

Canadian Iris Society

cis newsletter

Winter 2014 Volume 58 Issue 1



Canadian Iris Society

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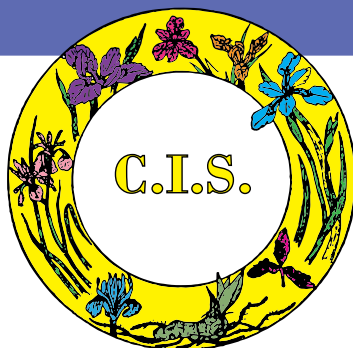
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Cover Photo: AGAIN AND AGAIN (TB)
(Innerst '99) Wide yellow w/white bds. Good rebloom. HM'01

President's Report

By Ed Jowett

I am sad to announce that our secretary Nancy Kennedy had to resign due to health reasons; we wish you well Nancy and hope for your speedy recovery.

As I sit wondering in this crazy winter weather what to write about; a few things come to mind. What to purchase for 2014? What new intros are there for 2014? Only to find I am too early. So I look back over the past three (3) years and made a summary of what we offered you (our members) in the way of new Iris types or cultivars. The small chart shows what we have offered in this time.



Types	BB	IB	MDB	MTB	SDB	TB
Count	11	18	3	17	42	56

Over all I believe we had a good mix. The year 2013 we specialized in rebloomers—thus some were older cultivars, but in the other years we only had cultivars four (4) years old or less. These sales seem to go well with the big support and work of your executive and directors who give a lot of valuable time to the CIS.

I read a little bit of interesting news on Barry Blythe’s web page. (For those who do not know him: Barry is a hybridizer in Australia.) In order for him to import even seed or ship seeds or rhizomes they must go through a quarantine period. This must make it hard for him to select what to import for breeding and what to have for export. I don’t know exactly when his bloom season is but it must be November or December as he ships to our continent in January and February. What would I do with a rhizome at this time of year; keep it in a cold temperature till May or pot it indoors; and when will it adjust to our climate? Little things we just take for granted.

Included in this bulletin are a couple of articles from the British Iris Society’s year book “Interspecies Hybrids – Fascinations and Doubts” by Lech Komarnicki and “A Lifetime of Iris Breeding in Northwest USA” by Terry Aitken. Both of these articles are published with permission of The British Iris Society and the writers.

The comments and statements in this bulletin are those of the writers and not necessary those of the board or society.



SIB "Burgundy Fireworks" (Aitken '13) See Terry Aitken's article on page 8

As I am working in the northern part of this province where temperatures reach in the minus 20's and the snow is piled at least 20 feet high at some of the schools it reminds me of my childhood when 3 and 4 feet of snow was usual. It makes me feel better at night when I get home to only a couple of feet or less. I think come spring the gardens will be in better shape because they will have had a steady snow covering with no thaws. I can't remember the last time my garden had 18" of hard packed snow covering it in February. One thing this cold weather has done for us is keep sickness down, at least for me anyways. Only six more weeks till spring they say? Seeing is believing.



We are looking for volunteers to join the Board. (There are only 4 meetings per year.) If you have some spare time, give me a call or email.

Ed Jowett

Canadian Iris Society:

You are invited to join the Canadian Iris Society. Membership in the CIS is open to all persons interested in irises regardless of skills or experience. New members are welcome. Official membership applications and other information will be available at the show or on the official CIS website: www.cdn-iris.ca.

CIS Officers:

President: **Ed Jowett** 905-936-9941 <jowettfarm@copper.net>

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Musings From Manitoba



By: B. J. Jackson

(jacksonb@mts.net)

If it wasn't for the weather in winter, there would be precious little to talk about! If 2011 is known as the year of the water and 2012 as the year of the snow, the winter of 2013 is fast becoming the year of the cold and wind. It started out harmlessly enough right on schedule around the last week of November when the snow came to stay in Southern Manitoba. But the winter since then has been anything but normal. It has been a heck of a ride. There is snow cover but not a prodigious amount. Normally the gardens are covered with between two and a half to three feet of snow at this time. I would estimate so far there is just 18 to 22 inches on the gardens. It snows a bit, the wind blows it around for a bit, it melts a little bit, it snows again and the circle continues. It wasn't until two weeks ago that all of the iris foliage was covered completely. They had been cut back in fall to about 8 inches but grew madly in September with not a single frost to impede their growth. And it has been cold. In a normal year we may get a handful of days with lows over -35 to -40. Through December and January, this was a common occurrence. Also not uncommon was wind chill values in the -40 to -50 range.



But enough about the weather, the iris will be fine. At least I keep telling myself that. So what have I been doing through this most unusual winter? I have been doing the next best thing to complaining about the weather. That would be planning for the iris season to come. This year that will include a major revamping of the main iris gardens starting in spring. The gardens have matured over the 25 years since I started on this journey. The trees, too, have matured and areas once prime for iris growing aren't any more. It is now time to look at a new plan which will involve the digging and potting of the iris as they bloom, the individual garden areas dug, amended and replanted. It is an ambitious plan and we shall see how far along I get. And dare I say it? The thought of actually cutting back on the numbers has entered my mind of late. I must be getting old.

I am also preparing for the annual iris seed out of the fridge ceremony which happens in just two weeks. At that time, a new batch received earlier this month from the British

Iris Society will start their cold treatment. If I time it correctly, they can be taken out of the fridge and planted directly in the seedling areas of the gardens. I am very excited to have received some from a couple of Olga Wells MTBs in this order. The anticipation has already started for things to come.

