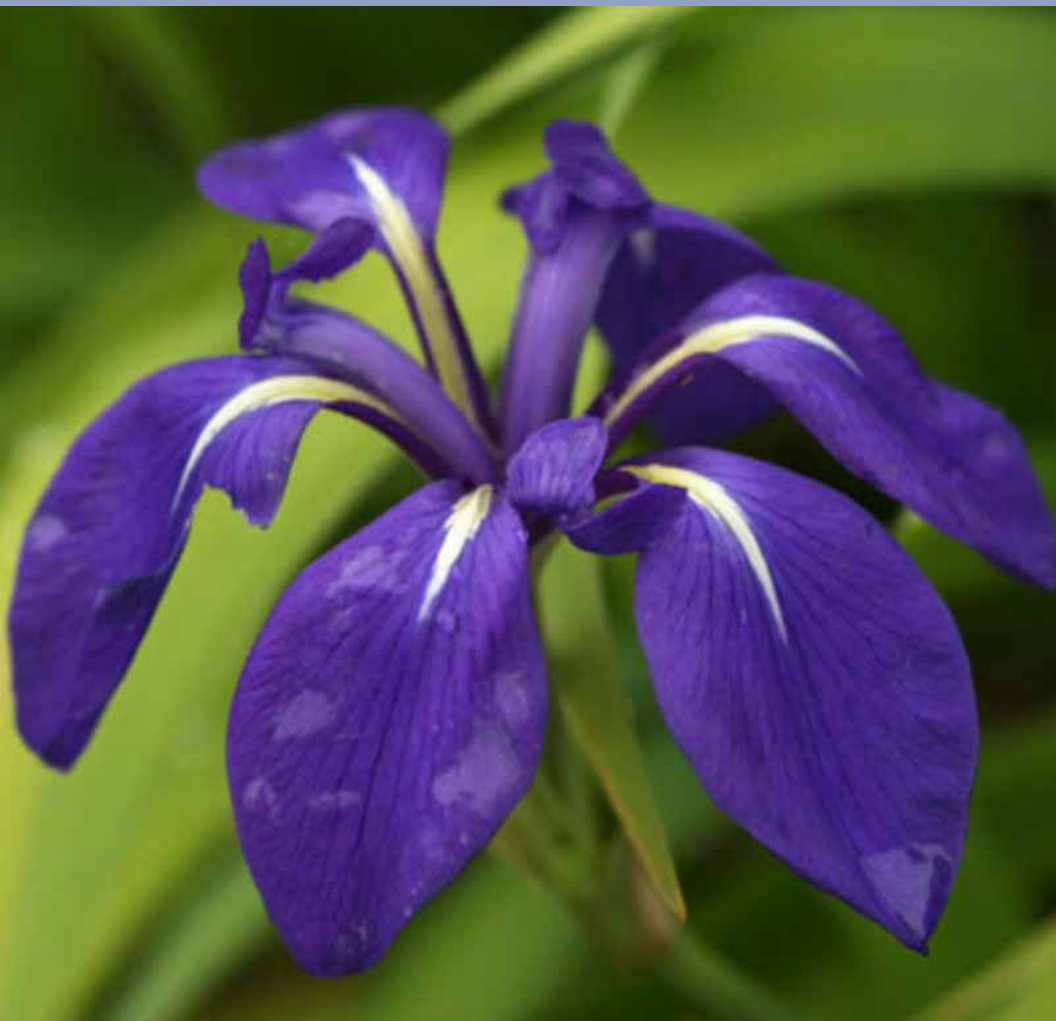


Canadian Iris Society

cis newsletter

Autumn 2014 Volume 58 Issue 4



Canadian Iris Society

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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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Cover Photo: *I. laevigata* **Royal Cartwheel** (Reed '81)

Photo courtesy: Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden

Canadian Iris Society Newsletter

President's Report

By Ed Jowett

As I sit to write this report I am reminded of many things; the things of our short summer, the pleasures of gardening and serving our members with their new purchases; and then the thoughts of the cold weather coming.

I would like to thank all those who continue to support our purchase plan. This year we had a number of current introductions at a very reasonable price. I'm in wonderment how to keep this going or to improve it. This year we had a number of rhizomes left over which a member said she would purchase any leftovers. Most of the leftovers were the new introductions so I guess this tells us something. I guess when you think about thirty six (36) left out of over two hundred and fifty (250) it is not bad but at the small markup we place on the purchase in order to give the members good value for their money it makes a big difference as to if we break even or not. This is not to make large profits but to try and make a little to help pay for our bulletin. In the past three (3) years we have sold over two hundred and fifty seven (257) separate cultivars.

The beardless iris we tried this year and found not too much interest, but some sold

out and others not so well. Our suppliers of these were very good to us and only charged us for what we actually sold and not what we ordered so we had no loss. Many thanks to them. This year (2015) I am looking to have Canadian hardy plants.

