTINGHAM. NG122HY.

Marked (vs) very small, (s) small, (m) medium, (p) plenty. If (s) or (vs) please order alternatives.

Lavigatae.

I. lavigata blue (vs), laevigata Alba (vs) Semperflorens, Regal & Monstrosa Mxd. (vs).
 laevigata Mixed (s).

I. pseudacorus (s), pseudacorus Bastardii (p), 'Golden Queen' (m), Cream Form (m),
 Variegated (vs).

Versicolor (p), V. Kermisina (s), V. Rougette (m), V. Cat Moussam (m). V. Mixed (s).
 Virginica.

Ensatae (Kaempferi).

Ensata Mixed American Hybrids (p). Ensata mixed (vs).

Series Sibiricae.

I. sibirica Mixed (m), 'Clee Hills' (p), 'Wiltrud Gissell' (m), 'Swank' (s), 'Laurenbuhl' (s),
 'Wine Wings' (m), 'Marlene Ahlburg' (s), 'Orville Fay' (m), 'Fanny Heidt' (m), 'Sea Shadows'
 (s), 'Prairie Warbler' (vs), 'Cambridge' (vs), 'Mountain Lake' (s), 'Caesar's Brother' (vs),
 'Rejoice Always' (s), 'silver Edge' (vs), 'Papillon' (vs), 'My Love' (s), 'Tropic Night' (s).
 Chrysographes (s), Chrysographes x Chrysofors (s).

Series Spuriae.

Orientalis (s), Orientalis, white, yellow falls (both s). Carthalinae (vs), 'Halophylla' (s),
 Kerneriana (s). Bi-tone yellow hybrid X Violet Bloomfield (s), Protege' (s), 'Imperial
 Ruby' (s), 'Violet Bloomfield' (s). I. Sintenissi (p).

Series Californicae.

Brummett and Hargreave strain mixed (s), Brummett & Wise mixed (m), P.C.I. mixed (s).
 Foetidissima 'Citrina' (m). Milesii (vs). Setosa (vs). Setosa Tall (vs).

Collections.

Spuria crosses:-

'Bali Bali' (Jenkins 89).
 'Barbara's Kiss' (McGown 82).
 'Border Town' (Ghio 89).
 'Candle Lace' (Jenkins 90).
 'Diminuendo' (Hager 86).
 'Elan Vital' (Hager 81).
 'Elixir' (Hager 84).
 'Eurasia' (Ghio 84).
 'Finally Free' (Jenkins 89).
 'Janice Chesnik' (McGown 84).
 'Lankoran' (Heddenko).
 'Lovely One' (Jenkins 89).
 'Now This' (Hager).
 'Penny Bunker' (McGown 82).
 'Purple Reign' (Jenkins).
 'Universal Peace' (Jenkins 91).
 'Zeal' (Hager 82).
 Open pollinated.
 'Ethic' (Ghio 77).
 'Galapagos Trail' (Wickenkamp 85).
 'Mystic Mesa' (Wickenkamp 86).

£4. 50p.

Pacific Crosses:-

'El Centro' (Ghio 76).
 'Las Glas' (Ghio 84).
 'Mission Santa Cruz' (Ghio 83).
 'Pescadero' (Ghio 80).
 'Sheila's Memory' (Jenkins 89).
 'Spring Daze' (Ghio 80).
 'Western Queen X Night Messenger' (indifferent pods). (Will probably segregate from this character). £3.
 also B35-23 (Western Queen X Night Messenger)

If both collections are ordered please send £7.

With this bad weather, it is impossible to be sure about the plants we have for sale. We have un-named Ensatas (2 year plants) at £2 each 6 for £10. One or two setosas and Pseudacorus at £1 each. One year seedlings at 25p each, some Sibiricas. Sisyrinchium Striatum, and seedling ensatas. April will be the time to confirm that they have come through this hard winter, if you like to write in... Bye Bye. Keep warm. J.