

**The Group for Beardless Irises of the British Iris Society**  
**Newsletter No.43**

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**AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE GROUP:** To foster communication between members in Great Britain and overseas by the exchange of ideas, seeds and plants; to help newcomers with their interests and problems, and to report on new work in hybridisation.



## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

I have had a most interesting yet at the same time a frustrating experience since the last newsletter. I am assured that you will find it interesting. I hope that if I do relate a little of what happened that you will not be too bored or at the other extreme too envious. I admit that I am luckier than most in being able to drop everything and just go. Anyway, last March I was informed that I could join another expedition to Tibet. Several of us had wanted to go this year as the famous Tsari valley was to be the goal. The previous November (1997) I was told that my chances of going were remote if not down right non existent, such was the demand. To say that I was overjoyed at the news is an understatement. Over the Christmas period and beyond I should have been walking a minimum of ten miles a week, and whilst not totally unfit, in racecourse parlance "I was short of a gallop". I did my best in the weeks before June but could have been fitter.

The Tsari valley explored by Kingdon Ward and by Ludlow and Sherriff some fifty or more years ago is a sacred place of pilgrimage for Tibetan Buddhists. It is reputed to be full of abundant wild-life including several pheasant species, but of most interest to us as gardeners it contains many endemic plants. For our purposes chief of these other than *Rhododendron* is *Daphne macrantha*, the largest flowered species recorded only once by George Sherriff. To see this one plant flowering in the wild would have justified the journey alone. Alas it was not to be! Some three weeks before we set off in June the Indians detonated an atomic device. When we got to China the Chinese arbitrarily revised our plans. Being a mere ten miles or so from the Indian border we had to accept their apprehensions. However a more unsympathetic group of people it would be hard to envisage. Most of our group were between fifty and seventy years of age. The two youngest were each aged thirty-four. Of these Kenneth Cox, our botanical leader, with his father Peter who was with us, is indisputably one of the leading world authorities on *Rhododendron*. The other young man was Steve Hootman, Secretary of the American *Rhododendron* Species Foundation. So the group being deprived of the *rhododendron* riches of the Tsari valley were entitled to feel a little aggrieved. To me it was not so important. We did see some *Rhododendrons* especially the rich pink *Rh. aganniphum* which seemed to grow everywhere wet enough. Also numerous herbaceous plants, i.e. *sp. Primulas* in their thousands and the bulbous *Fritillaria cirrosa*, a glorious yellow form; but no irises unfortunately. To cut a long story short our leader Kenneth contrived to take us to the reverse of the Tsari valley so that we could in effect look down it. This we didn't quite achieve. It took three days march with two camping sites to get somewhere close. The highlight to me of the whole journey was that at about 14,000 ft. we were among the yak herdsman in their summer pastures. In spite of being relatively unfit I was only a short distance behind the leaders; had coped and not let the others down. For that alone I felt distinctly pleased with myself.

One afternoon I took a short respite with a young Tibetan interpreter while he negotiated the purchase of a young Tibetan mastiff puppy. The whole group of course would have liked to have taken this puppy home. It was a beautiful young animal. When fully grown they are reputedly one of the most ferocious breeds on earth. In the meantime the herdsman and his daughter and son were busy churning yak's milk into a form of cream cheese. They then mixed this with some ground roasted barley and ate it immediately. This is the staple native diet: *tsampa*. Very few vegetables are grown. None at these heights but lower down in the villages potatoes were grown which even at these heights our Scottish experts assured us were virus ridden.

A few alliums but no brassicas as we know them seem to be grown except that a form of the dreaded oilseed rape was in flower, grown for a collective lower down the valley. The one thing that really fascinated me about their diet was the tea; imported either from India or China. No tender tips here such as we are used to, but mature or semi-mature leaves packed meticulously concertina fashion. These leaves are broken up and churned with hot water and yak butter in the churn previously used for making butter. In view of the latest claims that tea as an anti-oxidant is very beneficial to our health perhaps these mature leaves are the clue to the Tibetan's well-being in spite of a very restricted diet.

In short I enjoyed the hour and a half I spent in the herdsman's tent as much as any other experience. Another such experience. One day just after we arrived I took a short nap and woke up to find that all sixteen of our group had left me behind. I then had the glorious experience of an unparalleled vista down a wooded valley; far too steep for us to clamber down with any safety; and a nice stroll along a raised track. One has to be extra cautious when alone about personal safety. A broken or sprained limb holds up the whole party. Without exaggeration the nearest intensive care unit would be over a thousand miles away; but then so would the traffic queues, road rage and all the other so-called conveniences of modern life.

I just cannot convey in words the joy of walking through a *rhododendron* forest alone.

When we ultimately got down to more civilised levels the Chinese authorities interviewed, not interrogated I hasten to say, our leaders. To show their self-importance they confiscated some of our slides and extracted some of the little money we had. I am glad to say that not one of us raised our voices in protest, probably to the surprise of the Chinese. No one lost face, as the expression goes, and away we went. Thwarting the western business men seems to have extended to inconveniencing the western traveller. Once they have our money safe they feel free to play "cat and mouse" with us.

We were delayed in our departure from Lhasa by overcast clouds and untypical heavy rainfall. As a result we had an extra two days in Khatmandu which was a bonus in itself. Two months later in the midst of the Yangtze flooding I was reminded of this heavy rain. The President of China promised that the re-planting of forests in the upland reaches of the major rivers would be tackled as a preventative measure. It is nice to know that the Chinese leadership now recognises the vast indiscriminate damage that the felling of these forests has done over the last forty years. Natural regeneration is obviously too slow. It will be however almost as daunting a task as the construction of the monumental new Yangtze dam. In view of the fact that so many endangered species exist in these upper reaches we in the West must wish them well.

The whole world should be concerned in Conservation by now. Gardeners can do their bit even if growing one rare plant. I wish this was more publicised.

It is sad news that we are losing our Newsletter Editor. She has done an unparalleled job. I hope you will agree that she has maintained a high standard of publication, following the loss of Joan Trevithick, and we shall miss her equally. We need a young, aspiring journalist to take over Sue's duties. The officers will give every support, but without a replacement the prospect is gloomy.

Ray Bomford



## SECRETARIAL SECTION

Time and even modest inflation have overtaken us and you will see in Philip's report we shall have to increase our subscription. Mind you, even if a serious drop in costs should occur we wouldn't reduce it, we'd just look for some fancier way to make the subscription worth paying. So I do hope that you will all rally round and pay the modest increase so that we can keep going and provide you with worthwhile reading material for the days when it's too wet, too cold or too hot to garden.

I'm really not sure why none, or most of you, don't raise plants from seed for yourselves from the Group's seed lists. We really would like to know; You can write, anonymously if you like, to me or you can e-mail me and let off steam. Mind you, I'm not so hot on the e-mail reception yet, but it's fairly certain that something I might prefer not to get will register without trouble. And let me say that we are very grateful indeed to those members who send us seeds and we hope that they will continue to send them direct to Margaret Criddle.

Newsletter Editor, Sue Pierce has done a marvellous job for us since she took over in response to my howl of misery after Joan Trevithick's death. Now she is moving to fresh woods where we wish her the best of luck and if this Group is to continue, someone must succeed her. Obviously it would be marvellous if the volunteer were computer competent and could produce oven-ready copy and I suspect that a lot more of you can do it than ever let on. And in this day and age a lot of people are taking to this lark: it could be a really good opportunity for such a person to come to terms with the programmes. It could even be an opportunity for husband and wife co-operation. Sue will happily brief the volunteer on how she gets material for printing. More to the point, the new editor doesn't need to have a wide ranging knowledge of beardless irises and their cultivation. There are several of us who are willing to help with queries and a newsletter coming out twice a year does leave quite a lot of time for checking up. Seriously, if no one takes over from Sue quickly then this Group will fold in the course of the next year and that would really be a great shame.

Mrs. Norma Harris wrote enquiring about her *laevigatas* which suddenly decided to produce one flower with ten petals and another with more than the respectable count on the second flowers, her first question is, does anyone else have plants in this group which regularly produce variant petal counts? Secondly, have those parts of the plant stabilised as permanent mutations? In general, this group, together with the *ensatas*, is prone to instability in the flowers, but not always every year. And, incidentally, this has been a year for modified flowers in many groups, including the bearded ones. We even found a tendency to doubling in one or two at Wisley. I can only think the plants got a bit over-enthusiastic after last winter's rains.

Anne Blanco White

## REPORT OF THE TREASURER & MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

**Finances** - The Group's finances are satisfactory but of a balance of £438.43 in the Building Society pass-book at 31st December, (with half-yearly net interest of £5.72 to be added), a sum of approximately £200 represents advance payments by members. However, the balance is net of the estimated cost of the printing and postage of this newsletter, for which an advance has been withdrawn. Donations and plant sales are continuing to play an important part in keeping balances healthy. In June last I took advantage of recent Building Societies legislation and transferred the Group's account with the Bradford and Bingley Building Society into share status and became a member of the Society; the terms and conditions of the account remaining unchanged. I have heard that the Society's Board has received a Members Resolution asking it to take steps to convert this mutual building society into a bank. An A.G.M. voting pack will be issued in late March. In the meantime I will consult the officers so that a decision can be taken, and the members informed of the outcome.

Although balances at 1st January, 1998 appeared to be quite adequate they were in fact thought to be sufficient only to meet the year's expenditure, with the cost of three newsletters to meet. In the event the cost of this newsletter's costs will be charged in the 1999 financial year, for which it has become prudent to recommend an increase in the level of annual subscriptions which alone are insufficient to fund the cost of the newsletters. In consultation with the Chairman and the Hon. Secretary the subscriptions for 1999 will be increased by 50pence. This is based on a newsletter within the postal rates for 100g.

There is an added complication. The late completion of this newsletter, caused by my ill-health, means that with delays in its delivery combined with the effect of the resignation of our Newsletter Editor, the Spring Newsletter may be cancelled and all editorial will be concentrated in an Autumn newsletter. Provision is being made for an interim up-date, if thought necessary, on action recommended following the receipt of the Building Society A.G.M. agenda and developments following Sue's resignation.

Back copies of newsletters can be purchased for £1.00 including postage, if sent with the newsletter to be published following the receipt of your request. If sent separately the cost will be £1.50.

The new subscriptions for 1999 will be £3.00 for members resident in the U.K. and the European Community and £3.50 for other members resident overseas. Advance payments by members will be adjusted accordingly. The Chairman has authorised the inclusion with this newsletter of a personal statement so that you know the exact state of your subscription at year-end. This will also include any "stop press" items. Please make every effort to pay any subscriptions due by 30th June. The last increase in membership subscriptions took place in 1995 and it is due to the generosity of members that the level of subscriptions has been maintained for these past four years. As to the future please refer to my comments in the membership section. Arrears are now at a manageable level. The membership cut-off point this year has taken account of the late despatch of this newsletter and has been altered to 1st July where subscriptions are not paid.

Over £100 has been received in donations from various sources during 1998 and a detailed report will be made in the next newsletter after audit of the accounts. The Group's sincere thanks are due to Norma Harris, Jennifer Hewitt, Olga Wells, Evelyn White, our Chairman Raymond Bomford, Norman Bennett, John Carter, Norman Payne, Dr. Steven Ruffles, and David Trevithick for their generous donations, both specific and general. Reports on the use of specific donations will be presented from time to time.

On this occasion I am happy to report that a gift of a Brierley Crystal Cut Glass Coaching Bowl was made to our honorary life member, Dr. Currier McEwen, from specific donations made by U.K. members of the Group. It had a personal courier as I was able to take it with me and deliver it safely when I visited Currier and Elisabeth McEwen in July last. Our Chairman has received a letter of thanks for this unexpected gift, which marks the donors' appreciation of the generosity and support received from Currier over past years. A report on my visit will be included in the next newsletter. In his letter to the Chairman Currier said of the gift "It is a treasure in its own right made all the more precious to us by the thoughtfulness and kindness of you all in sending it." Dr. McEwen adds "I am happy



to see how firmly established the Group now is and to add my praise for the selection of the new name. Elisabeth and I send all of you our thanks and best wishes for the years ahead."

Plant sales continue to be an important source of income, and in this respect the Group is particularly fortunate in having a dedicated core of members who send such donations. We are indebted to Anne Blanco White, Jennifer Hewitt and Sue Pierce, for their sterling efforts and generosity. Our Seed distribution is now in the enthusiastic care of Margaret Criddle, B.I.S. Seed Distribution Officer. All future enquiries and seed parcels should be addressed to Margaret whose address is given on the front page. This part of my report would not be complete without a word of thanks to those who send seed to make the seed distribution possible.

In recent reports I have mentioned an unusual gift of a metal 'Rotadex' cabinet. The donor, my dentist, whose records are now computerised, has gifted another to our stock, which is to be used as a membership index. The main newsletter author/subject indices have now been housed in a larger "Rotadex" cabinet which, with the Chairman's approval, I purchased at a much reduced price. This uses up the bequest of £200 from the late Miss E.M. Sharland.

To those who have responded to my plea for advance payments, many thanks for making my work easier. Receipts will be attached to your membership subscription statement. Please avoid disappointment to both parties by sending your subscriptions as soon as possible. I am wholly occupied on work for the Group and the main Society, to the detriment of my garden and other pursuits, so can ill afford time spent chasing up arrears. Eventually the despatch of newsletters will depend on the pre-payment of subscriptions, for in this manner arrears will be avoided altogether. My thanks to you all for the friendly and supportive notes I receive from time to time, which are very encouraging.

**Membership** - With 55 U.K. members and 35 from overseas at the end of 1998, membership is fairly steady. Since the publication of our May, 1998 newsletter we have welcomed to membership Mrs. Barbara Draper of Shanklin, Isle of Wight; Peter Ashley of Eastleigh, Hants.; Stephen J. Atkins of Malvern Wells, Worcs.; Mr. J. Collington of Wollaton, Nottingham; Jeff Dunlop of NO. Windham, Maine, who is working with Currier McEwen on the hybridisation of his sibiricas; Mr. & Mrs. Chandler Fulton of Weston, Massachusetts; Mr. Ben C. van Noordwyk of Aarle-Rixtel, The Netherlands; and Andrew Wheeler of Colrain, Massachusetts. Please remember that the ultimate success of the newsletter will be achieved when all members make a personal contribution to it, telling us of your plans and achievements. Let us all share your fun and frustrations with beardless irises. Without them the world would be a less attractive place and our common interest would be lost.

Years do not pass without the loss of valued members. We remember our Pacificas Specialist, Ray Wilson, who resigned on health grounds in 1997; and who passed away after a massive heart attack in September last. We send our condolences to his widow Joyce and members of her family. The Chairman authorised the sending of a tribute in Ray's memory by way of a donation to the British Diabetic Society.

