
NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2005



◆ Santa Fe Iris Society

◆ Albuquerque Aril Society
New Mexico Iris Society

◆ Pecos Valley Iris
Society

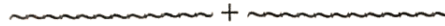
◆ Mesilla Valley Iris Society

REGION 23 OF THE AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY

HOW THE IRIS GOT ITS NAME

By Clair Boussum, Auburn, Washington

Iris, Goddess of the Rainbow, was the daughter of Thaumias and Elektra, and a sister to the Harpies. Iris was also the personal messenger to Zeus and Hera. One day her mother, Elektra asked Iris, "Would you go down to earth and pick a bouquet of flowers?" Iris said, "Oh, yes," and off she went, sliding down a large rainbow. After she picked the bouquet of flowers, up the rainbow she went. When she gave the flowers to her mother and father, they were so pleased that they told Iris, "We will name these flowers after you, Iris, and from this day forward you will become the Goddess of the Rainbow, and all of the people of the earth will look upon a rainbow through the iris of their eyes."



THE IRIS GROWER'S LAMENT

By Jean Witt, 2003, Seattle, Washington

Tiny ones, tall ones, early and late
They make their way through the garden gate
Colored like rainbows, varied in form,
Eluding the judges who set the norm.
Spread across meadows, hidden in shade,
The wild ones vie with those man-made.
Tailored or ruffled, spider or sphere,
They've graced my garden, year by year.
From habitats wet or habitats dry,
How many kinds are there left to try?
New species found! New catalogs lure!
I hate to say it, one thing is sure:
There'll never be time nor funds no space
To win the game in the Iris race.
It's not, of course, that my interest lags----
It seems, it's simply my strength that flags!

Both of the above reprinted
from the Region 13
Fall 2004 newsletter

REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Spring has officially sprung in the Land of Enchantment and I hope you are doing what all of us enjoy the most.....working in your garden and scrutinizing your iris. I know you will be “*mesmerized*” by the perfect iris you are “*conjuring*” up. As you all know by now there is a fine line between raising iris and “mental illness”, so keep up with all the other garden work.....they say that it is therapy.

It has come to my attention that Region 23 has not had a large percentage of participation when it comes to voting their **Symposium Ballot**. This ballot will come to you in the July issue of the *American Iris Society Bulletin* and is due back to me by September 1, 2005. This is a very important tool to help obtain a wide consensus of iris varieties

that grow and bloom best in gardens throughout America.

It is very important to visit as many iris gardens as you possibly can to really see how different varieties perform under different circumstances. I am sure that almost anyone you know, that grows iris, would love for you to look at their garden during bloom season----- so just give them a call and set up a mini-tour with some of your best iris buddies-----I promise you will have a blast!!!

Barry Blyth is coming!!! Barry Blyth is coming!!! Barry is a world-renowned hybridizer and he's Australian so you can listen to him talk forever! Please make plans to attend this once-in-a-lifetime Garden Judging training in Pat Bonham's garden on Sunday, May 8th. This will be an experience you won't want to miss. Special thanks to Henry Day, Karen Bergamo, and Scott and Reita Jordan for putting this all together.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you at your Iris Shows and I hope that as many of you as possible plan to attend the National Iris Convention in St. Louis May 9th through the 14th. If you have not had the opportunity to attend a National Convention I hope that you will really consider going to one. Next years is scheduled for May 22nd through the 27th in Portland, Oregon-----*the Iris Capital of the world*-----and promises to be spectacular! So start planning now for an iris adventure beyond belief!!!

Until we meet again, may the “*Goddess of the Rainbow*” flourish in your garden and nourish your soul.

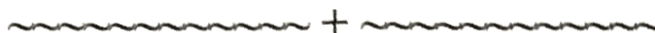
Best Wishes Always,
Pegi Naranjo

IRIS VIDEO AVAILABLE FOR ALL CLUBS

Russ and Carol Eacker, from Region 20, sent a copy of the 2004 bloom season from the Dr. Loomis Memorial Iris Trial Gardens in Colorado Springs, Colorado. This video is approximately 30 minutes long and contains a variety of newer irises planted at the test garden during the past three years. This video is available to every club, or club member, and I will be happy to send it to you at your request. Just e-mail, call, or write with your request to: Pegi Naranjo, 3102 North Montana, Roswell, New Mexico 88201, (505)622-0648, e-mail: pegi@dfn.com

