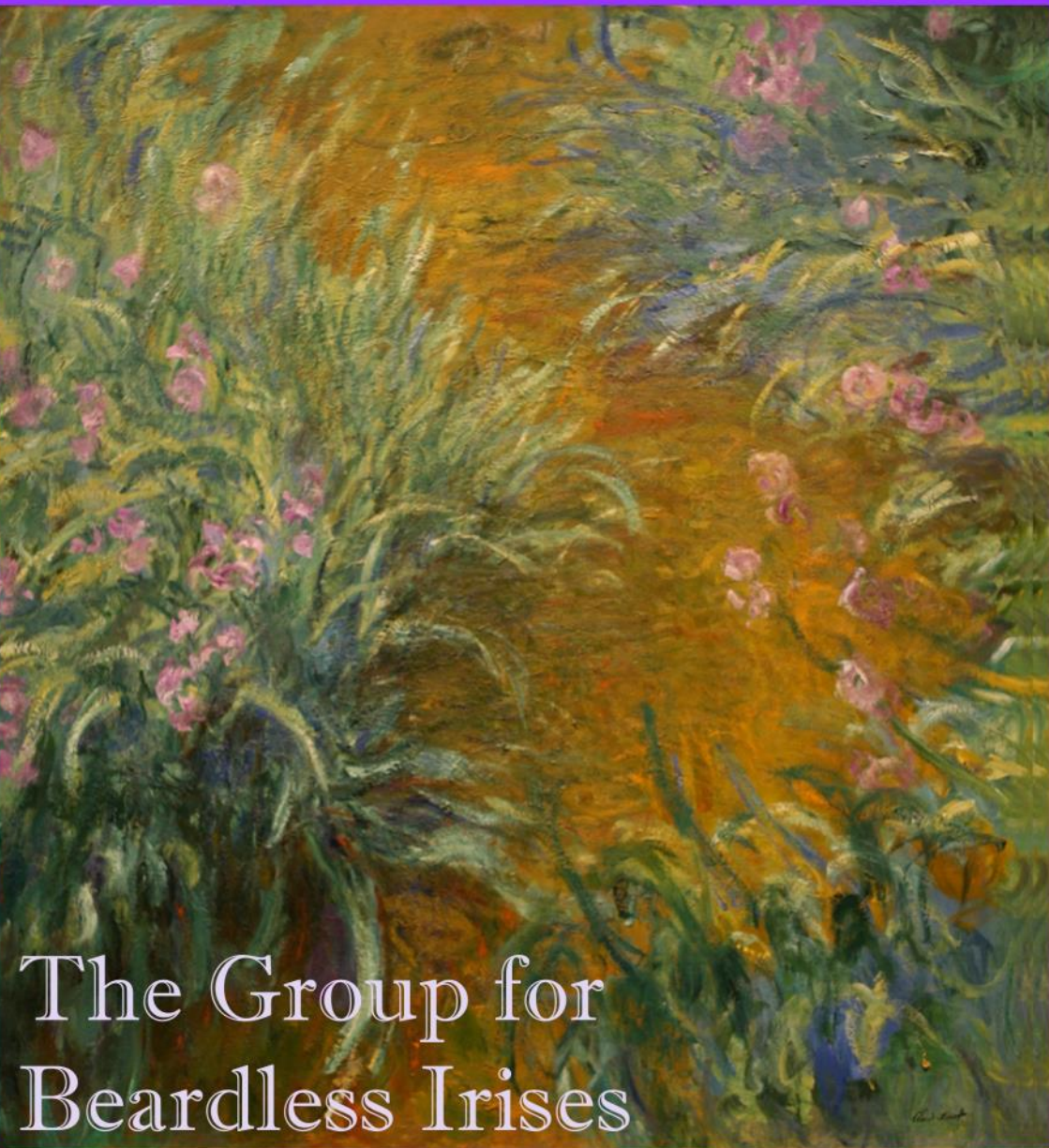


# The Review



The Group for  
Beardless Irises

Issue No 20 WINTER 2023





Above: *Iris* 'Hohe Warte' (sib)

Below: Mixed planting

both taken at RHS Wisley on a BIS show day



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The photograph on the front cover is *The Path through the Irises*, Claude Monet c.1915

The photograph on the back cover is *Gladiolus communis* ssp. *byzantinus* at RHS Wisley.

## Editor's Notes

*Brita Carson*

Sadly since the last *Review* we have lost Jennifer Hewitt who was always keen to write articles for us, full of information which she was pleased to pass on hoping to improve the cultivation of all kinds of beardless iris as well as increasing the enjoyment she hoped you got from growing them. Jennifer was involved with several other iris Groups and had another keen interest in pulmonarias which she hybridised as well as her beardless iris. On page 8, I have written an obituary or more accurately an appreciation of her and her work and then follows the article that she wrote on *I. typhifolia* for the 1995 *Year Book*.

Alun is tackling mulches to suppress weeds and hoping to get feed back from you, the members, on ideas either to try or, yes please, something you have found successful. Could you conduct trials in your own gardens to achieve possibilities, please do think about it. Having a large area under iris cultivation Alun needs to use a lot of mulch. Most of you wouldn't need as much but it would still free up your time for tackling other things.

Jill has written up reports on Wisley and the iris Shows and the dates to keep free for next year, to attend the Shows. It's never too soon to have those dates except that most of us haven't got our new diaries yet.

Brian Mathew has still found time to write about more of the series of irises from *Curtis's Bot. Mag.* and this time it is the turn of the series *Unguiculares* and *Chinenses*. It holds a great fascination learning about the history of these irises, their descriptions and where they were found at that time and still exist if drought, fire or flood haven't destroyed their natural habitat.

I have written a report on the summer and my poor Siberians and ensatas being subjected to heat they had never felt before, not just through the day but during the night as well. However there was a consolation prize the bearded iris, that were planted many moons ago, actually flowered for me whereas usually they happily just grow green leaves.

## **The Summer of 2023 on the Siberian and Ensata Irises**

### **Brita Carson**

As my weather reports usually detail the quantity of rain here in southwest Scotland, this year I have to report that the Siberian flowering of June started very early and even for some known earlies in early May. I wasn't without due warning after early spring flowering all over the garden but it was still a shock getting all my gear out for hybridising, not a lot of gear I admit, but more getting my brain in gear. My hopes were for certain blooms to open around the same time but I'm not good enough at knowing which irises bloom in which order, so must keep an orderly note in future. These are mainly diploids, the early ones, and the tetraploids follow, generally, but there are always exceptions.

Early is not what I want because the blooms haven't had that long slow growing season to develop their best flowers with their best colours. They don't have lovely long stems but rather look a bit dumpy often with large flowers on short stems. And then it was heat. I look at the hybridising labels now to see they say very hot but I then gave up because we had the whole month of very hot. Very hot also meant no rain and while I was doing rain dances others couldn't believe their lucky summer weather.

The Siberians here had never experienced that kind of heat before so I didn't know if doing crosses would work or not. Good plump seeds seem to have resulted but only time will tell when they flower what the quality will be and how strong the colours they produce, will be like. I was watching to see if the bees were out for hybridising but most of them avoid the middle of the day anyway. A siesta at that time of day is a wonderful idea except the dog likes his walk then.

If I found it hot here I have no idea what many of you must have "suffered" further south. Lovely if you are strolling along the shore on holiday with a gentle sea breeze, but if you have to do some digging or heavy work in the garden it would be seriously dangerous to your health. Watering also becomes the continual question; when and how much. We must have very chemically "contaminated" safe water because our dog and many other dogs in the village won't drink it, but give them muddy rain water and they are happy! However, tap water is better than no water even although it won't be as acidic as we would like.