In CWIS news, we are looking forward to the new season and plans are already underway for our two major annual events, our 7th annual show June 15th in Winnipeg and our 10th annual rhizome sales, one at the show and the main event in late summer. It amazes me that we have been around this long already. I am slowly learning the program for our website and can now actually edit it on my own. Sometimes it takes awhile to figure out how to do something, but I get it done. Last summer we changed service providers so if you want to have a visit and see what's new, check us out at <http://cwis.webplus.net/>. I have put up all the past newsletters up to Autumn 2013 if you'd like to check them out.

I hope the rest of the winter is more normal everywhere and that spring weather arrives early and to stay. I'm told it is less than two months away now so I think I can make it if the cabin fever doesn't set in too badly.

Stay warm, everyone!



CIS Membership

Not sure of your Canadian Iris Society (CIS) membership term?

Check your mailing label of the CIS newsletter for your current CIS membership term dates. If you receive the electronic version of the CIS Newsletter and you wish to know this information please e-mail the CIS membership chairman at cdniris@gmail.com and we will be pleased to advise you.

Early renewals are always appreciated.



The Can-West Iris Society is a not for profit organization with affiliate status in the American Iris Society.

Membership is open to all persons interested in iris regardless of skill or experience.

For membership information, please contact Deborah Petrie at petrie@mymts.net.

American Iris Society

The American Iris Society is a not for profit institution incorporated in 1927. The Corporation exists for the sole purpose of promoting the culture and improvement of the iris and is the official registrar for all but bulbous iris (ie. Dutch and Juno iris).

You are invited to join the American Iris Society. Official applications and additional information will be available at the show or can be obtained from the official AIS website: www.irises.org.

RVP Region 21 (Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, NWT, Nunavut, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba): Linda Wilke (lrwilkie@gmail.com).

Awards

AIS Award - Best Specimen in Show

Horticultural Sweepstakes:

- AIS Silver Medal and Certificate - highest number of first place ribbons)

- AIS Bronze Medal and Certificate - second highest number of first place ribbons

Best Historic Stem in Show - Sponsored by Can-West Iris Society

Best Canadian Hybridized Stem in Show - Sponsored by Chapman Iris

CWIS People's Choice Award - Voted by those attending the Show

Exhibition Certificates are awarded to the outstanding seedling, plus any seedling that obtains at least five (5) votes from certified AIS judges.

All AIS judges are asked to contact the Show Chair in order to pick up seedling ballots.

CAN-WEST IRIS SOCIETY

7th Annual Iris Show

**Bourkevale Community Centre
100 Ferry Road
Winnipeg, Manitoba**

Sunday, June 15thth, 2014- 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

Free Admission!!!

Show Chair: B.J. Jackson, jacksonb@mts.net



*Photo: SDB Cocoa Pink
Courtesy: El Hutchison*



A lifetime of Iris Breeding in Northwest USA

By Terry Aitken

My introduction to the iris world began shortly after I graduated from University as an architect and we were landscaping our new home in Minneapolis. I decided that I really liked the color orange and I set about acquiring any orange irises that were available. *Rarity* probably played into the acquisition game. The first to bloom was *Orange Parade*. It was not particularly happy on the northern prairies with cool temperatures and it had dull color. On cold days and nights, it would develop purple virus streaks on the petals. The only other orange available was *Tangerine Sunset*. This plant was laced and lovely but only knee high. How times have changed!

A couple of years later, we made a move to the Northwest where we could grow more diverse plants. We were to meet **Bennett Jones, George Shoop, Bob and Gus Schreiner**. A year later, they had me pollenating irises. I slowly became aware of the outer world of irises and iris hybridizers, of hybridizing, growing and competing for awards. I was told to expect to spend 10 years just learning what works and what doesn't. This is a statistical knowledge of the personalities of the plants you are working with. I was also told to plan on raising 1,000 seedlings in order to get one good one. In hindsight, it was all good advice. There was a wild card called *Lady Luck*. Apparently my intuition for making crosses worked to my advantage or perhaps because I listened to my mentors. In about 5 years, I got an AM for *Orbiter*. I remade the cross and raised 1,000 seedlings. In 3 years I was down to the final 7 contestants when one night we had a light freeze. 6 plants collapsed with the morning thaw. The 7th one stood tall and firm and became *Gyro*, a frost resistant flower. This is how the selection process is supposed to work.

Breeding iris for the North American market is an interesting challenge. The range of climates varies from tropical in the southern states to arctic in Alaska and Canada. Moisture varies from rain forest to desert; altitude from snowcapped mountains to ocean beaches; acid to alkaline soils. As the internet has expanded our horizons, we learn about climates around the world and how often they can be related to some part of North America. Our plants are shipped around the globe from South Africa to Russia, from China to Hawaii. Advising customers about which plants would most likely thrive for them has become a regular conversation.

The AIS award system provides incentive to hybridizers to get their plants distributed as rapidly as possible. We have approximately 500 Judges distributed all over North America and judges cannot vote for plants that they have not seen. This might be referred to as 'primary distribution'. The plants themselves provide 'secondary distribution' by being rapid increasers so that divisions can be traded to other growers. Plants with

vigorous growth are off to a good start but they still need to provide uniqueness, good form, health and color saturation.

Since the beginning of my iris experience, developing an extended bloom season has been an objective. Since I started with Tall Bearded Irises, I added the median classes to extend bloom another month earlier into springtime. Then, we added Spuria's and Japanese irises that gave us another month of bloom after TB season. For good measure, some Louisiana irises extended bloom on into summer. Then we had an overlap with some of the early reblooming TB irises. Now we have something in bloom from early spring until freeze up.

