The Review

The Group for Beardless Irises

Issue No 11 Autumn 2014

Photo Terry Aitken

Terry Aitken's medal winning Japanese iris 'Lady in Pink'. It won the Payne Medal, the highest award for an ensata. Lovely frills and flounces.

Photo Jan and Marty

An example of a modern Siberian with frills and flounces on all parts of the flower from Jan and Marty in 'Mad Hat'. See article p. 8.

Contents

Editor's Notes
Brita Carson

What a great summer we had here in SW Scotland where the sun shone for many weeks and the bees had a bonanza pollinating all the irises and I didn't do too badly myself. I took Jeff Dunlop's advice and pollinated really early in the morning before the atmosphere was too hot and dry. I was delighted to have lots of seed to send to both Janet for our beardless seed list and Margaret for the BIS. As always we would like to thank everyone who kindly sent us seed for our members list and distribution. You have all sent an excellent selection from far and wide. We can always do with more seed so please send some next year if you have any to spare. Not everyone had plenty of extra this year so I suppose it is a case of enjoy it when you can. We do appreciate the amount of work it takes to collect and clean seed.

We would like to congratulate Mark Haslett on receiving full status for his National Collection of Water Irises this summer. He already holds full Collection status for his Louisianas (spp. and hybrids) and now he adds to that *Iris laevigata*, *I. pseudacorus*, *I. versicolor* and *I. virginica* (spp., cvs. and hybrids). He is looking forward to hybridising all of these. And maybe we can look forward to some of his spare seeds.

There is a fascinating article on crocuses by Tony Goode. We sometimes forget that crocuses are also irids belonging to the *Iridaceae* family with three of everything. Tony has the National Collection of crocus species and his crocuses can be viewed by appointment. Roll on spring.

You will notice I have included two American medal winning irises as well as our 2014 registrations. I feel it keeps us up to date with trends and fashions so that you know what is happening elsewhere. And for those that are trying some serious hybridising - do try to use modern plants so that you will be moving forward instead of copying what has gone before. I have listed and intend to keep including the new registrations each year with a few irresistible ones from elsewhere. The most popular modern trends have lots of frills and flounces on not only the standards and falls but also in the styles and these are throughout the species from Siberians, Japanese, PCIs and some of the lesser grown beardless like Mark's water irises. Spurias are slowly starting to show new trends but they have either not been as easy to change, or hybridisers have been concentrating on changing the colours first.

Our regular contributors have written again with entertaining but meaningful words on their own subjects. Please get in touch if you would like to write for us. I'm always keen to include new thoughts and ideas.

Chairwoman's Report
Anne Blanco White

Meteorologically we have learnt a lot over the last decade about the influences on our weather, starting from El Niño and La Nina well south of the Pacific Ocean to the antics of the American tornados this year. In October the latest one is currently dis-organising the tidying up in my garden. As sure as taxes, if I am free to do a bit of work out back, it has rained.

Now we know that irises have two growing seasons a year so when flowering is over we seize the first hopeful chance to replant anything that is outstaying its welcome. By the way, did you know that the great Marjorie Brummitt replanted her Siberians when she found the cat was sleeping comfortably on the bare exhausted rhizomes at the centre of the clump? Anyway, as a result of matters beyond my control there was no question of getting my replanting and repotting done in September and so here I am in late October hoping to get them finished sufficiently soon before the first frosts – and there have been some cold nights – for the rootlets to recover.

Flowering on the whole was poor all over and I have a horrid feeling that the excess of winter rain may have contributed here by leaching out any fertiliser given last autumn. I, for one, should have been far more generous with top-ups when the growing season started again. Goodness knows I frequently point out that irises should be given extra nourishment directly if they are grown close to trees and large shrubs because otherwise the heftier plant will take all the available nourishment first. Little and often is the motto here.

At all events, the root systems I have had to contend with suggest that I haven't done any lasting damage. This is a very small garden and as a result I have to grow my wetlanders in pots. Lots of pots. Far too many pots. All through the summer they stand mainly in long sand trays – or the new, and cheaper, trays meant for tomato grow-bags. This does simplify watering. And it isn't only the wetlanders in pots either: there is the matter of the Junos. These are still in recovery from the wildlife's depredations of two years ago, but since they are kept in a relatively cool place they are easy and quick to repot since the soil is fairly dry and falls away from the roots. They are protected from summer rainfall, but natural humidity prevails and they don't dry out catastrophically. This practice partly resulted from the splendid roofed, but not walled, beds that Tony Hall was given at Kew. Indeed, the firm from whom I bought my main plant stand was very worried that I refused their offer of sheets of glass for the top and sides. With small children nearby, I opted for tough plastic for the top and stiff wire sheeting for the sides. This has worked very well giving some windbreak effect, and keeping larger birds and squirrels out. The wrens have no trouble squeezing through the mesh and so I have no trouble with red spider mites.

What will happen with the *Orthrosanthus* will be interesting to see. I think it resulted from tipping an ungerminated pot of seed onto a flower bed (I always do). One seed germinated and proceeded to try and eliminate a pogon. Not one of our great garden display plants, but a good blue. And there is the small matter of some half dozen pots of Evansias in urgent need of TLC; trouble is that they are rather dull seedlings. It would be nice if things like the tigridias and gladioli would die off so that they could be bedded down against the winter.

Back in the 1950s we grew tigridias. We reckoned they were good weather forecasters: if the plants came into flower, it was going to rain and it usually did. The commercial stock came from Holland and, as they were popular, Dutch breeders got to work and were producing named varieties in a wider range of colours and patterns. Then came the winter of 1962-3. It was spectacular in London and worse in Holland where they lost not only most of their stock, but any interest in the plants. Tigridias disappeared. They've come back again though. And I have a horrid feeling we may be back at square one. I bought quite a lot and they did very nicely for me. Set lots of seed too. Somehow they didn't like this last winter and it is clear that the number of bulbs is much reduced though they are relatively hardy. Time may tell, but I am reluctant to say 'watch this space' for our next edition. On the other hand the seeds which were sown out of doors in fairly late spring and which were nearly drowned have produced quite a satisfactory crop of plantlets if I can only keep them going through to next year. This means a lot of careful thinking. Presumably the Dutch treat them like iris bulbs by lifting the lot when they die down and replanting what they need the next spring. And it has always been my practice to leave things in their pots safely protected from winter rain, but not from cold.

And, of course, I have had my usual outbreak of weeds. The Enchanter's Nightshade had short shift; there's another I have failed to identify and the wild spurge had to go too. On the other hand the *Euphorbia* can stay until I see if it is worth keeping. There was a really promising melon seedling until the snails found it then it was totally consumed in about two days, but the tomato is really impressive. It started to flower about the beginning of October and has grown to about 4ft while sprawling all over the bed. I doubt though that I shall be making green chutney this year.

