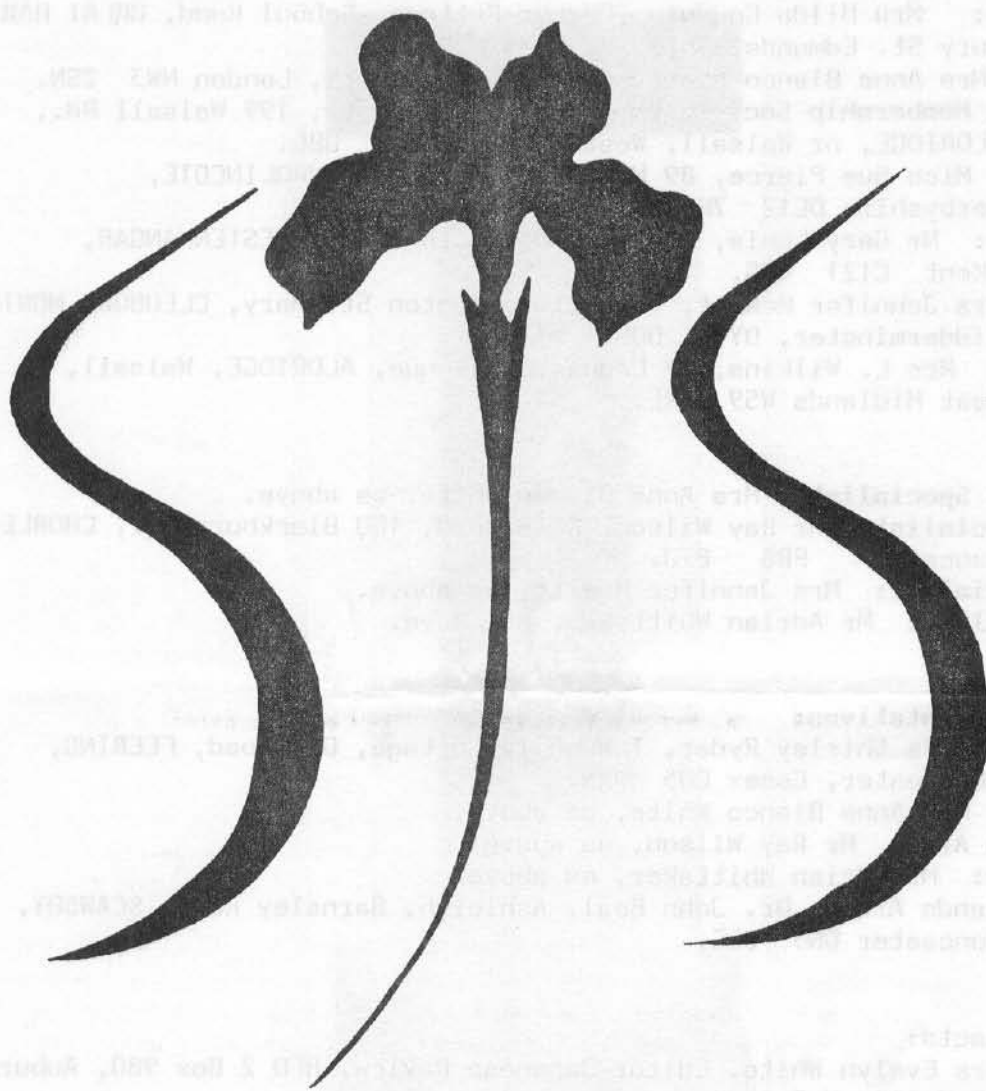


NEWSLETTER



OF THE

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

B.I.S.

FEBRUARY 1995

THE GROUP'S OFFICERS:

- Chairman:** Mr Adrian Whittaker, 'Chestnuts', Hilden Way, LITTLETON, Winchester, Hants, SO22 6 QH.
- Vice-Chairman:** Mrs Hilda Goodwin, Corner Cottage, School Road, GREAT BARTON, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, IP31 2RT.
- Secretary:** Mrs Anne Blanco White, 72 South Hill Park, London NW3 2SN.
- Treasurer and Membership Secretary:** Mr Philip Allery, 199 Walsall Rd., ALDRIDGE, nr Walsall, West Midlands WS9 0BE.
- N.L. Editor:** Miss Sue Pierce, 89 High St., Measham, SWADLINCOTE, Derbyshire DE12 7HZ.
- Seeds Officer:** Mr Gary Lewis, Ranchu Lodge, Stone St., WESTENHANGAR, Kent CT21 4HS.
- Librarian:** Mrs Jennifer Hewitt, Haygarth, Cleeton St. Mary, CLEOBURY MORTIMER, Kidderminster, DY14 0QU.
- Hon. Auditor:** Mrs L. Wilkins, 17 Lancaster Avenue, ALDRIDGE, Walsall, West Midlands WS9 8RE.

- Japanese Iris Specialist:** Mrs Anne Blanco White, as above.
- Pacificas Specialist:** Mr Ray Wilson, Dalehead, 100 Blackburn Rd., CHORLEY, Lancs. PR6 8TJ.
- Siberica Specialist:** Mrs Jennifer Hewitt, as above.
- Spuria Specialist:** Mr Adrian Whittaker, as above.

Regional Representatives:

- Eastern Area:** Mrs Shirley Ryder, Toadshole Cottage, Old Road, FEERING, Colchester, Essex CO5 9RN.
- London Area:** Mrs Anne Blanco White, as above.
- North Western Area:** Mr Ray Wilson, as above.
- Southern Area:** Mr Adrian Whittaker, as above.
- West and Midlands Area:** Dr. John Beal, Ashleigh, Barnsley Road, SCAWSBY, Doncaster DN5 8QE.

Overseas contacts:

- Japanese:** Mrs Evelyn White, Editor Japanese Review, RFD 2 Box 980, Auburn, ME 04210, U.S.A.
- Pacificas:** Lewis & Adele Lawyer, Editors, Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris, 4333 Oak Hill Road, Oakland, CA 94605, U.S.A.
- Siberians:** Mrs J. Hollingworth, Editor, 120 Sherwood Rd., East Williamstown, MI 48895, U.S.A.
- Spurias:** Carole Spiess, Editor, 6204 N. 15th Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85015, U.S.A.

The aims and objects of the Group are:

to foster communications between members in Great Britain and Overseas by exchanging ideas, seeds and plants

to help newcomers with growing plants and solving their problems

to report on new work in hybridisation

NATURAL DISASTERS.

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We send our very deepest sympathy to members and their families who have suffered in the recent earthquakes in Japan and New Zealand and the floods in Europe. We thought it best to delay despatch to some of these places until some semblance of normality is restored.

THE CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE.