Again and Again (TB from New England) starts off with early July rebloom and can go sporadically until freeze up. Another of the most reliable early summer rebloomers is *Pure as Gold* (TB from California). This plant has been used extensively for building up a gene pool of potential rebloom TB plants. We need 'early' because so much of North America has a short growing season for rebloom. We know the gene is in there but needs another nudge to make it express itself.

On the front end of the bloom season are the Medians where we have used many Canadian rebloomer SDB's from **Chuck Chapman**. The combination of SDB rebloomers with TB rebloomers has given us Intermediate rebloom. The best of these, so far, is *Many Mahalos*. In 2 year clumps, it is a nice orange that begins to rebloom in early August and can continue until freeze up. A very significant bonus is its fertility and it is passing on the rebloom tendency to its children. Crossed back up to TB's, we are getting BB children that can rebloom.



TB "Autumn Sunburst" (Aitken '10)
a good rebloomer



TB "Many Mahalos" (Aitken '03 AM '10)
reblooms August until freeze-up



"Perpetual Indulgence" (Aitken '05)
a SDB with two months of rebloom

a month or two. In discussion with other growers, we have determined that these plants will continue blooming as long as the soil temperature remains in a range between 60 degrees F. (15 C.) (Typical spring bloom time) and will stop when the soil temperature rises above 68 degrees F. (20 C.). This is determined with a compost thermometer about 8" below ground. Our Siberian iris, *Burgundy Fireworks*, introduction for 2013 puts up an explosion on sequential stems, and then blooms continuously until mid-summer. Our hope is that we can focus this type of performance even stronger to get an ever blooming Siberian. Since cool soil temperatures are a major factor, Great Britain may be ideal for these types.

Japanese irises have not escaped from this phenomenon either. Our first JI introduction was *Midnight Stars* (Aitken '88), an almost black 6 Fall JI. While it did not rebloom, some of its offspring tended to put up spontaneous summer bloom stems. (We normally have cool

Another dimension just now evolving is SDB's that can bloom sequentially for a month before TB's and continue right through TB season for two months or more of spring SDB bloom! This does involve the Canadian rebloom SDB's and this plant is also fertile and has been crossed with TB rebloomers. The potential here is for ever blooming Intermediate seedlings. For me, this is the most exciting development – the possibility of ever blooming offspring.

Bearded irises are not the only area for extending bloom season. For about 10 years, I have been quite fascinated with the sequential bloom on some Siberian iris cultivars. My theory on this phenomenon is that some Siberians will bloom at their appointed time in the spring but a few of them will continue putting up stems for



"Burgundy Fireworks" (Aitken '13)
a good example of a vigorous SIB with sequential blooming from mid-May through Mid-July, and continues more slowly after that

summers anyway) This year In October I was photographing the most recent generation of near black 6 Fall JIs. At this time, I do have a 6 Fall deep blue Japanese iris called *Second Wave* which puts up a flush of bloom when expected, then puts up a second flush of sequential bloom a couple of weeks later. I should have thought to cross the black one and blue one long before now. The blue one has ‘sequential bloom’ while the black one has typical ‘rebloom’ characteristics. It pays to write articles!



Japanese “Second Wave” (Aitken ‘05)
blooms twice sequentially

My thanks to the British iris Society for inviting me to their 90th birthday party. It was a wonderful opportunity for Barbara and I to meet so many people that we had only heard about and to experience the life and spirit of British iris growers. As we traveled through Great Britain, I was delighted to meet and visit **Brita and Tom Carson**. Their marvelous home was within an hours’ drive of where the Aitken Landscapers of 120 years ago lived in Kirkintilloch. In another age and time, we could have been neighbors!



SDB Sequential rebloomer



Editors note: This article was first seen and read in the British Iris Society Yearbook

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Iris pumila

by John Moons

This Iris has been described already in 1753 by **Carolus Linnaeus**. He described an Iris he had found in Austria.



In the genus *Iris* there are six subgenera. Their names are: *Iris*, *Limniris*, *Nepalensis*, *Xiphium*, *Scorpiris* and *Hermodactyloides*. The subgenus *Iris* has six sections and one of them is also called *Iris*. These are the bearded Irises. A few species in this section, *I. pallida* and *I. variegata* have contributed to the many hybrids we have today. All the species in this group have thick rhizomes and the leaves grow in the shape of a fan. Among the twenty most important species in this section we find *Iris pumila*.

It is thought that the *pumila* is the result of a cross between *Iris attica* and *Iris pseudopumila* a long time ago. *Pumila* means dwarf. Most species plants do not get much higher than 10 cm. Some *pumilas* that originate in Russia, might reach the 15 cm mark.

The *pumilas* come originally from Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. Quite often the species are divided in a Western and an Eastern group. The plants of the Western group usually have larger flowers, the petals are wider, the foliage is coarser and the plants are more vigorous. The Western group has its origins in Austria, The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and the countries that were in the former Yugoslavia. The plants from the Eastern group come from Rumania, Bulgaria, the Ukraine, Russia, the Caucasus and Western Siberia. The plants in this group have smaller flowers. Quite often the flowers have a very long perianth tube. The perianth tube is that part of the flower that you will see under the standards and falls. It looks like a tube. The flowerstem is sometimes only a few millimeters long and the ovary sits then almost on the rhizome. Some *pumilas* from Rumania are also fragrant.