Meantime, *Iris formosana* is staging a total invasion of my living room. It does need a warm environment - around 20°C all year, give or take. And it actively dislikes a hot, sunny windowsill where it will develop sunburn. Warm and not too dry greenhouses would probably be best. What worries me is that I was given an orchid last autumn which has done nicely so far. It was replanted in spring when the flower spikes had died down and during June three little green shoots appeared in the compost. Clearly seedlings,

probably irises though I can't think where from. The formosanas haven't flowered and the orchid is in a commercial compost which should have been sterile. Well, they're potted up and I may or may not find out: they have a heavy central rib to the leaves and pale lavender veining at their bases.

Addenda from the Chair
There have been two very interesting items in *The Garden*, November 2014. I don't grow *Hemerocallis* here so 'spring sickness' has passed me by (p.10). This has now been diagnosed as a form of *botrytis* and its widespread outbreaks are attributed to in-breeding of cultivars. Theoretically, this is a good idea because it may lead to stabilised forms which breed true in the garden. In practice it can also lead to defective genes. So far there has been nothing quite like this in irises, but it has been noted in the past that in-breeding for particular colour breaks can lead to weakened seed production: crosses repeatedly don't take, seedlings lack vigour or die off, and the line comes to an end. The point to be made here in plants, as in the animal world, is that new genes need to be introduced from unrelated breeding lines and it is no use relying on the bees to bring pollen from distant gardens. You must add to your breeding stocks for further work.

Secondly, and of equal importance, the RHS is running a Flooding Survey (p.8) on www.surveymonkey.com/s/plants for changing conditions. This is in the hope that they can recommend weather tolerant plants. This is something the BIS should take an active interest in so please contribute your views to them. We should take an equal interest on our own account. In the days when we had our Shows at Vincent Square we could reasonably rely on our exhibits being in flower at that time. But certainly in recent years for Shows around London, exhibits have been sadly thin on the benches. There are several possible reasons, but looking at my own garden I, for one, cannot rely on any cultivar or species being around when I would have expected it ten or twenty years ago. We really should have records of when the various members of subgenera can be expected to flower.

Finally could we add an encomium for you hard working officers at the end of the report?

So let us hope for a more conventional winter with better timing for the flowers and a less enthusiastic output of dedicated slugs and snails next year. And meanwhile offer our gratitude to our hardworking officers who keep this Group functioning so that we can all benefit from the experiences of others.

Photo Jennifer Hewitt

'Cloud Over Clee'
Jennifer Hewitt received an AGC, 2014 registered in 2009

Photo Jennifer Hewitt

'Margaret Gillian'
A new registration for 2014 from Jennifer

Photo Cy Bartlett

Sib. Tet. 'Lylah Constance' (Cy Bartlett)

L.A. 'Patsy Skipp' (Mark Haslett) (left)

L.A. 'Ella Donna Haslett' (Mark Haslett') (above)

Photographs Mark Haslett

The Morgan-Wood Medal Winner 2014

Photo Jan & Marty

Photo Jan & Marty

Marty Schafer and Jan Sacks 'Tree of Songs' (2006)

'Crème Caramel' X S96-67-20, 'Lady's Chain' sibling

Franklin Cook Cup 2010
Honorable Mention 2010
Award of Merit 2012
Morgan-Wood Medal 2014

A Siberian Iris Collection
Brita Carson

Siberian irises are addictive but then any genus can become the same. I'm thankful to find them not only beautiful but versatile in the garden with the added bonus that they grow well here in SW Scotland. Once you aim for a Collection it is all the excuse you need to keep adding to them. However a Collection does have set limits to keep them within certain boundaries and in this case it is British bred registrations and award winners and all those that are historically significant.

Historically significant starts with irises bred from 1900 and continues up to the present day. At first, that didn't seem a difficult task to find them but unfortunately many have been lost in nursery cultivation or more often have lost their labels in gardens, and nurseries can't be sure of the true identity. Photographs aren't accurate either with so many early ones being yet just another shade of blue. Cameras don't like blues and can give very different results but luckily there are records of flower shape, form and when bloom season is most likely, allowing for weather conditions to differ slightly, depending on the location in the country. Part of the fascination is comparing irises that were introduced in the early part of the last century and those that are available today. Nothing has happened quickly; evolution in plants moves slowly even though hybridisers are engineering the new developments rather than nature.

Form concerns the way the falls hang down and the standards stand up and all the positions that have been achieved in between. The original *Iris sibirica* had three falls that fell down and three standards that stood up. Now, through breeding, the falls more often flare out and sit nearly or completely horizontally. A similar change in character has been incorporated into the positions of the standards which range from horizontal forming six falls to all the positions of elevation back up to vertical. For hybridisers it is very exciting waiting to see what form their new seedlings will take. Fred Cassebeer's 'White Swirl' was the start of horizontal falls in 1957 and now nearly all modern Siberians have some part of 'White Swirl' in their parentage because it was such a breakthrough at the time. It does mean that very few hybridisers are still working on the old style of arching falls which may result in the disappearance of that style. Horizontal falls and then horizontal standards were first produced by Japanese hybridisers who now introduce irises which can have more than 6 falls and no standards. These very prettily overlap, looking like a Japanese iris.

There was another major breakthrough which has had a huge influence on new cultivars today and that was doubling the chromosome count. This has changed the substance of the flowers, leaves and stems. Instead of the plants containing 28 chromosomes (called diploid) the chromosomes have doubled

and are tetraploid. With a practised eye it is possible to recognise the differences in the irises. The tetraploids are larger and firmer with more substance but they sometimes lack the delicacy of the 28s. In 1970 Currier McEwen introduced two of the first tetraploids - 'Orville Fay' and 'Fourfold White' - which was the start of many hundreds that are available today. Known as the colchicine-induced method many hybridisers have used it to produce new plants and many others now use only tetraploids in their hybridising. Most of the tetraploids have stronger colour in larger flowers, leaves and stems. These can be more, or less, suitable for the place where you want them to grow. It is a personal choice of cultivar and finding the best position to grow them. The garden here suffers from strong, cold easterly, southerly, westerly and even an odd one from the north, winds but the chromosome count doesn't seem to make any difference and they are very able to withstand all weathers.

Why are Siberian irises called "Siberian" and not *I. sibirica* 'such and such'? Today it is nearly impossible, without DNA testing, to know which or how much of the three species are in each new cultivar but there is most likely to be more than just *I. sibirica*. There are only three species in this group that have 28 chromosomes and they are used extensively in breeding lines. *I. sibirica* is the dainty one, shorter with finer foliage, graceful and delicate which comes from western and southern Europe and not from Siberia as it was first thought. It also has good branching on the stems, an excellent attribute to produce many more flowers. *I. sanguinea* is the one that actually comes from Siberia and it brings wider, rounder fall shape to the petals but it has no branches on the flower stems. *I. typhifolia*, from northeast China, has only recently joined the other two in the mixing pot. It provides more delicate leaves and starts off the bloom season a lot earlier in the summer. It is similar in style and shape to *I. sibirica* but with very arching falls.