REGIONAL & NATIONAL EVENTS

A.I. S. National Convention & Garden Tours.....May 9 - 14, 2005
St. Louis, Missouri



Region 15 Spring Trek and Society for Louisiana Irises Convention.....April 21 - 23, 2005
Tucson, Arizona



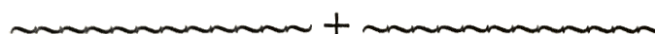
Mesilla Valley Iris Society.....April 16 & 17, 2005
Two Day Iris Show, Mesilla Valley Mall, Las Cruces

Pecos Valley Iris Society.....April 23, 2005
One Day Iris Show, Roswell Mall, Roswell

Albuquerque Aril Society.....April 30, 2005
One Day Iris Show, Albuquerque Garden Center, Albuquerque

New Mexico Iris Society.....May 7 & 8, 2005
Two Day Iris Show, Albuquerque Garden Center, Albuquerque

Santa Fe Iris Society.....May 28, 2005
One Day Iris Show, DeVargas Mall, Santa Fe

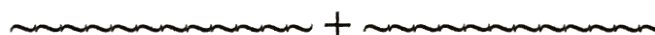


Pecos Valley Iris Society.....None This Year
Rhizome Sale, Roswell Mall, Roswell

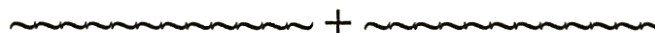
Albuquerque Aril Society/ New Mexico Iris Society.....July 23, 2005
Combined Rhizome Sale, Albuquerque Garden Center, Albuquerque

Santa Fe Iris Society.....July 30, 2005
Rhizome Sale, DeVargas Mall, Santa Fe

Mesilla Valley Iris Society.....September 10 & 11, 2005
Rhizome Sale, Mesilla Valley Mall, Las Cruces



Region 23 Annual Meeting.....August 26, 27 & 28, 2005
Hosted by the Santa Fe Iris Society at the Raddison Inn, Santa Fe



A.I. S. Board of Directors Meeting.....November 4 - 6, 2005
Minneapolis, Minnesota

REGIONAL AFFILIATES & PRESIDENTS

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BILL FEATHER ANNUAL ESSAY AWARD

Sponsored by the Santa Fe Iris Society

2005 Essay Topic: "How Can I Enjoy and Learn More About Growing Iris"

Prizes: Two prizes of \$100 each will be awarded to one writer in each age category: 12 and under, and 13 through 18.

Eligibility: New Mexico Youth

Deadline: Essay must be received no later than May 10, 2005.

Rules: Limit the essay to 500 words. Judging will be based on grammar, content, originality, and creative effort.

Tips: To begin your essay, brainstorm a bit and write a list of your thoughts. Think of the many ways your Iris garden and Iris activities bring you enjoyment. Next, list sources you've discovered which have added to your knowledge about irises. Perhaps you have a favorite iris book, or maybe a particular person has answered your iris questions.

From the list you have made, select three or four iris activities and/or learning sources to tell about in several paragraphs. This will become the middle of your essay. Now write a short introduction paragraph to start your essay and another short conclusion paragraph to wrap up your thoughts. You should choose a title for your essay at this point.

If you have no experience with growing Iris, write about why you would like to grow Iris.

Don't forget to check your spelling and grammar before typing or neatly writing your final version. An adult or your computer may be helpful for technical assistance, but we ask that parents not interfere with your creative efforts.

Submit to: Alverton Elliott, President, Santa Fe Iris Society, 30 Kachina Street, Los Alamos, New Mexico 87544. Include your name, address, telephone number, and date of birth. Winners will be notified no later than May 20, 2005 and the prizes will be awarded at the Santa Fe Iris Society Annual Iris Show at the DeVargas Mall, Santa Fe, New Mexico at 4:30 PM on May 28, 2005. Your attendance is not mandatory to receive the award.

MESILLA VALLEY IRIS SOCIETY NEWS

By Jim Reilly

The Mesilla Valley Iris Society will hold their Spring Iris Show on Saturday, April 16 and Sunday, April 17, 2005 at the Mesilla Valley Mall in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Two panels of Judges will judge beginning at 12 noon on Saturday. At the show we will have, for sale, blooming iris in pots. Our Annual Rhizome Sale will be on Saturday and Sunday, September 10 and 11, also at the Mesilla Valley Mall.