As is the case with many plants that you will find spread over a big area, you will see that the plants in a certain small area have evolved differently from the plants that grow in other areas. This is also the case with *pumilas*. Some *pumilas* are so different that they are given different variety or subspecies names. A few names are: *I. pumila* var. *heliotropii*, *I. pumila* var. *lutea*, *I. pumila* var. *tristis*, *I. pumila* subsp. *Taurica*, *I. pumila* subsp. *transsilvanica* and *I. pumila* subsp. *stenoloba*.

The *Iris pumila* has a rhizomesystem that looks like it is broken in pieces. The different segments are variable in length, shape and width. There is usually only one flower per stem. Besides the terminal flowershoot the rhizome can have side shoots that also produce flowers.

The flowers have a very wide choice of colours such as; shades of yellow and blue through lilac to purple, almost black and sometimes maroon or ruby red. The standards are usually larger than the falls and curve over the style-arms. A lot of pumilas have a prominent spot on the falls. Most often the spot is darker than the colour of the falls. Even the beards can have a range of colours from yellow, orange to violet, blue and white.

The most common number of chromosomes is $2n=32$. They are tetraploid. A few subspecies from Russia have only $2n=20$, 24 or 30 chromosomes. What makes the pumilas interesting is that the pumilas very easily cross with other bearded Irises. They are fertile both ways. A problem with crossing the pumilas with tall bearded Irises is the fact that the pumilas bloom very early. Sometimes they can bloom a few weeks earlier than their taller counterparts. Seventy years ago **Mr. Paul Cook**, who was breeding Irises in Northern Indiana, would mail pollen over to **Mr. Geddes Douglas** who lived in Tennessee. In Tennessee the tall bearded Irises would be blooming at the time that Paul Cook's pumilas would be open. The pollen was mailed both directions and both breeders ended up making many successful crosses that gave plants of different heights. Important in this story is also that we have now all kinds of bearded Irises that fill the timegap between the time that the pumilas bloom and the time that the tall bearded Irises are in flower. Interesting in the breeding story is the fact that the pumilas seem to have an inhibitor for the purple pigments of the tall bearded Irises.

Over the years hundreds of different Iris pumila cultivars have been found. It is impossible here to even start to mention all the different cultivars and hybrids that have been found and developed. The website of the American Iris Society shows hundreds of them. Pumilas have been crossed with Miniature Dwarf Bearded Irises (MDB), Standard Dwarf Bearded (SDB), Intermediate Bearded (IB), Miniature Tall Bearded (MTB) and Tall Bearded (TB). Pumilas have also been involved with crosses with other Irises. There are hybrids with Iris hoogiana, stolonifera, humilis and arilbred Irises.

Iris pumila likes to grow in a sunny location. The soil can be sandy or loamy, but it has to be very well drained. Pumilas do best in a soil that is fertile and rich in calcium. Throughout the winter the plants should be kept fairly dry. They are very good rock garden plants. The rootsystem is shallow. This can give problems with heaving in the winter. Some people believe that the pumilas should be transplanted every few years, but there are examples where one pumila has spread over a few square meters and the plant blooms every year very well over the whole area.

Books used for this article:

- The Gardener's Iris Book by William Shear, The Taunton Press
- The Gardener's Guide to Growing Irises by Geoff Stebbings, Timber Press
- The Iris Book by Molly Price, Van Nostrand
- Several issues of SIGNA ; a publication of the Species Iris Study Group of North America



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Royal Botanical Gardens Iris Garden Under Renovation ... AGAIN

by Ann Granatier

Since its beginnings in 1945, Irises have delighted many visitors to the Laking Gardens of the Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) located in Burlington and Hamilton, Ontario. Over the years, the collection has undergone many revisions and the Canadian Iris Society has been an integral player in the revitalizations.



Set on a fertile terraced plain, formerly a market garden, the Laking Garden is home to RBG's herbaceous perennial collections. The belvedere (overlook) at the end of the path offers a panoramic view over the entire garden.

The iris collection was the RBG's first herbaceous collection of importance with the plants being planted in 1947 with the main emphasis focusing on tall bearded iris. The collection includes award-winning bearded iris and hundreds of others including miniature bearded, dwarf bearded, intermediate bearded, border bearded, tall bearded, Siberian, Spuria and wild species iris. The collection displays the geographical and ornamental range of the genus with emphasis on the history of breeding trends within North American irises.

The following is a brief history:

A large collection of irises was donated to RBG in 1945.

In 1947 **Mr. W. J. Moffat**, president of the Canadian Iris Society donated 80 up-to-date varieties of iris and helped secure 34 new varieties. The University of Guelph also donated 70 varieties of iris.

In 1948 the planting plan for the irises was implemented. The design was such that there would be a first class display in the first blooming season, plus the ability to compare old and more modern varieties and follow the trends in breeding. Iris varieties that had won the Dykes Memorial Medal in England, France, and America were included.

There were approximately 260 varieties of iris planted including a selection of 36

Winners of the Award of Merit of the American Iris Society between 1932 and 1942, 60 varieties introduced between 1940 and 1948. 22 New varieties of iris were added and an exchange of varieties was made with the Horticultural Department of the Ontario Agricultural College, Guelph.

In 1954 there were 2000 clumps of blooming irises. The number of irises increased by 33 that year and a start was made in replacing tall bearded irises that were poor bloomers with more promising ones. The Trial Garden for Canadian Iris seedlings continued in co-operation with the Canadian Iris Society.

In 1955 the Convention of the American Iris Society and the Canadian Iris Society had to be moved ahead by one full week from June 12, 13, and 14 as the blooming season had been advanced by the high temperatures.