With the passing of Joan Trevithick, 1994 has obviously been a difficult year. A number of people have generously come forward to take on sections of the work of the Group, sometimes at very short notice.

I should particularly like to mention the invaluable contributions of Anne Blanco White and Philip Allery in that context. They require your active support to ensure the future of the Group. It is particularly important that the cash flow situation is improved if the Group is to survive. Production and postage of the two newsletters each year takes up most of the subscription income leaving little residue for other essential costs. We have also lost the effect of Joan's continuous fund raising activities which helped to offset some of the running costs.

In this scenario, may I ask everyone to make a special effort to pay their subscription promptly. Also, if you are able, perhaps there might be the opportunity to indulge in some mild fund raising on behalf of the Group. Plant sales are an obvious source, particularly if you have some out of the ordinary plants.

The Spurias in my garden have generally done well this year. I would highlight both 'Adobe Sunset' and 'Kaibab Trail' as being very reliable now that they have got established.

Many new cultivars are now appearing and a number of the breeders in the U.S.A. are producing spurias of lower height which are useful where a variation in flower height is required. Flower shapes are now also being varied as well as improvements in the placing of the flowers to avoid the bunching effect with all the flowers held close to the stem. The range of colours and colour combinations is increasing yearly.

The problem for U.K. growers remains the selection of the best plants for this climate. The origin of a plant may, in fact, give little clue as to its performance, particularly if it is from involved breeding. There is, therefore little substitute for actual experience. I would ask all who grow spurias to write in with their experiences, so that the pool of information becomes larger as time goes by.

May I wish everyone a successful 1995 in their garden. A.E.W.

THE GROUP CHAIRMAN: Adrian has done noble service in this office for many years now. Indeed, I doubt if Joan could have carried on as long as she did without his unfailing support. It is not surprising, then, that he would like to stand down in July of this year. While this is a matter of real regret to his fellow officers we can't expect him to carry on indefinitely so we would like suggestions from the membership for a successor. Names, please, to Anne Blanco White by the end of May at the latest and preferably without delay. Well, if we leave it any later you will have forgotten and this is an important matter.

SECRETARIAL SECTION: As you can see from the inside cover we have achieved a satisfactory team to run the Group which can now be considered properly convalescent. Future good health depends on **YOU** - The Members. Naturally, there are going to be changes, but they won't all come at once. The seeds, for instance: we are breaking the sales into two sections. The newest will be offered with the first newsletter of the year while older seed, to be known as the Seedbank, will be offered with the second. This means you will have no trouble selecting from the fresh crop and equally you will have further chances to fill gaps from older crops if, for some reason, you have lost earlier seedlings. Iris seeds in general have a long shelf life and it's always worth giving older material a trial. Incidentally, the Tall Bearded enthusiasts have a system for soaking and scraping their seed to get quicker germination - does anyone do this with the seeds of beardless irises? It works with oncocyclis!

TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT:

FINANCE: Expenditure during the period 1st July/31 December 1994:

Secretary - July NL publication	£33.00	
postage	35.64	
incidental expenses	1.36	
miscellaneous postage	11.03	£81.03
Membership - purchase of ledgers, files, etc.,	11.77	
Sec'y & purchase of receipt book,		
Treasurer paper & envelopes	4.55	
postage	19.82	£36.14

£37.17 of this total of £117.17 has yet to be reimbursed. Overall the above expenditure gives a misleading picture. The July Newsletter was intended primarily to inform members of Joan's death and was one third of its normal size. The ledger and files are expected to have a five year life.

Both deposit accounts in the Bradford & Bingley Building society have been brought up to date and the balances were £316.78 and £107.16 respectively. Tax has been deducted at the standard rate. The latter account has been used as a Reserve Fund to cover commuted membership subscriptions but this is underfunded by approximately £50 due to the necessity to increase the level of subscriptions to meet the cost of servicing membership. In order to eliminate the cumbersome transfer and withdrawal procedures from the two offices concerned, i.e. Sheffield and Nottingham, it is planned to merge these accounts at Head Office. This will facilitate procedures in the future. Most transactions are now postal with withdrawals requiring signatures from any two of the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. Paying-in can be undertaken at any branch office, or by post.

The main amendments to previous working practices are a recommendation to limit future commuted payments (not advance payments) to two years. Where the actual membership subscription has yet to be determined the excess will be expressed in terms of money value rather than years ahead and carried forward. I have also recommended that the Group's membership and financial year should commence on the 1st January annually. Both the Chairman and The Secretary are in agreement with this suggestion as are the majority of members I have written to since taking office. No objections have been received. The application of this change-over will be messy because approximately half the membership have already paid subscriptions for 1994/95 and in some cases for some years ahead.

In practice this is quite easy to do. Consider that your subscription expired on 31 December half way through the membership year for which you last paid a subscription, then send me the full subscription for the years following. I hope to announce provisional membership rates for the following year in the first newsletter of each year and confirm them in the Autumn newsletter.

Estimating future expenditure is difficult, particularly as I am warned that paper costs will rise considerably this year. I think it likely that postal costs for letters may also increase, probably in November 1995. I estimate the cost of this newsletter to be £100 increasing in the autumn to £120, including postage, which gives a total of £220 for 1995. Incidental administrative costs may reach £80 this year, mainly in postage, depending on correspondence generated by the four officers concerned.

One of my main problems in taking over the accounts has been that Joan's death caused so much uncertainty in the minds of members about the future of the Group that approximately half the listed membership didn't send in their 1994/95 membership subscription in July last year despite a plea in the newsletter sent out by Anne for that month. Postal expenditure on reminders cost the Group a little over £12, and with incidental expenditure nearly £14. There are still 34 payments outstanding and those who have not paid by 15th February will not be included in the membership list or newsletter distribution until such payment is received.

Luckily this shortfall in membership subscriptions has been out-weighted by very encouraging financial support in the form of many generous donations, exceeding £130 in total. The Group's grateful thanks for such financial help are due to Mrs Jennifer Hewitt and Mrs Anne Blanco White for plant sales exceeding £90 to date, and donations from Mrs Hilda Goodwin, Mrs M. Neale, Mr Norman Payne, Mr G.R.A. Bomford, Mr Peter Maynard, Mr Gary Lewis, Mr J.R.L. Carter and Mr Chris Rose amounting to nearly £45.

MEMBERSHIP. The Group welcomes its new members: Mr G.R.A. Bomford of Redditch, Mr G.F. Wilson of Utterby, Mrs Sharon Hayes Whitney, (Dr. Currier McEwen's new sales partner) of South Harpswell, Maine, U.S.A and Mr Akira Horinaka of Nishinomya, Japan.