This year several of our members are experimenting with a liquid fertilizer called BR-61, a product recommended by horticulturist member Jeff Anderson. BR-61 is 9-58-8 with Chelated Iron Zinc and Manganese; in New Mexico, it can be purchased at Rowland's Nurseries. Jeff has worked in commercial greenhouses that use this fertilizer exclusively.

THE NAMING OF THE SHOW

By Alverton Elliott

That time of the year has come again! Our chairperson, Stormy Sandquist has decided that we are going to have an **"IRIS CIRCUS"**. Bring on the Clowns!

The Santa Fe Iris Society has been innovative, humorous and sentimental with the themes of our shows.

In 1993, our show theme was "Mother Goose in the Land of Enchantment" with categories in artistic such as, **"PETER, PETER CALABASA EATER"** and **"JACK SPRAT COULD EAT NO CHILI, HIS WIFE COULD EAT NO BEANS"**.

In 1998, we went celestial with **"Iris in Outer Space"**, and in 2003, with **"Celestial Iris"**.

Our club shows a real sentimental streak with an artistic bend. In 1989, we selected **"Give Our Regards to Broadway"**, in 1994, it was **"Musical Memories"**. When Frank Sinatra died in 1998, we honored him in 1999 with **"A Tribute to Frank Sinatra"**. **"Somewhere Over The Rainbow"** was our theme in 2001. **"The Literary Iris"**, **"De Colores"**, **"Iris and the Fine Arts"** and **"The Literate Iris"** were the titles respectively in 1990, 1991, 1995 and 1997.

Politics came on the scene with **"Celebrate Diversity"** in 2002, **"Democracy in Action"** in 1996 and **"The International Iris"** in 1988.

In 2000 we were very practical as we presented **"The Weather Report"**. We went western in 2004 with **"The Iris Roundup"**. In 1992, our show chairperson, Dorothy Hammond, celebrated our 500th year anniversary of our country's discovery with **"COLUMBUS FROM SHORE TO SHORE"**.

As you can see, we are a very diverse group with active and talented minds.

Here's to 2005 under the Big Top with the "IRIS CIRCUS"!

HOW SHOW NAMES COME ABOUT

By Patricia Randall

In the fall of 2003 the Albuquerque Aril Society and New Mexico Iris Society members began discussing the feasibility of the two clubs merging into one and meeting on a weekend day to accommodate the working class, as well as those members traveling a long distance to attend our meetings. Initially, this sounded as though it would be workable, so when we began planning for our Annual Iris Show for 2004, and thinking that this would be the last show hosted by the Albuquerque Aril Society as it was now known, we selected the theme of **"The Last Hurrah"**.

At the time we thought it quite appropriate, however, to make a long story short it was ultimately decided that we would not unite as one new society and we went our separate ways.

As a result of all this the AAS annual shows were on again. Henceforth, the theme suggested for our 2005 show was a unanimous and resounding approval-----SO-----**"Hello Again"!!!**

We can now proudly join the ranks with the Santa Fe Iris Society for innovative show themes!

ALBUQUERQUE ARIL SOCIETY HAPPENINGS

By Cindy Rivera and Patricia Randall

For the first time in history, in our memory, the members of the AAS have decided to forgo our second day of iris show, scheduled for Sunday, May 1st, to instead host a Spring Garden Trek.

To be featured on our tour this Spring will be the gardens of *Cindy Rivera* of 20 Kennedy Drive, Los Lunas, and *Valerie White* of Southeast Albuquerque at 1428 Stagecoach Lane, SE. Cindy loves and grows a wide variety of species iris, as well as a large variety of dwarf to tall bearded irises. Another special feature of Cindy's gardens are her ponds and water irises. Valerie's garden will highlight numerous rows of arilbred irises, along with one of the most extensive plantings of median irises in the area. Her beautiful back yard provides a colorful and serene haven from the hectic bustle of metropolitan living.

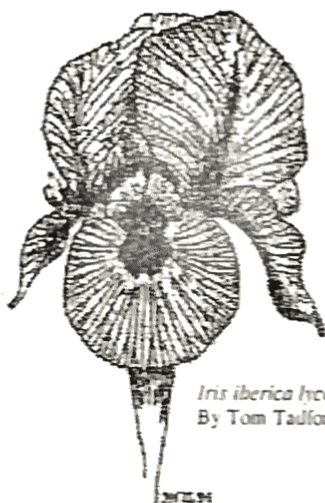
Any and all interested gardeners and irisarians are invited to attend this exciting event. Snacks will be provided by the society membership—SO—come and enjoy the ambiance with us!