We are fortunate in having an offer of help from Revd. Fr. Philip Jones of The Redemptionists serving the Parish of St. Thomas and Edmund of Canterbury at Erdington Abbey, Birmingham, who has many years experience of growing Pacificas. Fr. Philip has offered to help with problems with Pacificas, and lives sufficiently near me to be able to visit me. In view of the comments I have received from time to time on the hazards of transplanting Pacificas I am conducting an experiment, which stemmed from the neglect of that area of my garden over the past two years. I always understood that although germination from seed did not present difficulty, division and transplanting could only be carried out in September/October when the new white roots were emerging. Having missed that period for the second year running I decided (a) to try taking cuttings and (b) to encourage rooting by lifting the plant and immersing in water for a limited period. I am delighted with the results but it is too soon to recommend others to try it. Fr. Philip has seen my work and the experiment will be repeated at monthly intervals. There will be further comment in the next newsletter. Comments from other members on this subject would also be welcome.

We are saddened also by other losses. Our long-serving Southern area representative and Spuria Specialist Adrian Whittaker has been forced to resign his membership of the Group owing to the severe illness of his wife and his increasing responsibility for the care of his ageing mother who is living on her own at some distance from him. We send him our thanks for past services and good wishes for the future. Luckily Adrian's daughter has expressed an interest in continuing cultivation of some of Adrian's irises.

Membership at 1st February, 1999 is listed on the penultimate pages.

In January 1998, and in the absence of any other volunteer, I took over the duties of Hon. Literature Secretary to the British Iris Society. This takes up quite a lot of my spare time and I consider it undesirable for any one member to hold more than one post. It is likely that age and ill-health will force my resignation from this post later this year.

I am delighted to inform you that after my appeal in the May newsletter Mrs. Norma Harris of Brundall, Norwich has kindly offered to take over the duties of Membership Secretary, to whom all subscriptions and correspondence on membership should be addressed. Mrs. Harris has had experience of fund-raising for the Hardy Plants Society and is the Treasurer of the Norfolk & Suffolk branch. She is a welcome addition to our team. Donations should continue to be sent to the Group's Treasurer, who will also account for annual subscriptions if it is more convenient to send both the subscription and a donation at the same time.

This brings me once again to the serious loss to the Group of the services of our Newsletter Editor, Sue Pierce. She has been the hub of our production team and will be very difficult to replace. I have enjoyed working with her over the past four and a half years and thank her for friendly co-operation. If one of our members will take over the duties of Treasurer after the audit has been completed, then it will free me to act as Newsletter Co-ordinator for a panel of specialists. This would enable an inexperienced member who would like to try their hand at editorial duties to come forward in the knowledge that they would have full support for an initial period.

Do remember that we need younger people to take over. In the year 2000 I shall be 80 years of age, and despite an on-going 10-year plan I am being urged by my medical consultants, my family, and many friends to "take it easy". However I am anxious to give whatever help I can while I can to ensure the Group thrives. That is my priority.

Please consider very carefully how you can help. I know I am biased but I think the continuation of this newsletter is important. Please write to me or to our Secretary, Anne Blanco White. At the same time why not let us have an article for the next newsletter.

Philip Allery.

#### **OBITUARY-Ray Wilson**

It was with great regret that we learned of Ray's unexpected death last September. His work as Seed Distribution Officer from 1986 to his retirement through ill-health in 1993 was recognised by his presentation with the Society's Pilkington Award. His iris



interests were varied; he edited *Remontant News* for several years, his work with Arils and Pacificas contributed greatly to their increased popularity in the UK, being instrumental in including the latter in the SS&J, as the Group was then. Ray has also left a legacy of knowledge to other iris lovers as to what can be grown successfully in the north-west of England, as well as his body of research into fragrances. Ray and Joyce gave their full support to the West & Midlands Group and could be relied upon to man stands in the early days of regional shows when there was a dearth of other volunteers, and Ray supported his local horticultural societies as well as the HPS and the NCCPG.

The iris world has now lost a man who really loved irises, and was always ready to share this enthusiasm, and his plants and seeds, with others. We send our deep sympathy to Joyce and his family.

PA

## EDITORIAL

Jennifer wrote to tell me that since neither *delayvayi* nor *chrysographes* are tets, my dark purple ex *delayvayi* 'Didcot' seedlings are most unlikely to be so, despite their vigour and height, which is a *delayvayi* trait apparently most noticeable in first generation crosses. I do apologise for misleading everyone with my ignorance! These seedling clumps gave their usual gorgeous display this year, pieces of the best ones going to folk who came over, so even if mine have to be abandoned in our proposed move, hopefully some will survive elsewhere. Two Sibs that flowered for their first time in the garden this year, unfortunately had tall but slightly weak stems. 'Polly Dodge' (McEwen 1968) only leant often, drunk on rain, but 'Velvet Queen' (apparently unregistered) flowered it's two buds per stem together and flopped to the ground, a disaster. Maybe that's why it's not in Jennifer's Checklists! 'Marlene Ahlburg' (Hewitt 1983) on the other hand, in it's first flowering since I acquired it in '94, held its two stems nicely stiff. Both 'Pirate Prince' (Varner 1977) and 'Golden Crimping' (McEwen 1985) aborted buds this year, which is a rare event. 'Flight of Butterflies' (Witt 1972) managed to put up only one stem this year, as opposed to last year's five, and it's buds were promptly scoffed by some rampant mollusc, but 'Caesar' (Morgan 1924), 'Melton Red Flare' (Sangster. K. for T&M Ltd. 1997) and the *Sibirica sibirica* variant that I have were their usual reliable selves. 'Lavender Bounty' (McEwen 1981) put up only one stem for the second year running, but is so lovely that that kept me happy. My *laevigatas* have mostly apart from 'Rose Queen' (SJI 1989) done well enough to be split, an anxious occasion as it's my first time. Although this didn't get done until late September or October in the main, they look ok so far, apart from one pot of 'Regal' (Perry 1960) which rotted off whilst I had them standing in an inch or so of water in the shade after splitting. I've left the most robust of those and *laevigata* in water (3" under as recommended by Ray Jeffs, although he may not have meant it to be applied to the recently divided) and the rest have come back and been wrapped in newspaper for the winter along with the Louisianas. All these are still alive, if rather nibbled.

What has done really well after splitting is *pseudacorus* 'Phil Edinger' (Hager 1991), whose main rhizome was left with one fan after splitting, which just slowly browned at the edges and I was sure would die as *pseudacorus* usually grow strongly out of the cut fan with their young leaves. As I tweak this report in February, the rhizome has produced five stout sideshoots of from 2-4", so I'm reassured. My last year's splittings of *ungicularis cretensis* have largely survived, but I was surprised at the amount I lost as they all went into the ground and seemed to settle in nicely. Admittedly, the gardens weeds were left to their own devices all summer as I was rescuing the bearded being overwhelmed on the allotment. Needless to say, these haven't been establishing well and I reckon to lose 1/3 to 1/2 of those. Still, it'll be fewer to have to cope with when we move! Thankfully it was a wet enough summer here that I didn't have to water those in pots on the allotment, quite a chore as it has to be delivered. Although outside our remit, I shall mention here that of the Arilbreds I was trying outside on the allotment, Geoff Wilson's seedlings came off best, and those were his throw-outs too! They survived my unintentional abandonment in greater quantities and with more growth on than the others, including some named varieties kindly sent by Harald Mathes for me to try outside.

As this is my final fling as Editor, I'd very much like to thank the members who've been responsive to my pleas for copy, and the officers who've been unfailingly helpful and friendly. These people are what makes producing the NI worthwhile. I'm sure my successor will meet with a very warm reception, as I did, and wish them many more years of such fun. As those of you who are will know, I'm not particularly computer literate, and you'll all have noticed that my iris knowledge is minimal compared to that of other officers, so anyone thinking of saving the Group from collapse, don't feel intimidated, you'll get all the help you need. There've been no offers to date, so will anyone sitting on the fence of indecision please leap in Anne's direction forthwith.

Sue Pierce

## SOUTH OF WATFORD

This should have been a splendid season for the beardless irises with lots of rain over the winter and early spring to leave the soil well saturated. Oddly enough, the spurias were well behind themselves with small fans overwinter. It may be that there was a cumulative effect of the preceding hot summers and dry winter which led to rather underdeveloped rhizomes. Yet I found that nearly all my plants put on rather poor displays. Established *sibirica* clumps would give a couple of spikes, the *ensatas* sulked with a unanimity that was plain unnerving and the *pseudacorus* forms in the ditch barely flowered at all. What did do well were Tomas Tamberg's fancy hybrids - things like 'Northern Pink' (1995), 'Berlin Versilae' (1988) and 'Three Quarters' (1993). The 'Holden Clough' (Patton 1971) derivatives did well too and considering that they are probably pure *pseudacorus* this was a little surprising.

The most regrettable side of this was that the seed set was negligible. Soggy pollen does not take well and quite often promising pos proved to have useless seed inside. The BIS Seed Officer was in despair so it probably wasn't confined to the south of the country.

I had hoped to have a major replant during August with the ground nice and soft after the earlier wet weather, but as soon as I got down into Sussex the weather changed and became hot and dry with the soil setting rigid rather faster than I could do anything with it. Life was further complicated by an *allium* sp. I don't know what it is and I don't want to, but it offsets enthusiastically and the flowers, if any, modify immediately into bulbils. Every plant sent out to anyone from an infested area has to have a full phytosanitary clean-up. I hate doing this, even for plants going overseas, because of the insults to the roots. It's a case of cleaning up all the bulbils for cooking so that they are irrevocably killed off. And the smell isn't nice like culinary onions, it's rank. I'm reminded of a story from one of the Platt brothers who was visiting an Italian castle. He arrived rather before his hosts and the major-domo did the honours and took him round the garden. He noticed a rather fancy onion and asked if they were ever eaten. His escort said yes, but not when there were visitors. I'll get



rid of mine in the long run, but it's a case of settling down on the rug and taking clods of clay to pieces and fishing out these things about the size of freshwater pearls.

Anne Blanco White

## EASTERN REGION REPORT

September: It's been a really good year for me, although I've a feeling that many people will be of a different opinion. I didn't have any disastrous frosts so I had a normal amount of Bearded irises in flower, although I did have to lie on the ground to appreciate them because they had been felled by heavy RAIN! I didn't mind this at all because all things in the garden, although flat, were actually alive. No hybridising was possible this year because all the pollen was washed away. The P.C.I.'s were particularly affected in this way because even those left to get on with it by themselves had practically no seedheads at all. *Lungiculis* flourished early in the year, which is unusual for me, and I had 'Walter Butt' (Anderson 1962), 'Mary Barnard' (Anderson 1962) and, for the first time, alba. I do still have one that I have never seen in flower and know nothing about, i.e., 'Suffolk Grey' (Jennifer would like to hear from anyone who knows this as it's not in her Check Lists). I bought it at an auction many years ago under this name and would love to hear from anyone who knows of it. Other species that did well were *ruthenica*, *missouriensis*, *Douglasiana* and, of course, the *sibiricas*. *I. gracilipes* did well in the greenhouse and actually yielded some seeds. Also in the greenhouse I was enchanted anew by *evansia* 'Bourne Graceful' (Ellis 1975). I say enchanted anew because this Iris was responsible for my joining the B.I.S. Many years ago I had gone to the stand at Chelsea to try and identify another Iris I'd been given, (*missouriensis*) and whilst bending over the Alphabetical List of Species I looked up and came face to face with it. It was love at first sight and I paid my subscription in the hope that one day I might possess it. However, the world of the Iris proved to be so absorbing that I lost sight of my initial goal and it wasn't until last year that I acquired it (thanks to A.B.W.). If the weather had been more clement when it flowered, I would have moved it outside and invited all my friends to a party to view it and celebrate its arrival.

After all this success I felt sure that something would fail absolutely, it usually does, but I was wrong. The last to perform were the *Spuria* hybrids and they were magnificent. I've had some of them for ten years and never seen them but this year they all bloomed. Once again though, there was very little seed.

I usually give each year a title as an aide memoir, i.e. The Year of The Drought, but after The Year of the Drought IV, I am delighted to be able to use something different, so 1998 is going to be remembered as The Year of the Full Rain Barrels.

Finally, the icing on the cake for me has been that my daughter has joined the B.I.S. and the G.B.I. There is something really pleasurable in finding that one's over-riding passion in life has been passed on to the next generation. Her declared goal is to collect all of the Pacific coast species. I have not been able to help very much in this direction which is a good thing because I know that the enjoyment comes from the thrill of the chase and all the friends you meet along the way.

November: Since writing the above we have had nothing but rain. I'm sure that after four year's of drought everything here is feeling better for it and the only setback has been the inability to carry out the usual autumnal chores. However, I do extend my sympathy to all of our members in the Midlands and South West with the hope that nobody was actually involved in the floods.

Shirley Ryer

## WEST AND MIDLANDS REGION REPORT

For those who enjoy meeting members with like-minded iris interests I thoroughly recommend membership of the main Society and one of the regional groups, of which I can only speak of the benefits and friendships I have gained from membership of the West and Midlands Iris Group. With meetings and garden visits during the year; advice and plants are readily available. If you are interested contact the Secretary, Peter Hewitt, husband of Jennifer, whose address is given on the front page.

A report on activities in the West Midlands region will appear in the Autumn newsletter. Its annual meeting will be held here at Aldridge on Sunday the 14th March and those interested in becoming a member and having an opportunity to visit my garden on that day, either mid-morning or late afternoon, should write to Peter Hewitt or contact me on 01922 - 459397. I cannot cover adequately the south-west of the region, i.e. from the Hampshire border west to Cornwall. A volunteer is needed for that area as well as one for the Southern area to take over from Adrian Whittaker. Do take part - after all, it is your Group. Without your help it may fail.

Philip Allery.

## SIBERIAN BLOOM IN 1998

There were plenty of buds on many *Sibiricas* at Cleeton in May and June, though replanting nearly a third of the collection in 1997 meant a shortage of flowers in that area. The sad thing was that because it rained so often, many buds failed to open and those which did were frequently ruined.

Some varieties take a long time to settle down. 'Charming Darlene' (A.M. Miller 1984) has been in the garden since 1992 but this was the first time it had a stem of full height. It is a pretty mid to light blue. 'Forrest McCord' (Hollingworth 1984) also took its time but has got going well now, a dark blue-violet with personality. Luckily for my patience, not all take their time, and of more recent acquisitions, one very eagerly awaited was 'Countess Cathleen' (Schafer/Sacks 1997) which I fell in love with in Massachusetts in 1996 and brought back with me. But strange things can happen, and instead of the palest blue flowers with deeper veining, much deeper ones appeared. This is not the first time that such a difference has been seen and the most likely explanation seems to be that a cooler, damper climate can intensify some colours. But it is the pale colour that I wanted! Will another year (and a move to a slightly drier spot) bring back the 'right' one?

Several of Marlene Ahlburg's yellow *amoenas* did well, particularly 'Welfenbraut' which is vigorous. 'Welfengold' (also 1992) is one of the most yellow I have seen so far, also vigorous and with plenty of stems. Two British raised blues, 'Llyn Brianne' raised by the late and still missed Harry Foster (1986) in mid-blue, and 'Perfect Vision' (Cy Bartlett 1996) which has deeper blue falls, particularly caught the eye. Both are tetraploids and so is 'Harpwell Snowburst' (McEwen 1990), another mid-blue but with a very diffuse white signal making a 'snowburst' on the falls.