As the recent hybrids are viewed it is noticeable that the colours are becoming more pronounced although most still obviously come from the original blues to purples but now they also have pinks and rich wine shades. New whites and the first of the yellows are slow to appear. The 40 chromosome species are described as Sino-Siberians and they do not easily hybridise with the 28s. Yellow was found naturally in two species of the Sino-Siberians but it was not until the 1970s that it appeared in Siberians as 'Butter and Sugar' (McEwen). Many, many more have been produced since then but there are several problems with yellows. Some yellows fade in strong sunlight so that colour quality had to be improved. Some were not a clean, clear yellow but had a muddiness about them. Too many were so similar they could not be recognised apart. This has held back new flowers of yellow, orange and red. Even whites were not pure enough for the purist hybridisers. These are better in tet. form. However much more success has

been achieved with diploids and in particular American hybridisers have brought us wonderful new colour breaks.

Marty Schafer and Jan Sacks have worked loyally with diploids to give the most comprehensive collection of different colours. It is impossible to know where to start on the kaleidoscope of shades they have produced. Look at Joe Pye Weed's website to appreciate the work they have done over the years. Bob Hollingworth has also bred some very outstanding colours and he, Jan and Marty share the honours with each of them winning nine Morgan-Wood Medals in the last 22 years. It does show that diploids are still as popular as ever probably due to Jan and Marty's vast new range of colours. If you are trying hybridising yourself it is important to remember to cross dips. with dips. and tets. with tets. Tets are easier for new hybridisers to start with due to the larger flower parts.

My Collection now includes a larger number of new American cultivars than recent British ones even by adding all the British new registrations as well as medal winners. Jennifer Hewitt has received two Dykes Medals, one for 'Peter Hewitt' and the other for 'Stephen Wilcox', an outstanding achievement when a Dykes Medal in Britain can be awarded to any cultivar originating from any *Iris* section. In America the highest honour is a Morgan-Wood Medal which is specifically for Siberians, although theoretically they could win a Dykes Medal of the AIS. There is a large number of new Siberians registered annually in America and it is lucky for my pocket that they aren't easy to obtain here.

Jeff Dunlop from America has achieved really rich colours in both tets 'Tranquility Base' (2005) and 'Dear Currier' (2005) and these I have used for my crosses this year. He knew and visited Currier McEwen regularly and was able to see at first hand the work he was doing. Although he hasn't won a Morgan-Wood Medal yet, I feel sure he has irises that deserve that accolade and hopefully he will in time. Another very active hybridiser is Tomas Tamberg from Germany and my Collection has been greatly enriched with both his old and new Siberian irises although he is just as interested in crossing different species together. I always marvel at his exact fractional proportions of each species in each flower. My two Sib. favourites of his this year were 'Prussian Blue' (1993) and 'Blaue Milchstrasse' (2000) and I've tried crossing these two with various other tets. in the Collection. Tomas was awarded a Dykes Medal for 'Berlin Ruffles' in 1999. Cy Bartlett, a British hybridiser of both bearded and beardless irises, won a Dykes Medal for 'Perfect Vision' in 2000. Another of Cy's is 'Spencer' (2005) which really caught my attention this year and it has joined my favourites.

Although better known for his interspecies crosses, another name to know is Lech Komarnicki from Poland who has kindly sent me some of his

Siberians, both dips. and tets. to see how they perform in Scotland. All these irises are very hardy, as you can imagine when temperatures regularly get down to -30°C, although often with a substantial snow cover and not the usual British weather of repeated flooding and freezing. All top medal winners need to achieve several other lesser awards first and it can take nearly ten years to get all of these. Add to that the seed to seedling stage and the seedling to flowering plant which then needs to be carefully assessed each year and kept only if it continues to grow and flourish. The performance has to be consistent, growing even in different situations of sun and shade, dry and damp; it is no mean feat to get to the top.

Apart from colour the shape of the petals gives it even more character. These have changed significantly from early ones to all the varieties today. Other details of the styles and signals further the modern looks. Like fashion, flowers are either *in* or *out* but whatever you like Siberian irises will always be popular being so easy to grow; they are not too fussy about the type of soil so long as it is not very alkaline and they don't really complain about the weather although they will perform better given optimum conditions. Slightly acid rainfall water is better for them than tap water which contains chemicals for our teeth.

There is understandably criticism that Siberians don't flower long enough and a clump of one cultivar comes into flower all at the same time and is then over and all that is left is a clump of green leaves. This is true of a lot of varieties but there are also "repeat bloomers" and "sequential bloomers". Olga Wells has worked hard with diploids producing some beautiful, very delicate plants but she also experiments with tets. and one of hers I'm particularly interested in is 'Atlantic Crossing' which is a reliable rebloomer for me. 'Coronation Anthem' (1990, Hollingworth) is also a rebloomer and I am keen to use both of these to hybridise with some of my own plants to try to make them rebloom. This autumn I was able to cross these two plants and also use some pollen I had kept from earlier in the summer. This was not very successful this year but interesting to attempt and I'll try again.

'Burgundy Fireworks' (Aitken 2013)
Photo Terry Aitken

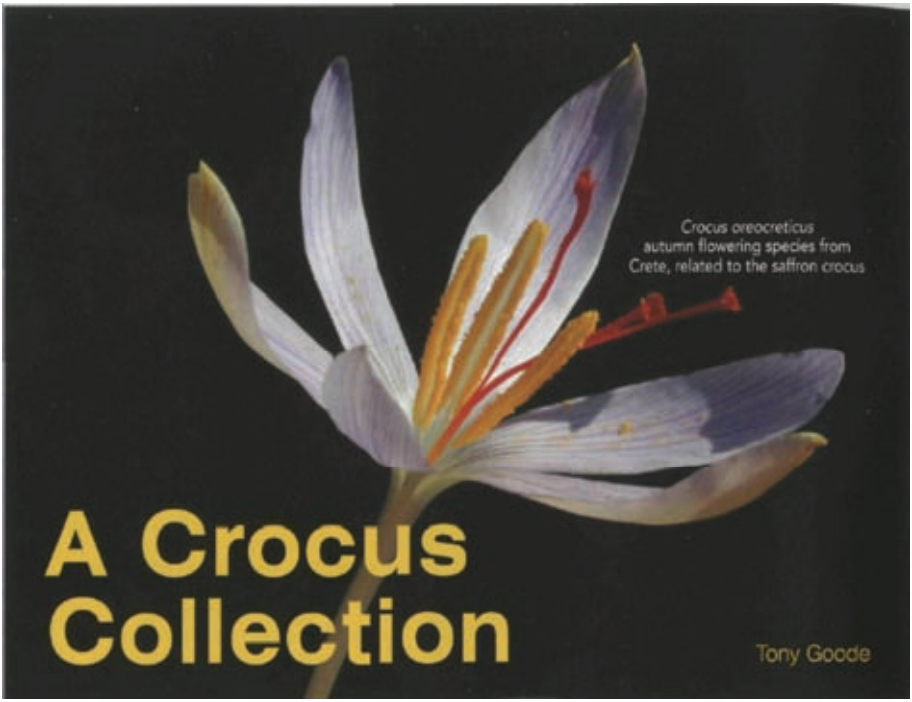
It is one of my aims to have as many of these sequential cultivars as possible to expand the flowering season. Terry