The membership breakdown by country is U.K. 68, Europe 6, Australia 1, Canada 2, Egypt 1, Japan 2, New Zealand 3, Sweden 2 and U.S.A. 27. Of these some 34 members have yet to pay their subscriptions and I estimate that the Group's membership level will reduce to around 90 members this year rising annually by a net figure of 5 - 10 persons.

The Group's membership subscription was increased to its present level of £2.00 per annum (U.K. membership) in July 1991. Joan's prudent housekeeping enabled her to keep the subscription at this level, but rising costs are now imminent. At the end of this year reserves may be substantially reduced. The Reserve Fund is under-funded owing to the increasing costs of membership services and it is apparent that an estimated expenditure of £300 in 1995 spread over a membership of 90 persons justifies a membership subscription of £3.00 to £3.50 if reserves are to be maintained. This is too much of an increase in one step so I have recommended an increased subscription of £2.50 per member (U.K. and Europe) for 1995 with £3.00 as provisional figure for 1996, the balance being met from reserves. At this estimated level of expenditure the rate for

overseas members increases to £3.50 for 1995 and £4.00 (provisionally) for 1996. This differential is caused by the increased cost of postage to these countries. My earlier estimates were for £3 and £4 respectively throughout the two years, but generous donations have enabled me to limit the increase this year.

In order to keep administrative costs to a minimum I shall send your future receipts with your newsletter unless correspondence is called for on receipt of your remittance. Another measure will be to indicate on your Newsletter label the final year of your current membership. A small red circular adhesive label will indicate that your subscription is overdue and that no further newsletters will be sent until a remittance is received.

The adoption of my suggestion in the reminder letter sent out in November last that subscriptions might be sent with B.I.S. subscriptions is causing some difficulty as repayment to the Group can only be made in bulk; once annually, in mid-year. It would be helpful if you would send future Group subscriptions and donations direct to me. When doing so it would be as well to address me as "Membership Secretary" and, if at all possible, send cheques or money orders. Please note my correct address. Those sending \$ notes must remember that, although the current value of \$10 is approximately £6.00, unless I can group all such payments together the Bureau de Change charge a minimum commission of £2.50 leaving the Group with £3.50 as the outcome of a single transaction.

You will see from this report that membership matters impinge on the work of the Treasurer to such an extent that I have agreed to undertake both duties. However, there is need for a younger assistant to become familiar with this work who could take over my duties when the need arises, as it surely will, at some future date. Corresponding with members can be fun! Any volunteers?

JOAN TREVITHICK.

We printed the major obituaries in the last edition, but several members have written in and here are some extracts from their letters:

Miss Hurrell, Devon, "I never met her, but her welcome could not have been more gracious and helpful".

Miss Grier, California, "I was most fortunate to meet her when I visited England in '91. She was such a dear, delightful person and so knowledgable".

Mr & Mrs Lawyer of the S.P.C.N.I. "We felt we knew her through her correspondence with us and with others; and also through the little friendly comments following many of the articles in the N.L.".

Dr. Ashford, Nairn, "I think the best I can do is to send my subs and try in all ways possible to keep her work alive".

Miss Sharland, Kent, "I was very sorry to hear of Joan's passing, but she had fought a long battle as I had gathered from the various little notes she used to send me".

Mrs Love, New Zealand, "I did have a regular-irregular correspondence with Joan over the years and met up with her when I was in England. It is sad to lose these dedicated people".

Mrs Pauline Brown, Surrey: "I am so glad the Group is to continue. Joan was quite remarkable and I have had considerable contact with her since my father died in 1991. He, of course, knew her for many years."

Mrs Jane Cole, Berks. "We are all going to miss Joan in the S.S. & J Iris Group. She was always so cheerful and encouraging."

Mrs Hilda Goodwin, Suffolk: "I am so glad the S.S. & J is to continue. It would be so sad for it to fold up after Joan's hard work. . . I am enclosing a cheque to cover my sub to the end of 1995 and a donation in memory of Joan and her wonderful efforts."

Mr P.R. Maynard, Sussex, "I was absolutely delighted to hear that the S.S. & J Group now has a full crew again and will be proceeding steadily in the right direction. We were all very worried about what would happen to the Group when Joan died and, although it was expected, in the event there seemed to be an irreplaceable gap."

Mr H.A. Webster, Derbyshire, "I did not know about Mrs Trevithick till I received the Newsletter, a very big loss to the Iris Society S.S. & J Group."

Prof. Nasr El-Emary, Egypt, "I have received the news of the death of Mrs Trevithick with great sadness. She devoted herself to serve the B.I.S."

Mr. A. Horinaka, Japan, "I was surprised when I heard Mrs Trevithick had passed away. I feel sorrow for her."

Paul Richardson, New Zealand, "Meeting Joan in her own home was one of the highlights of our last visit to England and the successive newsletters have only increased our admiration. . . I wish the Group every success for the future."

We are very grateful for the sympathy expressed by so many members and have real hope that the Group will continue with an active life.

SURPRISING SEEDLINGS FROM 'ROSE QUEEN' by Currier McEwen

I am sure that most readers of this article are familiar with 'Rose Queen', the lovely Japanese iris whose size and shape suggest that it is a pink form of the wild species *I. ensata*. It was erroneously introduced as 'Iris laevigata Rose Queen' by Lilly in 1915, and for years was thought to be an example of *I. laevigata*. That conjecture was put to rest some thirty or more years ago and it is now firmly established as a Japanese iris. Although known and grown widely on both sides of the Atlantic, it remained unregistered until 1989 when Clarence Mahan registered it for the Society for Japanese Irises.

In 1991 I made a number of self crosses on 'Rose Queen'. In this past season (1994), the seedlings from my cross 91/231 bloomed with, to me, surprising results. There were seven seedlings none of which had a color resembling 'Rose Queen'. Five were typical wine red examples of the species and one had a more bluish purple colour which I have seen in some examples of the species growing wild in Japan. Only one showed any suggestion of pink, a rather "dirty" shade of reddish purple approaching RHS 70B with a few off-white lines and strikingly different from the clear, clean color of 'Rose Queen'.

My assumption that all these differences occurred as a result of crossing 'Rose Queen' by itself was proven wrong by more careful reading of my records which showed that the one cross I had made with 'Rose Queen's own pollen had failed and that my seedlings 91/231 were from a pod from a chance "bee cross" that I harvested as a substitute. I believe that the 91/231 seedlings probably are indeed from a self cross, but several plants of the typical wild species were growing not far from 'Rose Queen' and the pollen could have come from one of them.

I had decided not to publish these results because of the uncertainty. Subsequently, however, I have talked with Clarence Mahan who tells me that seeds from bee cross pods occurring in his garden have given seedling similar to those I have reported above. He has encouraged me to write this article in the hope that some of you may have successfully crossed 'Rose Queen' by itself and can tell me the results.