But if the early season was rather disappointing, better days were in store; this has been the most rewarding rebloom year I have had in terms of later spikes though these too suffered from rain. 'Sky Mirror' (Warburton 1986) flowered in June and again in July, and in September there was a real bonus. 'Coronation Anthem' (Hollingworth 1990), a dark blue tet, was first to show a stem. It hadn't bloomed earlier but 'Mad Magenta' (Helsley 1993) had done so, as had 'Violet Repeat' (Brummitt 1967) which had two September stems.



Late in the month I visited the Trials Field at Wisley, not primarily to see irises, but in passing the Sibiricas there was 'Coronation Anthem' again, and what was probably 'Ursel Welch' (Tamberg) in flower, while McEwen's 'Soft Blue' (1979) and 'Exuberant Encore' (1985) had flowered abundantly earlier on.

Jennifer Hewitt

## SPURIA NOTES

I suppose, as you get older, it's natural to look more critically at the plants which you grow, particularly if these are old friends of many years standing. I'm thinking in terms of 'effort vs reward'. Before going any further, I should say that my interest is in finding good garden plants rather than those destined for the show bench. If the two coincide in one individual then, obviously, you have the best of both worlds. 'Effort' is probably fairly easy to define in a loose way, ranging from a continual up-hill slog to keep the plants going, which no one wants, to the ones which grow like weeds with almost no attention during the year. 'Rewards' is a much more difficult area. As with the appreciation of fine art, each person has their own ideal, which is as it should be.

Looking at the spurias, my own preference is for the taller ones which flower and grow well here (Hampshire) most seasons - reliability. I also like a minimum of four flowers per stem spaced to prevent a jumble of bloom at the top of the stem. In other words, so that the individual flowers can be seen and the stem, as a whole, looks in balance with the leaves, giving an impression of tall, slender elegance. The shape and the colour of the flowers are somewhat secondary to me except that, given the choice, I tend to go for the arched, slender shape of the species, rather than the broad, flatter flowers of some of the newer cultivars. In a similar way, I prefer smoother colours rather than garish novelties.

So, this year, how have the ones in my garden stood up to this sort of appraisal? Perhaps the most sensible way is to look at a bed of spurias which has been undisturbed for about ten years now. The bed is of the order of 6' x 8' in size, about the highest point in the garden and in full sun. It holds ten plants, eight being American cultivars, and two my own seedlings. There were 52 stems this year, with eight of the plants flowering -very roughly- a stem per square foot. The salient points are that the plants haven't been disturbed for ten years and have shown an increase in stems year by year. On this basis, it confirms that spurias benefit from being undisturbed and are therefore best suited to a long term planting.

Next question -have they all performed roughly the same? Well, no. There have been marked all round winners in this group. Without question 'Adobe Sunset' (McCown 1976) has been head and shoulders above the others, with 'Kaibab Trail' (Wickencamp 1984) being almost as good. The patch does not include any blues, however, good 'reds' are a favourite with me but, unfortunately, I have to say both 'Custom Design' (Hager 1981) and 'Imperial Ruby' (McCown 1973) have been much less reliable and slower to establish and increase. The rest have been in between these groups.

What about the 'effort' factor? Not very much now. Making sure the patch doesn't dry out in summer and a couple of thorough weeding campaigns each year is about it. I tend to leave everything alone (messily!) until mid November then cut out all the dry stems and trim the old leaves down, as I do the last weeding. This seems to work well and reduces the effort to the minimum. At this stage, I should talk about feeding. Over the years I've tried different feeds both liquid and dry and have finally settled on 'Growmore' as the best. Not only are the granules easy to apply after weeding, just scratched into the surface, but it has given the best results so far with me. I think now also that it's better to come down on the side of heavier feeding rather than light, particularly with plants that are growing close together like these. The patch will need replanting in a year or two as the rhizomes are getting entangled, but I shall leave that as long as I can.

For anyone interested in raising their own plants from seed, or breeding, remember that, in the UK, it's going to be quite a few years before your seedlings flower. Once they do, any that you intend to keep should go in to their final place (hot, sunny spot) as soon as possible and be well watered until they're established. A good way with spuria seeds is to plant the seeds outside in pots, straight from the pods, as soon as the latter start to split. Leave them exposed to the winter cold making sure the pots remain damp. Spurias generally resent transplantation and are particularly sensitive to upheaval at the seedling stage so it's important to ensure that they never dry out after being moved. Mature plants also need sufficient moisture to ensure continued healthy growth. However, once settled in, they are very tough and should survive temporary neglect and anything the UK climate can throw at them. The soil here is hot, thin and very alkaline, so anyone with reasonable garden soil should do as well or better, with spurias. Some of the fairly new cultivars do not set seed easily, or in quantity, so it's wise to experiment with your crosses. Discovering the best parents takes many years -in line with life with spurias in general- it's a long term affair.

So, overall, how has my patch matched up to my expectations? The answer has to be very well. To a degree, I think I've been lucky with the choice of cultivars but I think any group of ten will give you at least a couple of real winners for this climate, if they're grown in the right spot. This year I've had a wealth of flower, making the patch quite spectacular for 2-3 weeks, all for minimum effort. What to do with the less than perfect ones? Providing you have the space and they do bloom from time to time, Who can throw them out?!

Adrian Whittaker

## IRIS LAEVIGATA

In my previous article on iris laevigata I was pointing out that although laevigata are classified as water iris they are easy to grow as they thrive in pots stood in water. It is not necessary to own a pond to grow them. I now propose to deal with propagation. They can of course be grown from seed. Although that is not difficult it is very slow. If the seed is planted in the autumn and left outside for winter frosts a few seeds may germinate the following spring. Most seeds of laevigata take 18 months to germinate and then the percentage germinating is quite high. After germinating the young plants are 12 months reaching flowering size. There is therefore a wait of two and a half years between planting seed and obtaining flowers. I said it was a very slow process. They seem to come reasonably true to their parents from seed but there is always a hope that the bees have travelled around and you obtain something new. Seeds are best planted 1/2"-3/4" deep (1-2cms) as in 18 months they tend to work to the surface. Nobody has ever explained to me why stones and other things tend to work to the surface over the years. Some farmers mention that 'stones grow in their fields'.

Propagation of iris laevigata is usually by splitting up and is best done in July after they have finished flowering in June. The frequency of splitting up depends on the size of the pot in which they are grown. For sale we grow in 31/2" square plastic pots which are now called 9cm. They grow happily for twelve months in these and not so happily for twenty four months.



For flowering I would recommend the equivalent of J1 No.3 potting soil and at least a 12cm pot. Splitting up would only be necessary and desirable every two or three years. Additional feeding is advisable after the first year. A sharp knife is used for cutting up the clumps. When splitting up you must not be too ambitious. If you think a clump will split into four, be content with two. The two will grow but the smaller pieces from a division of four will be more likely to rot off. This applies particularly to *laevigata variegata* which is a desirable and expensive variety. I am reminded of twenty five years ago when all water plants were in very short supply due to the advent of plastic sheet and fibreglass ponds. A competitor of mine obtained a pleasing quantity of *I. laevigata* in large clumps. he was greedy and split it up into as many small plants as he could. The result was a tremendous number of failures. he would have obtained more plants if he had not been so greedy. My last piece of advice is to start the young plants off in damp soil after splitting. Although they are water plants they grow new roots better to start with in wet soil rather than under a few inches of water.

Norman Bennett

## IRIS INFORMATION

**CORRECTION:** The date for the NZ Convention 2000 that I put into the spring issue was wrong. Peter Berry, the Symposium's Convenor, wrote to put me right, so here is the information straight from the horse's mouth, as it were.

**NZIS' 50th anniversary Symposium: 3rd, 4th, 5th November 2000.** When Peter wrote to me in July, that was correct, but there were suggestions that the Symposium be extended to five days. This was to be decided at their annual convention in November this year, so if any change in date reaches me before this goes out, it'll go in. Just in case it should appear too late, please do check with him as to the final dates before you book any flights. Peter's address is: Peter and Myfanwy Berry, Apartment 8D, Tower 1, 1 Marine Parade, MOUNT MAUNGANUI, New Zealand. Ph/fax: 64 (0) 7 574 0913. Peter has made a generous offer that if any GBI members have any beardless irises that they would be prepared to send as guest irises for the Symposium, would they contact him. He has an import licence and the NZIS would meet the costs for any suitable irises.

Judith Neilson, the NZIS President, also wrote to correct me, with the supplementary information that the Symposium will be in Tauranga, North Island, and that there will be various tours arranged afterwards, either further south in the North Island, or maybe into the South Island too, so there will be plenty of treats in store for those who can attend.

The HIPS Convention 2000 that I was **incorrectly** told clashed with the NZI's 2000 event is in New York (probably State), June 2nd - 4th.

The AIS National Convention will be in Texas in 2000, April 15th - 20th, and will have plantings of historic irises.

## Brave New Sec-Treas., for SPCNI

Terri Hudson is taking over from Adele Lawyer as Secretary-Treasurer; 33450 Little Valley Road, Fort Bragg, CA 95437 USA

## GBI Library Addition

Professor Maretta Colasante has very kindly sent us a copy of the abstracts from the international conference held in May on 'Iris & Iridaceae: Biodiversity & Systematics'. Anyone who would have liked to have made it to Rome, I know it's a pale shade compared to talking to the knowledgeable, but it's available for loan from our library (Philip at present) and is solid information.

## 'Melton Red Flare' - the end of a small saga

Sibirica 'Red Flare' is a seed strain which Thompson & Morgan developed and named without (of course) any reference to the BIS, iris checklists, etc. I told Tony Lord it should be 'Towanda Redflare' in The Plantfinder and about two years later, visited T & M (I was involved in a Hardy plant Soc. event there) whose seed list I hadn't had for a long time. So it was then I found out the origin of 'Red Flare' and talked Keith Sangsen into registering it, but 'Red Flare' was already used for a bearded, so the registration was eventually made as 'Melton Red Flare' See 1997 Year Book! I don't believe 'Towanda Redflare' has ever got into this country, and if anyone has bought a plant of 'Red Flare' from Sue Pierce, can you note it should be 'Melton Red Flare' please.

Jennifer Hewitt

## A SEARCH FOR DORIS HANSFORD'S IRISES

As next door neighbour and friend of Doris Hansford, who was an active member of the BIS and, I believe, one time Treasurer, I, and one or two of her friends thought that it would be a nice gesture, to collect, and plant in her memory, those irises which she grew and named over something like a twenty year period. Not knowing where to start I spoke to Jennifer Hewitt, an old friend of Doris's, at the local show at David Austin Roses and she very kindly carried out the necessary research and provided me with a list of Doris's irises.

**Bearded:** 'Alice Pinkham' (1958), an orchid pink TB.

'Edwardian' (1958), a shrimp pink TB.

'Gwenda' (1963), a black-purple BB.

'Pervenche' (1958), a pale mauve TB.

'Birthday Party' (1964), a shell pink BB.

## Beardless: All 40 chr. Sibs.

'Blue Signal' (1968) pale & deeper blue.

'Charm Yellow' (1968), yellow.

'Elizabeth's Birthday' (1968), white/cream.

'Howard's Birthday' (1972), yellow.

'Rob' (1972), purple & darker purple.

'Watersprite' (1964), pale & deeper mauve.

'Charm of Finches' (1964), yellow.

'Christopher' (1968), red-purple.

'Golden Aureole' (1968), yellow.

'Leopard Spots' (1964), yellow.

'Splashdown' (1972), light violet-blue.

(Main colour given in each case.)



Is it possible please, that you could ask members if anyone still has these irises and if so if it would be possible to purchase specimens for the display. Jennifer seems to think that the 40 chr Siberian irises that Doris raised will have disappeared but it may be worth a try on the off-chance that they are still around.

Glyn Roberts, 56, Oakley St., Belle Vue, Shrewsbury, SY3 7JY

### Siberian Web Page

Now on the web is the beginning of a web page, <http://w3.one.net/~wilsonjh/ssi.htm> containing societal information and the commercial directory as it appears in 'TSI', and a list of top award winners. It's run by Jim Wilson, who's current goal is to collect good pictures of both plants and flowers of Morgan Award and Morgan-Wood Award winners. He's had this fired off for him by Bob and Judy Hollingworth, but would welcome more contributions, preferably digital although he will be happy to scan prints or slides if the donor will entrust them to the mail. Have a browse through your slides over the winter. He has more ideas as to what to do with the page, and reckons that the SSI's board will be receptive to suggestions, so if you have any, send them to him at wilsonjh@one.net. Some ideas so far are to link up with other pages displaying significant Siberian related info (such as Scott Aitken's link to the AIS page), a mention of their listserve (whatever that might be), and improvements in graphics.

### AIS Siberian Awards for 1998

**Morgan-Wood Medal:** 'Frosted Cranberry' (A.M.Miller 1991) 68 votes.

*Runners up:* 'Contrast in Styles' (R. Hollingworth 1989) 56. 'Windwood Serenade' (R.Hollingworth 1990) 56.

**Award of Merit:** 'Over in Gloryland' (R.Hollingworth 1992) 214. 'Rill' (L.Bellagamba 1992) 91.

*Runners Up:* 'Cheery Lyn' (A.M.Miller 1990) 68. 'Harpwell Snowburst' (C McEwen 1990) 67.

**Honorable Mention:** 'Trim the Velvet' (M.Schafer/J.Sacks 1995) 64. 'Lee's Blue' (R.Bauer/J.Coble 1993) 47.

'Sprinkles' (R.Bauer/J.Coble 1993) 47. 'Patio Rose' (L.Bellagamba 1993) 46.

### AIS Ensata Awards 1998

**W.A.Payne Medal:** 'Butterflies in Flight' (T.Aitken 1991) 56 votes.

*Runners Up:* 'Geisha Obi' (J.Rich 1988) 26. 'Pink Dimity' (L.Reid 87) 25.

**Award of Merit:** 'Electric Glow' (T.Aitken 1992) 50. 'Bellender Blue' (Hazzard by Bauer/Coble 1993) 40.

*Runners Up:* 'Pink Dace' (J.Copeland 1988) 31. 'Epimetheus' (S.Innerst 1991) 21.

**Honorable Mention:** 'Foreign Intrigue' (Bauer/Coble 1995) 25. 'Geisha Doll' (E.Methany III 1997) 22.

'Dirigo Debutante' (J.White 1992) 21. 'Pink Ringlets' (T.Aitken 1995) 20. 'Calamari' (J.Copeland 1990) 19.

The 1997 JI Checklist is now out, order it from John Coble, 9823 E.Michigan Ave., Galesburg, MI 49053. \$5.00 post-paid US, \$6.00 Canada, \$10.00 Overseas Air. Cheques to SJI in US\$ only. Remember that Philip is offering a \$ service through the GBI.

### 1998 JI Popularity Poll

Rank    Votes    Cultivar

1st      16      'Cascade Crest' (Aitken 1988).

2nd      9      'Rosewater' (Bauer/Coble 1995).

3rd      8      'Electric Rays' (Aitken 1990); 'Japanese Pinwheel' (McEwen 1988); 'Jocasta' (Innerst 1987);  
'Kalamazoo' (Hazzard by Bauer/Coble 1989); 'Lion King' (Bauer/Coble 1996); 'Rose Adagio' (Payne 1968).