Ensatas were quite a problem, although they love the sun they prefer cool damp soil for their roots. This was not easy to provide with the threat of a

hose pipe ban getting closer every day; what was I to do? The new bed of them I covered with compost after drenching them with water late one evening and then watered them every evening after and, very lucky for me, the ban never came. I feel sorry for all those of you who eventually had a ban and hope your plants survived. These ensatas have been a source of interest with one very tall spike still waiting to open in the middle of November and the flower has only recently been killed by the frost. They started to flower almost at the same time as the tets in mid June and really haven't stopped. I know I should have kept more detailed accounts of the flowering. Must do better next year.

I have a few species that all loved the sun and heat and flowered without stopping longer than usual.

Unfortunately we have a grey squirrel who can smell the crocus bulbs that I planted last year so instead of trying to think of new ways to stop him this year I've given all my bulbs to my middle daughter to plant after watching him climb up my tall flower pots which I use to grow roses and using his claws he dug up around the roses to find the bulbs which he then calmly ate while sitting on the pot. I had fixed the mice by covering over the area with the ashes from the wood burner and they didn't bother hunting from the top after that but I couldn't tell if they went underground or not but if I'm suffering stealing from the grey squirrel this will be a different problem. In Glasgow my son-in-law suffered the greys digging up the tulips I had given him for planting. He has now salvaged what he could and put them in deep pots with heavy wire mesh over it and held down with heavy stones.

However there was a consolation prize the bearded irises, old varieties I admit, like 'Jane Philips' that were planted many moons ago, actually flowered for me whereas usually they, happily, just grow nothing but green leaves.

## Irids at Wisley

Jill Whitehead

One of the advantages of being able to attend the British Iris Society Shows at Wisley is the opportunity to see other members of the iris family in both the garden and the Alpine House. There are also the show benches and often a specially created display by the RHS Alpine team. The Early Spring Show in February is a real chance to see crocus, like *Crocus korolkowii*, which was shown on the Alpine display table but *C. korolkowii* 'Kiss of Spring' was also flowering beautifully in the Alpine House. This variety was selected by Janis Ruksans and he considers it one of the best he selected. The species is named after a General Korolkow who collected the first bulbs in the 1880s and crocus were a favourite of E A Bowles. In Class 17, an educational exhibit, I featured an information board about Bowles and his crocus, which included a couple of images of his own paintings of the genus. After all, he was known as "The Crocus King" in his time. Fern Harden also featured crocus in this class with her own painting of *Crocus* 'Pickwick', displayed alongside the flowering plant. Other crocus which were on show included *C. chrysanthus* var. *fuscotinctus* in the Alpine House and several examples on the show benches including *C. 'Vanguard'* which was awarded second in it's class.

As you would expect reticulate irises are also a feature of this show and also in the garden, where *Iris* 'Painted Lady' was making quite an impression. Also growing well outside was 'Katharine Hodgkin,' which had a small red leaved *Bergenia* growing beside it and the two worked beautifully together. We grow some retics in pots and have noticed that it is not always the same cultivar which splits into smaller bulbils but it seems to be individual bulbs which exhibit this trait. It would be good to know if others have also found this to be the case. Of course, the advice is to plant the bulbs deep in the garden, not easy in a pot! The Alpine display also had a number of very well-presented retics and hence received a good number of admiring looks from the public – "oohs and aahs" were heard! Tony Hall from RBG Kew usually brings some little gems; this year it was *Iris aff. aucheri* which caught my eye, grown so beautifully in a very delicate shade of pale blue.

Two other irids flowering in the Alpine House this year were *Babiana cedarbergensis* and *Romulea tortuosa*. The *Babiana* name is derived from the Dutch "babianer", meaning baboon, the native African ape that avidly eats *Babiana* corms. A common name for this iris is 'Little Baboon'. It is a delightful gem from South Africa, growing in the rocky sandstone areas around the Cederberg Mountains. *Romulea tortuosa*, the name is derived

from Romulus, the legendary founder of Rome because one of the species is commonly found in the Roman countryside. *R. tortuosa* is pollinated by bees because of its sweet scent and distinctive markings. Other flowers in the *Romulea* family are pollinated by scarab beetles. I also saw *Romulea requienii* in bud, plenty of them but obviously a day or two early for them to be fully in flower.

For the April Show, there were not so many beardless represented on the show benches. Again, we were the only ones with PCIs which is a shame; other growers really need to consider these as beautiful flowering plants but a little tricky. It would be good to get back to the days of the extensive displays by Marjorie Brummitt. It was tulip time in the garden – brilliant colours but not much help in writing this article. Except, after hearing Jos Smit's talk at the BIS AGM, it did make a great deal of sense that a machine plants them, as the drifts were so extensive and definitely WOW!

At the Summer Show beardless featured as well as TBs. John Mullen had a lovely exhibit of the Siberian iris 'Dreaming Late', a Tomas Tamberg introduction from 1997. 'Here be Dragons' was in evidence and we had 'Tree of Songs' as one of our exhibits. Both, of course raised by Jan Sacks and Marty Schafer. I don't think I will ever forget their enthusiasm for their breeding work which came across so strongly in the ZOOM talk they gave at the BIS Centenary weekend. I would love to meet them in person and to see the seedlings which are in the pipeline. Perhaps one day!

Wisley garden also featured several drifts of Siberians like 'Butter and Sugar' and the Dutch irises were looking good with a large showing of 'Red Ember' mixed with *Sisyrinchium striatum* by the rock garden. *Sisyrinchium* is not often seen on the show bench, perhaps it is considered too much of a 'weed' by fellow iris growers, but it can work well in the right place and as a cut spike.

To come across 'gladdies' in the garden was exciting. A couple of years ago they had been planted under the long wisteria tunnel and what a sight they made. This year, they had *G. communis* subsp. *byzantinus* in a meadow style planting by the steps near the rock garden. I loved the deep magenta colour, but some might have felt they were too brash! Being planted in this way allowed you to look across the flowers but also to inspect and see more closely, it is only then that you notice the pale marking on the lower petals.

Another feature of this show was the art display, both from current members and past members. We saw a range of styles from the botanic representations



to a more modern approach, each exhibiting the members passion for their art and obviously for the irises they have portrayed. It was good to have artist William Caparne and Paul Wellington Furses's work on display. Both were past members and donated some paintings to the BIS. A self portrait of Frank Round caused some interest, with his paintings featuring in *The Genus Iris* by William Rickatson Dykes.

Lastly, it is not only fellow members who are great to meet and to chat with, but I also met a photographer, Tony O'Brian. He assured me he only dabbles in photography but was very happy to share his images and my favourite beardless one was *Iris orientalis*, a spuria iris. We had a great chat.

Now, I wonder what next year will bring. Three shows are planned and of course we would be pleased to see any GBI members, and don't forget if you are coming to the show, you are very welcome to add to the display. The more the merrier.

Note: Jan Sacks & Marty Schafer's talk can be downloaded by members, please email [admin@beardlessiris.org](mailto:admin@beardlessiris.org) for the link.



# Obituary for Jennifer Hewitt

Brita Carson

We are all sorry we lost Jennifer Hewitt earlier this year and I'm gathering my thoughts together to write about her life in the iris world rather than as a friend. It is very easy to cloud the picture with personal feelings when really she was a corner stone of the BIS for many, many years. What a CV she had collated from all of her work for various groups.

Jennifer was the original secretary, editor and instigator of the West Midlands Iris Group from its founding in 1974. It later became the West and Midlands Iris Group, W&MIG. She gave a long and dedicated service to this group, never losing interest in their activities every month whether it was a show, a garden visit or a lecture. Always there with plenty of ideas and encouragement to the members. She wrote many articles for their newsletters and she had gained a lot of knowledge on the culture of all the iris species. She gave talks and demonstrations regularly to the group and other garden clubs, HPS and BIS.