I had letters from a couple of our members with regards to visits to Ontario and they wrote an article about what they seen in this province (published



Mother Earth

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



[International Mosaiculture Montreal 2003 - entrance sign](#)

further on in this bulletin.) Jim Ball of Regina sent me a note about his growing which I published in Spring of 2011. Another member sent me an email to tell me the bore had got his rebloomers but he still got some actual bloom. I have been growing some supposedly rebloomers for the last 10 years and this year is first time I had one (1) rebloom a single flower. I don't know if they don't like my soil or if it is crowded after first bloom or what, but I don't give up. I was at a Hort meeting last night and a master gardener told us part of our trouble is that we cultivate the soil too much. ►

Southern Ontario Iris Society

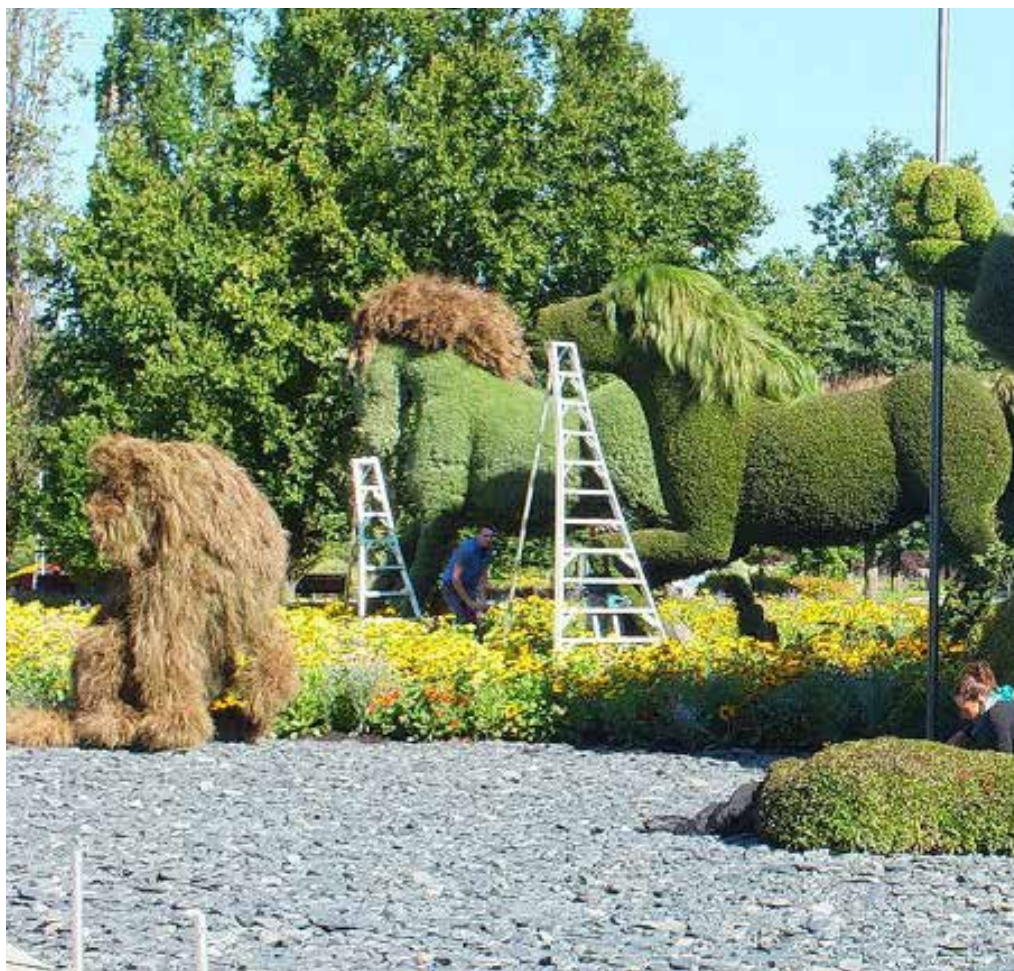
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Man Who Planted Trees

I was sorry that we had to cancel both of our shows this year due to the fact judges were not available in the region.

At the AGM, we were fortunate to gain a new Board member. Welcome aboard Charlie Blakeman!

On short notice, we sent out an announcement about showing a slide presentation on mosaiculture which was very good; but the work and time involved to produce these structures is a good reason why they only hold them every three (3) years, and different countries. I would like to thank Eclipse for their effort in design and editing work on our bulletins, which has us highly recognized in the iris world. Thanks again Vaughn.





Something different completely away from flowers.

This was told to me by a blacksmith friend of mine and it is working for me. I suffer badly with arthritis. In the mornings my knees are so tight I cannot bend them for a while and this has caused me to be vaulted down my porch steps. He told me to rub my joints with horse liniment! I laughed; then he said you used it all the time on the race horses. Right after every race or heavy workout we would rub the legs from above the knees down. So I thought what the heck—try it. I purchased “Absorbine Veterinary Liniment” from what in this province is known as the TSC store. This is a farm supply chain and I am sure it is carried in other farm chains in other provinces. I have been using this twice a day now for two (2) weeks and I can firmly say I walk a lot freer now, right away in the mornings with very little pain. I’m sold. What is good enough for my horse is good enough for me...

Ed Jowett

Musings From Manitoba



By: B. J. Jackson

(jacksonb@mts.net)

It is most definitely Autumn in southwestern Manitoba. The trees are mostly bare and we have received several frosts although many plants in the gardens are still looking good, particularly the heucheras and sedums. There are few reports of rebloom from CWIS members across the prairies this year. Two members in Winnipeg and one in Saskatchewan *Forever Blue* (Chapman, 1997) blooming in October and I just received a report from the Gimili area that *Wizard of Hope* (Chapman, 2001) bloomed the first day of November and then got snowed in. Although there was one slight frost in the middle of September, it wasn't until early October that we received the first killing frost so the late orders received were planted and all passed the tug test just last week. Indeed, our warmest day of the entire year was recorded on September 25th at 34 degrees. Many are calling it the summer that tried but never really was.



I did manage to get several iris moved out of the flooded former nursery bed this summer, and most of the plants dug and redistributed to other areas as well as many donated to other public gardens in the city in August. MTB *Bii O' Afton* (Guild, 1967), rescued last year after blooming in 8 inches of standing water and not showing any sign of growth in the spring, has now sent out a small fan so I am cautiously optimistic that it may survive. All the others are doing well in their new homes but I was very worried for that one.