Complete details and maps will be available for pick up at the Aril Society show on Saturday, April 30th at the Albuquerque Garden Center located at 10120 Lomas Boulevard, Albuquerque. The trek is scheduled to begin at 8:00 AM at the Rivera garden, and then to proceed to the White garden for that garden visit to begin at 11:00 AM. This schedule will allow ample time to view the gardens, take time for lunch, and then travel to the Albuquerque Garden Center located at 10120 Lomas Boulevard, SE, for the Artistic Design Program being presented by our *RVP Pegi Naranjo*, a widely recognized and renowned artistic designer with numerous awards to her credit. This program is being hosted by the New Mexico Iris Society, whose regular meeting is scheduled for that afternoon. The program has been scheduled to begin at 2:30 PM. These events will allow for traveling and visiting judges to participate in our Trek and featured program before returning home.

Other members will host a trek to their gardens in the forthcoming years, so stay tuned for future news and places as we plan to make this an annual event.

For further details, you are welcome to call Cindy Rivera at (505) 565-8285.

So join us for a fun time and to see some very fascinating and beautiful irises.



Iris iberica lycoris
By Tom Tadfor Little

Aril Society International

Devoted to the Oncocyclus and Regelia Irises
Membership includes the beautiful Yearbook, three newsletters and access to the annual Plant Sale
(an excellent source for aril and arilbred irises)

DUES: Annual: Single - \$10 Family - \$13.50

Triennial: Single - \$28 Family - \$33.50

Send To:

Reita Jordan

3500 Avenida Charada, NW

Albuquerque, New Mexico 87107 USA

Three year membership includes \$12 credit for the Plant Sale

Culture of Arils and Arilbreds for the Beginner

By Scott Jordan



Arils are irises which have only oncocyclus or regelia ancestry. Frankly, they are difficult to grow anywhere but in their homelands in Western Asia. They tend to go dormant in summer heat and if the rhizomes are then exposed to moisture, fungi often kill them. Successful growers use some sort of roof to keep moisture off. Some are spectacular, but pure arils are not recommended for beginners.

Arilbreds are irises which are genetic mixtures of arils with eupogon irises. The eupogon or "true bearded" irises are our familiar garden varieties: TB's, BB's, SDB's, MDB's (tall bearded, border bearded, standard dwarf bearded, miniature dwarf bearded), etc. Some arils, especially oncocycli, have spectacular flowers, and for the last century, hybridizers have attempted to add these attractive blossoms to plants which are easier to grow in normal garden conditions. Following CG White's success 65 years ago in breaking the arilbred fertility barrier, there has been good success in producing more gardenable arilbreds. Most modern arilbreds are advanced generations based on White's introductions. However, many of White's introductions themselves are not so easy to grow, which discouraged many irisarians in the past after they tried them and failed. The good news is that modern quarter-breds can be grown in a TB bed with no special treatment. Modern half-breds adapt nearly as well, but the usual recommendation is to put them in a dry corner of the bed, or situate them so that less water can be applied in the summer. Heavy clay soil probably should be amended with sand and organic matter and gypsum (calcium sulfate) added to help open the clay. Arilbreds love calcium in the soil, so if that element is deficient, it should be added. Culture of aril-breds of more than half aril content (OGB+) should be saved until success is had with quarter and half-breds. It would be nice to come up with a list of cultivar recommendations for Albuquerque, based on rigorous testing of many plants in Southwestern Gardens. Nice but not possible. More information is available for TB's and other eupogons, but even with these widely distributed irises, we often experience mysterious failures to thrive, even in different parts of the same garden, let alone discrepancies between Oregon and the rest of the country. So, some experimentation is needed and after all, is part of the fun of gardening. Application of fertilizer should be about the same as for BB's or MTB's, depending on size of the plants. If TB's are divided every three years, half-breds should probably be divided every two years to relieve excessive crowding of rhizomes which encourages rot.

The Aril Society International, a cooperating society of the American Iris Society, is the main source of information about arils and arilbreds as well as the single best source of plants. If you have Internet access, be sure to checkout their website at:

<http://www.arilsociety.org>

There is a link to the official ASI Checklist, derived from the American Iris Society Checklist, and you are free to copy and print it from the site. Also, there are a number of photographs demonstrating the range of appearance of arils and AB's. The ASI website also lists a number of other commercial gardens which can supply these plants.