The new Siberian, Spuria and Japanese Group was formed to cater for those members who were interested in "beardless" irises. As she was already involved with the BIS and the W&MIG she felt unable to take on any more committee positions but immediately became an active member. Early in her hybridising career she had concentrated on bearded irises but they proved unsuccessful for her. Beardless irises then became more interesting to Jennifer not only when she found they liked her garden but also because of their hybridising possibilities, especially when she realised that her area suited the "wet" iris species, but then occasionally it could be extremely cold during winter at 1,000ft up in the hills of Shropshire, so *I. ensata* and the Pacific Coast irises struggled during the many vagaries of winter up there. Jennifer and her husband Peter had found a property with half an acre of garden, an ideal size to grow plenty of seedlings. Siberians are very tolerant of all conditions and seldom bothered by the intense cold. She gradually collected them and started the first "National Collection of Siberian Irises" with over 100 cultivars, using mainly British hybridisers but adding others she felt were significantly important from hybridisers around the world especially America and Germany. Later when it was too much for her to keep it in good condition she made it into a dispersed collection and acted as the recorder. When it became unviable to keep in this format, all plants were given to Kim Davis at Lingen Nursery, who were relatively close to her.

Hybridising was always something she could enjoy doing and when we visited her she had been having a limited success with browns. Jan Sacks and Marty Schafer had been working on their diploid Siberians in Massachusetts for nearly forty years having a lot of success with exciting new colours in the diploid range. They were a great inspiration to her which kept her interest continually invigorated and they were all great friends. Other influencers were the Hollingworths, also from America. Bob and Judy made crosses with

both diploids and tetraploids and Jennifer explored the possibility of tets as they became known. The tets were developed by Currier McEwen, an American, who doubled the chromosome numbers by the use of Colchicine. Jennifer met him and he generously sent her plants and seed for her hybridisation. This expanded her basic pool of plants to enlarge the scope she could make with her crosses. Jennifer had lots of success with her tets and produced several Dykes Medals, her first in 2008 and named 'Peter Hewitt' after her husband and followed by 'Stephen Wilcox' in 2011 named after her son-in-law. 'Cloud over Clee' followed in 2017, all great achievements.

The Siberian, Spuria and Japanese Group became the Group for Beardless Iris with an annual *Review* printed. Jennifer became the Siberian Specialist and members were welcome to contact her for advice on growing or with problems in their cultivation. She was also very keen to encourage members to try to hybridise their own blooms and register them as new cultivars and she wrote many articles on how to cross pollinate. Jennifer wrote a book with Sidney Linnegar on general iris cultivation, both for bearded and beardless, called *Irises* and produced by the RHS, one of the Wisley Handbooks.

As well as hybridising Jennifer was also giving her time to the work of the BIS. In 1985 she took over as editor of the *Year Book* after Cy Bartlett and continued until Berney Baughen took over from her in 1993. This allowed Jennifer to take on the job of becoming the Registrar in 1993, a position she held until 2018. I took on the job of editor in 2009 and I soon learned to listen to all the advice that Jennifer gave me. There were lots of little things that I missed that Jennifer pointed out to me. I learned so much from her. We seldom differed in how we saw things except for one particular 'x' which Jennifer preferred and that was the cross between all the cultivars but I used the American way of a capital 'X' for the last cross after 'x's beforehand. Jennifer was one of my proof readers who thankfully always spotted my mistakes.

She was a stickler for correct spelling, grammar and general correctness. Jennifer had pet hates that some people were guilty of using when they were writing articles and it was advisable for them to learn where they were going wrong or suffer the red pen syndrome and we both disliked the use of American spelling with 'z' where we would normally use an 's'. We both disliked the use of the verb 'get-to' that so many use today along with 'like'. She even stood in for me as editor again when we were trying to get someone else to take on the job, and her daughter Rachel did the layout. Jennifer was unhappy learning about the computer but although she found it frustrating, she manfully persevered to feel confident with the very basics of sending emails which kept her in touch with her many iris friends all over the world.

Another annoyance for her was the careless use that many people have, especially nurseries, who name all Siberian irises, *I. sibirica*. TV gardening presenters also become confused but there are differences which can be easily spotted. Because *I. sibirica* and *I. sanguinea* easily cross pollinate and

produce new cultivars, they are not the same plant and cannot both be called “sibirica”, people see they look similar but to see more of the differences try to find Alun’s article called “Wood for The Trees” in 2018 *Review*. (you can find it online if you no longer have that *Review*) They are two of the three different species of the trio that make up Iris Sibiricae. The third iris in this series is *I. typhifolia* which also has a chromosome count of  $2n=28$ . All the other irises in the Sibiricae Group have 40 chromosomes and we call them Sino-Siberians. Another point that Jennifer wanted to make is the fact that due to the ease of cross pollination it really means it is most unlikely there remains anywhere a sample of an original *I. sibirica*.

As an example of Jennifer’s writing I have reprinted her article on *Iris typhifolia*, which she wrote for the *Year Book* in 1995. She taught me to carefully check my work which I try to do in her memory.

## ***Iris typhifolia***

Jennifer Hewitt (Extract from the 1995 *Year Book*)

The hybrid race we call Siberian irises has been developed over many years from *I. sibirica* and *I. sanguinea* and hybrids between them, the two species have a chromosome number  $2n=28$ . Tetraploid cultivars have been produced by treating seedlings with colchicine originally, then interbreeding converted plants to produce a stable race, but are not known to occur naturally. A third species with the same chromosome number was known to exist but herbarium specimens were the only evidence in the West for *Iris typhifolia*. Native to northern China, it was inaccessible during the long years when contact with Chinese botanists, or visits to the country were not allowed.

Things began to change some fifteen years ago, and in 1982 Professor Zhao Yu-tang, author of the account of Iris for the *Flora Reipublicae Popularis Sinicae* (Flora of China) wrote about a number of iris species for the Year Book and included *Iris typhifolia*. Subsequently, he sent seed to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and some seedlings were given to a few BIS members. Most were planted outdoors and didn’t survive their first British winter, but Bob Wise planted one in the soil in his cold greenhouse and in November 1989 it flowered on very short stems, the first ones to be seen in the west in modern times, perhaps the first ones ever. In 1990 Bob’s plant bloomed twice, in May on 60cm (24in) stems and in July when it reached 110cm (43in) with leaves at the same height. Bob wrote about it in the 1990 *Year Book* and there is a colour photograph taken by Peter Maynard. The flowers, of moderate size, were described as blue-violet but look redder in the photograph and there is almost no signal patch.

Bob was able to self-pollinate some flowers and also use the pollen on two Siberian cultivars, and he distributed the resulting seeds. I received some of the selfed *I. typhifolia*; not many germinated and those I have planted

outside, even when they are of a reasonable size, have never survived their first winter. Some half dozen have been kept in the cold greenhouse, in pots, and they grow slowly; none has bloomed, so far. The story of 'Dreaming Yellow' x *I. typhifolia* cross has been very different. Some seeds germinated in the autumn of 1990 (in a pot, kept indoors for safety) and many more, a very high percentage, in spring 1991. Unfortunately I couldn't cope with so many and I kept only 12 of the strongest which were potted individually and planted out in 1992. Eleven still survive and most have formed fairly good clumps. Two bloomed for the first time in 1994 and were exhibited at the BIS Summer Show, and six flowered in 1995. They were all in shades of violet-blue, most appearing more blue than violet though one was quite deep violet. Style arms often showed turquoise areas, and signals, always present, were yellow to white. The flowers were still moderate in size and rather narrow petalled with semi-flaring falls; some stems were branched. The leaves, though broader than in the species, were narrower than those in 'Dreaming Yellow' and have remained fairly upright and elegant. Flowering began earlier than in most other Siberians ('Dreaming Yellow' is not early with me) and there is no sign of rebloom so far, perhaps because of the dry summer and also because rebloom is not frequent in this garden, however enthusiastic I may be about it; 'Dreaming Yellow' has been known to rebloom in a more encouraging British garden, occasionally. Crosses have been made with a Siberian cultivar and with *I. setosa* (the latter I did not have great hopes of, but a healthy looking pod has formed) and there are numerous bee-set pods from which I hope to send seed to the BIS seed distribution.