Aitken is working hard on hybridising these sequential bloomers. An outstanding one of his is 'Burgundy Fireworks' which I have had for a couple of years and hope it will flower in 2015. I cannot resist including a photograph of 'Burgundy Fireworks' which shows perfectly what is meant by sequential flowering when a clump has irises at different stages from bud to full bloom and gives an extra long blooming period.

Siberian irises are very individual in leaf width and substance which affects their overall attractiveness. Some clumps have stately flowers and leaves, while others sprawl with floppy leaves and flower stems. There are also some differences with the overall heights of the plants although the early ones around 1900 were very tall and ungainly in comparison with today's varieties. Breeding has produced more compact plants that generally have larger flowers all chosen for their strong stems to hold flowers well above the foliage. Now that it has made a good sized clump, Tomas Tamberg's 'Hohe Warte' (2001) produces a mass of charming, dainty, nearly white dip. flowers, five feet high, which stand proudly upright high above the leaves. I find it very architectural but it makes a most delightful sight especially just before dusk towering over all the others. The bees had better luck than me at hybridising with it. A special favourite from Jan and Marty is one of their early ones, 'Banish Misfortune' (1999). It is also tall at 45 inches with classic colouring of soft blue and cream. It is as lovely when it is just going over as it is when in full flower. It is impossible to pick favourites from their recent ones. I just love 'em all.

Weather conditions affect the flower colour. Depending on the length of time it takes the developing bud to get to opening stage can change the plant's intensity of colour. Jan and Marty have written a fascinating article detailing the results they have found with each type of spring-summer season. I could see the differences myself this hot, sunny summer with a lack of colour density. It is a more intense, deeper colour if we have a long, slow, chilly spring to summer. Even taking this into account I found my favourites had changed this year from last year when Bob Hollingworth's 'Strawberry Fair' and Jennifer's two Dykes winners were so outstanding.

I wonder which ones I'll fall for in 2015.



A Crocus National Collection
Tony Goode

The crocus will be a familiar plant to many gardeners. It is a small perennial plant well adapted to a winter wet, summer dry regime, with its energies stored in an underground corm. In the wild the genus is centred on the Balkans and Turkey but it has outlying stations west to Portugal, east to western China, north to Poland and south to Jordan and Iran. In the horticultural trade *Crocus vernus* cultivars and so-called 'species crocus' (mostly forms and hybrids of *Crocus chrysanthus* and *C. biflorus*) are commonly available. There are also a couple of autumn flowering species widely available. So it may come as a surprise that there are 80 species described and more than 120 taxa when the many subspecies are taken into account. Most species show considerable variation, which further broadens the potential for an extensive collection. As access to remote regions of Turkey improves, exciting new discoveries are being made which have led to several new taxa being described in recent years.

I began growing crocuses as part of a wide collection of dwarf bulbs and alpines suited to pot cultivation at a time when I did not have a proper

garden. As my interest grew, involvement in the Crocus Group (an informal group of 'Croconuts') brought me into contact with other National Collection Holders, David Stephens and Ray Cobb. Their encouragement and practical support helped to develop my collection, which quickly grew to over 500 accessions. As well as corms from David and Ray, many new accessions were received as seed. Nearly twenty years on, I have now registered more than 2100 accessions with around 600 at flowering size. Growing several different forms of each species gives a much better understanding of the natural variability of *Crocus* species. The collection in Norfolk gets very few visitors, almost none in fact! However, I have developed a website that gives information and pictures of all the species that I grow. (now housed on AGS and SRGC websites) that enables many people around the world to view the whole collection from the comfort of their own homes and brings in a steady flow of enquiries from gardeners and fellow enthusiasts.

Cultivation

Most of the plants in this collection are grown in pots kept in cold frames. I have used clay pots successfully in the past but currently the collection is grown in square plastic pots. The cold frames that house the plants are very simple. A wooden frame supports glass lights (made from recycled secondary glazing) which can be easily removed. The lights are used to give winter protection from November to early March and to ensure a dry summer rest for the taxa that require this. Shade netting is also used in summer to reduce solar gain from the glass lights as this can lead to desiccating conditions. While most crocuses enjoy a warm dry rest period, few require a summer bake. The plastic pots stand on a bed of sand roughly 6 inches deep. The sand remains slightly damp during the summer, moderating the summer drought. The basic compost is a mixture of John Innes No. 2, sand and grit. The sand is preferably sharp and gritty, to ensure excellent drainage. I also add some additional fertiliser. Until 2003 I used bone meal but have recently switched to Vitax, a balanced compost additive. When mixing compost the aim is to provide a mixture that will retain some moisture but will drain freely and never become waterlogged.

The corms are best planted at least half way down the pot. If planted too shallowly they will often develop a contractile root, which pulls the corm deeper but uses valuable energy reserves. A top dressing of coarse grit is optional but may help reduce moisture loss and is aesthetically pleasing. I would recommend repotting annually but the plants will tolerate repotting in alternate years and appreciate supplementary feeding in the second year. Watering of both spring and autumn flowering species is started early in September. If possible I leave this to nature, simply removing the glass lights and letting rain soak the pots. Most of the watering through the growing season is from natural rainfall but it is important that the plants do not dry

Crocus chrysanthus parent of some of the smaller spring crocuses available in commerce.

out, as this will cause premature dormancy, which greatly weakens the plants. Feeding in March with sulphate of potash watered into the compost or a high potash liquid feed boosts the plants at the time when the next season's corm is developing and should improve flowering.

Cultivation problems are relatively few. Aphids can attack the plants and, as a vector for virus disease, it is important to tackle them as soon as they are seen. Good ventilation (hence the open sided cold frames) and avoiding overcrowding are key factors in reducing the likelihood of a problem. I use aerosol sprays to kill aphids; if the spray has a systemic action that is an added bonus. The starch-rich corms are attractive to rodents (you will know the likely candidates in your part of the world). Late summer or autumn is probably the time of greatest risk and newly planted corms are particularly vulnerable. This said, once a new source of food has been identified, they may return to systematically work their way through a collection of potted plants.