4th      7      'Center of Attention' (L. Rich 1986); 'Crystal Halo' (Marx 1958); 'Dancing Waves' (Payne 1962);  
'Picotee Princess' (L.Reid 1991); 'Prairie Twilight' (Hazzard 1977).

5th      6      'Caprician Butterfly' (Marx by Rogers 1984); 'Diomedes' (Innerst 1991).

6th      5      'Bellender Blue' (Hazzard by Bauer/Coble 1993); 'Butterflies in Flight' (Aitken 1991); 'Geisha Obi' (J.Rich 1988);  
'Niagara Power' (Rettig 1995); 'Peacock Dance' (Marx 1955); 'Tideline' (Bauer/Coble 1995).

7th      4      'Abraco' (Innerst 1992); 'Blue Spritz' (Delmez 1996); 'Chief Red Jacket' (Rettig 1997);  
'Fried Enchantment' (Marx 1958); 'Joy Peters' (Ackerman 1988); 'Maine Chance' (McEwen 1984);  
'Raspberry Glow' (Aitken 1992); 'Rose Queen' (SJI 1989); 'Stella Niagara' (Rettig 1995);  
'The Great Mogul' (Payne 1957); 'Wine Ruffles' (Ackerman 1981).

I've omitted the last two sections, having taken pity on Jennifer over the multitude of R&Is, so any interested parties will need to consult 'The Review' Vol 35 No. 2, Fall 1998. Ed.

### The Mitchell Award for PCIs, 1998

**Winner:** 'Pacific Rim' (B Jones 1990) 72 votes, the most ever received for the award.

*Runners up:* 'Chief Sequoia' (J Weiler 1990) 17 votes; 'Smuggler's Cove' (V Wood 1988) 11.

**Award of Merit:** 'Pink Cupid' (V Wood 1993) 22; 'Deep Blue Sea' (J Ghio 1991) 20; 'Jean Erickson' (C Rigby 1993) 20;  
'Sea Admiral' (V Wood 1995) 12; 'Escalona' (J Ghio 1993) 11.

**Honorable Mention:** 'Pacific Snowflake' (G Shoop 1995); 'Skylash' (L Belardi 1993); 'Wishing' (J Ghio 1993)



### Gardener's Definitions

**Allotment:** but little achieved. **Broad Bean:** vegetable grown as food for black-fly. **Rockery:** heap of rubble left behind by the builder.

**Annual:** an unwanted plant that persists in re-seeding itself year after year. **Digging:** wife's nagging about the garden.

**Pruning:** a method of killing trees and shrubs. **Weed:** garden main crop.

Contributed by George Casey to the Mercian Group's NI, March. 1998

### Attention all Cognoscenti

In case anyone missed this in the Species Group's Bulletin of July 1998, the *Iridaceae* are now in the Asparagales rather than the Liliales 'as a result of work on chloroplast DNA. And more recent molecular studies indicated that *Belamcanda chinensis*, *Hermodactylus tuberosus* and *Pardanthopsis dichotoma* together with the Scorpisises are all properly irises. Furthermore, *I. tectorum* which has some peculiar properties as a pollen parent, is more of a founding father of the genus than a mere, smear member.' Anyone who wants to know more, contact Anne Blanco White.

### A Descriptive Checklist of Species

This promises to be an essential reference for those interested in species irises. The publication comprises two parts of 230 pages, a descriptive text and an alphabetical list. Pre-publication orders received before February 15th, 1999, cost \$10 plus \$6 postage, and after that will be \$15 plus \$6 postage. UK members may send their order with payment please (£10 including postage) to Mr. Philip Allery, Hon Literature Secretary, 199 Walsall Rd, Aldridge, Walsall, West Midlands, WS9 0BE. Overseas members should order direct from Mr. Bob Pries, SIGNA, 6023 Antire Avenue, High Ridge, Missouri 63049, USA, with payment in dollars.

Anne Blanco White

### Iris Books

The Spuria Iris Society in America are hoping to put together a book on their best loved iris group with help from hybridisers. The SPCNI are at the stage of approaching publishers with outlines and samples, but have met with no takers. Once they've overcome their various setbacks, they will re-approach Timber Press, and if they're rejected again, the AIS. The AIS are bringing out a replacement to 'The World of Iris' so there's that to keep an eye out for in due course too.

### Greener Pseudacorus

An article in 'New Scientist' (22.3.1997. p24) reported on research into plants that might be able to deal with herbicides washed off fields into watercourses. A particularly noxious compound, atrazine, was targeted as although it's banned over here, it's used elsewhere. Although common reed *Phragmites australis* barely survived its brush with this chemical, *I. pseudacorus* did splendidly, whilst bulrush *Typha latifolia* and common clubrush *Schoenoplectus lacustris* ran it close. The iris's splendid underground root system harbours masses of micro-organisms with a taste for atrazine and once these had been bred up in sufficient quantities, the initial clean up time of fifty days was reduced to a week. So if you've a ditch at the bottom of your garden, as opposed to a dyke which gets periodically skimmed, why not do your bit for water purification and introduce pseudacorus?

The original version of this appeared on the Species Group's 9.'97 'Bulletin'.

### Instant Bog Gardens

Pam McKenzie in Waipu, NZ, dug out a 1.5m x 3m area, lined this with two sheets of black polythene (butyl? Ed.) and refilled with compost and soil before planting JIs, Louisianas, Black Taro and Mimulas. These were then mulched with newspaper and wood shavings that had been through a calf shed and were watered weekly in dry weather for about half an hour with the hose until the ground was evenly moist. This low maintenance system was extremely successful and Pam has therefore dug out another area with a large plastic container of water in the middle for a water lily.

NZIS 'Spectrum' No.34, Sept.1998

### Iris Varieties Created by Gamma-Radiation

Russian scientists are well known for having been quietly working away in various fields while their results have failed to be widely recorded elsewhere. This note is based on an article recording work with seed and pollen irradiation in the hope of raising plants which would be resistant to disease and more tolerant of Russian winters. These tend in many areas to have alternating periods of thaw with sudden and prolonged drops in temperature.

Seed and pollen were irradiated in a gamma-field on a GUT-400 at doses of 5, 20, 100 and 300 Gr. Work began with irises and gladioli in 1959 and continued into 1977. The first mutant garden irises were raised by I.V. Dryagina and G.E. Kazarinov during this time at Moscow State University. Irradiation shortened the normal second or third season germination with the irises to almost complete success in the first year. Between 1978 and 1986 these studies continued at the Vavilov Institute with the selection and breeding of further cultivars. Observations were made on economically desirable characteristics during the seedlings' fourth year, and again in their fifth after transplanting. Foreign raised cvs were mostly not winter hardy and were very susceptible to rust and soft rot. Russian raised ones, by contrast, were frost resistant, vigorous and far less prone to those diseases. In addition, the mutants threw twice as many spikes per plant as the controls. Thirteen of these were sent for testing to the state assessment grounds to confirm their winter hardiness, vigour, disease resistance and decorative quality.

It would be interesting to know what has happened during the last decade, but the upheavals have been so extensive that the original work may have fallen by the wayside.

Ref: Technical Bulletin No.187, Vavilov Research Institute. Probably late 1980's.

Again this is from the Species Group's 'Bulletin', this time that of February 1998



## IRISES IN THEIR PLACE

I am an eclectic gardener rather than a specialist, my interests include; Alpines, species Primulas, Meconopsis, Lilies and *Nomocharis*, *Pulsatillas* and Irises. Irises being probably my main interest, although this can vary with what is currently in flower. I have been a gardener for 64 years, if the plot my grandparents gave me in their garden when I was four years old is included, and I have owned seven gardens in the U.K. and two in New Zealand. My original interest in irises was stimulated by Harry Randall's book in the 1960's and since that time I have gradually worked my way through the genus.

My present garden, which I have had for eleven years, is far from ideal for growing many irises. It is situated at the base of Cadir Idris adjacent to the Arthog Bog and faces due north overlooking the Mawddach Estuary. It gets no sun at all from mid October to mid February but as we are close to the sea is mild and we have a reasonable rainfall! To the rear of the house I have a large area of steeply sloping natural scree and oak and ash scrub which is too steep and unstable for gardening, and I have contented myself with planting a number of *Rhododendrons* in pockets of leaf mould in order to try to stabilise it and minimise rock falls. The main garden is on the other side of the A493 road and is about one third of an acre in size with unusual soil consisting of natural peat and rock debris overlying slaty rock. This is highly acidic but well drained. In order to overcome the twin problems of shallow soil and *Osteo Arthritis* the garden consists mainly of raised beds surrounded by gravel. I gave up grass five years ago having fought a losing battle against an apparently inexhaustible population of moles, which has turned out to be one of the most sensible things I have done from a horticultural point of view. In my opinion lawns are the most labour intensive and expensive parts of a garden.

I feel I can best give you an idea of my iris odyssey by giving a list of the irises I have grown or tried to grow in various gardens.

1. In Somerset. Tall Bearded and Intermediates, *Sibiricas* (inherited), *danfordiae*, *reticulata* and hybrids, *I. histrioides major*, *Hermodactylus tuberosus*, (is this regarded as an iris again?) *unguicularis*, Dutch, and *bucharica*, which is about the only iris I do not care for.

2. In Somerset. Most of the above plus *tectorum*, *japonica* and *graminea*.

3. In Northamptonshire. Added *hoogiana* and *gatesii* plus some *Regeliocyclus* which I succeeded in flowering once, but they did not survive a second year. I now regard them as very expensive and time consuming annuals.

4. On Exmoor. Added *laevigata* and *versicolor*, *chrysographes* 'Mandarin Purple' (Neel 1960) and another from Jack Drake.

5. My present garden. Added *orientalis*, *setosa*, *ensata*, named vars. of *sibirica*, and from seed, *kaempferi* (now *ensata*), *forrestii*, *forestii* hybrids, *tenax*, *innominata*, *douglasiana*, *chrysographes*, Pacific Coast hybrids, *x fulva*, *pseudacorus* and *p. variegata*, *foetidissima*, and the *reticulatas* 'Katharine Hodgekin' (registered in the Dutch Bulbgrowers Checklisted but undated) and *winogradowii* and *histrioides* 'George' (van Eeden 1973). I have saved seed from the Pacific Coast hybrids and *chrysographes* and from these seem to have produced some natural hybrids, some of them quite astonishing.

Gardening problems, the ones common to most of us, are lack of time and energy, and lack of space. When I plant something new something old has to come out. The Tall Bearded and Intermediates are due for removal next as they do not appreciate my conditions. With slugs and snails I have tried to adopt an ecological approach and have a large resident population of toads, grass snakes, slow worms and hedgehogs who help mitigate the problem but do not overcome it. Aims; at my time of life I feel it unwise to make long term plans, and so I plan to continue to grow what I have, but to grow it better. However, there are still irises which I would like to grow; I would like to try some *Juno's*, but they are probably too difficult, and I covet *Iris histrio* if I could find a source, and I also want to try *I. mellitta rubro-marginata*.

Martin Maule

## CULTIVATION IN BETWEEN TIMES

I've been a member of the BIS now for about three years, including the West & Midlands Group and more recently the GBI. I live on the eastern side of the Malvern Hills and also have a flat on the west side, in all I cultivate over sixty different species and varieties of Irises. I also grow a similar number of ornamental grasses, one of which is now registered as a new hybrid. With my wife we have cultivated two sons who are with us in between term times, together with their plants. Originally I was apprenticed in horticulture within a London Borough Parks Dept. and eventually pursued training at Hadlow College in Kent. Later I worked at what was the East Suffolk Horticultural Centre as a Horticultural Supervisor, on it's closure I entered nursing, so my time is either spent in nursing people or nursing plants.

In my spare time (what's left of it) I am a member of an Art Society and recently I've tried my hand at painting individual Irises. I think the most appealing in this respect are the *Spurias*. Recently, whilst at the stand at the Spring Garden Show in Malvern, I was interested in meeting Phil Allery who introduced me to the Group, certainly my interest includes these irises and I would like to know more from other members and see what they have. I have arranged planting into groups according to cultural needs, so I have *Sibiricae*, *Californicae*, *Reticulatas*, *Spuriae*, *Tripetelae*, *Longipetelae*, *Laevigatae*, *Unguiculares*, and other visitors are welcome. I've even got some *Pogons*, what I haven't got yet are *Xiphiums*, except some Dutch Irises, a maligned race it seems; this brings me to a final point. I am keen on taking photographs and I have a slide of a beautiful bronze flowered Dutch Iris taken in the '60's when I got hooked on taking pictures of plants. I shall conclude with a plea; I would like to know if there are any bulbs around of this variety?

Stephen J Atkins

I have Philip to thank for the above articles, as he's been doing a good job of recruiting, and apparently has a natural talent either for attaching those prepared to write, or persuading those less inclined to do so anyway!

Ed

## A GOOD YEAR FOR THE IRISES

The Editor has asked me to write a piece about my irises. This puts me in a quandary. I am always amazed at the knowledge some members have of the subject, and am at a loss to know what I can contribute that will be of interest to others. This year has been particularly good for my irises (unlike the roses). I had, in particular, an exceptional giant of purple and yellow. Unfortunately the cats have buried the label so I do not know the variety. Others such as the *spurias* 'Kaibab Trail' (F. Wickencamp 1984), 'White Shimmer'



(Jenkins 1990) and 'White Dream' (this is registered as a TB, if so, Moos 1991 Ed.) have made a lot of growth, but have not flowered. I obtained *I. chamaeris* and *I. cristata alba* this June at Pont de Nantes in Switzerland in the Jardin Botanique there. I am keeping them in pots for the time being. My biggest problem is an invasion of bind-weed which is climbing around the irises and other perennials. Does anyone have the answer to this?

June Moore

My only suggestion is to dig up all the desirables and poison the bind-weed. Admittedly a laborious solution. Ed.

#### ENSATAS: THE RIGHT PLANT FOR THE PLACE

For some forty years I gardened in St. Albans, Hertfordshire, on dry, sandy soil in a dryish climate. Part of that time I grew a largish collection of TB's with some success, but only as part of my general love of flowering plants - not as a specific interest. About seven years ago, when I was sixty-six, my wife and I moved to this 17th C cottage, bringing with us many plants, including a quantity of TB's. Within two to three years I had lost nearly all my TB stock due to rot. Canworthy, (the hamlet which is part of Canworthy Water) is half way up a hillside, but not only do we have two rivers below us, but we are in the midst of an area of lush pasture land, with water draining nearly all year down the hill, often swelling the rivers to flood. In short, together with the typical Cornish moist air, it should have been obvious as being the last place to grow TB's.

Then one day a year or two ago we visited one of the large gardens hereabouts, with a lake in which were several varieties of beautiful ensatas. I was hooked! The next time the (BIS) seed list arrived I asked almost entirely for ensata seed, and achieved good germination. But, by a combination of circumstance and a plague of snails, I lost virtually every one. So I am starting again, with seed Margaret has kindly supplied.