In 1959 Iris Week was cancelled due to winter kill and bacterial soft rot kill of the tall bearded iris. Iris hobbyists and growers restored the best of the former collection and added additional varieties.

In 1960, 60 new varieties of iris were donated. The Trial garden for Tall Bearded Iris continued on behalf of the Canadian Iris Society.

In 1965 the breeding of Tall Bearded Iris continued with 130 crosses, half of which produced apparently viable seed and forty red selections were kept for 1966.

In 1970 a main section of the Iris Collection was renovated and a new collection of 92 Siberian Iris introduced.

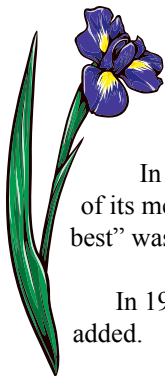
In 1971 the section devoted to Canadian Iris was renovated and updated. Another section of the old Hemerocallis collection was removed and made ready for a collection of cultivars of Spuria Iris. The first plantings were introduced in the fall through the assistance of the Canadian Iris Society.

In 1972 the central alphabetical collection of Iris was renovated with the updating of the "One Hundred Best" bed and the introduction of a Spuria Iris Collection under the sponsorship of the Canadian Iris Society.

In 1977 two new beds were added at the end of the main garden walk.

In 1978 after 2 growing seasons, flowering began in several Siberian iris progenies.

In 1979 major renovations included redesigning of the Siberian Iris bed and a prominent section of the Tall Bearded Iris featuring introductions of the 1960's and the 1970's. Plants were augmented by private donors and the Canadian Iris Society. The Auxiliary provided funding through a scholarship fund for a University of Guelph Student for the summer to maintain the perennial garden and prepare detailed records of the collection.



In 1980 The Canadian Iris Society's W.J. Moffat trophy for the championship seedling in the annual iris show went to the RBG for a new Siberian Iris seedling bred by **Mrs. Brown**.

In 1983 new acquisitions donated by the Canadian Iris Society and some of its members were planted. The bed featuring the American Iris Society's "100 best" was updated and 21 plants added to the species in the collection.

In 1995 the Siberian Iris Collection was renovated and over 150 new cultivars added.

2003: The Canadian Iris Society hosted the AIS Siberian Iris Convention.

2004 :Budget cuts led to staff cuts and the weeds were a continuing problem.

2006 and 2007: The Iris beds were renovated to remove the weeds and new soil was added. The bed layout was a fleur-de-lis carefully cut from within the turf mat. While beautiful from the overlook or an airplane, it proved impractical to maintain and difficult for visitors to navigate. In addition, the soil mixture used for the planting beds was not conducive to healthy plant growth and rot became an issue.

New Beginnings

2010: Bridge closures limited access to the Laking Gardens for over a year. Staff used this time to plan and completely renovate the Iris Gardens once again.

2012-13: The irises and peonies were removed and stored in holding beds. A new layout was designed with a return to the more traditional rectangular beds. The soil was replaced with more suitable fast draining planting mix. New and up to date varieties were purchased from local growers and planted in the fall of 2013. They feature the Dykes Medal winners along with historical irises illustrating the development of the species. The collection will once again feature award-winning bearded iris and hundreds of others including miniature bearded, dwarf bearded, intermediate bearded, border bearded, tall bearded, Siberian, Spuria and Species iris.

Future plantings will include the Introductions of Canadian hybridizers. Plants with unusual colours and form will be included. Species irises will demonstrate the morphology of wild and natural plants. There are currently shortages in the 20's, 30's and 40's beds. Members who have extras of these cultivars from these decades are encouraged to make them available. The herbaceous and tree peonies have been relocated to flank the Iris beds and the Clematis collection will be featured around the Gazebo creating a perfect spot for wedding photos.

Carlo Balistrieri, Head of Horticulture, along with **Alex Henderson**, Curator of Collections are responsible for moving this project forward. The Canadian Iris Society members and growers have been consulted and encouraged to mentor the ongoing development of the gardens.

Alex is looking forward to the co-operation of Iris fanciers and staff to validate the individual varieties bringing back the vitality of the gardens. This process will take several years, both to catalog and replace the cultivars as necessary. Long term goals include membership in NAPCC
<http://www.publicgardens.org/napcc>.

The North American Plant Collections Consortium (NAPCC) is a network of botanical gardens and arboreta working to coordinate a continent-wide approach to plant germplasm preservation; to promote high standards of plant collections management; and to develop nomenclatural standards in co-operation with the Royal Horticultural Society
<http://www.rhs.org.uk/Plants/Plant-science/RHS-Herbarium/Nomenclature>.

A nomenclatural standard is the specimen or image that forms the definitive reference to interpret the name of a cultivar. The Royal Botanical Gardens collection conserves the diversity of the genus, securing this plant material for use in future breeding programs. As members of the Canadian Iris Society, we are proud of our longstanding partnership with the Royal Botanical Gardens.

Did you know?

In 1953 removing daily spent flowers from the Irises consumed approximately 400 man hours, which paid dividends in public appreciation.



Southern Ontario Iris Society

Join the society that specializes in one of the flowers you love

1 Year	\$10.00	
3 Years	\$20.00	Save \$10.00

Join both societies (CIS & SOIS) and save

1 year	\$20.00
3 Years	\$50.00

Coming Events:

Sunday June 1, 2014 SOIS Picnic Plus
(not fully finalized yet. Watch next issue.)