Most of the other plants were dug and redistributed to other areas as well as many donated to public gardens in the city in August. The campanula rapunculoides which had totally overtaken one of the beds in the flooded areas is in the process of being eradicated. Anything taken out of that area had to be completely washed off of all the dirt and dipped in bleach 'just in case' to ensure that this scourge wasn't passed on inadvertently. Right now the only remaining plants in the affected areas are MDB and SDB iris around the edges. Despite their wet conditions the last four growing seasons, most are still growing and in some cases thriving where they are, so they will be the last to go next year.

Not a single one of my planned crosses took this year although the bees did manage to produce a few. The ones I kept come from SDBs *Raspberry Tiger* (Black, 2009) and *Ruby Eruption* (Chapman, 1997) as well as MTBs *Easy* (Craig, 2005), *Look Here* (fisher, 2005), and *Dappled Pony* (Witt, 1980). In the 10 plus years I have grown it, this is the first pod ever on *Ruby Eruption*. Last year's seedlings from the British Iris Society seed exchange have been planted out and have settled in nicely. I hope to see bloom on them by 2016. And this year I have just one iris inside growing under the lights. Although the rhizome is firm and it has rooted in a pot, MTB *Juvenile Joy* (Black, 2014) has thus far refused to put out any new growth so just to be safe, I have moved it inside to hopefully stimulate it to do show some green.



Ruby Eruption

The CWIS members rhizome sale (our 10th annual) was well supported and for the second year in a row, we processed a record number of orders. The postal system's parcel service outdid themselves with many boxes of iris arriving in Saskatchewan and Alberta within a few days. That is not the normal way of things. As we plan for 2015 this coming winter, high on the list will be another member event and continuing education for our local judges. It usually takes a couple years of fundraising to be able to afford to sponsor such events given how far we are from anything and everyone in the iris world.

So what am I looking forward to for 2015? The first would have to be the AIS convention in **Portland Oregon, May 18-23**. That one is a must! The next is the **CWIS show and public rhizome sale in Winnipeg on June 14th**. I look forward to seeing this year's new acquisitions bloom next year (optimist that I am) and I hope to see the seedling I. halophylla that have been growing since 2012 in full bloom to justify all the space they are taking in the new garden. I also look forward to seeing my pseudatas bloom for the first time. It never gets old in the iris patch and hope springs eternal! I wish you all a moderate winter and best wishes for a happy and healthy holiday season.



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.

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The Iris Treasures of the Royal Botanical Gardens

by Jacquie McDonald

I have often thought how fortunate the iris lovers who live in Ontario are! Most of the commercial iris sellers are out in Ontario and have the Royal Botanical Gardens in Hamilton/Burlington, Ontario.

As a British Columbian living in the beautiful Okanagan Valley which is much like living in paradise, we have scenery one never tires of, rolling hillside vineyards meeting the refreshing blue lakes. The contrast of desert-like scenery and irrigated, verdant green hillside vineyards is stunning.

However, iris lovers in Eastern Canada have so many amazing opportunities to add to their iris collections and one that I was able to experience this past spring of 2014 was the Royal Botanical Gardens spring plant sale. (Irises!)



Liking Gardens new layout (2013)

As a member of the international iris Society The Historic iris Preservation Society I flew out to Ontario for the annual spring plant sale with hundreds of irises requested from the iris sale list by our members.

Dan Totino and the wonderful, hardworking staff and volunteers of the Auxiliary Plant Department kindly set aside all our iris orders ahead of the sale and prepared them for mailing to B.C.

I don't know if everyone is aware of the historical iris treasures of the RBG but it certainly piqued the attention of our historic iris group.



Of special interest are the many species and median irises available in the RBG collection. SDB's seem to be more popular in Canada due to the harsh Canadian climate and there were SDB's for sale that have no known or very hard to locate sources in the United States, such as *Truce*, *Baria*, *Fairy Flax*, *Delicate Air*, *Russet Dot*, Dark Fairy, *Bit of Chocolate*, *Skycaper*, *Sherlock*, *Fad*, *Briget* as well as many tall and intermediate bearded iris that are high on the list of desirable and hard to find such as *Java Beauty*, *Holiday Flame*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Michelle Taylor*. Could go on and on! The RBG has an amazing species iris collection as well.

I met **Don McQueen** and **Nancy Kennedy** at the plant sale which was great! I've enjoyed Don's iris photography in our magazine of Historic Iris Preservation Society for some time now as well as the Iris Fix emails with photos!



Crowd at the Sale

The next day I wandered around the RBG gardens and got lost in the enormous cemetery that borders the property, how I longed for one of those ride on golf carts vehicles that the gardeners were using!

I was able to view the beaver dams and the wonderful birds in the swamp land habitat area and of course the Laking Gardens.

The newly renovated Laking Gardens (photo included) by the summer of 2015 should be sensational. Make sure you enjoy viewing their iris garden in the coming season.

It was a wonderful and memorable experience. Thank you to the RBG for sharing your amazing iris collection with our iris group.

The new layout is not quite as large as original Note the large grass area on sides was not that large originally.

[Editor's Note: See an explanation (next page) of how your Society contributed to this cause.]



Plants ready for sale

Society's Contribution to RBG Iris Collection

By Ed Jowett

For many years the society donated funds to RBG to purchase new cultivars for their gardens

In the year of 1973 we got a new rep from RBG to keep the society aware of what was going on at RBG. This person was **Dave Schmidt**. We changed at Dave's suggestion to save both the duplication of purchases and effort so from that time on till Dave's retirement in 2003 we did the following.