There is one ray of hope (in addition to my constant optimism for the results of any seed sowing I do). My two brothers in law own and manage a plant nursery a few miles away from us. Recently one brother has branched out into water-gardening and makes part of his income from cleaning out over-grown ponds for customers. His scale of charges takes into account how much plant material he gains from this, and my interest in moisture-loving irises has encouraged him to seek out especially these plants. Early days yet, but he has passed to me two or three nice ensatas, unidentified, which will make a good foundation for a collection. At present I grow the plants in 'water-frames', i.e. rectangular wooden troughs lined with thick polythene, the plants in pots, but where I go from here I'm not sure.

Laurence Oliver

Laurence isn't a GBI member, but if some of you knowledgeable folk out there can advise him as to where he might go from where he is, maybe he'll join!  
Ed

#### A POTTED PASSION-THE GARDEN OF OUR SDO

Only a few square yards of garden corner the front of the house, but Mrs. MV Criddle has crammed into this a *hydrangea petiolaris*, a plumbago, a *phormium cookianum*, a pine sold to her as a house-plant (!), a viburnum, a host of libertias and Joe Ghio PCI seedlings, over twenty dieramas, including one from Doug Murray. A mass of potted TBs sit on the path around the house, which leads past a conservatory housing cymbidiums and happily flowering *cyrtanthus mackewii* from Cape Flora of Table Mountain S.A. Ranged opposite this along the foot of that neighbour's hedge are pots of *Phormium purpureum* (for sale), libertias, onco's from Geoff Wilson and a miscellany of smaller pots dotted amongst PCIs, sibiricas and *sisyrinchium* (syn *Iris filifolia*). Behind the conservatory the garden shed shelters a table loaded with germinating PCIs from Joe Ghio, seedling Hellebores-popular with the mice- and ex butter tubs of Cyclamen Society seed. This area is shaded by a netted pergola supporting *passiflora caerulea*, *rosa* 'Mermaid', jasmine, *Eucromacarpus scaber*, an evergreen honeysuckle and a climbing dicentra.

A patch of Roger Poulet's hellebores marks the start of the long narrow garden and amongst these are *I. confusa*, *I. c.* 'Martyn Rix', *I. tuberosa*, an inordinately large snowdrop and a budding collection of convallarias, polygonatums and disporums. A short south-facing wall runs behind these out from under the pergola, providing warmth for Margaret's collection of *L. unguicularis* cultivars, which now numbers over twenty, including some wild ones from Henning Christiansen. (Margaret would welcome offers of unguicularis, please contact her on 01754 811173, but as she's up at around 5am, please don't ring late at night). Accompanying these are large clumps of *I. innominata*, *I. douglasiana*, *I. graminea*, *I. tenax*, *I. reticulata* and *I. setosa*, an epimedium, white and yellow tree peonies and several now misplaced erythroniums left over from the reorganisation of the garden imposed by that neighbour's fencing activities which changed the sun pattern in the garden. In front of the unguicularis is an island bed of mixed pots, mostly 3 1/2", housing seedlings of Sibiricas, cyclamen, primulas, phormiums and digitalis. This is actually a bed of special TB's, but space is tight.

Peony 'Molly the Witch' and a special kniphofia start the garden proper on this side, introducing *crocus* 'Peggy Salmon', a trial of around twenty *sisyrinchiums* from Rita and Edmund Heaton, and another host of TB's. Halfway down this narrow bed are Sibiricas, versicolors, *I. milesti*, etc., special *hemerocallis*, a patch of goosecurrants, more libertias, and a medlar, footed by muscari and a small flowered *cistus* heralding the main *hemerocallis* bed and a few TBs. The whole garden has been double dug and pea-gravel has been added where required by the inhabitants. A medley of muscari, more libertias, evening primroses, forget-me-not's, primulas and *Arum italicum* etc. fill the border before a young 'Spartan' apple provides a comma at the *Helleborus orientalis* hybrids which are shaded in summer by two *buddleia davidii* 'Black Knight'. Here the bank of the dyke houses various geraniums, corydalis, astrantias, a purple *Viola odorata*, yet more libertias and a choysya, with *Ipseudacorus bastardii* along the water's edge.

Backing up the other side of the garden, there is a quince, ferns, epimediums, primulas potted for sale - as is so much else- pulmonarias, a red tree peony, another *buddleia davidii*, species geums and a honeysuckle now trained onto an eleagnus as the new fence won't support it. The border here is of sibiricas, accompanied by spurias, *I. Holden Clough*, *Rosa rugosa* and various *Anemone japonica* hybrids. The path is edged by rows of pots, Spanish bluebells, (dare I say it?) more libertias, *Campanula turkestanica*, and more primroses, until the pots take over again, massed all over more special TB's, many of which are from Charles Rhodes who supplies the BIS' Seed Distribution so generously. The pots are of himalayan cowslip, *sisyrinchiums*, hellebores, gooseberries and a mass of etceteras, and extend over the eryngium 'Miss Wilmott's Ghost' and the *Fritillaria imperialis* in the bed proper. The fence behind these is covered with chicken-wire to support honeysuckles and ten shade loving clematis'. A wedge of PCIs, species and hybrids, are in the angle as the path heads back to the pergola, housed in ordinary garden soil, these are backed by the TBs and a rearguard of sibiricas.



There are then more various potfulls and seedling lilies from the Danish Iris and Lily Society with more behind these, yet more sibiricas, spurias, small narcissi and, you guessed it, libertias. Even the house is put to good use, the spare bedroom being full of named clivia cultivars which Margaret grows to sell.

Sue Pierce

## **TWENTY EIGHT OR FORTY, CAL-SIBS TAKE THE BISCUIT**

On page 3, para 4 of issue No.42, you mourn the loss of the old tetraploid Cal-Sib 'Margot Holmes' (Perry 1927). In fact it was *chrysographes* x *douglasiana* and is therefore a diploid, and being so is an infertile hybrid never setting viable seed; lots of excited growers have reported a seed pod, but ne'er a plant! Jean Witt has raised many diploid Cal-Sibs since that date, I can mention 'Golden Waves' (Witt 1979), and 'Fine Line' (Witt 1977) both of which I have put into the Wisley trial and have won awards. 'Fine Line' has real hybrid vigour and with me rivals 'Holden Clough' (Patton 1971 (Thought until the '80's to be *pseudacorus* x *foetidissima*, but now the latter seems ruled out by Andrew Wheeler's work)) in 'spreading power' and unlike many other c/s has several flowers per stem.

The tetraploid Cal-Sibs started with Tomas Tamberg using Colchicine and these of course are fertile, readily producing viable seed. Several growers have been raising them since that time and I for one have concentrated on producing plants which resemble the PCIs but are more vigorous, capable of withstanding a wide range of climatic conditions and soil pH with many more and bigger flowers. Like the winners of the Foster Award, the growers must of course assiduously remove all seed pods, or better, dead-head the flowers and avoid all risks unless of course you have been scrupulously making known crosses. These plants are incredibly fertile, every flower seems to set a bulging pod and if you let seed fall down into the clump your choice plant will soon be corrupted. Before getting this message through to Wisley several of my selected varieties had changed character in just the three years of the trial. The same phenomenon does occur with diploid PCIs but although many old varieties seem to persist unchanged without much care, they are not in the same league for vigorous growth.

I have seen the same effect with colour-forms of other iris species, with me the *unguicularis* are a notable case, the seeds on 'Walter Butt' (Anderson 1962) for example roll through the tangled rhizomes and in three years there is an ordinary looking blue flower at the edge. I have had several tetraploid Cal-Sibs accepted for the Wisley Trial, the first batch were killed by a mole which even these hardy plants failed to overcome. There are several in the current Trial which are doing well and one in fact flowered nicely in September, so remountant too? The funny thing is that despite the fact that they are described as tetraploid Cal-Sibs on entry forms, no one yet seems to have grasped the fact that they are there.

Peter Maynard

Thank you Peter, if any snippets of your labours escape the BIS' Yearbook, please do send them to us. Jennifer also noticed my error and mentioned that Currier was, to the best of her knowledge, the first person to induce conversions with Colchicine in beardless irises, in this case *Sibiricas* and JIs, back in the 60's.

Ed

## **An Adaptation of: SIBERIAN IRISES IN MY CONVENTION GARDEN**

It wasn't until I moved into my current home that I was able to acquire a few Siberians. I started with an old historic one 'Llewellyn' (Cleveland 1929) and 'Caesar's Brother' (Morgan 1931). In time, I acquired a few more, and that probably would have been the end of it if were not for two events that occurred in 1994. The first was a talk given by Bob Hollingworth, when he showed a slide of 'Strawberry Fair' his introduction for that year, and the second was my visit to the Portland Convention. I then told the Denver Convention planners that I wanted to grow beardless guests, I needed to see more of these graceful plants.

Not very many other people grow Siberians here in Colorado. Here on the high plains, early spring can sometimes be hard on the irises, with wide temperature changes. Our winters often present challenges to growing Siberians too because there often isn't enough snow cover or precipitation and the soil becomes very dry. I've had to water my irises, bearded and beardless, at various points during the winter for the last five years. Fortunately, there is no lack of sunshine here, even in the winter, so I rely on the sun to thaw the garden hose on days that are sunny and relatively warm. Still, even watering in winter is sometimes a challenge as there may be long periods with no snow but the temperature isn't warm enough to be able to water.

The beardless convention guests arrived in late summer and early fall of 1995. The ensuing winter, like many others here lately, was warm and dry (relatively speaking). I watered them several times over that winter, but still lost several. The other convention gardens reported losses too. I lost all three of the Tamberg/Niswonger Cal-Sibs. In the summer of 1996 one was replaced, and I lost that the next winter. By contrast, 'Cascade Velvet' (Halinar 1994), a 40chr species cross, was a hit both with the lay public and convention visitors. The small plum coloured flowers with their yellow signals, and delicate grassy foliage were delightful, and this little plant bloomed for two out of the three years.

One of my favourite guests was 'Lake Keuka' (Borglum 1991). A gorgeous ruffled blue forming a large clumps with many stalks. This was voted fifth in the guest iris popularity poll at the convention. 'Seneca Skylites' (Borglum 1993) is another beautiful blue that did just as well. It's less ruffled than the former and has large round falls and upright standards. 'Rill' (Bellagamba 1991) was another popular, vigorous blue. A pronounced bitone, this produced 14 stalks of two buds each, with no branches. 'Patio Rose' (Bellagamba 1993) was another of my favourites. A dark rose, almost raspberry, with some violet veining and a small yellow signal, it was extremely vigorous, the large clump throwing 21 stalks this year. These averaged 3 buds per, with one or two branches and it bloomed every year. I had mixed results with the Hollingworth Siberians. Those that survived the first winter generally thrived, excepting 'Band of Angels' (1996) which never bloomed. I have moved a piece to another area in hopes. By contrast, his 'Blueberry Fair' (1996) was a real show stopper. It produced eleven stalks of big, fat, ruffled blue-berry coloured flowers with white signals, with three to a stalk and one branch per. 'Coronation Anthem' (Hollingworth 1990) surprised me all summer. It began blooming at the end of May, repeated through June and finally quit at the end of July, much to my delight and amazement. The July stalks were down in the foliage in comparison to the May/June ones, which were just above it. In the intense heat at the end of July, just to have a Siberian still blooming was a treat. Anna Mae Miller's pastel Siberians were a delight. 'Lilting Laura' (1989), with it's lavender flowers, made a large clump with many stalks, each of two to four buds. Her 'Cheery Lyn' (1990), a pretty lilac and pink bitone, also grew well.



'Liberty Hills' (A.M.Miller 1988), a blue violet, grew into a good sized floriferous clump, but her 'Glow of Happiness' (1994) never bloomed, and I plan to move it. Finally, although the clump of her 'Purple Sand' (1990) wasn't very large, it put up fifteen bloom stalks of two buds each.

In general, the guests outperformed my expectations. The losses of the first winter were more than offset by the performances of those that remained. Although my Siberians showed short foliage due to an abnormally warm May, and other weather factors, almost all plants had at least one flower open for the convention.

Lynda D.Love. *'The Siberian Iris'* Fall 1998

#### **An Adaptation of: GUEST SIBERIANS AT THE DENVER CONVENTION**

At Long's garden, Dana Borglum's guests were growing short. Her 'Seneca Skylites' (1993) had round, ruffles blue falls with a darker centre, paler, wide standards and light style arms. 'Seneca Egret Cove' (Borglum 1993) was just opening, a greenish white with lots of stalks and one branch. 'Seneca Night Sky' (B.1993) had good contrast between its blue-purple flowers and aqua style arms. His 'Lake Keuka' (1991) was not blooming up to its potential but maybe it hadn't been planted long enough. Bob Hollingworth's introductions were growing shorter than usual, but his 'Band of Angels' (1996), a purple with a white edge, and 'Coronation Anthem' (Hollingworth 1990) were blooming above their foliage. 'Flutterby Butterfly' (Hollingworth 1996) had two bloom stalks on a small plant. Both my 'Purple Sand' (A.M.Miller 1990) a beautiful clump of light lavender with darker purple veins, and my 'Liberty Hills' (A.M.Miller 1988) were lovely clumps. The pink 'Cheery Lyn' (A.M.Miller 1990) was nice and 'Lilting Laura' (A.M.Miller 1989), its lavender sister, showed good growth and bloom. Though there had been some plant losses, the remainder were growing and blooming well. Jack Norrick had a beautiful plant 'Patty Kay Hall' (J.Norrick 1997), a flat shaped dark purple with white markings and blue style arms.

Lynda Love's city plot holds her own collection of 400 irises, including historic, median, TB, Siberians and Spurias. She had 200 guests planted in beds by the 120 year old irrigation canal with its bike path and old cottonwoods. Here 'Lake Keuka' (Borglum 1991) was a nice clump, 'Seneca Storm Clouds' (Borglum 1995) was a blue-purple, and Bob Hollingworth's 'Flutterby Butterfly' (1996), a three toned blue, was blooming. His 'Blueberry Fair' (1996), another ruffled, flaring tetraploid, was a nice shape and color. Of Sterling Innerst's ten, only numbers 5, a red-violet, and 8, wine with light blue style arms, had good bloom. I'd like to see these again as we need some better wine reds. 'Frosted Cranberry' (A.M.Miller 1991), a deep pink with wine veins, had two new blooms and more stalks coming. 'Cheery Lyn' (A.M.Miller 1990), 'Liberty Hills', 'Lilting Laura' and 'Purple Sand' were all blooming well here.

Dave Miller, the convention chairman, has a garden in Golden, Colorado. Unfortunately, there was a frost the night before our visit, but that did not affect the Siberians. Dana Borglum's 'Seneca Night Sky' (1993), was growing best here as well as his two whites, 'Seneca Egret Cove' (1993) and 'Seneca Cloud Puffs' (1993). The latter, as at Love's garden, appeared to be a sequential bloomer. 'Lake Keuka' (Borglum 1994) had a good number of flowers and lots of stems still to bloom. Bob Hollingworth's 'Band of Angels' was holding its bloom way above the foliage and his 'Coronation Anthem' had good bloom. My 'Aqua Whispers' (1987) and 'Lavender Stipples' (1990) would be blooming much later.

Many of the gardens lost 50% of their plants, I don't know whether they didn't get delivered on time or what, but lots of good Siberian bloom was on show for the convention.