Propagation

An important role of the collection holder is to further the conservation aims of the Plant Heritage (NCCPG). Through propagation of the species,

especially by seed, it is possible to ensure that these rare plants remain in cultivation and to reduce the demand for wild material. Many Crocus species increase naturally by corm division but unfortunately this is often a slow process. The crocuses in the horticultural trade are often exceptional clones selected in part for their reproductive vigour. Seed is a good way to acquire *Crocus* species and is the most common means of reproduction in nature. Seed is available from a range of specialist nurserymen around the world and also from various societies' seed distribution schemes. In a collection such as this where a range of clones is grown for many species, the level of seed set is improved. All the crocus collection holders are able to make seed available to interested individuals and seed exchanges.

Seed should ideally be sown as soon after harvest as possible. This maximises the length of the first growing season and can shorten the time taken to reach flowering size. The seed should be planted in similar compost to that described above and covered with at least 1 inch of compost. I keep all ungerminated seed pots in a north-facing cold frame, moving them under the benches in my well ventilated greenhouse when germination occurs. This gives the newly germinated seedlings a bit of extra protection and guards against frost damage, as many germinate at the coldest part of the year. I am also then able to give dilute liquid feed when watering the plants, which helps to build strong first season corms. Repotted for the first time after the second growing season, most species will flower in three or four years after sowing.

Crocus in the Garden

While it suits my purposes as a collection holder to grow most of my crocuses in pots many of the species can be grown in the open garden. The autumn species, generally from lowland areas with a Mediterranean type climate, appreciate excellent drainage and with one or two exceptions need a warm site where the soil will dry out in summer. Such plants are best suited to cultivation in raised beds especially in areas with high rainfall or heavy soils.

The spring flowering species are mostly more accommodating, many are mountain plants in the wild, flowering soon after snow melt. Many of the species can be grown in grass, the critical factor for success is that the grass should not be cut for at least six weeks after flowering in the spring. This allows the leaves to feed the new corm which develops after flowering each year. I have seen exciting pictures of an autumn crocus lawn, which I hope to emulate one day, however the successful gardener lives in Vienna, and climate and local conditions there may be more favourable than in the UK.

The genus *Crocus* has much to offer the discerning gardener. The small flowers may never dominate a garden display but can be a sophisticated addition to the rock garden, raised bed or trough. Some species can be naturalised in grass to form part of a wider 'natural' planting scheme. While the individual flowers may be relatively fleeting, their jewel-like appearance, often after the winter gloom, lifts the spirits. The genus offers such a wide range of species that it is possible to have a crocus in flower in eight months out of twelve in Britain. In the wild there are crocus in flower every month of the year. Crocus species are extremely variable and the variation is not just between species. There are many subspecies described and even within individual taxa considerable variation may be shown. These all combine to make this a most fascinating bulbous genus, which has captivated the attention of enthusiasts around the world.

References

The Crocus. Brian Mathew. ISBN 0 7134 33906. Out of print but sometimes available second hand. The definitive book about the genus. Recently updated through the two articles below.

The Plantsman (New Series) Vol 1 Pt 1 March 2002 pp 45-57 'Crocus Update' by Brian Mathew (part one).

The Plantsman (New Series) Vol 1 Pt 2 June 2002 pp 92-102 'Crocus Update' by Brian Mathew (part two).

Crocuses. Janis Ruksans. ISBN 978-1-60469-106-1. 2010 Monograph from Latvian Expert. Reflects changes in thinking after genetic research.

Photo Brian Mathew

Crocus mathewii 'Brian Mathew'

And the lilac purple form

Photographed at Wisley by Brian Mathew October 2014

Bulbs. M. Rix & R. Phillips. . ISBN 0 330 302531 Great pictorial guide.

Growing Bulbs. B. Mathew. ISBN 07134 4920 9.

Bulbs for the Rock Garden. J. Elliott. ISBN 07134 7424 6.

The Smaller Bulbs. B. Mathew. ISBN 07134 4922 5.

The Alpine Gardener (QBAGS) 71,2:137-143 'Crocuses in the Garden'. There are extensive listings of *Crocus* in the index to each volume.

The AGS Bulletin provides details and accounts of successful cultivation.

http://www.SRGC.org.uk/genera/index.php?log=crocus. A web reference for the genus. Some basic information for all taxa and many images.

http://www.edgewoodgardens.net. John Lonsdale has some excellent galleries of plant images including an extensive collection of crocuses.

Many specialist nurseries have images of Crocuses on their web sites, some include useful cultivation advice.

Crocus sieberi ssp. *sieberi*

White *Crocus boryi autumn* flowering from Greece

Crocus banaticus, an unusual autumn flowering crocus not difficult in UK gardens.

Tony has updated his original copy which was printed in *Plant Heritage* Volume 12 No 1. Spring 2005. All photographs are his own except those taken by Brian Mathew.

Saffron - Precious Threads Of Gold?
Jill Whitehead

Those who know me will know that cooking is not my forte, in fact it is something that I really do not enjoy. So why did I decide to find out about saffron? No real reason except it fascinates me. Why is it the most expensive spice and is there a link between it and Saffron Walden, a market town in Essex, which, by the way, has a smashing bakers! Then I read an article about pargeting, and the train of thought continued, for it was on a visit to Saffron Walden and the surrounding area that I first noticed the beautifully decorated buildings. For those of you who don't know, pargeting is the traditional art of decorative plastering on the outside of a building and has been practised in England for over five hundred years. It is mainly found in the eastern counties of England, although records exist of it being used from Canterbury to York. It was used to cover up the poorer quality of wood in half-timbered houses and as wood became scarce in the eastern counties so pargeting predominated. The designs vary considerably from simple geometric patterns to quite complex or detailed arrangements: designs often represented important aspects of an area. For example, the cable or rope pattern was probably linked with the hemp industry. While in Saffron Walden you will often see a crocus incorporated into the design, and one wonders why, but saffron is the dried, thread-like stigmas of the saffron crocus, *Crocus sativus*. This gave the town its name. In the Doomsday Book it was plain Waledana but by 1582 it had become Saffornewalden. Saffron had arrived, and records show that it was first planted in the 1300s and by the 16th century the town became known as Saffron Walden when the saffron trade was at its peak.