Very little is happening in Britain and no nurseries are listing it. Reports in the Spring 1995 issue of The Siberian Iris make it clear that much more is being seen and is happening in the USA. With the kind permission of the editor, Judy Hollingworth, and the authors, here is a summary of the reports. To set the scene, it should be mentioned that Dr James Waddick, author (with Professor Zhao) of *Iris of China*, has visited China twice and brought back plants and seeds of many irises. Quantities of *Iris typhifolia* seed have been distributed by Dr Waddick and Professor Zhao, and it seems the first flowers were seen by Dr Waddick in 1991, though buds had been killed by frost the previous year. His description appears to tally with Bob Wise's plant, in general. In 1992 plants were being offered for sale by John Coble and Bob Bauer of Ensata Gardens, and it seems that was the first year in which a large number of seedlings bloomed. Observations in that and later years are those reported in TSI for Spring 1995, and it is evident that here is a species showing a considerable degree of variation and that the first plants to flower, while they were more or less corresponded with Professor Zhao's description in the 1992 Year Book, were not the whole story.

To date it does not seem that any albino forms have been seen in the wild or in cultivation. The flowers are described as deep violet or blue-purple in *Iris of China*. Waddick states ".....that there are no known variations in colour, form or stature" but adds ".....as more material or other collections are introduced, we may see more variety".

**Variations in colour:** Bob Hollingworth reports (in TSI) that these are "all in the basic iris blue-purple range but vary in intensity from quite light to quite dark. In some cases a clear reddish tinge is present, especially in the styles." John Coble mentions medium blue, dark and lighter shades and purple, and Kevin Morley has seen "all shades of red and blue-violet, with many contrasting midribs". There is variation in the signals, Coble and Hollingworth report that they range from quite large and prominent through medium and small sizes to being almost absent. One Coble flower showed a fine white rim on the falls.

**Form:** Morley says "The flowers tend to vary a great deal in form, many with pendant falls, but some with flaring fall" Hollingworth's comment is "Perhaps the greatest degree of variation occurs in the flower form. We have everything from fully pendant falls, to partially flaring ones, to falls that are completely flaring." Kevin Morley adds that the shape of the falls oval, round or heart-shaped, and standards vertical or flaring while Bob Hollingworth's plants all had upright standards; width is always fairly narrow.

**Stature:** heights reported range from 12in (30cm) to 35/36in (88-91cm) with the average around 24in (60cm). John Coble mentions several plants with flower stems at 12,15 or 18in (30, 37 or 45cm). There may be 3 branches, two, one or none. Leaves mostly seem to grow to about 36in (91cm) after flowering, perhaps less on shorter plants. They are generally narrower and more upright than on related species, often but not always with a spiral twist. They may collapse in late summer.

**Bloom Season:** this is universally early, up to two weeks ahead of the first bloom Siberian cultivars, though only on a few plants. One of John Coble's though, has given repeat stalks for three years, and one year it bloomed three times.

**Hybridisation potential:** all the contributors have made crosses with other Siberians, aiming for early bloom, added hardiness, more elegant foliage, repeat bloom and prominent signals (not all at once!). The reports were written before any seedlings from these crosses flowered but some at least should have been seen in 1995. Perhaps the earliest flowers to be seen from this type of cross were those in the Maine garden of Currier McEwen, in 1993. Two small plants, in a short row of seedlings from 'Pansy Purple' x *Iris typhifolia*, had single stems. The flowers on both were very similar. 'Pansy Purple', registered in 1969, has somewhat ungainly flowers with narrowish parts but in a very rich, deep, velvety purple; in general, they are not much unlike those of Bob Wise's *I. typhifolia*, so it is not surprising that the flowers were broadly similar to both parents.

Bob Hollingworth has treated some seedlings with colchicine but none has been converted to tetraploidy either wholly or partially, and he comments "my impression is that *typhifolia* seedlings are a bit more resistant to colchicine than those of typical garden Siberians". Even without tetraploidy, it seems that this species has the potential for enhancing a range of characters, and perhaps adding ones we have not dreamt of?



## Iris from Curtis's Botanical Magazine Part 5

Brian Mathew

A more detailed introduction to this series of articles, giving historical details of Curtis's Botanical Magazine, appeared in the 2018 *Year Book*.

William Curtis's famous journal made its debut on the 1st of February 1787 and has continued in an unbroken series ever since. It is probably the oldest botanical periodical still being published and is thought to be the world's longest surviving magazine in colour. Iris has been a popular subject with the Bot. Mag. over the years with about 150 species featured to date. It would be impossible to cover these in one article for the *Year Book* so they have been divided into their subgenera, sections and series and they will be reviewed here in these taxonomic groupings. The first four articles looked at the Bot. Mag. illustrations of Iris species of subgenus *Hermodactyloides* (the Reticulatas) [Part 1], those of the series *Sibiricae* and *Spuriae* [Part 2], Section Iris (the 'Pogons') [Part 3] and section Lophiris (the 'Evansias') [Part 4]. The articles provide extracts from the original texts combined with comments based on more recent knowledge. In Part 5 we explore the Bot. Mag. coverage of the species of section *Unguiculares* and series *Chinenses*. Thanks to Tim Loe for sourcing good quality copies of the illustrations reproduced here.

### Part 5. Iris from Curtis's Botanical Magazine: series *Unguiculares* & series *Chinenses*

#### *Unguiculares*

Chronological order of publication:

1. *I. unguicularis* Plate 5773 [publ. as *I. stylosa*] (1869) by W. Fitch.
2. *I. cretensis* Plate 6343 (1878) by J. N. Fitch.
3. *I. cretensis* Plate 9369 (1934) by Lilian Snelling.
4. *I. lazica* Plate 357 (1999) by Wendy Walsh

1. *Iris unguicularis* Poir., Voy. Barbarie 2: 86 (1789).

Bot. Mag. plate 5773 (1869) [publ. as *I. stylosa*].  
Artist and Engraver: Walter Hood Fitch. Text: Joseph Dalton Hooker.

This well-known and much-loved winter-flowering iris, still fondly known to many as *I. stylosa*, was given this epithet to denote the long slender style; for the write-up of the *Bot. Mag.*



*I. stylosa* (*unguicularis*)  
plate 5773b

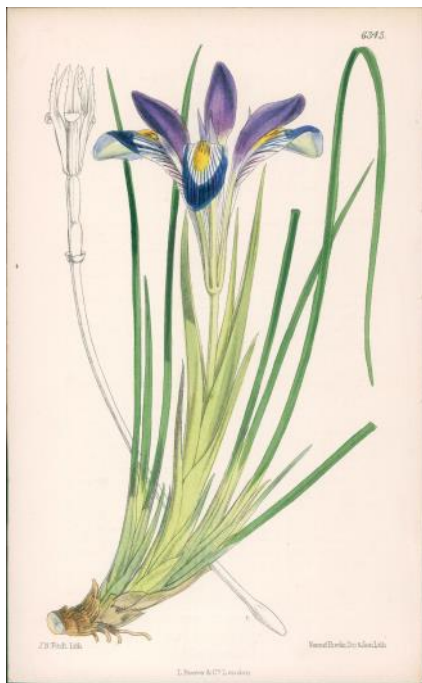
plate Hooker attached the vernacular name ‘Long-styled Iris’ but this never caught on and it is more likely to be referred to as the ‘Algerian Iris’. Desfontaine’s *stylosa* of 1798 had been preceded by the less euphonious *I. unguicularis* [this epithet was particularly disliked by W R Dykes who referred to it as ‘Poiret’s uncouth appellation’!]. The name *I. unguicularis* was published by Jean Louis Marie Poiret following his extensive surveys of Algeria in 1785-6 and published in *Voyage en Barbarie* (1789). Poiret records the site as follows: ‘*J’ai trouvé cette plant en fleurs au mois de décembre dans le bois de Fréje, chez la nation des Zulmis* [a bedouin tribe in Algeria]’. It is recorded as being a widespread plant in the mountains of north-western Algeria and north-eastern Tunisia up to about 2000 m. In view of its origin it is not surprising that in cultivation it does require a sunny situation where the rhizomes receive a good warm rest period in summer but it is a hardy plant in much of Britain although the buds and flowers have almost no frost tolerance, turning to mush on cold nights. Given an open but sheltered site it is a very easily cultivated iris and can be readily propagated by division of clumps of rhizomes in early autumn when new roots are forming.