Sunday June 8, 2014 SOIS Flower Show
9.00 a.m. – 11.00 a.m. Setup
11.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m. Judging
1.00 p.m. – 3.00 p.m. Open for public
Royal Botanical Gardens, Rm 5
680 Plains Road West, Burlington. ON



News and Newsworthy

By Ed Jowett

I am too early as most have not released their 2014 introductions but I do have a few from **Paul Black**. *Die Laughing* I would say it is a light streaked Grape in colour and appears to be a lengthy bloomer by the pictures.

(Picture 1 was taken May 29/11, Picture 2 was taken June 6/11, and Picture 3 was taken June 6/11 – nine days later.)



Deal or No Deal A nice Bitone with good branching. Yellow or tan standards with violet falls. Buds looking black before opening.



Ready for My Close Up If the picture is true colour this I believe is the closest to red as we have seen. I questioned the name and this is its proper name.



Fabulous Fortune I would class this as another rich coloured Bitone. Falls look like they could be close to black with copper tone standards and orange beard.



Three Part Harmony This looks like another soft tone Bitone of yellowish green falls and nice pink standards



Send us your articles: The editor would appreciate contributions to the newsletter from the general membership. If you have news of an Iris event; or looking for a particular variety or type of Iris; growing or cultivation advice. If you have plants to sell or anything you would like to share. Send them to the editor for submission. This way we can make our newsletter bigger and of more interest to our readers. (For address see inside front cover.)



INTERSPECIES HYBRIDS – FASCINATIONS AND DOUBTS

By Lech Komarnicki

Most of the gardeners speaking about irises think of Tall Bearded ones. There is however a big enough group of enthusiasts for other bearded or beardless irises. Within the latter there is a group interested in wide hybrids, fascinated by new plants coming from crossing different species.

The fascination is easy to understand. The cross made for the first time resembles a journey to an unknown land. The breeder cannot predict what will be at the end – the success or the disappointment. Success means that a new plant is created, and the breeder will await with excitement which characteristics from which parent the new iris will inherit in hope that it will be an addition to the beauty of the irises. Of course even the most inconspicuous new hybrid has its special value for our knowledge of irises but some particularly successful ones, like tetraploid *sibbaldia* or tetraploid *versicolor* (both introduced by Tomas Tamberg) turned out to be excellent garden plants with big decorative value and it seems in the near future these irises may form garden classes of their own. Thanks to their fertility they allow the creation of breeding lines. Some other hybrids, though sterile, bring into the iris world new forms and colours and they make good impressions in the gardens.

The fascination is less strong now among enthusiasts of bearded irises. The new species were added to the melting pot about 80 years ago and many generations separate the modern cultivars from the species. In the last 40 years adding *I. aphylla* to the breeding of IB, MDB or MTB has not been treated as wide cross but only as a technical operation which will diminish the size of seedlings or will bring fertility to the groups of often sterile cultivars. Aril hybrids have had garden categories of their own for many years so these crosses are examined and appreciated. The crosses of diploid *I. pallida* with *I. tectorum*, also known for many years, do not cause much ado any more. *I. variegata* crossed with *I. tectorum* produced some pods full of seeds, however none germinated. I know that Dr. Tamberg planned a cross of tetraploid TB with tetraploid *I. tectorum*, but the converted clone was very prone to rot and it seems that the plan was not realised. Such a hybrid would certainly be interesting and probably fertile so it would have important consequences if it existed. I found also that in 1993 Dr. Samuel Norris offered, through ECO Garden, seeds of a tetraploid clone of *I. tectorum*, but there is no information if anybody grew and used the seedlings.

A similar situation exists in some beardless groups. In Subseries Sibiricae practically all cultivars are hybrids of *I.sibirica* and *I.sanguinea*. The third existing species, *I.typhifolia* was introduced into breeding more than 20 years ago. Nobody cares about the original crosses. The only important exception (though known probably only to the specialists) is 'Drei Quelle' of Tomas Tamberg who combined in this iris all three species on the tetraploid level.

It is uncertain if all the species from Subseries Chrysographes were used in breeding but they all cross easily with each other and breeders most probably do not think they make wide crosses while they are planning new garden plants.

In the Series Californicae, Hexagonae and Spuriae (the tall group) all the species cross within their groups without any problems. In the tall group of Spuriae sometimes hybrids of the 40 chromosome species with the 38 or 44 chromosome ones have limited fertility but (according to Ben Hager) only in the first or second generation. The third and next generations are fully fertile.



SPEC X "Bkit Paryski" (a) (*I.virginica* tet x *Slav.Beauty*)

In Series Spuriae only the group of tall species is homogeneous. Nothing is known about the hybridising between the small species and it seems they are not compatible with the tall ones.

For me the wide crosses and fascinations began with Series Laevigatae which is completely different. From five species belonging here one is tetraploid, the rest are diploids. Every species has a different chromosome count, different look and crosses between them are not easy, showing that their relationship is not so close though *I. virginica* is one of the parents of *I. versicolor*. Some botanists maintain that *I. ensata* should be excluded from the Series in view of differences in morphology and cultural needs. From the other side there are opinions based on the DNA examination that *I. setosa* should be included to the Series.

Even more difficult, and so more fascinating, are usually the interseries crosses and these are the most interesting, no matter if pure species were used for crossing or garden cultivars. Despite the systematics, the hybrids between the Sibiricae and Chrysographes should belong here. They are the typical results of wide crosses though unfortunately listed as plain Siberians.