This experience with 'Rose Queen' has added to my curiosity about the background of the lovely pink Japanese iris which I named 'Joan Trevithick' in 1992. Joan had sent me the seed from which her namesake came in a packet of seeds from the typical wild, wine red flowers of the species *I. ensata*. Twelve seedlings resulted, eleven typical wine red examples of the species and one the lovely pink that I subsequently named after Joan. I was excited when it bloomed because I assumed that it must have occurred as a sport from the wild wine red species just as, presumably, 'Rose Queen' did. Subsequently, however, Joan told me that although she no longer had 'Rose Queen', it had been in her garden the year she collected the seeds for me and I have to conclude that my 'Joan Trevithick' may have come from a chance seed from 'Rose Queen' that got into the packet by mistake. I made two self crosses with 'Joan Trevithick' this year. Neither one succeeded although I have several pods from crosses made with modern pink Japanese irises.

I am eager to learn the results of self crosses of 'Rose Queen' and 'Joan Trevithick' in the hope that they may help explain the mystery of how these lovely flowers came about. I will continue my efforts to self 'Rose Queen' and 'Joan Trevithick' next year and will also cross them with each other. I urge others of you who have these lovely flowers to do so too and let me know your results.

In closing, I must emphasize the debt I owe to the real Joan Trevithick for the seeds she gave me, her friendship and the invaluable contributions she made for all of us who love the beardless irises. I am especially glad that I was able to send her the plant named after her.

So, if anyone over here has been experimenting with 'Rose Queen' please will they tell us what happened. And do remember that a negative result is almost as important as a positive one when it comes to hybridising. Even if none of your attempted crosses take, Currier would like to know. I've never grown the plant myself, but Joan did have a photograph of a seedling from 'Rose Queen', but it was in the blue-purple range so presumably an outcross. Coincidentally, Sidney Linnegar has an entertaining contribution to make in this field.

A SHORT HISTORY OF I. 'ROSE QUEEN' by Sidney Linnegar

When giving a lecture to a Horticultural Society one is asked to do many things besides judging the Flowers, Fruit, Vegetables, Cakes and Floral Arrangements. Sometimes awarding 1st, 2nd and 3rd prizes, sometimes to mark all the entries out of 10 with the winner being whoever gets the most points through the lecture season. So I wasn't really surprised recently to find a competition for the best collection of Horticultural Catalogues.

Looking through these while trying to think how to give an award, I came across one without a cover, but possibly an early Perry's or Prichard's, with an intriguing entry:

'New iris for the Water Garden'. I. laevigata 'Rose Queen' a double form of I. laevigata with purplish-rose flowers.'

The following evening out came the 1929 Check List: Rose Queen LAEV-DBL, Lilley 1919, Wal. 1929, Prichard 1929 laevigata Rose Queen.

Turning to the 1939 Check List: Rose Queen Jap-DBL-6R1 1915, Wal. 1925, Orp. 1928, Prichard 1928; Gartensch. 14:53 Apr.1933 (with an illustration); Hoehner 1937; Per. 1938 (a kaempferi variety); **laevigata Rose Queen**.

Rose Queen DB-E-R9M(Bun); AAA 135 [also in 1929 list].

Rose Queen Jap-Sgl-5RL Waterer 1938; Prichard 1939

Although the last entry is not in bold print to give the name preference, yet Rose Queen as a single Japanese Iris is the one to survive today.

Turning to I. laevigata there is a heading: laevigata Rose Queen Laev-6RL Ruys 1921; J.R.H.S. 60:9, cxxxvii, Sep 1935.

Finally, as Currier says above, the matter was settled in the 1989 check List where the rose pink colour was stressed, but that is quite an interesting history for an iris name and while the double form does not sound so attractive it is curious that it disappeared so suddenly.

THE SEASON IN N.W. ENGLAND by Ray Wilson

The S.S. & J has for many years supplied its members with seeds, plants, information and, not least, friendship. It behoves us all to ensure that the memory of Joan Trevithick should be with us in assuring the future of our Group. It often seems that she almost single-handedly perpetuated the idea of the importance of the beardless iris. Let us therefore guarantee the future of our Group with loyalty and in a practical sense by continuing and developing what Joan started.

The 1994 bloom season has not been notable. The reticulatas only did well in pots; as usual our dampish, cool climate did nothing to aid propagation and as time goes by each year sees a diminution in the number of flowers emerging in the spring. Quite unlike so many of the crocuses which do so well. Alan McMurtrie has written his notes of his work with reticulatas which are a valuable guide to how we should proceed; I have decided to try yet again. This time using a quickly draining raised bed in a well ventilated greenhouse; the bulbs are set out on a well gritted compost overlaid with 1cm depth of grit, covered with about 5cm of gritty compost and a similar depth of grit (literally a alpine bed). This was done in September. Now, end of November, leaves of 'Gordon' have emerged and I am not sure if our present, warmish weather is good or bad.

As the Seed Distribution Officer up to 2 years ago, I found it amazing that just about all the Reticulata seed was donated by either Anne Blanco White or Alan McMurtrie. It was snapped up by members who were so eager to get it that most were bound to be disappointed. Where did it all go? With what result? It would be marvellous if renewed interest in the Reticulatas could be generated and one of the most delightful spring flowers had a more important place in our gardens.

The early Pacificas did not fare too well, either. Early bloom was meagre and no seed set. Later flowerings were better, but I seem to have lost about all of the Broadleigh hybrids. The Broadleighs have been replaced, but this time in pots at least until I can propagate from them. I used these plants for a comparison with the growth of Pacificas from Joe Ghio. The aim was to purchase plants from a U.K. and a U.S. source and to compare how well they took and grew on. Despite Joe Ghio's success in hybridising, growing and showing his Pacificas I have had no luck at all. The plants received, usually within ten days from posting, were pieces wrapped in wet newspaper and there was rarely any new root development although the leaf colour was normal. The pieces were planted in gritty, or sandy, or peaty compost (all lime free). Some were kept on the wet side, some just damp; they were either warm or cold, but never below 35 - 40°F; some were watered using plain water, others with diluted liquid fertiliser. Others again were kept in wetted newspaper. Comparison was made either with pieces from Broadleigh Nursery or with cuttings from my own seedlings. My lack of success has meant that I no longer import, but instead grow from seeds. I would be most interested to hear of other people's experiences and try to establish the imported Pacificas. Growing from seeds is no problem, thank goodness, and this year I hope to have seed from SPCNI and SIGNA and with more time now available expect to be in a position to offer some seedlings to members.

FROM THE SOUTH EAST by Shirley Ryder

Well this year was a shade better than usual in that the Autumn of '93 was wetter than usual and I did notice the improvement in the size of flowers generally. We certainly had our customary drought in the Summer, sometimes going for weeks without rain, but because of the previous Autumn

I didn't actually have to get out and water for several hours a day. I was really pleased about this because we had a water meter fitted in the Summer and I wouldn't like to be so extravagant until after the first bill had been received.