In the text accompanying Fitch’s illustration Hooker notes it as ‘a very beautiful and sweet-scented spring flowering iris, for which the Royal Gardens are indebted to Mrs. Bodichon of Algiers. Barbara Bodichon, née Barbara Leigh Smith, (1827-1891) was an artist and educationalist, also a leading mid-19th-century feminist and women’s rights activist who lived part-time in Algiers. Landscapes were a speciality but there also exists a beautiful painting by her showing a vase of TB irises.

2. *Iris unguicularis* subsp. *cretensis* (Janka) AP Davis & Jury in Bot. Journ. Linn. Soc. 103: 294 (1990).

Bot. Mag. plate 6343 (1878) [publ. as *I. cretensis*]. Lithographer: John Nugent Fitch. Text: John Gilbert Baker.

In the text for this illustration J G Baker noted that it “has a wide distribution round the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, as it occurs in Greece, Asia Minor, Crete (where it ascends the hills to 5000 feet above sea-level) and the Ionian Islands.” He attributes its introduction into cultivation to Mr Elwes



*I. cretensis* plate 6343 b



*I. cretensis* illustrated by Lilian Snelling, plate 9369 showing the original in *Bot. Mag.*

By kind permission of Kew Gardens

[Henry John Elwes] noting “it flowered with him at Cirencester last November [1877].” It is not stated but it is likely that the *Bot. Mag.* painting was prepared from Elwes’s plant. Elwes could have collected it in several places in the Greek islands or even south-western Turkey for he travelled widely in the region, but the fact that he used the name *cretensis* suggests that would have been the source.

The plant depicted is rather taller than usual for the Cretan forms but this could be as a result of cultivation methods. In citing this wide geographical distribution for *I. cretensis* Baker was including all those variants of *I. unguicularis* that occur outside North Africa. In their multidisciplinary study of series *Unguiculares*, published in the *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 103: 281-300 (1990), AP Davis & SL Jury distinguished the Cretan plant as *I. unguicularis* subsp. *cretensis*. The representatives from SW Turkey and East Aegean Islands were distinguished as subsp. *carica* var. *carica*, the Greek ones (from the Peloponnese, Ionian Islands and Paros Is.) as subsp. *carica* var. *angustifolia*, while those from Eastern Turkey, Syria and Lebanon were recognised as subsp. *carica* var. *syriaca*.

3. *Iris unguicularis* subsp. *cretensis* (Janka) AP Davis & Jury in *Bot. Journ. Linn. Soc.* 103: 294 (1990).

*Bot. Mag.* plate 9369 (1934) [publ. as *I. cretensis*]. Artist and Lithographer: Lilian Snelling. Text: William Bertram Turrill.

The earlier *Bot. Mag.* illustration by Fitch in 1878 is an acceptable

representation of this narrow-leaved variant of the species, *I. unguicularis* subsp. *cretensis*, but the superb painting of this taxon in 1934 by Lilian Snelling is botanical illustration of the highest order. Not only do we see an entire plant with flower and bud but in addition a set of detailed floral dissections which is a hallmark of her meticulous work.

The source of the plant that Lilian Snelling illustrated is impeccable and has a BIS connection: "The material from which the present plate was made was supplied by G P Baker, Esq. of Hillside, Oakhill Road, Sevenoaks, Kent, from plants collected by him in Crete." George Percival Baker was one of those instrumental in founding the BIS in 1922, became its President in 1924 and contributed many articles in the following years.

The very detailed text accompanying the plate was written by William Bertram Turrill, a Kew botanist and Keeper of the Herbarium and Library from 1946-1957. One of his specialist interests was in the botany and taxonomy of the Balkans and Greece so he would have welcomed the opportunity to study and write about *I. cretensis* and this he did at some length covering four pages. Turrill discussed the characteristics of this and other geographical variants of *I. unguicularis sens. lat.*, one of the noteworthy characters being leaf width; he presents a comparative table showing the differences between this and other variants and came to the conclusion that it was preferable to treat this dwarf, narrow-leaved plant from Crete as a species distinct from *I. unguicularis*. His reasoning was that "it is the Cretan plant which is figured [here] and this has to be distinguished for both botanical and horticultural purposes from *I. unguicularis*." Many gardeners would approve of this approach, thus side-stepping having to use cumbersome hierarchies of infraspecific taxa! As noted above, Davis & Jury in 1990 studied the group in great detail and concluded that subspecific status would be a more appropriate way of expressing the botanical relationship.

4. *I. lazica* Albov in Prodrromus Florae Colchicae: 232 (1895).

Bot. Mag. plate 357 (1999). Artist:

Wendy Walsh. Text: E. Charles Nelson.



*Iris lazica*, plate 357

Although *Iris lazica* was named and described by Nikolai Michailovich Albov almost 130 years ago it was not until the 1960s that it became more widely known in British gardens thanks to introductions by several collectors including Paul Furse and Martyn Rix. The plant depicted here by Wendy Walsh was introduced under the number E M Rix 1020 from Turkey in 1968 and cultivated in Ireland by her and by Charles Nelson who provided the text to accompany the plate. He remarks that “This is a first-class plant that should not be confined to the gardens of a few enthusiasts”. Fortunately this is now not the case and this easily propagated iris is offered by several nurseries although not necessarily the clone that was cultivated by Charles Nelson and named ‘Turkish Blue’ by him in this issue of *Bot. Mag.* Over the years seedlings of cultivated plants have been raised so other forms are appearing and some bear cultivar names. Capsules are freely produced (if you can find them buried among the leaves, for they are very short-stalked!) and each contains numerous seeds so there is plenty of opportunity for variation.

Albov’s description of *I. lazica* in 1895 gives the type location on the borders of Adzharia [SW Georgia] and Lazistan [NE Turkey] in the valley of the Çoruh River. This arises in the Mescit mountains of Turkey near Erzurum and reaches the Black Sea near the Turkish-Georgian border via Artvin and Batumi. The distribution of the species is restricted to this south-eastern part of the Black Sea at low altitudes up to about 500m, growing among shrubs such as rhododendrons and hazel nut groves. In Turkey it has been recorded in the provinces of Samsun east to Giresun, Trabzon and Rize, then crossing into Georgia but always not very far from the coast.

Dykes, in *The Gardeners’ Chronicle* of April 22nd 1911 wrote of *I. lazica*: “This plant has recently been introduced into cultivation by Mr C G Van Tubergen, junr., of Haarlem, who has very kindly sent me flowers. It was shown, I believe, for the first time at the Haarlem Jubilee Exhibition last spring.” Dykes compares it with other variants of *I. unguicularis* and concludes that “it would seem best to refuse specific rank to *I. lazica*, and reduce it to a local variety of *I. unguicularis*.” This status as *I. unguicularis* var. *lazica* was subsequently published in his monograph *The Genus Iris*, p. 54 (1913). Now, and quite rightly in my opinion, it is accepted as a being a ‘good’ and rather distinct species, not only in morphology but in the details of its natural habitat in the high rainfall Black Sea region; this has a direct bearing on its cultivation requirements. Although Dykes comments in a later article in the *G.C.* of 1919 “for some reason the plant declines to flourish here” this is far from the case and it can produce large and free-flowering colonies. This is certainly my experience and Charles Nelson notes in the *Bot. Mag.* text that in March 1998 “three substantial clumps of this handsome iris are blooming profusely [in Norfolk]”. For cultivation requirements he

recommends a free-draining yet moist soil. It does seem to be tolerant of a wide range of conditions both exposed and shaded but the hot dryer situations that suit *I. unguicularis* should be avoided.