Here also the doubts begin. Many people try to obtain new hybrids. They vary between experienced breeders or just pollen daubers and written sources are full of information of the “hybrids are known” kind. A few years ago I began to collect information planning to describe the groups of these hybrids and to publish the results. I was amazed how strong is the wishful thinking which leads some hybridizers to register hybrids which in reality do not exist.



SPEC X “Dla Eweliny” (a) *I. xversilae*vX (*reversicolor*x*I. pseudacorus* tet)



SPEC X “Bkit Paryski”

In the first AIS Check List I found a cultivar supposedly from the cross TB x *I.versicolor*. In the description there was no word about the features coming from the alleged pollen parent. The iris was registered as TB. No comments.

In the middle of 1930s two breeders registered four cultivars coming from the cross of a *Spuria* x *Louisiana* iris or from the reciprocal cross. One of these cultivars was later crossed with *I.pseudacorus*. All of the hybrids in the descriptions seem to be similar to the pod parent. According to the *Spuria* Check List 1985: “Validity of the parentage is questioned as other hybridizers have not been able to successfully duplicate the cross”. Results of the Kew investigations show clearly that the *Spuriae* belong to the second group of beardless irises and its relationship with the first group is not so close. The above mentioned plants probably do not exist any more and no trial is possible but nothing allows us to include them on the list of true hybrids.

Tracing the true hybrids is not an easy task. Among “known hybrids” I have found *Spuriae* hybrids with *I.ensata*, *I.laevigata*, *I.pseudacorus*, *I.fulva*, *I.nelsonii*. I could not find any details, any confirmation, any proof, for any of them. It is interesting, that *I.foetidissima* was never mentioned as a partner though it is the only species which is related to *Spurias* and the reported hybrid with *I.graminea* (predicted by G. I. Rodionenko) was credible.

Many other hybrids, mentioned as known, though they would not seem impossible, also do not figure in any Check List and the first source of the information is not known. However it should be said that hybrids of *I.laevigata* with *I.ensata* were obtained by Dr. Yabuya only in 1975 by embryo culture and the tetraploid (amphidiploid) clones of these hybrids in 1985 also by embryo culture. It means that achieving such hybrids without laboratory techniques seems hardly probable. So the earlier reports about *I.laevigata* x

I.ensata hybrids are not true. It is strange however that so much unconfirmed information finds its way even into serious publications. I found an interesting paragraph in Akira Horinaka's book of *Iris laevigata*: "Earlier a horticulturist Takayoshi Asakawa wrote in his book that the hybrid of *I. laevigata* with the Japanese iris (*I. ensata*) blooms at the beginning of June. When I asked him about it, he said that a hybridiser Toichi Ito had told him so shortly before his death. Perhaps Ito wished to produce this hybrid." So somebody's wish may change into "I heard of..." and this statement in turn into "hybrids are known". In Japan an old hybridizer informed a western breeder that he obtained a hybrid of *I.sibirica* with *I.tectorum*. It seemed rather improbable and indeed Hiroshi Shimizu when asked about it answered that such hybrid is not known in Japan. I must confess that when I heard about so strange hybrid I tried to repeat the cross. *I.tectorum* x Siberian gave no pod. Siberian diploid used as pod parent produced full pod of seeds and twelve seedlings bloomed two years later. All pure siberians.

There was an active rumour several years ago about supposed *I.ensata* x *I.sibirica* hybrids. The breeder had even in support of her statement the chromosome counts made independently by two persons. But the chromosome count is not always definitive. There are variations inside the species. I remember I saw years ago the laboratory results of chromosome counts of plants of *I.pumila* – they varied from 29 to 34. Dr. Currier McEwen, who had received the plants of supposed hybrids for a trial, wrote in his report that he could not find any intermediate features. I am quite sure that if a plant from an interseries cross was showing no features of the pollen parent and in addition on a diploid level was fully fertile then this plant was NOT a hybrid. And forgive me please all pleno titulo AIS judges but I shall follow the opinion of the great specialist author of books on Siberian and Japanese Irises, and not your votes.



SPEC X "Dla Eweliny"

It happens sometimes that a breeder obtains from a cross between different species a pod full of seeds which give seedlings like the mother plant though the flower of the pod parent was properly prepared. I have described above such an occurrence from my own experience. This was also the case of numerous *I. lactea* x different *Spuria* crosses made by a very experienced breeder: B. Charles Jenkins. Nearly all the crosses produced pods full of seeds. All the seedlings were pure *I. lactea*, a few had twin plants which were *spurias*. Dr. Jenkins was bold enough to admit that his experiment failed. The breeder came to the conclusion that it was due to the apomixis. But why apomixis which was not observed before in *I. lactea* or in *Sibiricae*? Usually the properly prepared but unpollinated flowers never give seeds. So seemingly the wind cannot be the pollinator. Is there any unknown factor in the germinating pollen which can cause the female gametes to double and form self embryos and in consequence seeds? What can trigger the apomixis? As for now I cannot find any answer. Inexperienced breeders, who would not examine such seedlings in search of the features of the male parent, may claim that hybrids were obtained. The fertility of the seedlings, particularly if they are diploids, should suggest no hybridisation occurred.

The last case is for me very strange. Dr. G. I. Rodionenko in the last version of his classification of irises transferred *I. verna* to the Subgenus *Iris*. The species has on the falls minuscule hairs which may be treated as the beards. To support this decision Rodionenko added that there are hybrids of *I. pallida* with *I. verna*. To the same conclusion came the scientists from Kew Laboratory which investigated DNA of irises. They also used as an additional argument the existence of hybrids with *I. pallida*.