We used to hold a plant sale each summer which really was only for close members benefits.

Dave and I would sit down in early spring and pick out what the RBG would really like. This was mostly Irises which had received awards or HM. We would place orders with the suppliers and when they arrived the society would pay their share of the bill. Dave had made arrangements with the RBG that the society have a piece of land to grow the newly purchased irises. We would split these each year and sell them at our sale. After the 3rd year we donated these iris to the RBG gardens. However after some problems arising with staff doing work for the society and not all society's.

We were now faced with how to raise funds in order to operate. That was when we came up with a couple of new ideas to be of service to all members. First we tried the share program which enabled members to grow irises to be sold to other members. But after a short time we realized this did not work to well. The book-keeping of who had what, and were there any increases for the sales, and what had died just became too much. So we went to plan B. We made an arrangement with a vendor very early in the season usually before their new catalogue is available that we can purchase x number of cultivars and quantity of each with cultivars to be determined as soon as possible. We then establish our selling price to the members and publish the catalogue in our Spring news bulletin. This seems to be working and makes us a very small profit to help our operating cost. There are always some not sold and we have given these to the RBG to add to their collection.

If anyone would like some special cultivar; drop us a line and we will consider it. We are open to new ideas.

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Dependable Dwarfs

Part 3

by Don McQueen



Part 3 finalizes a series of illustrations highlighting MDB or SDBs which have become my favourites because they are just as described - dependable.



ELFIN MAGIC

MDB A&D Willott, Ohio 1990

Always one of the very first dwarfs to set out bloom, the 'Elfin' has only missed blooming twice since 1998, the year it was acquired. The first snowy white with lemon-shouldered bloom usually appears between May 2nd and May 8th.

[Don's digital April 4, 2012]



BROWN SPECTACLE and SURPRISE ORANGE

SDBs: W. Welch, Indiana 1976 and H. Collins, New Zealand 1974

This pair of vigorous increasers bloom in combination with one another, normally during the week of May 5th, just as the magnolia flower petals begin to fall. They have blossomed every year since acquisition in 1991 and 1989 respectively.

[Don's digital May 6, 2009][Don's digital April 4, 2012]



RED HEART

SDB A. Brown, Virginia 1966

Once it began to increase into a large clump, the effect became impressive, even though the soft bluish-grey standards and banding are not dominant shades of colour. Acquired in 1989, the dwarf has bloomed consistently, peaking about the week of May 10th.

[Don's digital May 20, 2011]



FROSTED OLIVES

SDB W. Jones, Oklahoma 1976

This carpet of pastel bi-colours faithfully does its thing beginning about May 10th, failing only twice to put on its show since acquired in 1989. Colours will vary according to either light intensity or the time of day.

[Don's digital May 1, 2010]



MOON SUNDAE

SDB B. Blyth, Australia 1975

That burnished texture and rosy purple shading, enhanced by those bright blue beards have always been a magnet for garden visitors. Bloom has always begun during the second week of May since it joined my family of dwarfs in 1992.

[Don's digital May 7, 2009]



WHEELS

SDB B. Blyth, Australia 1977

Another impressive blue-bearded Australian, set this time in a background of ochre and brown, has been moved around several times since first planted it in 1990, but I can count on bloom about May 7th each year.

[Don's digital May 10, 2013]



Irises for Wet Places

By John Moons



Irises will grow in a wide variety of environments. Bulb irises can be out of the soil for quite a while during their dormant period. When they are replanted and conditions are right, they will grow and delight us with their flowers. Irises that have rhizomes can be out of the ground for a while, but they usually don't like to dry out. They need to be wrapped in moist wrapping material when they are shipped.

There are a number of irises that will grow happily in or near water and others that like only damp or even wet soil. Others can grow in water only part of the year but like to have a dry period.

In this article I do not pretend to give a complete list of all the irises for wet places.

The irises that belong to the *laevigatae* series all like moisture. For a lot of irises, short dark cross veins are a sign that they do well in wet ground or standing water.

The first water-loving iris that comes to mind is the *Iris pseudocorus* or **Yellow Flag**. I grew up in Holland where we saw them along the canals. They can grow in the water but are also at home in drier soil. Here in Ontario the *pseudocorus* is considered an invasive species and we are not encouraged to plant them. The seeds germinate easily. The conservation agencies do not like to see them along water ways from where they can spread easily downstream. *I. pseudocorus* is a very strong grower and is winter hardy to Zone 6 in Ontario. The plants grow to 1.20 meters high when planted in water and the flower stems can be 1.75 m. or more. In an ordinary flower bed they will be lower. The species flower is yellow, but there is also a white cultivar (*Alba*). Most of the other cultivars have a bit of brown or purple in the flowers. We tried them in our flower beds but soon moved them to our ponds because of their enthusiastic growth habit and the fact that they soon became taller than everything else.

The *Iris ensata* (syn. *kaempferi*) originates in Japan, Northern China and Eastern Siberia, so they are hardy to at least – 20 degrees C. Japanese breeders have been working with *ensatas* for hundreds of years and there are now many hundreds of cultivars. The basic flower colours are blue and purple but there are also whites and pinks. Because so much breeding has taken place, there is a huge diversity in shapes, forms and colouring. There are even truly double flowers. After the *ensata* was crossed with the *I. pseudocorus*, yellow appeared in the flowers. The *ensata* are among the biggest of all iris flowers with

some that are 30 cm. across. The flower stems can be up to 90 cm tall. They are happy to stand in 5 cm of water. They can also do well in pots with standing water but protect the pots in the winter. (The plants might not freeze but your pots will crack.)