Anna Mae Miller *'The Siberian Iris'* Fall 1998

#### **An Adaptation of: THE BACKGROUND OF FROSTED CRANBERRY, MORGAN-WOOD MEDAL WINNER FOR 1998**

'Frosted Cranberry' (85.41. 4) began its development in the spring of 1978 when a chance wine seedling was seen and admired amongst my seedlings. I numbered it 78.5. At that time I was growing 'Snow Queen' (Barr 1900), 'Kingfisher' (Dykes 1923), 'Periwinkle' and 'Tycoon' (Cleveland, 1926 & 1938), 'Caesar's Brother' (Morgan 1931), 'Towanda Redflare' (Scheffy 1949), 'Mandy Morse' (Spofford 1962) and 'Bickley Cape' (Kitton 1963). There were, perhaps, a few more, most with unknown parentages, but all prior to 'White Swirl' (Cassebeer 1957).

78.5 was a deeper red than any of the available ones, which were light to medium rosy reds, certainly not as dark as this one. I also noted that it was a wide flower. I was lucky to get Bill McGarvey's 'Pink Haze' and 'Temper Tantrum' (both 1969) after the 1976 AIS National Convention in Michigan, when we chose new Siberians to grow and appreciate. 'Pink Haze' was not my idea of pink, but it is a pink-lavender and as such, it was natural that I would use it in my hybridising efforts to get a true pink. I set a pod on it using the wide wine seedling and got 67 seeds. Most of the seedlings had wine flowers and red spathes that I found attractive and thought could be developed into a positive feature. My sketchy notes say there were a few whites. WHY didn't I make a cross using one of these recessive whites? I did choose a wine seedling (78.16.5) and used 'Pink Haze' pollen on it.

For the third generation I selected a pink seedling with red spathes, numbered it 80.9.3., selfed it, and got four seedlings. All were pink with red spathes, but one was a deeper pink veined with wine, giving a much deeper appearance, and would be even more so in a cooler climate than that of Michigan. This was numbered 85.41.4. The falls were RHS 78B/77A with darker veins; the standards RHS 80C with aqua veins, and the style arms white. Bob Hollingworth saw it in bloom and encouraged me to introduce it. I chose its name because it reminded me of frozen cranberries.

Anna Mae Miller

#### **An Adaptation of: LATE MATURITY**

In 1996, XP325A and XP325B started blooming on May 3rd and 8th, and still had a flower open on July 7th, 45 days after the last bloom on a named variety. In 1997, a hot, early and short season, it was XP325H which closed its last bloom on June 13th. This year it was XP325M that ended the season with a branched stem of nine flowers which opened its eighth on July 2nd and its ninth on July 4th, when it had two flowers open. The last one closed in the evening of July 7th. This was also 45 days after the last named variety finished and 70 days after XP325M first flowered on April 28th, five days longer than any previously recorded season.

Lewis Lawyer. SPCNI's *'Almanac'* Vol.XXVII, No.1, Fall 1998



### **An Adaptation of: NOTES FROM NORTHERN CALIFORNIA**

We live in Paradise, California at 1700' and our rainfall for the 1997/1998 winter was 100" plus (as much as 5" in 24 hrs). The last rain was on June 4th. The lowest temperature was 26 degrees in March, and our hottest so far has been 113 degrees on August 4th. We have a variety of soil types, a previous owner had hauled a variety of fill and rock in due to a large swampy area, so almost every bed has been given different treatment. The garden is a variety of mini-climates; full sun on a south slope, part shade under an oak grove along a meandering creek and full shade under the big oaks in terraced beds. So far, these latter are the best conditions for PCIs. There are two ponds, one deep and one shallow, which we utilize for JIs and Virginias. We have developed some gardening tips from our own experience. These are to utilize the shade of our oaks for seedling beds; To return all the leaf and brush waste to the soil after it's broken down; to make sure that if we use a general fertiliser that it has a sulphur base, as lime is fatal; to grow the PCIs on raised or well sloped beds rather than flat ones. All that we lost were on the flat as despite the heavy mulches the drainage was poor. With seeds, we plant them in 6" pots of washed sharp sand and out of the 250 seeds we bought we germinated 255 plants. I kid you not!

Norma Barnard, SPCNI's 'Almanac' Vol XXVII, No.1, Fall 1998

### **An Adaptation of: CULTURAL DIRECTIONS**

Except for areas bordering the ocean, where they tolerate full sun, PCIs are generally found in lightly wooded areas, with well drained gritty soils. They therefore grow best in filtered shade or morning only sun. They thrive where summers are long and dry, but will tolerate rain, snow cover and some frost in other seasons. Our current recommendation for seeds is as follows: Plant the seeds in a good, moist potting mixture with a pH of 6.5 to 7 and which will drain quickly. Use either pots or trays, cover the seeds with about 1/4" of the compost and firm them down. Set the seeds as closely as possible, in our experience that is 1/2"-1" apart. Keep them in a cool area as they will germinate best at around 50 degrees F, and at above 70-80 degrees F will not germinate at all. Keep the pots or trays outside unless you are in a hard freezing area, when a cool basement or garage is preferable. The soil must be kept moist until germination, which takes around two months on average. The seedlings should be transplanted into either the garden or 6-8" pots when they are 3-6" tall, around April or May. Those going into the ground should be placed 6" apart in rows that are a foot apart. This will enable you to dig out your selections when they flower. Most hybrid seedlings will flower the following spring, but some species will take two years to do so. The adult plant doesn't transplant as readily as seedlings, so should only be moved when it's in active growth, i.e. in late autumn or early spring.

Adele Lawyer, SPCNI's 'Almanac' Vol XXXVII, No.1, Fall 1998

### **Adaptation: THE EAST COAST MAKES SMALL STEPS TOWARD ADAPTING PCIs TO WINTER COLD**

Our bloom season has been excellent for all types. The 11" of rain in four to five days in early June ruined my two or three PCI blooms, so I couldn't make any crosses. We have been very dry here in Minot, Maine, since then, so I moved about forty PCIs to the JI and Siberian garden in a drier area in mid August. I cut around them with a shovel and lifted the whole clump without disturbing the root ball. All have survived and are doing well, some showing new growth. My tenax seedlings from my own cross on tenax are growing well. I expect to see bloom next year on the plants that are now two years old. These are from seed that came from named varieties from collected PCIs. Progress on getting hardy varieties for my climate is slow, but keeping at it, we may get lucky!

John White

Our adventure began here in Concord, MA, with four plants from Dick Kiyomoto: 86K-8000-1; 86K-145-1, 2, and 3. I believe the seed came from SIGNA and these were selected seedlings. All four bloomed initially in 1991 and I think would all be huge clumps by now except for the rodents which tunnel them mercilessly. We have only lost 86K-145-3, and the rest have bloomed reliably. In the meantime, the bees and I have been making pods and I have ordered various species from the SIGNA exchange. From these I now have between 50 to 100 seedlings in various parts of the garden. Although we would like to select from these for variations in color, form and hardiness, the rodents do most of the selecting for us. I enjoyed growing the seedlings descended from named hybrids -some tetraploid -that John White gave me a couple of years ago. It looked initially as though some were going to thrive, but about half succumbed to the next winter and after two winters, I don't think any have survived. I keep thinking that the hybrids involve species other than tenax, that are more difficult for me to figure out how to grow here. I keep trying some of the other species from SIGNA, hoping that some other individuals will carry better traits for survival; and then eventually, I'll use them to get harder hybrids. I've been crossing the surviving 40chr. Siberians from SIGNA seed with our hardest PCIs to see if some of the resulting Cal-Sibes will fare better here. Actually, 'In Stitches' (L. Reid 1987) grew pretty well for a few years, but then dies. 'Half Magic' (P. Farmer 1983) is doing well this year, and set one pod with 35 very 'iffy' seeds. Barbara and I both love the PCIs and Cal-Sibes and will continue to try to do better at growing them. Generally, I had pretty good germination from last year's seed. Unfortunately, I've been slow in developing seedling beds for them. Barry and Leslie Blyth helped me get started on an area of woods in the late spring, but manually extracting several huge stumps has taken a while. I am now racing against winter to get them all in and hope that they won't all 'heave'. I love planting the cute little plants and seeing the amazing range of appearance at this stage already.

David Schmieder

I wish I could say that I was successful with the PCIs here in Sudbury, MA, but truly I can grow them only in the cool greenhouse. I can't even keep tenax here, which should be hardy for me. I think it's partly my heavy, wet soil, but even with amending it, I can't keep them. Sometimes I think it's because they start into growth during a warm spell in February, say, and die when it freezes again. Frustrating!

Helga Andrews

When I look through my recent copies of the bulletin I am impressed with the activity and progress in the world of PCIs. I feel that I am cultivating only a very small corner of that world, but at least I am having the same luck as always. This corner in Floyd, VA I is still the same, although the Post Office has chosen to change the address on our mailbox. The places where I first tried growing PCIs are still places where you can find them, looking impoverished, but without disease. These plants were mostly from seed, but some were



transplants from Laurie's Garden and Portable Acres. There is one exception, a small bed where seedlings are their own volunteers did well for a few years is now entirely empty of PCIs. It is a little more shaded than the other beds, and it's basis is pure sand. Where the PCIs are surviving, the beds are of the soil as it comes at the wood's edges, clay loam with a little duff and compost, but with almost no sand or gravel. The severe drought of the last four seasons (the current season being the driest) may be responsible for this. All the good sites are occupied now, but last year at this time I did slice off small divisions from four small clumps and planted these in sunnier locations, trying to coax some bloom. One that responded was my all time favorite 'Fort Point' (Wood 1987), and at least the others survived. Every spring I can count on bloom from established clumps of yellow and red innominatas, 'Mini Ma' (Davidson 1972) some lack-lustre seedlings of 'Fort Point'. If the dry season were not so discouraging for all gardening ventures, I would be trying to get out of this rut, but as things are, I am not branching out at all. If my irrigation problems sort themselves and I somehow discover new ground, I think I had better plant seed from my own plentiful capsules. There must be something about the long-time survivors here that would give them a better chance than the random genes of someone else's PCI seed.

Writing about the limited success of my PCIs prompts me to conclude that somewhat more trouble taken would be rewarding. If you set up next door and really tried, you'd probably have a nice lot of PCIs, and a breeding program leading to even better growing irises.

Elaine Hulbert

#### **An Adaptation of: A TREK TO LEE WALKER'S GARDEN, ROSEBURG, OREGON**

Lee visited us in Salem for our 1998 late season show, which is predominantly JIs and we got to see some impressive seedlings and he talked about his 'Crayola' line. This is a variation on the splash patterns common to JIs, Lee's plants having spontaneous splashes of a darker color with a waxy sheen to them. He also mentioned that he had a planting of hundreds of tetraploids (1996 series). That did it! So, late in June I picked up Keith Keppel and headed south. Stopping of at Lorena Reid's garden in Eugene, the outstanding flower of the day was her 1998 introduction 'Confetti Showers', a refreshing billowy white with all six falls delicately sprinkled with raspberry splatters. This does have a tendency to throw reversing flowers with a dark streak, and I'm sure it'll keep many judges nervous in the years ahead. I happen to like these spontaneous patterns.

Lee lives in a valley on the dry side of the coastal mountain range. It's a serious challenge to grow JIs there due to the very dry micro-climate and because the ground water, in a layer of shale, is about Ph 10! Lee has a water tank mounted on a truck and so hauls water from a nearby lake for his ensatas and spurias. His patch of seedling JIs was the largest I've seen, with thousands of seedlings from the last three years. In a separate bed were the fabled tets, hundreds and hundreds of them! Breeding tets on the west coast has been a serious challenge as pods are sparse, giving two or three seeds in each, and germination is timid.

The late bloom season was impressive with color variations that I hadn't seen before and of a quality that promised future introductions. Although the late season was of predominantly three fall plants, Lee assured me that there were many six fall types earlier on and claims to get repeat bloom on some of these seedlings in September. The most striking plants to my mind were the 'blue freckles'. Lorena Reid has been breeding the freckle pattern line for many years, culminating in her Payne Award winning 'Freckled Geisha' (1998). These are best described as white ground delicately sprinkled with raspberry/rose speckles and with a matching wire rim. Lee is doing a similar thing in rich blue and Keith and I kept him running up and down the rows tagging reselects as we worked our way down the rows. In a shady period in the late afternoon the blues took on the mystical iridescence that occurs with indirect light. Magnificent!

I would highly recommend that anyone coming to the Northwest in late June 1999 should make time available to go and see Lee, and rumour has it that Mike Iler in the same general area has thousands of JI seedlings awaiting the judges' perusal too.

Terry Aitken. 'The Review' Vol.35, No.2, Fall 1998

#### **An Adaptation of: VICTORIA B.C.-1997 FALL & WINTER BLOOM**

Today (April 30th, 1998) it's hot and dry. My TBs started blooming on April 10th, and I now have seven JIs in bud. However, last year our spring weather was cold, with overcast skies and much torrential rain and gale force winds. Only my old 'border' JIs put out bloom- almost as if they had an internal clock not totally dependant on external forces. My hybrids cowered and made no attempt to bloom. We had no spring, but summer was hot and the JIs woke up and bloomed copiously in September. On Christmas Day a one year old seedling bloomed with four stalks, two days later snow put an end to that. I had cut the poor things down at the end of November and still they persisted. The 1998 spring was early with El Nino off our coast. However, the TBs started blooming on April 10th and the JIs in early May, which bloomed for seven weeks. Everything bloomed prolifically.

Joy Flint. 'The Review' Vol.53, No.2, Fall 1998

#### **An Adaptation of: REBLOOMING JIs ARE ON THE WAY**

Two years ago I decided to focus on JI rebloom. Using the best material available I picked 'Southern Son' and 'Exuberant Chantey' (both McEwen 1990) as the common denominators, the plants which gave the most rebloom from among the named varieties. Since both are good blues, I mated them with our best blue 'Rolling Seas' (Aitken 1994). We crossed that plant both ways, collected several hundred seeds and got good germination. With 'Izo-Nopumi' (Hirao by SJI 1993) -a good three fall blue- as grandparent behind 'Rolling Seas', it was reasonably predictable that we'd get a block of blues ranging from light to dark. What we have not seen before is JI stems with four or five branches on fall bloom, although this increase in bud count and branching on fall bloom is fairly common in bearded. The next step is to cross these fall bloomers to reinforce the reblooming tendency (line breeding). I'm a bit skeptical about being able to set pods in September and ripen them before dormancy sets in here in late October, but I'll give it a try. Back-crossing to those McEwen rebloomers will have to wait for spring anyway.

Bearded iris hybridisers have been struggling with rebloom for forty years. The big problem has been public acceptance, as the later bloom quality has been significantly inferior to that of spring blooming types. This gap has been closed significantly and dramatically in the last five years. With the JIs we will have introduction quality and perhaps even award quality almost immediately. In addition to Dr.McEwen, other hybridisers are hard at work.



John White reports from the east coast that he is getting outstanding pinks that bloom all summer. Chad Harris has been working on the wine colors, using 'Tafeta & Velvet' (Ackerman 1984). Our first dramatic evidence of his success was when he turned up with a huge bouquet of truly spectacular JIs at the Greater Portland Iris Society's summer auction in 1997. These had great substance and form, with much promise for future introduction. Lee Walker is claiming rebloom on many of his plants too.