Let us check the alleged hybrids. The *Iris Encyclopaedia* in the last note about hybrids of *I. pallida* with beardless irises quotes in parenthesis “(probably in error)” and then 7 names of cultivars plus 3 of $\frac{1}{4}$ *I. pallida* hybrids. Nine of the cultivars mentioned, when found in the SIGNA Check List of *Iris* and in the AIS *Iris* Check Lists, turned out to be registered as TB. No word about *I. verna* in the pedigrees. In seven cases both parents are known and none was *I. verna*. In two cases the pollen parent is unknown but it seems improbable that TB crossed with a species 4-6 cm high (smaller than *I. pumila*) would give a TB. There is in a Check List only one hybrid cultivar mentioned, it is ‘Pal-verna’, with the comment which says “Lack of *I. verna* characteristics suggests *I. pallida* was accidentally selfed”. So do the hybrids indeed exist?

Many crosses were attempted only for scientific reasons, others from curiosity. Their purpose was to prove if such a cross was possible. Some hybrids do not exist, some others proved to be without garden values. Many crosses yet wait to be tried, others need to be confirmed. However there are many hybrids which are proved and beautiful and enrich the glorious assortment of garden irises. From these comes the fascination. These pictures are just some of Lech’s hybridizings.



Join the American Iris Society

\$25.00 one year, \$60 for three years

Send payment to:

Tom Gormley—AIS Membership Secretary
205 Catalonia Avenue
P.O. Box 177
DeLeon Springs, FL 32130

Phone and Fax: 386-277-2057

Email: aismemsec@irises.org

or visit: www.irises.org for more details



Your new AIS RVP's for the regions aligned with Canada:

Region 1 Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, **Newfoundland/Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island**

Norine Veal nsveal@aol.com

30 Franklin Park East, Rockville, CT 06066

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138 Cresthaven Dr, Cheektowaga, NY 14225

Region 13 Washington, Oregon, Alaska, **British Columbia, Yukon**

Alan Brooks ebb1012@aol.com

Region 21 Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, **NWT, Nunavut, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba**

Ron Cosner keighley15@msn.com

328 Central Ave SE, Lemars, IA 51031

AIS newly updated web site: www.irises.org

Coming Dates to Remember

2014 Board Meeting Dates

Sunday Apr 13, 2014 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

(Due to the RBG having a show on April 27th and Easter being April 20th, the meeting has been set for April 13th.)

Sunday Jul 20, 2014 1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

2014 Publication Dates

May 2014

August 2014

November 2014

Vol 58 No 2 Spring Issue

Vol 58 No 3 Summer Issue

Vol 58 No 4 Fall Issue

Take this fun garden quizz and see what you know.

1. What type of bulb is an iris?

- ☐ Corm
- ☐ True bulb
- ☐ Rhizome
- ☐ 40 Watt

2. The best shaped hole to plant a tree ins?

- ☐ Bucket shaped
- ☐ As deep and wide as you can get someone else to dig it
- ☐ Pear shaped
- ☐ Bowl shaped

3. Which of the following is not a means of plant reproduction?

- ☐ Seeds
- ☐ Bulbs
- ☐ A blind date
- ☐ Corms

— www.gardenhumor.com

Canadian Sources for Irises

We provide this listing as a resource for our members and readers. This listing does not necessarily imply endorsement of the businesses by Canadian Iris Society (CIS). The sources listed have paid donations/contributions to help support the society. If you know of someone who should be added to the list please send the information to the editor. The listings in BOLD are members of the CIS

Chapman Iris

RR #1 8790 Wellington Road 124,
Guelph, ON N1H 6H7
Phone: 519-856-0956
Email: chuck@chapmaniris.com
Website: www.chapmaniris.com
On-line catalogue: \$3.00

McMillen's Iris Garden

RR1 285112 Pleasant Valley Rd.
Norwich ON N0J 1P0
Phone 1-866-468-6508
Email: info@mcmillensirsgarden.ca
e-mail or call for Price List

Tara Perennial Farm

123 Concession # 6, RR2
Tara, ON N0H 2N0
Call for availability/price list
Marion Kuhl 519-934-3447
Website: www.taraperennialfarm.com

The Plant Farm

177 Vesuvius Bay Road
Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 1K3
Phone: 250-537-5995
Email: hello@theplantfarm.ca
Website: www.theplantfarm.ca
On-line catalogue

Trails End Iris Gardens

3674 Indian Trail, RR#8
Brantford, Ontario N3T 5M1
Phone: 519-647-9746
Email: bob@trailsendiris.com
Website: www.trailsendiris.com
On-line catalogue

Liaisons and Regions



British Columbia Iris Society (BCIS)

Ted Baker, 185 Furness Rd.,
Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 1Z7
ph: 250-653-4430 www.bc-iris.org

Can-West Iris Society

B.J. Jackson, 2421 McDonald Avenue, Brandon, MB R7B 0A6,
ph: 204-725-4696 email: jacksonb@mts.net

Southern Ontario Iris Society (SOIS)

CIS - AIS Affiliate

Chris Hollinshead, 3070 Windwood Drive,
Mississauga, ON L5N 2K3
ph: 905-567-8545 e-mail: cdniris@gmail.com

London Region Iris Society

Gloria McMillen, RR#1 Norwich, ON N0J 1P0
ph: 519 468-3279 email: gmcmlen@execulink.com
Please inquire for membership and group activities.

cis website
www.cdn-iris.ca

up-to-date information on CIS activities and many useful links to other iris sites and information

Canadian Iris Society
1960 Sideroad 15, RR#2
Tottenham, ON L0G 1W0



Walker Ross

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