Crocus sativus is not known as a wild plant and it is thought to have derived from *C. cartwrightianus* which is native to Greece and surrounding areas. So how did it get to Essex? One story which was recorded by an Elizabethan historian is that a pilgrim stole a head of saffron which he hid in his specially hollowed out *staffe* and brought it to England, risking his life by doing so. However it seems more likely that it arrived with the Romans as they valued its qualities, but either way it certainly brought great prosperity to the town. Saffron was a valuable and lucrative crop, fetching 20 shillings a pound and sometimes five times more. Apparently the men who grew and sold saffron were known as *crokers*, and it was planted extensively around the town in saffron gardens which varied in size up to three acres. The 'heads' - botanically they are corms - were planted in June or July in rows and were ready to harvest in September. An early morning start was essential as the crop needs to be picked before the sun has risen. My back aches at the thought of all that bending! The rest of the day was spent adroitly pinching off the stigmas, while the blooms were just tossed aside. The precious saffron was spread on a cloth stretched over a small kiln to dry. When you consider

that saffron is still gathered by hand, as no mechanical means have been developed to harvest this crop, you can see why it is so expensive. It is estimated that it takes more than four thousand blooms to yield one ounce of saffron, or to put it another way you need an area the size of a football pitch to get a pound of saffron. Phew! The trade went into decline in the mid-1700s. I wonder why - perhaps cheaper imports or weather patterns. Who knows, but the name still lives on. In 1549 Edward VI granted a charter to the town. Even today the coat of arms shows a wall encircling the town with four towers, a gateway and portcullis enclosing three saffron flowers. Could it have been a pun on Saffron 'Walled in'...

Now I knew why I saw crocus flowers in the pargeting designs, but then I started thinking about its history. It's like all these things, once you read a little, you need to know more. Well I do, and I don't think I'm alone. I cannot think of any other plant whose history would cover so many varied uses over such a long period as there is evidence that saffron has been used for four millennia. Frescoes dating from the Bronze Age depict a goddess supervising the plucking of flowers and the gleaning of stigmas. The Ancient Greeks and the Romans prized saffron so highly as a sign of wealth. Its uses were various: as a medicine, a condiment, an aromatic essence, a disinfectant and a dye. Often it was worn around the neck so as to mask the smell of less desirable body odours. It was added to warm bath water by no less than Alexander the Great as he thought it healed his wounds, of which there must have been plenty. Of course once somebody of note like Alexander used it, then all of his troops and followers would want to do the same. Marketing was as rife then as it is now!

In Persia saffron threads were interwoven into royal carpets and funeral shrouds. The use of saffron soon spread - the Romans took it with them as they built their empire; the Moors introduced it to Spain; and by the eleventh century it was in France and then across Europe. The medicinal uses were numerous. The Black Death struck Europe in the mid - fourteenth

century and the spread was rapid, taking the rich as well as the poor. As in Roman times, people were advised to purify the air in their homes by sprinkling saffron on the floor, but only the rich could have afforded this. One recipe for the plague involved using green walnuts, saffron and London treacle! In 1671 *Crocologia* was published, which was almost 300 pages dedicated to the treatment of diseases using saffron. As the demand for saffron increased so did the price and this in turn led to adulteration, which was always treated very seriously. In the fifteenth century, German merchants convicted of adulterating saffron could be buried alive and one was burned at the stake with his sacks of adulterated saffron fuelling the fire. Over the years, various plants have been used to extend the saffron crop. Turmeric was once called Indian saffron and safflowers, marigolds and leopard's bane have all been used. The plant called meadow saffron is not a crocus as it is a member of the lily family, *Colchicum autumnale*. I found one reference to this being called 'vegetable arsenic' as the bulb stores colchicine, even the stigmas contain some and colchicine interferes with cell division. E. A. Bowles was always infuriated when people confused crocus and colchicums and pointed out the difference with some impatience! Even today, if you see a bargain packet of saffron, it is probably too good to be true. Just consider the labour involved in harvesting saffron and you can immediately see why it is often referred to as the most expensive spice in the world.

I got quite carried away whilst reading all the various historic uses for saffron, but can vouch for its value as a dye. In the 'good old days' when I had time to create textile designs I used saffron to give a yellowy-orange colour to various fabrics. The colour is due to a pigment called *crocin* and is really strong so you only need the tiniest amount to dye fabric. It is a fugitive dye and sometimes this was an asset but at other times it needed to be fixed in order to retain the colour. This was also a problem that the Egyptians faced when using saffron to dye the linens used to bind their dead. They eventually developed a system of using urine to 'fix' the dye. I feel really sorry for the dyer. It must have been quite a lucrative profession, but imagine the smell!

But the story that I like best concerns saffron as a source of hilarity. It is a fact that we don't laugh enough, and hilarity is supposed to be good for your health, at least according to a recent radio broadcast. Sir Francis Bacon, essayist and gardener, valued one plant above all else 'it maketh the English sprightly' - the saffron crocus of course. If we believe an account in Tournefort's Herbal (published around 1720) he reports:

> 'I saw a lady of Trent almost shaken to pieces with laughing immoderately for a space of three hours, which was occasioned by her taking too much saffron.'

So let that be a lesson to all - saffron in moderation only but remember to smile often!

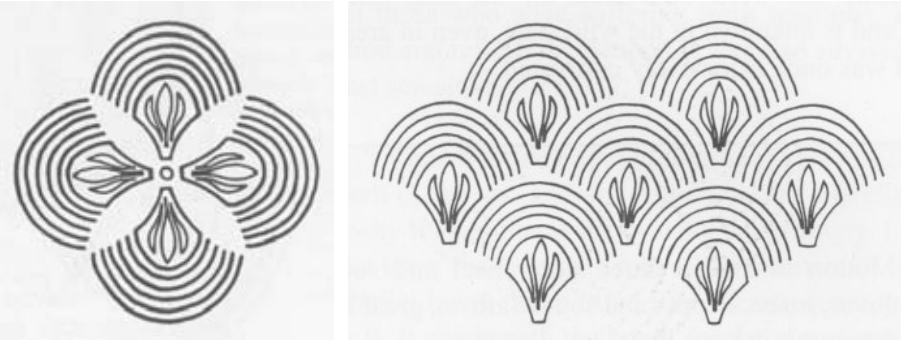
I seem to have digressed, but that is what makes looking at plants so interesting and it is often the odd path away from where you started that can lead you to undiscovered territory. It is a good job that I don't need much sleep with all this digressing, as I can see that this is one journey which may not have an end! Just in case, like me, you have never seen a saffron crocus I will enlighten you by way of quoting Brian Mathew's description in his excellent publication *The Smaller Bulbs*: '*C. sativus* has large wide open lilac-purple flowers, veined darker purple, with no trace of yellow in the throat, but it is the length of the stigmas which are the most distinguishing feature, variously described as brilliant blood red, red, or orange-red'. As to growing your own I checked with E. A. Bowles, after all he was not called the Crocus King without due reason, and he suggests that it needs to be lifted and divided frequently and needs a sheltered, sunny spot. He goes on further to suggest that it may be better suited as a kitchen garden crop, thereby ensuring good fertile soil. Brian Mathew also gives us the advice of planting it deeply, 12-18 cm, in similar conditions, rich but well-drained soil in full sun.