Both *Iris ensata* and *Iris laevigata* are called Japanese Irises. You can tell the *ensata* apart from the *laevigata* by feeling the leaves. The *ensata* has a distinct midrif, whereas the *laevigata* does not. The *laevigata* comes from Eastern Asia. It grows in swamps and on the edge of water. It can stand in water year round. The *laevigatas* have never been as popular as the *ensata* so the ones we see are closer to the species. The flower stems are 30 – 70 cm. high. The main colours are shades of blue purple and violet. There are also white forms. When they are happy they can rebloom.

The *laevigata* are reported to be easy to grow. They are hardy to – 20 degrees C. Of course winter hardiness is relative. If you have a guaranteed snow cover, they will survive in colder places.

Two other irises from the *laevigatae* series come from North America. The *I. versicolor* and the *I. virginica* will grow on the edge of the water but they do not like their roots in the water. The two irises are quite similar. The *versicolor* is happier in the more northerly regions. The *virginica* has a yellow patch on the falls. Both will also grow on drier soil, but they will not get as big as they do when they grow in damp conditions.



Iris ensata Ruffled Dimitri July 9 2014

The versicolor leaves can grow up to 80 cm high but the virginicas can reach twice that height. The flower stems are only 90 cm high. The colours are mostly blue violet, but there are also white, and reddish-violet forms. They can have nice veining.

The series Hexagonae has 5 species of irises that grow in the south-eastern USA, the Louisiana irises. These irises can stand in a bit of water during the growing season but in their natural habitat the swamps dry up in the winter, giving them the dry period that they like. Louisianas should not be planted in a pond that is likely to freeze over in the winter. They like a damp spot with lots of organic material. The soil should be acidic. The species braevicaulis and fulva are said to be hardy to Zone 6. The Louisianas have a wide colour range. Blue and purple are the most common. White is also available. The fulvas and nelsonii have red orange and yellow colours. Four of the five species have crossed extensively with each other so even in the wild there is a vast range of colours. The species can be from 30 cm to 150 cm tall.

The Iris sibirica does not mind a damp location. They do well near a pond but do not grow in the water. They will also grow in drier locations but the plants should not be allowed to dry out in the summer. I will not write too much about sibiricas. Most of us iris-lovers are very familiar with them.

In the Spuriae group of irises there are several species that grow in damp soil and even in salt marches. They will also grow in drier conditions. The one spuria iris that comes to mind first is Iris orientalis. It will grow in both acid and alkaline soils and can form clumps that can be 150 cm across. The flower stems are higher than the leaves and can be 120 cm high. The flower colour is a combination of white and yellow. They can bloom for up to 4 weeks. Iris spuria is very variable when it comes to height, flower size and habit. The main colour is purple with its different shades. The flowers are up to 10 cm in diameter and sit on flower stems that can be up to 100 cm high in drier conditions, but 120 cm in wet conditions. The spuria comes from Europe and Western Asia. It is found mainly in bogs.

Iris foetidissima comes from Europe but has also been found in Western China. It is beardless. The flowers are not very big. They resemble a small spuria iris. The colours range from lavender to violet to pale yellow. They are interesting for their orange seeds. The seeds stick to the wings of the open seedpods for up to two months and can be used for dried flower arrangements. When the seeds eventually fall, they germinate easily. The foetidissima is very happy growing in deep and permanent shade near swamps, creeks and ponds. They have a strong smell when the leaves are bruised. Foetidissima is hardy to Zone 6. It naturalizes easily in an organic-rich soil. It can have problems with leafspot that can spread to other irises.



Books used for this article:

The Gardener's Iris Book by William Shear – Taunton Press

The Gardener's Guide to Growing Irises by Geoff Stebbings – Timber Press

Irises by Susan Berry – Running Press

Several issues of SIGNA, a publication of the Species Iris Study Group of North America

E.B. Williamson and the Williamson White Medal

(for Miniature Tall bearded Iris)

By Ann Granatier



Edward Bruce Williamson was a banker, a naturalist, world class authority on dragonflies and damselflies. And one of the most important hybridizers in the history of garden irises. Born in July 20 1877 in Marion Indiana, he attended Ohio State University, worked as Assistant Curator of Insects at the Carnegie Museum followed by teaching high school, and studied as a fellow at Vanderbilt University in 1900-1901.

He married **Anna Tripolet** in 1902, went to work at his father's bank as bank cashier in 1905, becoming President in 1918.

Growing irises soon after marriage, he began corresponding with **J.N. Gerard** who advised him that so many people had been breeding Tall Bearded, that their potential

for improvement had probably been exhausted. Gerard recommended that Williamson focus on breeding Aril Bred irises. If you tried to devise a list of the irises most difficult to breed in Indiana, you could not choose a better selection than this. Aril iris species are native to the arid areas of the Middle East where there is almost no summer rainfall.

In climates with summer rains the rhizomes will rot if they are not grown in protective frames or dug up and stored in a dry place until autumn. Although he had to re-order most of the aril species every year, he did manage to get several of them to flower and set seed. Finding the seedlings as difficult to keep alive as their parents, he then tried crossing aril species with common garden irises. He obtained 14 distinct aril bred seedlings using *Iris Susiana* as a pod parent. But the seedlings were all infertile. Although



E. B. WILLIAMSON

he gave names to four of the seedlings only one—*Cherokee Chief*—was still being grown in 1939.

Williamson's efforts to breed aril and aril bred stopped in 1920 when he gave his entire collection to **B.Y. Morrison** “to test out”. His work on Aril bred for more than a decade and a half is conclusive evidence that he had an iron will and phenomenal perseverance.