**Chinenses** Chronological order of publication:

1. *I. speculatrix* Bot. Mag. plate 6306 (1877) by Walter Hood Fitch.
2. *I. minutoaurea* Bot. Mag. plate 8293 (1910) [publ. as *I. minuta*] by Matilda Smith.

1. *I. speculatrix* Hance in Journal of Botany 13:196 (1875). Bot. Mag. plate 6306 (1877). Artist and Engraver: Walter Hood Fitch. Text: John Gilbert Baker.

This species is included here as (see below) there currently seems to be no consensus as to which infrageneric group of the genus it belongs.

The specific epithet *speculatrix* probably refers to the double-lobed white marking in the centre of each of the falls. The marks could be likened to a pair of spectacles and, being feminine, it would mean “the woman [presumably Iris!] who watches or spies”. It was named thus by Henry Fletcher Hance, a British diplomat living in Hong Kong from 1844 until his death in 1886; he was a keen botanist specialising in the local flora and published a supplement to George Benthams *Flora Hongkongensis*.



*I. speculatrix*, plate 6306

When Fitch produced the artwork this was a newly discovered species, named and described by Hance in 1875 and introduced as living material to Kew in 1877. In the text accompanying the plate John Gilbert Baker [quoting Hance's original description of the site] records that “It was discovered in April, 1874, by a Chinese workman, attached to the botanical garden of Hong Kong, on a hill facing the sea between Victoria Peak and Mount Davis, in that island.” Baker notes it as being “a very interesting novelty” and that “in structure it belongs clearly to the small group of crested Irises of which *I. japonica*.....is



the oldest and best known representative.” The plant illustrated was cultivated at Kew having been sent by Mr C Ford of the Hong Kong Botanic Garden [Charles Ford was the first Superintendent of the garden, appointed when it was opened to the public in 1871]. It “was received in April, 1877, and came into flower immediately after its arrival in this country.” Transport by sea would have been a slow process so the plant must have been tended carefully on the long journey!

It is interesting that Baker related *I. speculatrix* to the crested *Lophiris* group (‘Evansia’ irises) and Dykes also held this view. Other later authors have allied it to the *Chinenses* but a recent detailed study of this group of small Chinese species by Carol Wilson [*PhytoKeys* 161: 41–60, 2020] suggests that it does not really belong with the *Chinenses*; this was also the view of Tillie, Chase and Hall in their molecular study (*Annali di Botanica (Roma)* 1: 105–112, 2001). Although in 1982 I tentatively placed it with the species of *Chinenses* I have recently had the opportunity to check on the root system of a mature plant of *I. speculatrix* (sadly it had died!) and found it to have vertical, thick, almost thong-like roots, quite unlike the mat of thin wiry roots of, for example, *I. henryi*, *I. minutoaurea*, etc., of the *Chinenses*. For the moment this species remains a bit of an outsider from both groups but hopefully further molecular studies based on wild source material will lead to a firm placement, possibly in its own group (and perhaps including *I. grijsii* and *I. cavaleriei* which may or not be synonyms of it). The distribution of *I. speculatrix* is not confined to Hong Kong and the *Flora of China* Vol. 24 (2000) records it in most of the provinces of south-eastern mainland China.

*Iris speculatrix* is still a rarely seen plant in cultivation in Britain, possibly because of its questionable hardiness. Baker predicted that it was “not likely to prove hardy in England” and this does seem to be the case. However, in an unheated glasshouse or conservatory it grows readily and sets seed freely when hand pollinated.

2. *I. minutoaurea* Makino in Journ. Jap. Botany 5:17 (1928).  
Bot. Mag. plate 8293 (1910) [publ. as *I. minuta*] Artist: Matilda Smith.  
Engraver: John Nugent Fitch. Text: Otto Stapf.

In the text for this illustration the Kew botanist Otto Stapf notes that “The plant from which the drawing now given has been prepared was obtained for the Kew collection by purchase from the Yokohama Nursery Company in February, 1908.” *Iris minuta* is described in this nursery’s 1911 catalogue as a “lovely tiny iris 4 or 5 inches high with yellow flowers - per 10, \$2.50”. Stapf continues: “A few days after its arrival a flowering example of the same species was presented to the Herbarium at Kew by Mr W E Ledger\*, who had



### *I. minutoaurea* first used in only black and white, plate 8293

grown it in his garden at Wimbledon.” Walter Edwin Ledger is a familiar name to many iris enthusiasts on account of the allegedly hardy form of *Iris japonica* known as ‘Ledger’s Variety’. One might well assume it was a form perhaps selected or imported by him, possibly from Japan via the Yokohama nursery as they also included *I. japonica* in their catalogue. Ledger clarified this himself. He states “I do not know how it has come to be styled Ledgers with that description to distinguish the form from the type plant.” He says that he received his original plant from Major Lugard, who had it from his brother Sir Frederick Lugard, who found it growing in the gardens of the British legation at Tokyo, and brought it home in 1912. [ref: *Gardening Illustrated* July 16th 1927].

Stapf goes on to say that at Kew it “has been cultivated in a pot in a cold frame, where it has formed grassy evergreen tufts, with thin, wiry, freely branching and interlacing rhizomes that emit numerous very thin roots. These roots, when examined later in the season, are found to bear many very small potato-like tubers, in shape and size somewhat resembling the eggs of ants.” Stapf notes that “it is evidently easily kept in health, and promises to

be fairly hardy”, but even today *I. minutoaurea* is sadly still a rare plant in cultivation in the UK.

*\*Walter Edwin Ledger, an author and bibliophile was ‘part of the circle around Oscar Wilde and Robert Ross’. He built up a huge collection of books, letters, periodicals, photographs and newspaper cuttings [around 1000 items] relating to Wilde and Ross which he bequeathed to University College, Oxford, on his death in 1931. Ledger’s own ex libris bookplate was designed by himself and there exists a photograph of Ledger dressed in a sailor’s uniform “posing in his beloved garden”. He was a keen sailor, also a pianist and “the greatest living authority on Ceropogonias [a genus of succulent plants]”. This has been extracted from articles published online by University College, Oxford concerning the Robert Ross Memorial Collection.*



## ***Gladiolus*, a member of the Iris family.**

*Alun Whitehead*

With inflation once again active and belt tightening being mentioned, it is good to hear that a humble Iridaceae relation has been in demand. It appears the *Gladiolus* as a cut flower has had a meteoric year with sales up over 300%. Is it that people are coming to admire the brazen charm of the flower, or is it simply the fact they are a cheap alternative?

By July this year, Tesco had sold 60,000 bunches compared to 14,000 the previous year. It is pleasing to hear that this is a British crop. K Martin & Son Ltd. in Lincolnshire grows for Tesco and is the largest grower in Europe. Perhaps next year we should don our sunglasses and head over to Spalding to admire the crop? Interestingly, Colin Martin of the firm has also been developing new varieties – so watch this space.

Photos below taken at RHS Wisley:



## Mulches and Maintenance

Alun Whitehead

It always seems better to travel in hope than arriving and likewise maintenance is less fun than acquisition or planting, but has to be faced. As weather seems to go through different extreme phases, this makes the job more awkward – ignoring other things like age! Before Covid we used the council green waste to mulch each year and this, as well as providing extra nutrients, kept most of the weeds at bay. Then Covid arrived, green waste was unavailable, and we had to resort to weeding all the beds four to five times a year – of course it didn't happen, though we did try. An annual thistle can reach flowering in 5 weeks. If you live in an area where fewer weeds seed, it may be better, but here the hedges maintain an active colony and the farmers' fields can be a glorious haze of dandelion heads. We are wildlife friendly and our "visitors" bring in a wonderful array of seeds. I should say that our soil is heavy clay, full of nutrients, and we try not to tread on it when it is waterlogged to avoid damaging its structure (we use a board occasionally if necessary) and so there are times when weeding is not possible.