Rebloom plants do set commercial growers new potential problems. There is some evidence that 'bloom-outs' may occur if the plants aren't vigorous increasers. Sequential bloom is the ideal answer, and only some plants may have that characteristic. The other problem is how to divide and ship rebloomers after they have finished their summer rebloom during the shipping season. Many bearded growers simply ship the plants with the spent bloom shoots, and with good side increases. JI growers may have to do the same thing.

If others 'out there' are working on rebloom, please get in touch. This is not an exclusive club, and in my opinion, the more hybridisers working, the merrier. In an article about ten years ago, Dr. Ackerman documented statistics indicating that it took five generations of line breeding to lock a characteristic, such as rebloom. We sure could use some help!

Terry Aitken, 'The Review' Vol.35, No.3, Fall 1998

#### **An Adaptation of: MORE NEWS ON REBLOOMING**

This was an El Nino year for my irises here in Monkton, Maryland. After an exceptionally mild winter, even dahlias and cannas left in the ground. Then we had torrential rains and everything was lush and green. The JIs that threw repeat stalks were 'Springtime Prayer' (Reid 1994); 'Mizu No Hikari' (Hirao by SJI 1995); 'Kirigamine' (Jennifer has corrected this to Kiyoro Yoshie reg'd by the SJI 1995); 'Hatsu Kagami' (Hirao by SJI 1992); 'Springtime Snow' (Reid 1983); 'Sakae Muraski' (Makino by SJI 1993); 'Let Me See' (Ackerman 1989); 'Diomedes' (Innerst 1991); 'Continuing Pleasure' (McEwen 1982) and all of Bill Ackerman's Ashton series. The latter did extremely well this year, being vigorous with double branching and high bud counts of five to nine. 'Ashton Pride' and 'Ashton Velvet' (both 1997) remained in bloom over seven weeks.

Bruce Hornstein, 'The Review' Vol. 35, No.2, Fall 1998

One of my goals has been to create a pink JI without a lavender cast. My best pink to date is 95JI-W17-14, a three fall rosy pink, about 9" across, it's overlapping falls having a narrow white edge. This plant bloomed continuously from June 30th to August 23rd 1998 and it's blossoms held up well for nearly four days. I made five crosses on this plant and the pods are bigger than walnuts. It appears to be a good pod and pollen parent. Several other nice pinks came from the same cross (a White seedling x 'Hana-No-Yoi' (unregistered?)). One of these, a six fall bloom, was judged Best Seedling at the Maine Iris Society's 1998 JI Show.

John White, 'The Review' Vol.35, No.2, Fall 1998

#### **An Adaptation of: NAGAI TYPE OF JAPANESE IRIS**

The Nagai type is older than the Edo, Ise and Higo types of JI and the Nagai district is a very important place for Japanese iris lovers, especially for those who are interested in the origin of garden cultivars. That is because the Nagai type is very old and cultivated only in the Nagai district. Mr. Toshihiro Nagata, who grows JIs for Kamo nursery, and I visited Nagai city in north-western Honshu in June 1997. We went by train and were welcomed at the station by Mr. Kakima, who was a key person for our planned investigation. Mr. Kakima is an enthusiast of Nagai varieties and has tended them as a volunteer at the Nagai Ayame garden for a long time.

We first went by car to Hagyu village on Nagai plain. It is a quiet farming village where there are many rice paddy fields. Upon taking a short walk, we found many flowers of *Lensata* growing along the dikes. These were not cultivated plants that had been naturalised, but truly wild plants. This was evident from their simple flower form and almost no color variation. By a stream that Mr. Kakima led us to on a hill near the border of the Ide mountain range and the Nagai plain, we found many examples of the wild species in bloom in a meadow on the hill and felt fortunate to find two plants of the white species. Mr. Nagata and I were excited at this finding but Mr. Kakima remained calm. He told us that there were many mutant forms in the meadows of the Ide mountains. I concluded that this particular meadow and the dikes of the rice paddies must be secondary habitats, the meadows near the top of the mountains being the primary habitat of these wild irises. Perhaps using this area for cultivation expanded the habitat. Nagai district has rich soil and a diversity of native flora and fauna. Here many natural variants of *Lensata* have survived. The people who live in northern Honshu, and especially in Nagai district, protect nature, so wild species have great potential for developing cultivars in the future.

We visited Nagai Ayame Garden the next day. This garden has cultivars of Ise, Higo, Edo, American and Nagai types of JIs. We concentrated on the latter and I made a number of observations about them. About half the cultivars had simple forms with narrow falls and standards, but they showed a very wide range of color and pattern variation. The other half had color and patterns similar to the Edo cultivars, but flower shapes and sizes were intermediate between those and the wild species. Some of the Nagai cultivars had flowers with a form different from any other type.

The records of this garden reveal that it was established in 1919 by collecting JIs from many private gardens in Nagai and Hagyu villages. These varied widely in color and pattern. Mr. Kakima explained that Hagyu villagers had collected many wild variants for their gardens. The bloom season coincided with the villagers' vacation from their agricultural work. Hagyu village used to be a castle, and was very crowded. It had long been the home of cultured people who enjoyed collecting, growing and appreciating clones of *Lensata*. This activity at Hagyu might be called the birth of JI cultivars.

I believe that the following factors were necessary for this birth.

Firstly, the gene pool. Many mutants were brought into a limited area from the wild. The resultant bee set seed increased the flower's variation, and the many people enjoying the JIs selected the most beautiful forms and possibly exchanged them with each other. The iris breeding activity of Japanese gardeners has always differed from that practised in the West. Instead of obtaining new cultivars by crossing different species, the Japanese gardener pursues variation by gathering mutants from the countryside. I believe that the addition to the gene pool of white forms was probably critical to the development of a wide variety of color forms in *Lensata*. If there were not a pool of recessive genes for white, other mutant variations would be masked with purple or violet, which are the dominant genes in the species.



There is no sign of any other species having played a role in the development of the II, all cvs and wild forms have ( $2n=24$ ), the only exceptions being aneuploids of Ise varieties which have ( $2n=25$ ), and these cross readily with natural diploids. Therefore they are regarded botanically as belonging to a single species. The Nagai type is the oldest group surviving today and its existence gives us hints as to how the modern cultivar was born, and provides material for future hybridising.

Hiroshi Shimizu, 'The Review' Vol.35, No.2, Fall 1998

#### NEWS FROM NEW ZEALAND ON *I. LUNGUICULARIS* AND ITS CULTIVARS

Gwenda Harris reported that she has little success with trying to flower the various sub-species and hybrids although the common one does very well. There's much excitement over 'Bunty' (R Harvey 1986), described by Hec Collins as 'E-L, S. pale orchid-pink; F. deeper orchid-pink, deeper pink suffusion extending to hafts, gold signal stripe; sweet fragrance. 'Starker's Pink' sdling x 'Starker's Pink'. Marilyn May wrote that this was bred by Revie Harvey, and that as the (unregistered) 'Starker's Pink' is inclined to virus and therefore frequently lost, this scion was extremely popular, being 'exactly the same' apart from being slightly smaller. She reckons that most 'Bunty's about will be from seed and doesn't know of anyone who still has it. Hilmary Catton wrote that she had had seedlings from 'Bunty' that she considered to be superior to the parent.

Over there, a lightly shaded position and lots of food is her recommendation. Ron Isles advises a good loose soil to which lime has been added. Compost should be incorporated on a poor soil, sand on a heavy one. He has used crusher dust or brick mortar rubble effective. The site should be warm and sunny for summer baking of the rhizomes. The *unguicularis* will withstand down to -14 degrees C although the flowers and buds won't tolerate that. His autumnal clean up in February consists of raking out those dead leaves that will happily pull away, leaving those that won't to shelter the growing points and should be left on until the weather's more genial, when they should be pulled off individually. Old, spent rhizomes should be removed then too to discourage molluscs, and the plant dusted with dolomite limestone and top dressed with coarse sand or crusher dust.

In Ron's opinion a rich diet is inappropriate but a dressing of potassium and bone meal in spring and autumn will be beneficial. He remarks that it's been said that better flower will be obtained by shortening the leaves to 8" /20cm in the autumn to allow light and warmth to the rhizomes, but he's dubious about it's usefulness, except in that it allows the flowers to appear above the foliage. He recommends slug bait to protect the new shoots and cautions that if foliage is cut back too hard, the loss of their food factory will inhibit flower for several seasons.

Ron advises propagation in spring or autumn, and he prefers to do so after flowering, with big sections of new rhizomes that should be nice and fat with new (white) roots since the old fibrous ones can't re-establish the section. These must be firmly planted and their soil kept moist until they're established. As far as cultivars go in New Zealand, Ron mentions 'Walter Butt' (Anderson 1962), palest lavender with green markings; 'Starker's Pink' a rather weak dwarfish pinkish-lavender; 'Mary Barnard' (Anderson 1962) a violet-blue, and 'Bunty' (R Harvey 1986), a pale orchid pink bitone. The 'A.K.Aslet'(unregistered) that was around after importation was incorrectly supplied in the first place, as it should have been a small flowered dark violet with narrow leaves.

Amalgamated from NZIS's 'Spectrum' No.34 Sept.1998

#### IRIS FUN IN FLORIDA

I have been looking at what plants people here grow in their gardens. Although barely hardy in the north, *Iris versicolor* will not grow in the deep south of the USA. *Iris virginica* can be grown as far as southern Florida, almost to Miami. Both species are native to the eastern USA. *Iris virginica* is native to Florida. I am not sure what keeps *Iris versicolor* from growing here, but I suspect that it is the lack of winter chilling. I do know that the five louisiana species will grow here, but they have to be irrigated and provided with some shade at midday. Here at 29 degrees north latitude, the sun gets quite intense. Results with TBs are mixed here. A few growers get them to flower fairly well, while for others they may bloom only once in five years. By trying some rebloomers, I am doing something others have not. I will let you know how it works out. As for the other irises, only one Siberian and a couple of IIs have survived so far. The spuria 'Ila Crawford' (Hager 1976), dwindled away to nothing. The Daylilies though have been something else this year. Some other plants of the iris family, including *Neomarica*, *Trimezia* and *belemcanda*, will grow here very well. 'Blue Eyed Grass' *Sisyrinchium atlanticum*, is native here, and blooms from February well into April, maybe longer had it not turned so dry. *Iris pseudacorus* will grow here. Thinking of irids, I have some type of iridaceous plant that has come in some fill soil. By the leaves and growth habit, it is almost certainly in the iris family. It has buds, and if ever I get it identified, I'll let you know. As for the PCIs, most success with them has been in the northern half of California, northward through Washington. Very little success has been had with them in the east. If you took that latitude to Europe, it would compare with Spain, Portugal and France. My latitude followed across the Atlantic would be in northern Africa, somewhere in the Sahara.

The weather here, while not as wildly crazy as Kentucky's, can still throw some tricks, such as the tornadoes in Orlando this past spring, and the drought that started in March, after a record wet winter. Thinking drought, this is now (June) a record dry spell for Florida. However, as I write this, it is raining some for the first time this month. Today set an all-time high for this area; 42 degrees C. If three rainy season goes ahead and sets in, most days would have a thunderstorm. However, the temperatures would back off a bit, hanging around 33 degrees C during the day. January's the 'coldest' month, the normal daytime temperature here is 68 degrees Fahrenheit. In December and February, it's 72F, and by March it's 77F. Days of 80F plus can occur any time. Frost is possible from late November through March, but is generally confined to December, January and February. While very rare, snow has been known to fall here. In Kentucky, the normal winter day would peak out at around 35F after a low of about 18F. Cloud cover here is much less than in Kentucky, even during the rainy season. In Kentucky, temperatures of freezing or below occur on about 115 days a year, here it happens about a dozen times. The Rainbow River here has a year round temperature of 72F. The Gulf of Mexico, 30 miles away, can have water temperatures ranging from the mid 50's to 90F, depending on the season. Those of us who swim a lot do so all year, but we avoid the Gulf in the hot season.

Mark A Cook



## THE LURGH FILE

*I. foetidissima*. For the first time in about a quarter of a century I have been faced with leaf miners in these plants after having been sent some specimen leaves for inspection. The sender's suggestion was that they might have rust. But rust, which should be inspected under a strong magnifying glass, has a powdery appearance on the leaf surface as it does on an iron sheet. Mind you, there has been a good deal of rust in the last couple of years. The best treatment is to replant at the appropriate time of year, breaking up the clump and allowing more air to circulate through the leaves. Feed 'em up, too. But leaf miners, when you run your fingers down the leaf, feel rather like little pimples. If the outbreak is fairly modest you can usually just squash them, like greenfly, but if it is a serious outbreak, (and in this case the leaves were covered in pimples) the only effective treatment is systemic insecticide. The trouble here is that iris leaves in general have a waxy surface and the spray runs off without doing any good. So make up the mixture as suggested and pour it down the leaves into the heart of the fan. The soft material at the bases will absorb it and the rest will run down to the roots from where it will be pumped up the interiors. And while you are at it, have a look around for any carriers such as *Aquilegia* sp. and treat them too.

Anne Blanco White

## An Adaptation of: VIRUS 'SPOTTED' IN DENVER

Unusual 'spots' were discovered by Carol Warner on a guest clump of Siberians in the Long's garden during the garden tours at the convention. This was 'Liberty Hills' (A.M. Miller 1989), and it caused quite a stir with the Siberian enthusiasts on my bus. 'The spots were small, irregular areas of very dark blue, several of us remarked that they resembled undissolved color pigments in paint. These spots were only on the flowers, equally on unopened buds as well as mature flowers, and we couldn't distinguish any pattern or arrangement. Someone asked if they could be contagious, so the surrounding seedlings were examined in detail. Close by were several of Sterling Innerst's and no spots were found on these. Methodical examinations that would have made Sherlock Holmes envious established that there were no other clumps in the garden with spots. Bob Hollingworth agreed that the damage was probably viral although no-one can recollect seeing this before in Siberians.

Bill Smoot 'The Siberian Iris' Fall 1998

From the black & white photograph in 'TSI', this looks similar to the flecking found on bearded flowers to me. Ed

## WANDERING SEEDS

No, this isn't a matter of getting labels mixed up. It is something I have found mildly interesting for many, many years and a letter from Robyn Rohrlach brought it back to mind. She says:

'In January a seedling appeared of *I. bungei*. Waddick and Zhao's Iris of China describe its cultivation as 'challenging' and only of an expert which is not exactly confidence building. I presume it will be deciduous? I will either refrigerate it over winter and it can jostle for space with the vegetables in the crisper (I'll keep it separate, of course!). I may have it baby-sat at a botanist friend's place further up in the Blue Mountains where it is much colder and it even snows. It would need to be kept dry over winter I suppose. Any suggestions would be most welcome.

Another slow germinator is a seedling from some Brian Mathew sent in 1994 from a Chinese collection that according to the label is probably a *pseudoregia*. A curious thing with these two seedlings is that they were both right against the sides of the pots. They must have worked their way to the edges after rain and watering over a long period. I've noticed other iris seedlings germinate in this manner and wonder if others have had this experience? Perhaps this barrier induces them to germinate? I have heard the theory that planting seeds very close together stimulates them into germinating.'