I attended the '94 A.I.S. Convention and enjoyed it hugely. However, after being confronted with so many T.B.s at the same time on the second day I found that every time I caught a glimpse of a Siberian I rushed towards it with great relief. In the voting I actually went for a Siberian called 'Lake Keuka' and lots of other people must have been similarly impressed because it came in at Number 2. I did lose my heart to several Siberians, namely 'Jaybird', 'Shirley Pope', 'Dear Diana', 'Pas de Deux', and 'Regency Belle', and if anyone knows somebody who has them and might be prepared to swap, or sell a piece I would be delighted to know.

I was really pleased that I so enjoyed the Siberians because when I arrived home I found that my own were disastrous. Not very many flowers and I had to witness the actual death of my most beloved 'Navy Brass'. I gave it ample water to no avail and desperately took off any piece that had a surviving root and moved it to intensive care, but nothing worked. I feel so badly because it was practically the only plant in the garden that had a planned plant association site. I love yellow-blue combinations and it just happened that I had two vacant sites adjacent at the same time and I put it together with a Genista 'Lydia' and the effect was electric. I can't often do that in this garden and plants tend to get put where there is a habitable space and not where I want them or where they should go. I come home sometimes with my latest purchase with the right spot in mind and then when the first trowelful of earth is removed I can see immediately that the ants have moved in and that is the reason that the plant that was there before has died in the first place. So if there is anybody out there who knows where I can obtain 'Navy Brass' . . .

I had a non-season with the Spurias again with only one blooming. I started off my collection with eight plants and have seven left which are still the same size as when I put them in and of which only two have ever flowered. It must be the lack of water again and perhaps the S. East is not the place to grow them. However, I had a good display of P.C.N.s again and of all the Iris that I grow they do seem to be the best suited to conditions here. I have always felt that my hybridising would be greatly improved if I could introduce some white along the line, but I've never had a white P.C.N. and have never seen one. I mentioned this in Portland at the Convention and recently was very pleased to receive a nice packet of white seed.

Summing up this year, I think the thing that will be most memorable is the sadness I felt on learning of Joan Trevithick's death. I don't think I've ever met anybody with such enthusiasm and enough power of persuasion to make habitual non-participants like me actually put pen to paper. I always used to think of her as Joan Terrific and can only hope that this group will carry on. It would be a great shame to lose it as it is such a comforting thought that you have the ability to make contact with other people sharing the same interest.

AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY CONVENTION, PORTLAND, OREGON, MAY 1994 by Clive Russell

The largest number of delegates ever (1104) convened in Portland for the 1994 American Iris Society's annual convention. The logistics of organizing such a bun-fight made the mind boggle: 24 coaches each transporting some 40 excited irisarians to 9 participating gardens took a lot of planning, but apart from one coach taking the wrong route on the first day, to all intents and purposes, the whole event passed without disastrous repercussions.

As so many of the delegates were visiting Oregon for the first time, the two days prior to the convention proper were taken up with sight-seeing. On the Saturday we went to see the Pacific, which in itself was not so terrific, but the sight of middle-aged Americans rushing down to the water's edge was something else. I read somewhere that no point in this country is supposed to be more than 30 miles from the nearest sea, whereas in the U.S.A. we are talking REAL mileage. While talking to some of the paddlers on the return trip I found out that, living in the mid-west, this was the first time they had ever SEEN the sea! On Sunday we were taken up the Columbia River Gorge, a valley gouged out during the Ice Age, through which the Columbia River now runs, dividing Oregon from Washington State. We had breathtaking views both up and down the river from Crown Point, one of the viewing stations, and the coach driver was continually being begged to stop for 'photo opportunities' every time we came to one of the spectacular waterfalls prevalent in the area. All-in-all, a very enjoyable de-jet-lagging, breaking-in period to the convention proper which started at 6 the following morning.

It would be pointless describing all the gardens on the 'official' convention list as most of them were only growing bearded irises, so I shall concentrate on the few where we saw 's & s's'. (No j's, too early)

Taking it in chronological order, the first relevant garden we came to was Dave and Nancy Silverberg's. They had mixed plantings, predominantly bearded irises, with siberians in a block on the right side of the garden and the spurias planted in a row along the length. Two of the spurias 'Alphspu' and 'Bronze Art', both registered by Charles Jenkins in '92, had barely opened and, as such, were not able to be judged properly, but looked to be very promising. The Siberians,

however, were in full bloom and, in the open aspect of the Silverburg's garden, looked magnificent.

I was looking for two in particular: 'Over in Gloryland' (Hollingworth '92) and 'Shakers Prayer' (Warner '90), but neither were being guested here. Instead I was able to feast on 'Strawberry Faire' (Hollingworth '92), a very ruffled siberian in crushed strawberry which went on to win the Franklin Cup at the closing banquet as the best out-of-region iris. Others of note were 'Lake Keuka' (Borglum '94) and 'Simple Gifts' another '94 introduction from Bob Hollingworth.

The afternoon was spent at Cooley's, where the s & s's were not to the fore, but on Tuesday morning we were at Schreiner's Gardens, who, although not known for their beardless varieties, were able to show that they could grow them just as well as they could grow the bearded varieties.

One in particular caught my eye, a Sacks Schafer seedling no. 586-8-1. This had formed a clump some 2 feet in diameter, with 36" high bloom held well above the glossy green foliage. (When I visited Jan and Marty in August and made noises about this seedling, I was advised that all known existing stock had been destroyed as the flower form 'was not quite satisfactory'! Not professing to be a siberian expert, I could not disagree, but nevertheless it did seem a waste, especially as so many unworthy bearded varieties do get registered purely for commercial purposes.

After a lunch of of German sausage and sauerkraut at an Oktoberfest centre, we headed up the hills to the Abrego garden. This garden is only 2 years old, but one would never know and, most remarkably, there wasn't a beard in sight other than the one Tom was sporting. Ellen Abrego is a Schreiner and both she and Tom work at the family business so presumably, having a surfeit of bearded irises during the week, they chose to concentrate on beardless in their own time and are hoping that in the not too distant future they will be able to go their own way on the apogon ticket. In the meantime, their garden was like breath of cold mountain air. It had well-established clumps of siberians, but all the guest irises were in specially dug beds on a south facing hill which sloped away from the house. 'Holden Clough' (just going over) was at the top, then spurias lined the fence down the hill with siberians of varying heights in front. I made a note of 'Enbec' (Reid '89), 'Red Oak' (Ferguson '66), 'Lenkoran' (Rodionenko '94), 'Imperial Ruby' (McCowan '77) and 'Phil Edinger' (Hager '91), another magnificent clump of Sacks-Schafer's 586-8-1 growing under totally different conditions and finally caught up with 'Shakers Prayer' which proved to be something of a disappointment. Across the top of the hill was another long narrow bed in the centre of which was a small clump of the blackest I. chrysographes I have ever seen. Some of the blooms were going over, some were just opening, but they all had the same intensity of colour totally unfaded by the Oregon sun. A 'must' - if I can ever lay hands on a piece.