Since Covid, we have used green waste again, but we have started looking for less labour-intensive alternatives. When growing other plants, the situation can be easier. For instance, the daylilies spread their leaves and leave little room for weeds; the occasional one that pops its head up is easily pulled out. The shape of irises doesn't help. Presumably they originated in a very sunny hot climate. Their leaf shape means they cast little shadow when the sun is overhead, or put another way, they expose very little of the leaf to the mid-day sun. As the irises spread during evolution, the Siberians ended up in not such hot spots, the rhizome being small probably doesn't protect it quite so much from drought as the bigger rhizomes of *pseudacorus* or *pallida*. In nature both *sibirica* and *sanguinea* tend to be found near water courses or in water meadows. Is it the wetness that helps them or the fact it inhibits some of the stronger competitors? The *BSBP*<sup>1</sup> lists the UK flora and records 8 instances of *Iris sibirica* being found growing wild in the UK since 1982. This is not a lot but there may be more escapees not recorded. But even so, it doesn't show a voracious colonising tendency and does suggest that where it is successful may be sites with limited competition. This suggests that if we use ground cover to restrain the weeds around the Siberians, we will need to be careful which ones we choose. This is a balance between practicality and taste. For instance, the best ground smotherer here is *Epimedium x perralchicum* 'Fröhnleiten', but would you want this around your Siberians and would it grow with too much vigour? I noticed a very pleasant planting at Wisley of Siberians with *Matteuccia struthiopteris* with a thin mulch of white stone. This may last for a time, but on our clay this fern can be very strong growing and then last summer the drought killed most of it; so not a reliable planting for us.

The spacing and thinness of the stone mulch there would not stop self-sowing, but mulches if they work can be a solution worth exploring. Stones/

gravels we have discounted. To be effective, they need to be deep, some say as much as 15cm. A thin mulch is a haven for the self-seeders as our yard demonstrates and in fact depends on for its changing effects, through the season and through the years. Other mulches include bark, garden compost, bio-char and processed straw. Many years ago, a nursery advised us that they had had a bad experience using bark with Siberians and so we have not tried it to date. We cannot produce enough garden compost to mulch all our beds and even if we could, how much weed seed would remain? The same goes for farmyard manure; cattle is better than horse manure, but so many seeds still remain. Bio-char is a new one to me, heated bio-mass with over 80% being carbon and so very slow to decompose. If you have a source which is cost effective, then it is worth further exploration but the cost looks very high at present and a black mulch won't give the look we desire. *Strulch* is processed straw with minerals added. I haven't found a cheaper alternative so far. We did try a straw bale from a kind farmer many years ago and if you want a corn field, then this is the mulch for you!

Despite the expense, this year we tried *Strulch* for the convenience and just to see if it would work. It has been used for many years at RHS Wisley and they endorse the product. Theoretically, it needs to be about 5cm deep, but the first problem is trying to gauge the depth when spreading it over such a large area. The beds look good when it is done and watered to 'lock' the mulch in place.

What problems could arise? Well, the website mentions about it being wildlife friendly and we have a pheasant nesting in it. Any disturbance of the mulch is not a good thing. Pheasants have been dust bathing amongst the Siberians here for many years, but amazingly they don't scratch amongst the *Strulch*. That is left to the foxes, squirrels, cats and mainly rabbits, or in our case RR, the Resident Rabbit. Being rabbit fenced, it keeps most out but one got in about a year ago and has shown no inclination to leave (despite efforts) and luckily none have joined him. He tends to prefer to dig in a tilled bed and so even that has not been too bad. We keep finding rabbit skeletons on the grass by the Siberians and cheer, but no it isn't RR, just imports brought in by the crows & buzzards; it must be their picnic site where they can enjoy a quiet meal.

So how has *Strulch* worked? It was initially very impressive for stopping the spring weeds. We have one patch mulched and another bare. In a couple of weeks, the contrast was stark; neat versus wild. Later in the season we did get germinations of a particular spurge – presumably it does not need light to aid germination, but it wasn't such a problem to weed out. Later other weeds emerged and so it didn't eliminate weeding completely, just reduces the time needed. One advantage of *Strulch* is that the minerals added deter slugs and snails. This was a big advantage around the spurias which always attract a variety of multi-coloured snails. As the *Strulch* weathers this advantage fades especially after this wet summer and our mollusc population has bounced back, so perhaps a top up of *Strulch* is needed – perhaps a bit now and a bit



in spring? We'll see.

Interestingly, I did try *Strulch* on a container and this has worked well if the container is deep enough so that the birds cannot toss it out. However, the *Strulch* colour doesn't sit well with terracotta to my mind.

You may well have found a better method than I have covered or have different experiences, if so, please do let Brita, our Editor, know so that we can all benefit. A good idea is worth sharing.

1. Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland



Above, A planting of Siberians underplanted with *Matteuccia struthiopteris*

Below, The bed of Siberian irises mulched with *Strulch*



## Hybridising

Brita Carson

Jennifer was the ambassador for agitating you all to start to hybridise, so with her no longer with us I feel it is up to me to encourage anyone and everyone to take up the cotton bud and make crosses of their irises. At the beginning, don't think too deeply about the possible results and don't get out a paint brush to see which colours you might get, just marvel that you have been successful.



Good parents produce good plants. Unnamed as yet; the pod parent was 'Miss Apple' (R. 2009) and the pollen parent was 'Paprikash' (R. 2012), both are from the Jan and Marty's stable. This is a photograph taken summer 2023 and shows short leaves and blooms. I hope to register this plant in 2024 once I have thought of a name! This is an example of a new seedling that is two years old. It also shows what *Strulch* looks like after a year as a mulch. It is still looking good.

However on the next page is another new seedling which has made its first appearance this year by itself from bee set seed. It is situated close to 'Trim the Velvet' and that is very likely to be the pod parent, although I must only call it "unknown parentage". But this is showing what *Strulch* looks like when it is not laid to sufficient depth and the weeds have and will take over unless they are removed. Not really the photograph I had intended to use for its debut. Normally I would crop out from a photo as many weeds as I could.



Sdlg 118

Although 2023 is the first year this sdlg has flowered I have used it in crosses already. I have guessed it is a diploid and crossed it with other diploids producing good quality seeds. I think I would like to call it Johnstonebridge Tartan but as this is too long a name it would be easier to remember J B Tartan.



'Bramble Smoothie' (R. 2012, Brita Carson) showing fairly short growth this summer. However the colours are still good. If it grows to the usual full height the flowers are much paler.





Top left is the colour on first opening, look at the deep colour of the flower bud ready to open.

Bottom left, the bloom has fully opened. At the back you can see the blooms which have been crossed but none was successful so I will have to try again next year. The photo on the right shows how the seedling looks as a clump. It is a bit wishy washy so it needs to be hybridised with another. But what? Do I try to strengthen the soft yellow or the lavender?

This hybrid is 'Crème Caramel' X 'Bramble Smoothie', the 'Crème Caramel' is another of Jan and Marty's. Sdlg 71 first flowered in 2017. It has been slow to clump and it isn't that keen to be crossed with others but I won't give up on it yet.