Parallel with that I have found that some seeds rise to the surface of the pan before they get round to germinating. In fact a clear-up the other day produced two pans of ensated seeds which had been left under soil and now were sitting determinedly on the surface.

How many of you readers have noticed these odd activities and can you tie them in to any particular weather or maintenance conditions and what were the species. Is there any difference between cultivars and species proper? Robyn's and mine were species.

Anne Blanco White

Although it's unfortunately not very relevant, I've found it to be mainly bearded and sibiricas that rise to the top and had assumed this to be too thin a grit layer which settled around them over time, as at least with the latter, it's unlikely to be lack of an adequate root system. I experimented a bit with all sorts of seed, splitting each packet into one set with just a grit top, the other with a blanket of J1 No.3 (my potting medium) before the grit, but if there was any difference in performances, it escaped me, although my trial was very small. Another explanation that occurred to me was simply the old observation that when shaking up something composed of different sized granules, the larger ones rise to the top. Assuming that they're not all doing the conga in their pots on those exciting nights of germination, settling is all I can think of that might account for it, although the expansion and contraction of the compost due to frosts and thaws may contribute to this process. How to get the seeds deep enough on setting them for this settling not to leave them exposed- if that is the case- but not so deeply that they rot off (again a bearded trick mostly), is one of the many things I have yet to master. Do write in with your experiences.

Ed

## ORGANISING SEEDLING NUMBERS

Mine start with one or more letters showing what the cross is intended to achieve. Not the same as what it actually produces! R = remountant / repeat; RD = red; P = pink; D = dwarf. All these would be diploids. For tets, there is T, sometimes plus another letter, e.g. TE = tetraploid with white (or gold) edge; WT = white tet. Then the year the cross was made and the number of the cross itself which comes from the order in which successful crosses were made. Finally, the seedling's own number - its order in the row/s. So RT981/A3 would be red tet, first successful cross made 1998, third seedling in row A.

Jennifer Hewitt



### An adaptation of: SEED CUTTING OF RARE AND IMPORTANT SEED

About 400 little plants are producing their first leaves in my winter garden under some artificial light and another 500 are still to come. (I have found in the past that more than 1000 seedlings per year are impossible to treat in the proper way by a person who has another 8 hour per day profession). For starting the seeds I always use a seed cutting method which is of special value for rare and important seeds. A near 100% germination can be obtained by the proper application of the method. Seeds that start rotting after two or three days were already dead at the moment of cutting. You then know that not getting a seedling is not your fault. This can happen with seed from wide crosses: they develop a normal looking seed with embryo and endo sperm, but when you try to germinate it, it proves to be dead. This also happened with most of the seeds from the last Waddick collection, distributed via SIGNA. These seeds were possibly collected during flowering time from residual capsules formed the year before.

#### Description of the method:

1. Soak the seed in tap water for 7 days. Replace the water at least each second day. Remove seeds which show signs of rot or mould. Seeds should not float on the surface. If they do, they can normally be pushed down on the third day. The seed shells of *I. setosa*, *I. laevigata*, *I. versicolor*, *I. virginica* and Louisianas should be removed from the dry seeds prior to soaking. Before the seeds are cut, it may be helpful to add a small quantity of fungicide to them, leaving this for 30 minutes before rinsing away carefully.

2. Miniature green houses are prepared from preserving jars, used upside-down, their lids filled with sterilised vermiculite, (3-6mm grain size). The vermiculite is washed through with tap water, using a sieve, and a little heap of it is placed on the lid. The jar is then placed, upside-down, on top of the lid and the whole thing is heated in an oven for one hour at 200 degrees C. After cooling down, some tap water is added to the vermiculite and a little circular seed bed, 10-15 mm high, is formed from this wet material using a spoon.

3. The seeds are cut in such a way that a thin slice is removed at the point where the embryo is to emerge during normal germination. This is normally very near to the point where the seed was fixed to the centre of the seed capsule. In the case of irise seeds, the removal of several thin slices of seed coat may be necessary until the endosperm and the embryo is reached. Make sure that a thin slice of the endosperm and the very tip of the embryo (where it emerges from the endosperm and touches the seed coat according to Tomas' diagram. Ed.) are removed by the last cut. For cutting small seeds it is necessary to use strong magnification and to work under intense light. Normally, one should do some training with unimportant seeds before the really rare ones are treated. For training it may be helpful to cut some seeds in half lengthways, in order to make the embryo and its position visible. Some seeds (e.g. Tetra-Calsibes) often have a very irregular seed shape, so that the cutting point is difficult to find. In such cases the seed coat is removed with the fingernails and the seed is rubbed gently on tissue until the details are clearly visible.

4. After cutting, the seeds are taken with a pair of forceps and pressed into the vermiculite with the cut surface upwards. Avoid contact of the cut surface and the vermiculite or other seeds. If more than one type of seed is in any one jar, label the lid at the appropriate points and take care to leave enough space between the different types, as the seeds may travel a bit during germination. The jars should then be stored in a dark and warm place.

5. Check the jars daily for signs of rot or mould. A droplet of slimy liquid forming on the cut surface is the first sign of rot. Such seeds were already dead when cut, and they should be removed immediately. Sometimes a seed can exude a droplet of clear water at the cut surface. This is harmless, and may be removed using the tip of a clean tissue. Seeds with mould should be removed too. However, in the case of very rare seeds, when mould is developing on the seed coat of an otherwise healthy looking seed (good embryo development), it can sometimes be controlled by repeatedly spraying with a fine spray of clear water until the mould breaks down. Seeds which have the embryo pushed out to its full length immediately after cutting must be removed too.

6. Germination normally starts immediately after cutting. Depending on the type of seed it may take 10-14 days until the seedlings are ready for potting. In some cases a batch of seeds may refuse to do more than grow more than 0.5-1mm (some Spurias, some Tbs, some Calsibew). If the seeds then still look healthy, they can be stored in their jar in the fridge for six weeks at a temperature of as near as possible to freezing, without actually reaching it. When they are taken back to the warm place, they will then normally germinate at a very high rate.

This method has the advantage of giving a quick result at all times of the year. It is nearly a 'must' for seedlings which are to be treated with Colchicine, since it's very important to do this at the right moment.

Tomas Tamberg, 'Spectrum' No.32, Oct/Nov 1997

**THE SEED LIST:** DO remember that when ordering GBI seed from Margaret you need to send a cheque made out to our Group for it at 40p per packet inclusive of p&p. There are too many possibilities for confusion if cheques cover GBI and BIS seed together.

#### 98/99 Tony Huber's Seed

##### A - *I. versicolor* from collected and hand pollinated (HP) crosses.

A-01. 'Anticosti Island' self HP., vigorous, purple & white.

A-02. 'Island Cheer' x 'Anticosti Island' x HA-49, nearly white. From Magdalena Is. Gulf of St. Laurence.

A-03. MR-03-666, self HP, multipetalled.

A-04. Improved White 92-600- for back crosses with Biversatas HP.

A-05. 'Riopelle' pink x 'Anticosti Island' HP.

A-06. 95-53- 'Anticosti Island' x Biversata x selfed HP.

A-07. 96-04 'Anticosti Island' x AC-12 selfed HP. 100 seeds.

A-08. Kr-03-40, Red Selection, selfed HP.

A-09. HA-48, ex Magdalena Islands, dark violet-blue, selfed HP.

##### B- *I. setosa*, *hookeri* & hybrids,

B-01. *Setosa*- interior 97-02. White selection. Open pollinated.

B-02. Vigorous purple with blue & white winged style arms.

B-03. *hookeri* ex Point Riche Nfl. Very dwarf, 15-20cm, for rock gardens. Selfed HP.

B-04. 'Labraska' cross *setosa* 'Farm Park' x 'Point Riche', Vigorous, good bloomer, 50-60 cm. Selfed.

B-05. 'Innu Spring' cross, *hookeri* 'Point Riche' x *setosa* 'Labraska'. 30-40 cm. Selfed.

B-06. Sancti-cyriana (Renault) cross *I. versicolor* x white *hookeri*. Half the size of versicolors, purple with white styles. Selfed HP.



### C-I.virginica and hybrids.

- C-01 I.virginica var virginica clone 131, selfed, HP.  
C-02. I.virginica var shrevei, pink, ex St.Laurence river, Quebec.O.P.  
C-04. I.virginica var shrevei, 'Crown Point' selfed HP.  
C-005. I. virginica var shrevei ex. Lake Erie Ontario. Selfed HP.  
C-06 I.versicolor white x I.virginica var virginica white. Clone white, selfed HP.

### D- Iris Spec X (Biversata) = I.versicolor x ensata =(Versata) x Versicolor. Hybrid Biversata has 120 chr.

- D-01. I. versicolor 'Anticosti Island' x Biversata 'Belle Promesse' selfed HP.  
D-02. Clone 94-15. I.versicolor x ensata x versicolor. Selfed HP.  
D-03. Clone 96-45. I.versicolor x ensata x versicolor. Selfed HP. Multibranched, small fls.  
D-04. Clone 95-128. Purple biversata . Selfed HP.  
D-05. Clone 94-051. Versata 'Oriental Touch' x red versicolor, selfed HP.  
D-06. Clone 94-33. Versata 'Oriental Touch' x purple versicolor. Selfed HP.  
D-07. Biversata 'Tenue Royale', burgundy red, selfed HP.  
D-08. Clone 94-70. Biversata blue x biversta pink selfed HP. Multibranched miniature fls.  
D-09. Clone 94-86. Biversata purple, selfed. HP.  
D-10. Clone 95-129. Biversata x Biversata selfed HP. multipetalled flowers.  
D-11. Clone 94-44. I.versicolor x ensata x versicolor x Biversata HP.

### ENSATAE (Currier's 'small type fls' are "myriads of 4-4 1/2" flowers that literally cover the 36" plants")

- 'Dewa Banri'-Kamo Nurseries, light blue, dark veins, many 'small type' flowers -CMcE  
'Honya-no-kaza' -diploid  
'Nagai-homurashi' -diploid  
'Rebecca's Choice' -an excellent pink diploid being introduced in 1999  
'Sei Nagon' -excellent old Hirao introduction (1969), blue falls, pinkish stds, popular in Japan in its day -CMcE  
'Shii-no-Homare'-Ichie introduction (1989), rich dark violet blue diploid  
'Shii-no-sode' -diploid  
'Variation in Pink' -McEwen introduction (1996)  
'Warabe-Uta' -Ichie, white and violet-purple bi-colour diploid, small flowered type  
Ensata- dark red-violet, wild form. -JH

### SIBIRICAE

- 'Ever Again'- medium blue tet repeater-C.McE  
'Silver Edge' - an early Currier tet that won the Morgan Award in 1978 -CMcE  
'Violet Repeat' -JH  
'Marlene Ahlburg'- wine red -SP  
'Melton Red Flare' - this is finally the right name, ask Jennifer! Rosy blend -SP  
'Polly Dodge'- wine red -SP  
'Velvet Queen'-this, I think,unregistered, it came from Rougham Hall nursery -SP  
'Calsibe W.193 selfed'- a branched pale blue seedling -SP  
'Calsibe W193 selfed'- from a plicata seedling -SP  
chrysographes- red form -SP  
chrysographes- red-purple, a floriferous plant -SP  
delayvayi 'Didcot' descendants, dark purples -SP  
As above, a plant that threw branches this year -SP  
delayvayi hybrids (possibly), tall plicatas -SP

### OLD GBI SEED- the seed itself is free, but Margaret obviously needs p&p anyway.

#### Ensatas:

- Ensata N.Z. form  
Ensata  
Ensata -mixed diploids

#### Laevigatae:

- virginica

#### PCI Species:

- macrosiphon

#### PCI Hybrids:

- 'Califancy' crosses  
'Carmel Gem'  
'Palma Violet'  
'Sierra Dell' crosses

#### Setosas:

- setosa ssp hondoensis  
setosa-blue, tall form  
setosa- very wide fall blades

#### Sibiricae:

- chrysographes sub series - mixed hybrids  
chrysographes var rubella  
versicolor sdlg (Schafer/Sacks) SP90-1. 'Little Rhyme x  
Mysterious Monique'



**Spuriae:**

spuria x orientalis-60" yellow  
 orientalis 9/M 121 D  
 orientalis mixed- 4'  
 ochroleuca 'Shelford Giant'  
 Charles Jenkins' hybrids -

*carthalinae*  
*halophila*  
*musulmanica*  
*sintenisii*

|                     |                            |                   |                         |
|---------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 'Adobe Sunset'      | 'Clara Ellen'              | <i>halophila</i>  | 'Penny Bunker'          |
| 'April's Birthday'  | 'Dark Purple'              | 'Irene Benton'    | 'Popped Corn'           |
| 'Baby Chick'        | 'Easter Colors'            | 'Lenkoran'        | 'Snow Giant'            |
| 'Bali Bali'         | 'Elan Vital'               | x 'Little Splash' | 'Struttin' x 'Struttin' |
| 'Banners on Parade' | 'Falcon's Crest'           | 'My Impulse'      | 'Universal Peace'       |
| 'Border Town'       | 'Equality' x 'Crow's Wing' | 'New Vista'       | 'White Shimmer'         |
|                     |                            |                   | 'Zulu Chief'            |

97/98 BIS Seed -These are 25p per packet.

**Evansias**

No.156. *lectorum*. 1996 seed. RR Australia

**Series Laevigatae species & hybrids**

331. *ensata* cvs mxd HP '96 seed HS Japan

333. *ensata* diploids '96 seed PA USA

*Virginica* var *shrevei*

**Series Sibiricae (28chr.)**

No.189. *sibirica* white fls. ABW UK

No.190 *sibirica* blue fls. ABW UK

**Hybrids**

No.197 'Bridal Jig' white JH UK

No. 199 'Casino' JV UK

No.200 'Caeser' deep purple SP UK

No.204 'Elinor Hewitt' JH UK

No.215 'King of Kings' HK Germany

No 220 'Lydia Winter' EH USA

No. 221 'Mabel Coday' JH UK

No.223 'Maggie Smith' EH USA

No.229 'Perry's Blue' JV UK

No.234 'Sea Shadows' HK Germany

No.244 'Summer Sky' HK Germany

255 modern blues, mxd. MVC UK

257. mixed colours, diploids JH UK

260 purple SP UK (These are probably *delayvayi* 'Didcot' descendants Ed)

**40 chr. Sibircas (Chrysographes Group)**

267 *bulleyana* c. Yunnan Province, China 1996 TS Australia

270 *chrysographes* MB France

**Series Spuriae species & hybrids**

409.*halophila* '95 seed AMcM Canada

411 *kerneriana* SDB UK

420. *orientalis* CJ USA

427. *spuria* ssp.*carthalinae* BG Canada

430 *spuriassp.musulmanica* (syn.*klattii*) c. V.Lenkoran, SE Transcaucasia. GR Russia

431 *spuriassp.sogdiana*

432. *xanthospuria*

**Series Tripetelae**

No.169. *setosa* ssp.*canadensis* (syn *hookeri*) 11" JV UK

No.179. *setosa* light blue-violet. JH UK

No.180. *setosa* light violet. JH UK