At the end of day 2, the American Spuria Iris Society held a meeting at the Portland Hilton. The venue had been moved from one of the convention rooms downstairs to a bedroom on the 7th floor and, as more and more members piled in, one could not help but become 'friendly' with one's neighbour. There were many luminaries in attendance: some, like Dave Niswonger, already acquaintances, others, like Ben Hager, until that moment just revered names. Bobby Shephard chaired the meeting and, after spending the first half-hour dealing with business (including the announcement that 'Son of Sun' had won the Nies Medal for the second time) the rest of the time was spent looking at slides of spurias Bobby had photographed earlier that month in her garden in Arizona. Their bloom was already over! The slides were dominated by hybrids from Floyd Wickencamp and Charles Jenkins and, although I made a list 3 pages long, I highlighted 'Zulu Chief' (Jenkins '92), 'Sultan Shah' (Niswonger '90), 'Innovator' (Hager ?), 'Look Again' (Johnson '91), 'Lady Butterfly' (Jenkins '94), and 'Dress Circle' (Hager '85) adding them to my 'wanted' list.

The last day started at Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden. Terry Aitken specializes in IBs and BBs, but although his new seedlings were very interesting, the one iris that had me going back, and back again, for just one more look was a Sino-Siberian called 'Dotted Line' which was a local raising by Lorna Reid ('92). It had a snow-white ground with a cobalt blue plicata pattern in dotted lines radiating out from the centre of the bloom on both standards and falls and was creating a lot of attention despite being planted in the shade of an old fruit tree which was not in the main part of the garden and nowhere near the guest irises. (When I placed my order with the Aitkens later in the season I requested a piece of 'Dotted Line' and received a good-sized lump which I am able to report seems to be doing quite well so far!) It was here also that I finally managed to see 'Over in Gloryland' which, unlike 'Shakers Prayer' did not disappoint. Bob Hollingworth really seems to have isolated a genetic bloodline which I have no doubt will generate many more gems in the years to come.

And to cap it all? A beardless TB bred by, and growing in, Duane Meek's garden. Not registered at the time of the convention, this baby pink self is expected to be launched on the market as 'Close Shave'.

It is difficult for me to be sure whether or not 1994 was a good year for sibiricas in most gardens, though there are some pointers which suggest it probably was; but reports of a dry summer in most of southern England may have caused some stress for plants later on. It hasn't been like that in South Shropshire.

Flowering in my own garden brought both pleasures and disappointments. I am not going to dwell on the latter, save to say that they reinforced what I knew perfectly well already - that the time for many plants to be divided and replanted with hefty quantities of compost is long overdue. The improved performance of those that have been dealt with simply emphasises the point. I am also seeing that the addition of a slow-release fertiliser (in my case Vitax Q-4, but I expect others would do as well) to the compost, when it is dug in, seems to be very beneficial. Probably it is adding trace elements and other nourishment which my compost lacks. But, as with advanced hybrids in other sections, it seems that modern hybrids need a richer fare than the old faithfuls. Another reason for non-flowering is also obvious: a large bed is overrun with grass and other weeds. Cleaning and replanting has been started, but oh for more time and energy!

A third factor is one for which I cannot blame myself. Here we have had two (now three) mainly coolish, dampish summers in a row. Even if sibiricas do not require summer baking, they do need more warmth than they have had if they are to flower well. I value very highly those such as 'Laurenbühl' and 'Creme Chantilly' to whom the weather seems to make little difference.

The pleasures come from these and other reliable friends, and new acquisitions blooming for the first time here. The Morgan-Wood Medal winner for 1991, 'Mabel Coday' (Helsley 1984) is a very neat deep violet flower with yellow to white signal which has established well in a short time. Another Medal winner, 'King of Kings' (Varner 1982) which won in 1990, is also proving a good grower and flowering regularly. The white blooms are rather horizontal in form and the falls could be wider at the haft. I do find 'Mikoko' (Tamberg 1993), which gained an AM at Wisley last year, more attractive as the standards are semi-upright and the wide falls arch gracefully. It is a seedling with 'Creme Chantilly' as the pollen parent and this seems to have passed vigour and generous flowering to 'Mikoko'. A third white which arrived in 1993 and has made a good start is 'Esther C.D.M.' (McGarvey 1981); though I am reserving judgement on its form; first year flowers are not always typical.

A tetraploid from New Zealand has been here for several years and proved a good doer. 'Emma Ripeka' (Frances Love 1990) has rather narrow falls and vertical standards reminiscent of the older tets, but is an attractive colour combination of rich blue-violet standards and falls with much paler style arms. At its best, as I saw it in New Zealand, a clump can be almost covered in bloom and one can understand why it won the Begg Shield for the best New Zealand raised seedling of 1989. A much later generation tet is Currier McEwen's 'Lady Lilac' (1990) which also has a vertical shape but with fairly broad white standards and wide, downward arching falls, deep lilac-pink at the centre paling to white at the edges. On closer inspection from above there are lilac spots to be seen at the base of the white style arms while the hafts of all its parts deepen to reddish-brown with (on the hafts) green centres. A fascinating flower of good garden value.

So is 'Roaring Jelly' (Schafer/Sacks 1992), described by my husband as 'sexy'. I can't quite see that myself (difference in male and female vision?) but it has great personality and clearly character is in the eye of the beholder. It is an exuberant combination of pinkish standards heavily veined and flushed raspberry, rich bright wine-red falls with a violet flush at the centre, and fancy style arms in very pale blue/violet/raspberry/pink with enlarged crests. Almost impossible to describe, but there is a photograph in the 1993 BIS Year Book.

Two 1994 British registrations are 'Leo Hewitt' and 'Ashfield Clementine'. Anne Watson has a nursery near Leeds for unusual perennials and hybridises hellebores. She grows some irises, too, and found a 'flat form' seedling which she has registered. I have not yet grown 'Ashfield Clementine' myself, but Anne brought flowers for me to see. Like Alex Back's 'Vee One' the standards arch over to lie just above the falls and have signals like those on the falls, but the ground colour is basically rich blue-violet. Read the description Anne provided for registration, in the 1994 Year Book, and you will find the colouring is really much more subtle. The discovery has roused Anne's enthusiasm for breeding more sibiricas of this form and an addition to the too few British hybridisers is very welcome.