While working with aril irises, E. B. Williamson began hybridizing beardless and non-aril bearded irises. His method of hybridizing was always the same and it was sharply criticized by some of his fellow iris breeders. He used mixed pollen.

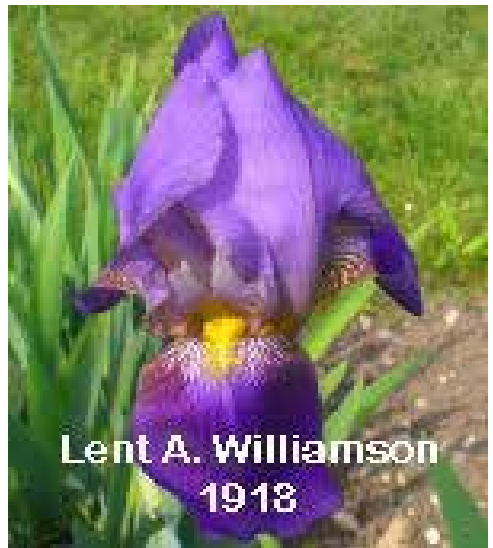
Williamson and his children, most often Mary and Jane, gathered pollen from many different cultivars and mixed it in small pillboxes. He or his children then applied the pollen to flowers of irises that he thought would be good parents. When he thought a specific cultivar had special potential to produce good seedlings, he would direct that every flower on every stalk be pollinated. Williamsons’ method was designed for mass production of seedlings. Others called it unscientific and devoid of philosophy, but his method produced some magnificent new iris cultivars.

E. B. Williamson’s rise to fame as an iris breeder came not from his work with aril or beardless irises. It happened when he bred a magnificent tall bearded iris cultivar that radically changed the course of iris development in America.

After pollinating over 500 blooms from one variety, only one set seed. The largest seed that he had ever seen. From this seed grew the plant he named after his father **Lent A. Williamson**. It was one of the first tetraploid tall bearded irises bred in America. Modern tall bearded irises are all tetraploid, which is to say they have four sets of chromosomes.

The transformation of tall bearded garden irises from diploids to tetraploids was not easy. Imagine the vision and persistence required to put pollen on 500 flowers of an iris that had always refused to set seed pods.

When Williamson decided to sell irises, he established a nursery called Longfield Iris Farm. He founded the nursery in 1918 and into partnership with **Paul Cook** in 1920. Paul Cook would later become one of the world’s most successful and distinguished iris hybridizers.





Tall Bearded *Lent A. Williamson* is called the great progenitor in the American Iris Society's book '*The World of Irises*'. Other iris breeders in America and Europe used *Lent A. Williamson* as a parent to produce scores of outstanding new cultivars, some of which are ancestral to modern tall bearded irises in a wide range of colours.

The most important of Williamson's irises derived from *Lent A. Williamson* were *Dolly Madison* and *Dorothy Dietz*.

If you take the time and effort to draw up a genealogical chart for almost any modern tall bearded iris growing in your garden today, the odds favour your finding *Dolly Madison* in its pedigree

and often finding it several times

The American Iris Society established the Williamson White Award *specifically for Miniature Tall Bearded irises in 1968. It became the **Williamson-White Medal** *in 1993. The award and medal were named to honour E.B. Williamson, however, perhaps it would be more fitting for the award to honor Mary Williamson, his daughter. It was she who named and introduced the irises her father called "runs", with the encouragement of Ethel Peckham, horticultural artist.

Mary Williamson's legacy to the world of irises is also unique. She ensured her father's best seedlings were preserved, named and registered and introduced after his death. She also preserved the irises her father called runs but that **Ethel Peckham** and she called 'table irises'. She was the first person to deliberately breed these table irises and obtain outstanding new cultivars. The miniature tall bearded class of irises is to a considerable extent Mary Williamson's legacy.



After her father's death in 1933, Mary Williamson continued to operate Longfield Iris gardens until 1958. Although there is some confusion about who was the hybridizer, her or her father, it is generally recognised that she became the first woman to breed an iris that won the American Dykes Memorial Award for *Wabash* an extremely popular historic still readily available. During the years she operated the nursery; it introduced many new irises for a number of distinguished iris hybridizers, including **Paul and Franklin Cook, Walter Welch, E.G.Lapham, Franklin Meade.**



E.B. Williamson's legacy to the world of irises is unique. Without his persistence and exuberance the course of iris development would have taken an different course He was the first American hybridizer to name and introduce a hybrid Louisiana *Dorothea K. Williamson*, a tetraploid tall bearded iris *Lent A. Williamson* and perhaps his most important contribution was to introduce garden irises that grew well everywhere.

*Alice White (1886-19690 led the campaign to have Miniature Tall Bearded Iris recognized by the American Iris Society

Introductions:-

1909 *Cherokee Maid*,

1918 *Lent A. Williamson*, and *Dorothea K. Williamson*

1920's *Grisette, Lycaena, Gay Hussar, cinnabar, Tuscany Gold, George J. Tribolet, Vesper Gold, Rhea*

1926 *Dolly Madison*, 1929 *Dorothy Dietz*

1930's *Beau Sabreur, Cantabile, Ethel Peckham, Baby Blue, Fallen Leaf, Salerosa, Brukor*

Edited and abridged by Ann Granatier from the **Classic Irises and the men and women who created them** written by Clarence E. Mahan



Autumn 2014 Garden Diggings:

by Christopher Hollinshead

"Garden Diggings" is a regular column in the CIS Newsletter. Chris Hollinshead lives in Mississauga, Ontario with his family, an ever-evolving garden and lots of irises. He may be reached by e-mail at: cdniris@gmail.com.