GET WELL WISHES



Maxine Perkins, Mesilla Valley Iris Society of Las Cruces, recently underwent minor surgery on her hand, to repair a painful condition. It was scheduled as outpatient surgery that guaranteed immediate relief. Best wishes Maxine, and hope this did the trick!

Ann Colwell, MVIS of Las Cruces went through her second knee replacement surgery in December. It is reporting that she is recovering well, even though her knees now act as her weather barometer!

Alma Maxwell, Albuquerque Aril Society and the New Mexico Iris Society, Albuquerque, recently suffered a stroke. It is reported that she is considerably improved and is here in Albuquerque under the care of her daughter.

Mary Anne Gebel, Pecos Valley Iris Society, Roswell is home from her stay in an Albuquerque Hospital, and is recovering from major surgery due to complications of ovarian cancer. She is doing remarkably well and has maintained an outstanding attitude that amazes all of her friends.

Mary Herrington, PVIS, Roswell, is now using a cane but is on the way to a full recovery after suffering a broken leg and ankle. She is hoping to have knee surgery on the other leg when the broken leg is back to 100%.

Ilima Freudenberger, PVIS, Roswell, recently suffered a mild stroke and is staying with her son in Colorado. She seems to be recovering nicely and is hoping to return home soon.

Lavaughn (PVIS, Roswell) *Huff's husband Bill* is undergoing treatment for cancer in California. All society members and friends are praying for a full recovery.

J. N. Cook, PVIS, Roswell, is receiving the best possible care from his loving wife *Dorothy*, and still attends as many meetings as possible. JN just celebrated his 90th birthday. **WAY TO GO JN!!!**

I guess "no news.....is good news". Anyway, I have not received any information regarding any other Regional members. **We all wish everyone a happy and healthy year 2005.**

GROWING WATER IRIS IN LOS LUNAS, NM

By Cindy Rivera



I grow Louisiana hybrids, but mostly I grow *I. pseudacorus* and other water iris species. I have two ponds, a stream, and three bogs. All are man made. Most of my irises are grown in pots in the ponds, small peat bogs, or in medium size livestock tanks.

Most water plants are from acidic bog areas full of peat and rotting vegetation so I try to imitate those conditions as closely as I can. The ponds are in full sun. I do minimal cleaning and I keep the water circulating year round. The ponds are full of fish, hornwort, water lilies, and iris. Snails, dragonfly larvae, tadpoles, and healthy nitrogen cycle clean and break down the dead vegetation that doesn't get pulled out. Broken down vegetation and

fish mulm in turn feeds the plants. I cover my ponds with swimming pool covers in the fall to keep most of the cottonwood leaves out. The covers are removed in the spring.

The Louisiana hybrids are grown in five gallon pots in lean heavy soil covered with rocks to hold the soil in. I grow *Clyde Redmond*, *Sinforana*, *Black Gamecock*, *Delta Dawn*, *Delta Honey*, *Over There*, *Red Gamecock* and *Star Power*. They seem to grow larger and flower more freely in the pond. Our soil is so alkaline that acidifying soil amendments don't last very long. If grown in the soil, supplemental acid is necessary to keep the iris from getting chlorosis. If I feed I use half a Lily Tab per pot.

The Louisiana species and *I. pseudacorus* seem to do better in slow moving water. I pump water from the bottom of the pond to the beginning of a small stream, which slowly runs back into the pond. The sludgy water is pumped into an area full of horsetails, water celery, hornwort, *I. gigantea* *Her Highness*, *Sinforana*, and *Black Gamecock*. The water flows from there through water celery and back to the pond over rocks and a *I. pseudacorus* X '*Roy Davidson*'. At the mouth of the stream is *I. laevigata* '*Alba*', *I. fulva*, *I. fulva* '*Bayou Bandit*', *I. pseudacorus* X's of '*Holden's Child*', and '*Holden Clough*' and into the still water where the dwarf water lilies, *I. pseudacorus* '*King Clovis*', Louisiana hybrids and variegated aconus live. Another pump pulls water from the bottom of the pond into a large Rubbermaid tank where it filters through the largest of the *I. pseudacorus*. These *I. pseudacorus* are not in pots. I hold them from rising to the surface with large rocks. *I. pseudacorus* seems to grow better when it escapes its pot and its root tips can float in the water.