## The Gear I have for Hybridising.

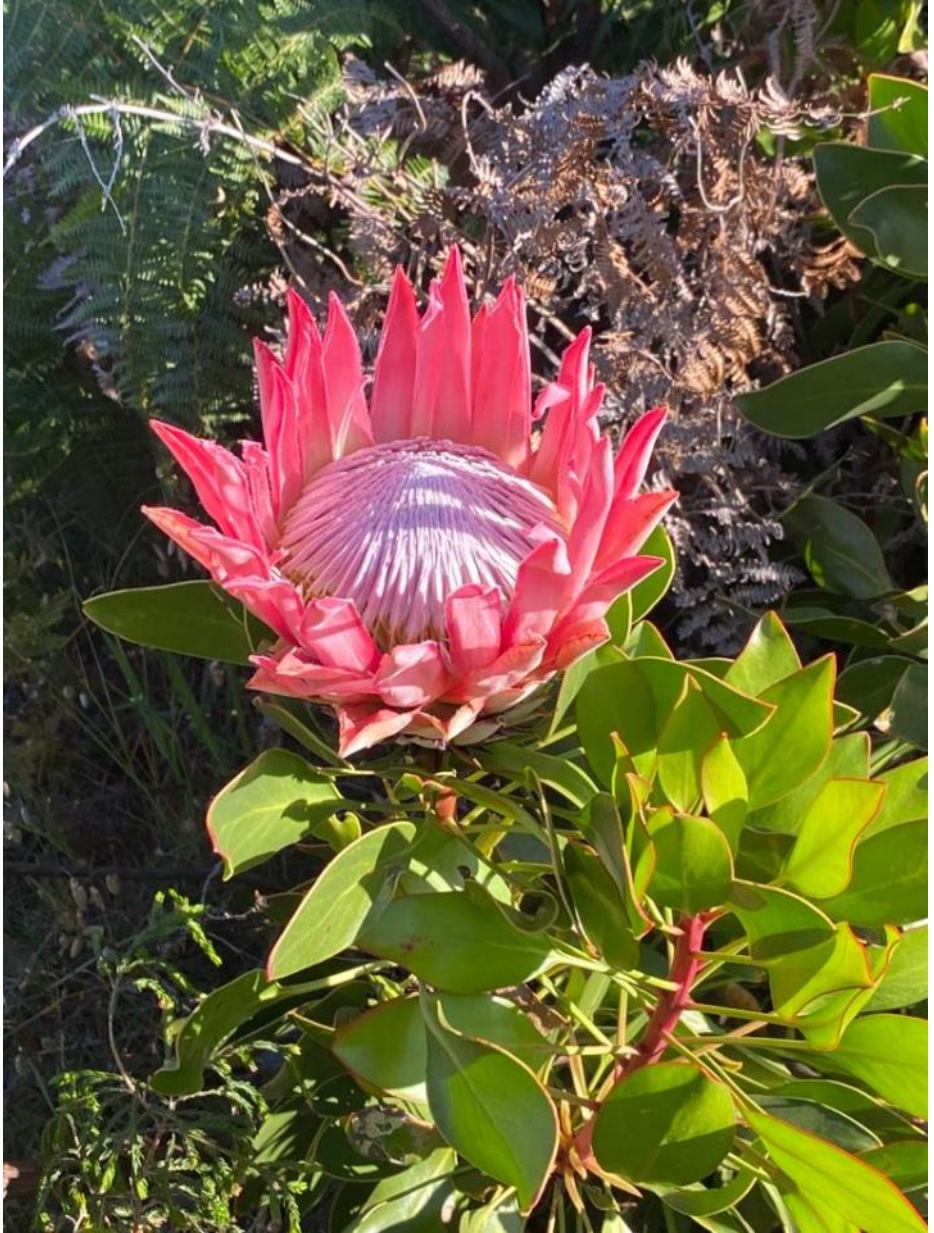
Arm yourself with a few essentials but please, what I suggest is not essential, but a help until you work how you are going to keep records, and you need to keep as much record information as possible. You could still be checking out this information several years later. I know. I've suffered from lack of care of the details.

A large A4 size stud book is a help when you are doing a great number of crosses and the numbers creep up quickly after the first couple. Make use of the seed lists to build up a good size collection of plants from as many different sources as you can. You want to add lots of different "blood" at the beginning. Try to have seed from different hybridisers. A general habit amongst hybridisers records the pod parent first followed by the pollen parent which saves repeating each time and a good habit for future use.

Keep complete pages. Plants that have been hybridised, the successful pod formation which suggests lovely fat seeds. The number of seeds from each pod, when you planted the new seeds. If you have the time to count the number of successful germinations and leave space to continue to monitor the progress. And then a date for the first flowering and a description and measurements. Height of the leaves, the stems with flowers' height and numbers of flowers per plant. Then the measurements of the standards and falls and the description of everything including the style arms. Photographs are always a good idea. In the second and third years you need the same again and you can check if anything has changed. We often find the flowers are different after the first year.

You will need seedling numbers. How you are going to make up these numbers. Obviously they require an actual number which usually includes the year. Sometimes a small area may have clumps from the same batch.

Now is the time to decide whether to register or continue to hybridise or do both. Take the pollen and go hybridise something else.



Eldest daughter and family had a wonderful holiday in South Africa but instead of photos of irids I was hoping for she emailed me this Protea, the South African National Flower. Beautiful in its perfection.



## Financials

As the Group moves to a new format, it seems an appropriate time to give a summary of the Group's accounts for the last few years.

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Subscriptions	202.32	220.50	172.50	77.00	15.00	0.00
Donations	0.00	0.00	1.50	40.00	0.00	0.00
Seed Sales	217.00	221.40	366.97	117.68	83.72	38.00
Newsletter Cost	-113.92	-51.56	-89.07	0.00	-41.35	0.00
Review Cost	-164.53	-258.48	-201.87	0.00	-230.89	0.00
Interest Received	1.12	2.10	1.03	0.12	1.79	13.57
Beardless Iris Day	0.00	294.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Paypal & Bank Charges	-13.77	-40.59	-22.85	-12.52	-67.56	-53.03
Website	-85.56	-26.28	-83.98	-28.68	-112.66	0.00
Postage	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Total : Net change at bank &amp; paypal:</b>	42.66	361.49	144.23	193.60	-351.95	-1.46
Opening Totals:	3707.12	3749.78	4111.27	4255.50	4449.10	4097.15
Plus net increase:	3749.78	4111.27	4255.50	4449.10	4097.15	4095.69

represented by:

Closing Treasury AC	1048.52	1050.62	1051.65	1051.77	1053.56	0.00
Closing Current AC	2044.87	2170.29	2625.82	3095.32	2798.37	4095.69
Closing Paypal	656.39	890.36	578.03	302.01	245.22	0.00

The final balance of £4095.69 has been transferred to the British Iris Society for the future benefit of the Group.

## British Iris Society 2024 Shows

Early Spring Show Saturday 10 February, 10am—4pm RHS Wisley, Surrey GU23 6QB. We will be sharing the room with the Cyclamen Society.

Late Spring Show Saturday 27 April RHS Bridgewater, Greater Manchester M26 2LJ. Times to be confirmed.

Summer Show Saturday 25 & Sunday 26 May 10-5pm RHS Wisley, Surrey GU23 6QB. We will be sharing with the Clematis Society for this event.

Virtual Show is open to GBI members;

<https://www.britisshirissociety.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/virtual-show-2024.pdf>

## Group Changes

With the change from a formal constitution to becoming an informal group of the British Iris Society, the offices are no longer governed by those given in the constitution and in fact a looser arrangement is possible. We thank all those who have contributed in the past. We are sorry that Janet Miller is stepping down as an Officer and thank her for all her enthusiastic work on the seed exchange. The Group's seed exchange has now stopped, but we recommend supporting the BIS seed scheme.

Brita Carson remains as Editor and Alun Whitehead in the administration role. However, if you would like to contribute in whatever way, large or small, you will be very welcome.



A final question for someone. This hedge in my garden is at least double this length. What I want to know is this cobweb which always just appears overnight. Is it made by just one spider or many spiders? And if many spiders how do they divide the work? Please email me your ideas. Thank you.  
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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.

Proof Readers: Julia Carson, Marina Jackson, Alun and Jill Whitehead.

Photographers: the photographs are provided by the authors or have their providers written below their photographs. No name means the photograph was taken by the author of the article.



Above: *Babiana cedarbergensis*

Below: *Crocus korolkowii* 'Kiss of Spring'

both taken at RHS Wisley