Another gardening season is winding down to a close everywhere across Canada. For some, in the prairies, it ends sooner and for others on the west coast, a little later. I hope that your gardening season was a fruitful experience for you. Every season is always a little different than the previous and each season brings new and interesting developments.

Frosted Olives ...an update

Last year I wrote of the SDB iris *Frosted Olives* (Jones 1977), a little iris that I had inadvertently subjected to a trial of survival. This spring I transplanted it from the pot in the photo and it grew well, although no bloom presented itself during the 2014 season. This was not surprising considering it spent the entire 2012 autumn/winter and 2013 growing season out of the ground! I am confident that in the 2015 season I will see this plant boom again. It always was a prolific bloomer in the past and we should see that again now that the plant is fully recovered. When it blooms in 2015 I will post a photo in this column and on our CIS website.

To refresh your memory or if you are a new reader/member, perhaps you have not seen the initial story/info previously, here is an edited redux of the item:

A gardening failure and success; This is the tale of a little iris that has the AIS registered name of *Frosted Olives* (Jones 1977). It is an SDB that I have grown for a number of years, a hardy and resilient little iris. Late in 2012 when reorganizing a section of the garden I dug this plant as it needed to be divided and replanted badly. I do this on a regular basis to a number of irises each season as they grow better if you do this every couple of years. All the plants were reset into the garden to overwinter and were doing quite nicely the following spring of 2013. The iris season came and went and was thoroughly enjoyed. Then, again late in the summer 2013 I dug a different group of irises to do the same dig-divide-replant routine as in 2012. In my travels around the garden I found *Frosted Olives* along with its garden marker, in a pot, no soil at all! The pot



was sort of hidden under the edge of a euonymus bush and had been there all previous winter, spring and summer. Poor *Frosted Olives*! I examined the rhizomes carefully and amazingly it looked as though they were trying to grow... almost imperceptible growth



Frosted Olives

but one or two millimeters of green visible. I was both sad and happy at the same time. Next was the thought that these little guys really deserved a chance to grow in the garden again, I carefully picked approximately ten of the very small shriveled rhizomes and potted them up, gave them a drink, full sun and waited and hoped. Around two weeks later the rhizomes definitely show signs of growth! Yes! Awesome little iris lives again. Over the next few weeks I kept a watchful eye on this iris on the back patio along with other new potted acquisitions. Eventually after approximately 6 weeks or so, Frosted Olives started to flourish with great growth of foliage (3 to 4 inches) and obviously some decent root growth where there was none at all a few weeks earlier. All this after almost a whole year out of the ground! Wow, some irises are super hardy!

Iris and pH explained:

What is pH? Iris will grow in a wide range of pH soil. This symbol is simply an indicator of acidity or alkalinity. Neutral pH (in the middle) is 7.0. Numbers below that indicate acid soil and numbers above that indicate an alkaline soil. Your county extension agent can give you a general idea what your pH should be in your area, but to know for sure, your soil should be tested. Inexpensive test kits are found at garden centers everywhere, and while they are not as accurate as a laboratory analysis they will get you pretty close. Optimum pH for iris is just under 7.0 (6.5-6.8). (slightly acidic)

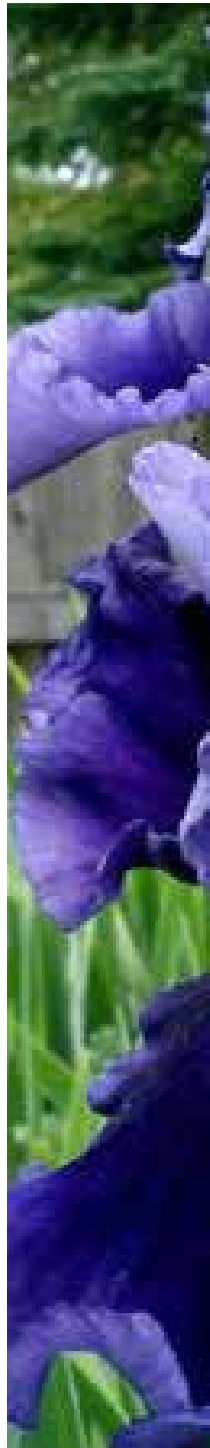
Soils at Cooley's Gardens in Silverton, Oregon are naturally about 5.9. Over the years, through crop rotation and applications of lime to the soil, we have raised our pH levels to about 6.6.

The primary effect of improper pH is reduced growth. This can lead to secondary problems such as impaired disease resistance, rotting, stunted bloom stalks and poor increase. Sometimes the foliage will be yellowish, indicating a chlorotic condition, or an iron deficiency.

The thing to keep in mind is that pH is a primary requirement. Adding fertilizer to a soil with an improper pH will temporarily boost the plant growth but it will not change the pH and the fertilizer will not be used efficiently by the plant.

Common methods of changing the pH include adding lime to the soils to increase pH and gypsum or aluminum sulphate to decrease pH. Your county extension agent will be able to tell you what is available in your area and where to find it.

One last item: native plants (plants that naturally occur in your area) area good indicator of pH.





Ancaster Blue Ruffle (photo courtesy of Don McQueen)

Note: This item is from **Richard Ernst** of Cooley's Gardens, Silverton, Oregon. The mention of "county extension agent" may not be something available to you depending on where you live but a knowledgeable garden center should be able to help regarding pH amendments and testing kits. Sadly Richard Ernst is now deceased and Cooley's Gardens are closed. I have written of this in a previous Garden Diggings column. The information he leaves behind still helps iris growers everywhere, a fitting epitaph that would no doubt please him.