It is thought that botanically the nearest relative to *Crocus sativus* is a selection of *C. cartwrightianus*, but their chromosome count differs. Whereas *C. cartwrightianus* has 16 pairs of chromosomes, *C. sativus* has 24 pairs. This increase has an important effect in the size of the flower and in particular the size of the stigmas. It is dependent on man to effect any increase in bulbs. There is on-going research by the University of Leicester in collaboration with the European Commission Crocusbank Project who have set up a gene bank in order to preserve the variants of saffron crocus; to protect commercial stocks; to hybridise new, improved strains and to improve disease residence. When you consider the history and uses of saffron it would be a very sad day if we lost the diversity that numerous small producers have developed with their own heirloom strains over many generations. I have just read that saffron is supposed to keep away moths, at least it was thought so in the sixteenth century:

> 'Saffron killeth moths if it be sowed in paper bags verie thin, and laid up in presses amongst tapistrie or apparels', so now you know!

References

Brian Mathew - *The Smaller Bulbs*.
E. A. Bowles - *A handbook of Crocus & Colchicum for Gardeners*.
Pat Willard - *Saffron*.
Tim Buxbaum - *Pargeting*. www.crocusbank.org



Examples of pargeting

Crocus sativus growing on Brian Mathew's allotment in Claygate, Surrey.
Photograph Brian Mathew

Iris japonica 'Ledger's Variety'
Jill Whitehead

Earlier this year I had an enquiry through the British Iris Society website concerning the naming of *Iris japonica* 'Ledger's Variety'. Of course, my first port of call was Anne Blanco White who is a fount of knowledge when it comes to these things. She pointed me in the direction of a reference in the 1927 BIS Year Book. This was an article by George Dillistone which gave not only a description but also information on its history. It refers to the original note by Walter Ledger in *Gardening Illustrated* of the same year. It seems that this form was found growing in the gardens of the British Legation in Tokyo by Sir Frederick Lugard in 1912 who then gave it to his brother Major Lugard. It was from the Major that Walter Ledger received his plant. He notes:

> "I do not know how it has come to be styled 'Ledger's Variety,' it is none of my doing. Possibly friends who have had it from me passed it on with that description to distinguish the form from the type plant."

This would seem perfectly possible as all gardeners have the habit of referring to a plant by the donor's name, in fact this often makes a garden come alive, the memories and friendships that it holds. It is also worth remembering that it was only in 1927 that a resolution to look into iris nomenclature and registrations was passed at the November BIS AGM.

So who was Walter Ledger? Obviously a keen gardener, an authority on *Ceropegia* (a type of succulent flowering plant) as he gave a number of plants to the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and entered into some correspondence with them. But there is very little other information of his personal life. It seems that Walter Edwin Ledger died at the age of 69 in 1931, he was an extremely keen sailor, pianist and bibliophile. During his lifetime he established quite a collection of books and in his will he requested that these be made available as a resource for students. This presented Donald Cree, the executor, with a problem, because at that time the collection was deemed to be of a sensitive nature. It contained works by and about Oscar Wilde who was of course imprisoned for 'gross indecency'. Eventually the collection was accepted by Oxford University but was to be housed in the Bodleian Library due to lack of space. As an illustration of how tricky a subject Wilde was, even in the 1930s, when the College record of 1930-1931 noted the benefaction, there was no mention of Wilde's name; the collection was described as 'illustrating the literary movement in England in the nineties of last century'. It has recently been reinstated in the University Library and is now considered to be one of the most important collections of its kind. Walter was obviously quite a character and liked to wear a sailor's uniform, something which his friends often found somewhat embarrassing especially when taking him out for lunch in Lincoln's Inn.

We find *Iris japonica* to be a good grower here even in our heavy clay, although a number of sources state that it needs good soil and the shelter of a sunny wall. We tend to grow it in partial shade, it seems to flower well and spreads by means of slender stolons. But we have; in the past grown it in a sunny border; just keep an eye out for slugs as they can mar the leaves by flowering time.

Over the years this iris has had various synonyms, including *Evansia chinensis, I. chinensis* and *I. fimbriata* and there have always been some doubts as to whether 'Ledger's Variety' is distinct. In fact Brian Mathew voices this opinion in his publication *The Iris*. The 2013 *Plant Finder* has ten entries, but two of these are listed as invalid names, 'Purple Heart' and 'Snowflake'. As well as the species there is 'Bourne Graceful', 'Monty', 'Rudolf Spring', 'Variegata' and a seed collection reference from Sue and Bleddyn Wynn-Jones of Crûg Farm. 'Monty' is supposed to have a bluish cast to the flower and is named after Monty Cohen. 'Bourne Graceful' is a hybrid between *I. japonica* and the 'Capri Form'. It was raised by Jack Ellis in 1975, see the BIS *Year Book* of that year for further information. Earlier this year, we obtained a plant of 'Bourne Graceful' and await its flowering, we also have 'Rudolph Spring' but this has never done well for us. 'Variegata' has grown well in the past making a good drift. We have also seen an *I. japonica* which often has four falls and four standards instead of the usual three and even obtained a plant, which may well still be lurking somewhere! Maybe I should also obtain 'Monty' and the Crûg Farm seedling and even another 'Rudolph Spring' to see how they all compare, or perhaps somebody has already done this? If you grow any of these, or have any other information then I am sure our Editor would be pleased to hear from you.

Photo Jill Whitehead

Iris japonica

Alas! - She Was Too Beautiful
Alun Whitehead

Two Siberian irises caught my attention during this season. They were two seedlings from Jeff Dunlop's crosses, both appearing to have 'Dirigo Black Velvet' as one parent. However, it was not their colour that attracted me – both were quite large typical dark violet blue – but their characters. The first started flowering with the first of the Siberians and was still trying to flower at the end of July but struggling against the dry conditions. There may have been a brief lull for a few days but it was quite an achievement. The second of the two was taller and its flowering coincided exactly with the Japanese, showing only good stature and promise whilst the other Siberians were having their fling. They are both plants which have been grown on for a few years and if I had culled them in the early stages as small clumps, I would never have known their potential.

My initial reaction to the long flowering one was pleasure. Often at talks, it is quite apparent that irises are stigmatised as having a short flowering period. If you ask a group of plantsmen, this is their usual agreement: I have never heard the opposite expressed. This is a pity as most irises we have sold, if well grown, have a similar flowering period to many perennials which don't carry the same stigma. Having said that, it has actually helped us by making many nurserymen ignore the genus. Less competition!

So is a longer flowering period better? At one Iris Meeting I heard a leading nursery lady say that she wanted all her flowers open at once to make a big splash. To be fair, I think she was playing devil's advocate. If all the flowers were really open at once, it would produce a splash of colour, but with the flowers crammed cheek by jowl, it would be a messy splash and the beauty of the flower shape would be lost.