'Leo Hewitt' (no prizes for guessing the raiser) is a tetraploid which is almost navy blue, with a gold signal, named for my late father-in-law who spent many years in the Royal Navy. One interesting aspect of the 1994 season was that sibiricas with white or gold edges on the falls seemed to have especially bright ones, and some which do not normally have edges showed them - 'Jaybird' (Hager 1982) for one, and 'Leo Hewitt' for another. I wonder whether 'Leo' may have shown them before and I didn't notice, as I only realised it had happened when I saw a slide I had taken. How could I take a photo and not see what I was looking at? (Answers not required.)

Finally, two very cheering notes from a wider field. The number of entries at the BIS Summer Show for the class for a vase of 5 spikes of sibiricas amounted, I think, to 12 - certainly to a goodly number and more than in most years - including several from people who I do not think have shown sibiricas before. If this shows increasing interest and success in growing these excellent plants, three (or twelve) cheers. The standard was high, too, in the list of Awards of Garden Commendation given by the BIS in 1994; there are six sibiricas. Unprecedented! Four come from Tomas Tamberg and his lovely, large, ruffled 'Prussian Blue' tops the whole list. Congratulations Tomas; perhaps we shall see you with a Dykes Medal in due course? To see beardless cultivars competing successfully against the domination of the bearded is now a reality and not a dream and yet they are still plants we can recommend with confidence for growing in a wide range of gardens.

A.I.S SPURIA AWARDS 1994 (courtesy of the Spuria Society Newsletter)

Eric Niess Medal - Son of Sun (Wickencamp); runners up: Cinnamon Stick (Niswonger), Highline Coral (McCown).

Award of Merit - Missouri Rivers (Niswonger), Sonoran Senorita (Wickencamp), In Depth (Hager), Kitt Peak (Wickencamp).

Although these awards were published unusually early in 1994, the NL arrived just too late for our own previous edition.

NEW EDITION OF THE SPURIA CHECKLIST

'A task force has been set up to revise the 1985 edition of the Spuria Checklist'. In particular, plants registered and/or introduced between 1985 and 1993 will be included and there will be additional editorial material.

If any of you have plants in either category Floyd Wickencamp would like to hear from you together with a brief biographical note about yourself. His address is 10521 Bellarose Drive, Sun City, AZ 85351, U.S.A.

Help !

Roger Nelson of Oregon hopes that we can help him over two matters. Firstly, he is looking for some old iris and daylily cultivars:

Siberians Acuta, Blue Charm, Blue Chanteuse, Blue King, Cool Spring, Emperor Mitsou, Morning Magic, Mrs Perry, Night Sprite, Nigrescens, Ottawa, Periwinkle, Perry's Blue, Pickanock, Rimouski, Royal Ensign, Schwan, Snow Wheel, Wisley White, Yankee Trader,

Spurias A.J. Balfour, Blue Acres, Blue Zephyr, Bronzspur, Burnished Brass, Cherokee Chief, Crow Wing, Dutch Defiance, Eagle, Forever Young, Good Nature, Hazy Hills, Lumiere, Michigan State, Monaurea, Morningtide, Mrs A.W. Tait, Oriole, Red Step, Ruth Nies Cabeen, Wadi Zem Zem, White Lance, Wren's Nest, Yellow Swallowtail,

Hemorocallis Hesperus, Hyperion, Marcy, Orange Beauty, Revolute.

Since there is a fairly simple way of getting any plants to Roger, please will you get in touch with Clive Russell, 47 Station Road, New Barnet, Herts. EN5 1PR if you have any of these to spare.

Secondly, Roger says 'Thieves broke into my house some four years ago and stole many items. Among the things lost were old iris catalogs and bulletins that I often referred to. I have compiled a list of those I most want to replace. Can you help me with this search?'

Siberian Iris Society Newsletters - all issues 1970 & 1971; spring 1972; all issues 1973, 1974, 1975; fall 1976; spring 1979; fall 1983; spring 1993.

Spuria Iris Society Newsletter - Spring 1985 issue.

Laurie's Iris Garden (Lorena M. Reid, Springfield, OR 97477) all price lists prior to 1972; 1973; 1980; 1981; 1982.

Northwest Hybridisers (Jean Witt - John Taylor, Seattle, WA 98155) all price lists before 1971 and those after 1980.

Rainbow Hybridising Gardens (Lloyd Austin) all catalogues except 1962.

Even photocopies might be a help here and if there is anything you can do please get in touch with Roger R. Nelson, Iris County, 6219 Topaz Street NE, Brooks, OR 97305.

After the winter we have been enduring, you may remember the blizzards that Mark Cook of Kentucky suffered last year. He wrote in the autumn to say that in spite of his fears, the losses were not so disastrous. The badly damaged dogwood grew away well. The irises and other perennials survived and bloomed as they should, but didn't set seed because of the extremely hot summer; dry and windy with temperatures around 100°F, even to 107°. Even after that, the remount irises joined the other autumn plants in putting up a show.

CLOSE INSPECTION

Anna Mae Miller has a large garden: she can give a bed of 50' x 100' to 95 Japanese iris plants and another of 100' x 200' to Siberians though she says some of them will be for the chop after flowering, but there are seedlings to take their places. Out of 1000 seedlings, 7 have been registered. She is pretty ruthless because, after all, the duds need just as much attention as the winners and give far less satisfaction.

Very kindly, she has sent a copy of an article written for the 75th Anniversary of the A.I.S. which I do hope they will be able to print in full. The basic criteria for breeders' successes are discussed and she makes some interesting points. Firstly, make up your mind what you are trying to do and stick to it. Secondly, look twice at the eye-catchers because on closer inspection they may not be good at all. There is a lot of work to be done in improving some colours and colour retention in a number of lines and in ensuring they are good doers. That the dwarf cultivars are becoming popular we had noticed and the flat flowered forms are cropping up more often.

In the course of the round-up she mentions breeders who are well known over here and names of plants of which a surprising number of British raised ones have resulted in unexpected breaks. (At a later stage, her copy of the article will go in the Group Library)

And on top of all that she and her husband will be over here during the second half of May for an extensive visit on a History of Gardens trip. With luck, one or two of us should meet her.

FLAGS AHoy !

A recent article in The Times described the anti-pollution works carried out by Westons, the cider makers. It involved a lot of tree planting and establishing a series of settling ponds for the effluent, of which there can be a great deal. The first pond is horrible, the second an improvement, but the third is planted, amongst other things, with yellow and blue flag irises and they are flourishing. (I take these to be Ii. pseudacorus and versicolor)

PLANT SALES.