Background information to Cooley's Gardens: As of October, 2011, Cooley's Gardens officially closed. They leave a legacy of iris hybridizing and introduction spanning eight decades. Iris lovers the world over will continue to cherish and enjoy the varieties that are with us due to the efforts of the Cooley family and all their heirs that have lovingly kept the business going all this time. As well, historic iris lovers will continue to collect their beautiful catalogs, for which they were renowned.

Cooley's Gardens started as a back yard hobby of **Rhola and Pauline Cooley** in Silverton, Oregon. They produced their first commercial catalog in 1928, and went on to become one of the largest iris firms in the US, lasting 83 years as of 2011. The business has been continued by subsequent generations of the family, most recently by **Rick Ernst** and his wife **Katie**. Sadly, Rick passed away unexpectedly in the spring of 2011.

Milestones: McMillen's Iris Gardens closed

The year 2014 brought a significant Canadian iris milestone with the closure of McMillen's Iris Garden after 40 years. Located in Norwich Township, in southwestern Ontario, McMillen's Iris Garden was founded in 1973 to provide Canadians with

irises through mail order. The McMillen's ; **John McMillen, Gloria McMillen** and sons **Dan and Jim** all worked or participated in the business in one way or another through the years. They have been staunch supporters and promoters of the Canadian Iris Society throughout all this time.



Celebration Song

Over the years the McMillen's hosted numerous iris events on their property; iris BBQs, CIS iris shows and the final iris show in 2013. This last show was the SOIS show which is memorable for me as for the first time ever I won a Queen of the Show award with the TB iris **Celebration Song** (Schreiner 1993).

Jim McMillen hybridized and introduced a couple of tall bearded irises; *Summer Frost* (Jim McMillen 1986) and *Ancaster Blue Ruffle* (Jim McMillen 1993). Here are the slightly modified descriptions of these irises taken from the annual McMillen's catalogue:

ANCASTER BLUE RUFFLE (McMillen 1993) A Canadian introduction, named by the city of Ancaster, Ontario to celebrate their bicentennial. Standards are frosted blue, darker in the middle fading to near white at the edges, falls are deep blue-violet with a quarter inch frosted light blue edge, yellow beards with brushed blue tips. H=36 S=EM

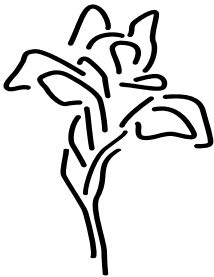
SUMMER FROST (McMillen 1986) This ruffled and lightly laced Canadian introduction has orange beards with frosty silvery white standards and falls. H=36 S=ML

I currently continue to grow these two irises in my garden. The McMillen's Iris Garden was the location where in 1988 I first encountered the rainbow of color for which the tall bearded irises are noted. Prior to that I thought irises only existed in the light purple that my mother grew beside our house when I was growing up! The display garden at McMillen's was a wondrous place to discover. All sorts of beautiful tall bearded irises and usually including many that I had not seen previously. I think that over the years it provided a similar enjoyment and discovery for countless visitors. To all the McMillen's, thanks for all the memories.

Iris friends, I wish you happy holidays, a Merry Christmas and a great gardening New Year.

Stay warm over the winter and get set for next gardening season!

...and as always,
happy garden digging.
C.H November 2014



Summer Frost

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

Region 2 New York, **Ontario, Quebec**

Judy Tucholski-Zon irisjudy@aol.com

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

2014/15 Board Meeting Dates

Sunday January 18, 2015	1:30 pm – 4:00 pm
Sunday April 19, 2015	1:30 pm – 4:00 pm
Sunday July 19, 2015	1:30 pm – 4:00 pm
Sunday October 18, 2015	1:30 pm – 4:00 pm

2014/15 Publication Dates

February 2015	Vol 59 No 1 Winter Issue
May 2015	Vol 59 No 2 Spring Issue
August 2015	Vol 59 No 3 Summer Issue
November 2015	Vol 59 No 4 Fall Issue

Coming Events

Sunday August 9, 2015	S.O.I.S. Iris Sale, RBG Burlington
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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.)



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

Tara Perennial Farm

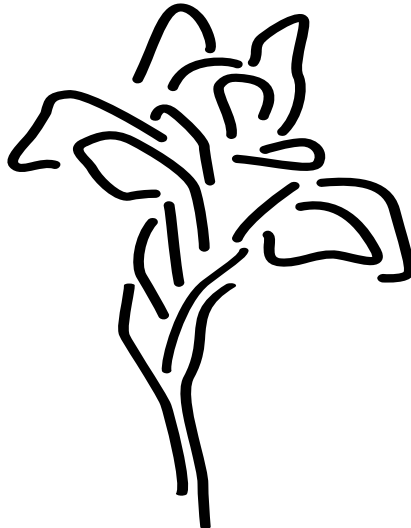
123 Concession # 6, RR2
Tara, ON N0H 2N0
Call for availability/price list
Marion Kuhl 519-934-3447
Website: www.taraperennialfarm.com

Erin Mills Iris Garden/ Chris Hollinshead

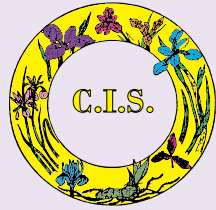
3070 Windwood Drive, Mississauga,
Ontario L5N 2K3 Canada
Email: erinmillsiris@gmail.com
Website: www.cdn-iris.ca/erinmills

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, PO Box 385, Otterville, ON N0J 1R0
ph: 519 532-2364 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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