I would like to digress here and thank Ian Smith for pointing out many years ago the American Iris Society's *Handbook for Judges and Show Officials*. It sounds a dry volume but contains a wealth of information as well as the dry bits. For instance, even good garden Tall Bearded which produce only one flower at a time (hence longer flowering) should not be penalised in a show for not having more flowers open.

In seedling selection, is there a right or wrong? Having looked at a few seedlings this year which have all been grown on to test their garden value, I don't think there is a correct answer. It really depends on the look you want in your garden. In the 'seedling' bed alongside the longer flowering plant, there was the other end of the spectrum. A typical iris

with a good number of flowers out on similarly sized stalks. The visual effect of the two was very different. The former was sparse whilst the other produced a sea of bloom. The second would fit better in a border mass planting, whilst the first would work well where you could appreciate the blooms close by – perhaps for a more intimate spot?

So with this in mind, I asked the opinion of an experienced plantswoman who was visiting. I showed her the two styles of plant and asked which she would choose. Her answer was dismaying. She would choose the one which flowers irrespective of habit. If this is the reaction of many people, they will be drawn to new colour breaks, strong patterns before the plants are proved to be garden worthy. Hence the title. However, there is a brighter side. Visiting a friend's garden last month, she apologised for very few irises. She explained that the colours need to go together and the strong colours of many irises do not fit in. I'm sure she was thinking bearded, as most people do, so there is plenty of scope to enlighten people with the more subtle beardless. For this type of gardener, the significance of the flowering period will not be lost.

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PCIs 2014: The Shape And Colour Of Things To Come (or "Plants Choose Themselves".)
Philip Jones

The summer and autumn of 2014 were very educational. I, for example, learnt that it was not a good idea to move some kinds of PC irises just after flowering. This applies to the species – *I. douglasiana* excepted. The dry spells also spelt death to little pockets of plants which were used to fill in an empty space, and were well watered in, but then left to look after themselves. I must have openly expressed more than once my disappointment at these iris bereavements because one of the sisters in the monastery – Sister Maria – has now taken to referring to my trial bed as the iris cemetery.

It was half way through October before we had rain in abundance. The rain falls on Scotland moving from west to east, but if you look closely at the weather map you will often see that it stops raining when it reaches water again, the Firth of Forth, and the surrounding coastline which includes the monastery, here in Dysart, is affected. I decided to wait till October before moving the irises around.

All my time and attention given to the PCIs this summer and again this late autumn has been devoted to finding them space. Not just space for groups of similar plants but for each individual. Each plant is asking for space. The overcrowding and the overshadowing are a constant problem and I have only just finished the task required before the ice age - promised regularly on the front page of the Daily Express - descends upon the whole land.

At the beginning of July I had moved nearly all the irises about and I thought they all had enough room to be themselves. I must have moved them all because none of them set any seed – something else I learnt this summer! During the summer months they continued to grow – I am not really complaining - and come the autumn I have had to perform the whole task again.

I am looking for a certain elegance. Nothing to match Brita's Siberian irises which all stand to attention. Instead the PCIs give us endless variety in shape and size and colour.

In the summer I was able to select a few small plants with pale flowers and plant them in the same bed. This could be rockery plant material. The trick is to keep them apart. Otherwise we end up with a jungle. Behind them I have selected the best of the "reach for the sky" irises. Again they need to be apart. Whether initially they were reaching for the sky because they were against a wall or were too close together or were competing

with a monster iris that threatened to cover everything in sight we will have to wait and see. And likewise whether the small plants are destined to remain small or become large plants will be revealed in 2015 – we hope.

In the meantime the many other irises have an opportunity to be themselves and demand my individual attention. At this point I feel an attack of phenomenology coming on. I try to keep my phenomenology and the irises apart but occasionally they stray into each other's territory. The fact is that when there are lots of different things mixed together the phenomenologist likes to point out that it is the things that are similar or identical to each other that are likely to catch the eye. However, for this to happen each thing has to have its own space. Then two reds or two circles will stand out from the rest of the miss-matches. With space comes the possibility of seeing what the similarities are and also with the similarities we begin to see possibilities of something special being isolated from the mob and developed. This is what we are looking forward to in 2015.

It is now time to put the irises and the phenomenology back in their boxes and call it a day.

New Registrations for 2014 see pages 6 and 7.

ELLA DONNA HASLETT (Mark Haslett) Sdlg. LA 06/51. LA, 24in (61cm), M. S. pale lilac, fading towards edges; style arms pale lilac with yellow tinge; F. as S, reverse tinged lemon yellow; signals yellow. (a) 3, (b) 4, (c) 5in (13cm) x 5in (13cm). Laced. Fragrance absent. 'Lone Star' x unknown.

LYLAH CONSTANCE (Cy Bartlett) Sdlg. C-03-04. SIB (tet.), 32in (81cm), M. Royal blue self; signals greyed brown surrounded by bright white. S. upright, F. flaring, all ruffled. (a) 2, (b) 3-4, (c) 4in (10cm) x 5in (13cm). Ruffled. Slight fragrance. 'Plissee' x 'Perfect Vision'.

MARGARET GILLIAN (Jennifer Hewitt) Sdlg. BT043/9. SIB (tet.), 31in (78cm), M. S. dark reddish violet (near RHS 83A), short, upright; style arms smoky reddish violet, paler side edges; F. very dark velvety reddish purple (83A/89A), near-black centres, fine cream rims, flared, tips dipping; signals green, blending to cream outer edges, dark veins. (a) 2/3, (b) 3-4, (c) 1¾in (4.5cm) x 4½in (11.5cm). Lightly ruffled. Pronounced citrus fragrance. 'Dirigo Black Velvet' x 'Sibirische Nacht'.

PATSY SKIPP (Mark Haslett) Sdlg, LA 1202A. LA, 39in (99cm), M. S. carnation pink, fading to centre, translucent in sunshine; style arms carnation pink, yellow tinge to midribs and edges; F. burgundy red; signals chrome yellow. (a) 3, (b) 5, (c) 4in (10cm) x 4in (10cm). Fragrance absent. ('Blue Dog' x unknown) x unknown.

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My sincere thanks to all the contributors of articles and photographs for this edition of the *Review*. Please do get in touch if you have something to say and would like to write for the next edition.
A special thanks to Jill and Alun Whitehead for all their help doing 'gofor' work, if you can describe it as that when it is by email on computer.

(Photo Jill Whitehead)

(photo above and left,
Anne Blanco White)

Wonderful flower patterns and colours from the new cultivars of Dutch Irises at the trials at Wisley. Well worth a visit.

The stunning photo on the back page is *Crocus mathewii* taken by Brian Mathew on his allotment.