We would like to encourage the sale of actual plants among members. You know what does well in your gardens and what is going to be replanted this year. Let Sue Pierce know so that she can include your offer in the next N.L. You won't be swamped with orders and packing up a few plants doesn't take long. If you are generous enough to give the money to the Group, less postage and packing costs, the Treasurer will be delighted.

And to start the ball rolling Mrs Margaret Criddle, 5 Storeys Lane, Burghle-Marsh, Skegness, Lincs. PE4 5LR can offer seedlings raised from B.I.S. seed of 'Mrs Rowe', 'Fairy Dawn', 'Ego' and 'Red Flare'. Also from 'Orville Fay', and an American deep blue-flowered plant as well as I. wilsonii. Then for a bit of variety Belamcanda chinensis, Dierama pulcherrima, and seedlings from Crocasmia 'Lucifer'. There are supplies of Sisyrinchium striatum, too, useful for filling gaps in the hedge to deter the neighbours' cats. These are all at £1.50 a plant inclusive of post and packing.

BEWARE THE FLATWORM

Artioposthia triangulata is spreading rapidly through England. The main objective has to be to keep it under control until some predator is found because if it is just left to spread it will eat all our native worms (it's preferred diet) and wreck the soil structure of our gardens. Adults are up to ten inches long with a flattened cross section and dark purple-brown with pale stripes along the side, the hatchlings are pinkish. Do not stamp on the creatures as they regenerate very easily. Try a bucket of strong salt solution, boiling water or a fire. They are usually found, and can be trapped, in damp sites such as under rotting wood, old bricks or earthenware flower pots where they are usually in a cocoon of bubbly mucus. The eggs are oval, up to half an inch long and shiny black. Be suspicious of all container plants and soak them thoroughly in a bucket of water when the worms should float to the surface after a time.

This Group has changed since Alex Back first set it up to cater for the spuria, siberian and japanese iris cultivars which he felt weren't getting a fair whack in the competition stakes. S.S. & J is a manageable abbreviation, but now that pacificas and water irises are included in the titling things are getting out of hand. We could call it the Beardless Iris Group, but somehow the obvious contraction is a bit 'off'.

The Committee has decided to offer a year's free subscription to the member who can concoct the best title for a group which apparently aims to include cultivars from the whole range of beardless irises in the long run. And this is urgent - we already have 'versatas' in the seed list and the range of plants is increasing yearly. Suggestions to the Hon. Sec. by the end of June, please.

1994 SEEDS DISTRIBUTION. The seed list this year will be split between the Newsletters. Those being offered here are new seasons stocks. Those to be offered in the summer will be known as the Seed Bank and are older. We hope this will make it easier for you to choose immediately from the newest and then, if you have a sudden afterthought, you will have a second chance. Remember that iris seeds have a very long shelf life and that it is sometimes easier to germinate older seed. Unless the wording indicates otherwise, all seeds are open pollinated.

Seeds are 30p a packet and orders should go to Gary Lewis at the address on the cover sheet. Make his month and buy them all.

PSEUDACORUS HYBRID:

from Currier McEwen, U.S.A.: 'Donau' selfed tetraploid; good with other tetraploids

PSEUDACORUS SPECIES:

from Mark Cook, U.S.A. pseudacorus

SIBIRICA HYBRIDS:

from Dale Hamblin, U.S.A.

'Anniversary'	'Mabel Coday'
'Belfast'	'Maranatha'
'Carrie Lee'	'Mountain Lake'
'Cool Spring'	'My Love'
'Demure Illini'	'Ong's Hat'
'Diana Blue'	'Pirate Prince'
'Dreaming'	'Roanoke's Choice'
'Eric the Red'	'Sea Shadows'
'Esther C.D.M.'	'Showdown'
'Fairy Dawn'	'Skeena'
'Grey Prince' - 3 seeds	'Snowy Egret'
'Gull's Wing'	'Sole Command'
'Illini Dame' (tetraploid)	'Steve'
'Illini Encore'	'Temper Tantrum'
'Lavender Light'	'Towanda Redflare'
'Little Tricolor'	'Windwood Spring'

from Jennifer Hewitt, G.B.

'Sparkle'
Chrysographes sub-series (40-chr.) mixed hybrids
'Lavender Light'
'Red Flare'

from Currier McEwen, U.S.A.:

T 91/55(2) x bee - white tetraploid repeater
yellow tetraploid - very few
mixed blue tetraploids
diploid miniatures - blues, some whites

SIBIRICA SPECIES:

from Jane Cole, G.B.:

chrysographes rubella
delavayi (Didcot)[ex Humphreys long ago]

JAPANESE HYBRIDS:

from Currier McEwen, U.S.A.:

diploid Japanese

91/61(3) (Hekiun x Chitose Hime) x bee
91/22(5) (White Parachute x Chitose Hime) x bee
'Joan Trevithick' x bee
'01' Man River' x bee
'Returning Tide' (repeater) x bee

AI50-08

'My Impulse'

'New Vista'

'Now This'

'Penny Bunner'

'Popped Corn'

'Snow Giant'

'Struttin' x 'Struttin'

'Universal Peace'

'White

'Zeal'

'Zulu Chief'

from Jane Cole kerneriana

orientalis (syn. ochroleuca)

x spuria - yellow, 60"

from Jane Cole

var. *kermesina*

'Murgayana'

'Party Line'

'Pink Peaks'

'Whodunnit'

Schafer/Sacks sdq. SP90 - 1

mixed colours

from Mark A. Cook

I. x LA 'Bajazzo'.

from Jane Cole - I. setosa (18")

from Currier McEwen, U.S.A.:

(DOMF 208 [89 backcross SBOSS] x versicolor) x bee

In a Group such as this where members seldom meet to discuss various problems the NL has to stand in, but the Editor can't make it all up. Your contributions are essential. They need not be of the calibre of the great garden writers. If you will even put some notes on paper and send them in then they can be turned into good reading. Something along the lines of 'the spurias started out well in the autumn, then there was all that snow and the deer nibbled them down to the ground. Thought I'd lost the lot. But the spring was warm and wet and they grew and flowered magnificently'. Or whatever did really happen. Tell us what you bought, how long it took to come to flowering and what you thought of the result. Don't worry that other readers will look down their noses at your problems; somebody else will be in the same mess. All is grist to an editor's mill.

Please let Sue Pierce, address on cover sheet, have your contributions to the next newsletter by July 31, 1995. And, as she is a newcomer to this game, do your best to find something for her. The next edition should be distributed in September.

A fully updated list will be published in the next edition in September.

The National Trust is running this affair on Sunday, 7th May - 11am to 5pm at Dunham Massey Hall, Altrincham, Cheshire. If any member would be interested in publicising the Group there, further details can be obtained from Peter Hall, 061 - 9414222 or 9269291. This would not be a plant sales stand. There will be running tea and coffee for exhibitors.