Lute Song (nursery name, no formal registration under that name) a dwarf *I. pseudacorus*, *I. versicolor*, and the Siberian iris '*Caesars Brother*' grow in peat, manure, and silt bogs next to the ponds. I flood water from the ponds once or twice a week into the bogs. I also grow mint, Marsh Mallow, *Agastache rugosa*, and ornamental striped grass amongst the iris in the bogs.

Anyone can grow water iris if you remember one thing....."Just add water".

AUSTRALIAN EXTRAORDINAIRE

By Patricia Randall

Australian hybridizer Barry Blyth is coming to New Mexico! He has scheduled his trip to coincide with the annual American Iris Society Convention, which is being held in St. Louis, Missouri May 9 - 14, via New Mexico. He has been in correspondence with Henry Day of the Santa Fe Iris Society and has planned a day with their group, as well as sites and gardens of that fair city. He will then be traveling to Albuquerque to spend a few days in our area, courtesy of his host's Scott and Reita Jordan. Barry and Gwen hope to be able to visit a few gardens, as well as the New Mexico Iris Society show being held at the Albuquerque Garden Center, located at 10120 Lomas Boulevard, Albuquerque, on Saturday, May 7 and Sunday, May 8.

In conjunction with his trip, he will be doing the honors of conducting a three-hour Judges Training Class on Sunday, May 8, 2005 in the fabulous gardens of A.J. and Patricia Bonham, located at 2551 Chanate Avenue, SW, Albuquerque. As your hosts, we have an array of events planned during this visit, **see all the details below, and plan your trip accordingly----**

Barry has stated that judging in Australia is different from judging here in America, and stipulates that he is not a qualified Show Bench Judge, by American standards, and will leave that training to those who are more qualified.

Barry feels his expertise lies in garden judging, especially in selecting seedlings, and we all know his talents in this field! He also mentioned providing information about selecting parents for hybridizing and why he uses certain things, and why he avoids others. He says "I suppose after looking at 5,000 to 15,000 seedlings every year for the last 50 years, I have some definite views even if lots of people do not agree." After seeing all of the exotic beauties he has introduced over the course of years, who are we to dispute that talent?

In our communication, it was felt that training in the hybridizing arena, along with information on picking good breeding parents, and which ones to avoid, would be the best venue for our instructor, and may serve as a tool to remove the mystery of that art to those of us lucky enough to attend this class. Who knows, it may even prompt a few of us to dabble in the exciting world of iris hybridization. This class would open a whole new area of iris culture to most of us. It could also serve to provide more information in the production of quality iris, and a broader range of knowledge to utilize in our own garden and exhibition judging ventures.

Class registration may be arranged by sending your name and check to our **Region 23 Judges Training, Chairman Karen Bergamo at 2508 Punta de Vista Drive, NE, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87112, (505)299-5198**, or registration and payment may be made the day of the class.

Other events associated with Barry's visit will be a dinner at the Copeland's Restaurant, located at 10051 Coors Boulevard, Albuquerque (east of the Cottonwood Mall). A room has been reserved and scheduled for Friday evening May 6th. Cocktails will be served at 6:30 PM with dinner to follow at 7:00 PM, the average cost of entrees is \$10 - \$15 with a wide range of culinary offerings, ordering will be from the menu. Please call **Karen Bergamo (telephone number above) no later than May 2nd to arrange a reservation for the dinner.** This will allow us to make proper seating arrangements for all who plan to attend this momentous engagement. So, don't forget to let Karen know if you will be arriving early and attending the dinner, as well as all the other festivities scheduled for that week end.

SEE Y'ALL THERE !!!!!

AIS STOREFRONT UPDATE

By John & Kay Ludi, Boring, Oregon

During the fall board meeting in Little Rock, Arkansas (November 5 - 7, 2004), the AIS Board of Directors voted to make changes to some of the items in the AIS Storefront. These changes are effective January 1, 2005. The price of the year 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 registrations and introductions has been increased from \$7.00 to \$10.00. The price of the year 2004 registrations and introductions was established at \$10.00. Price includes shipping and handling. The price increase is a result of rising costs of shipping and printing.

A new publication, published by the Society for Louisiana Irises, is available for purchase through the AIS Storefront. The Louisiana Iris: The Taming of a Native American Wildflower, 2nd edition, is now available. The cost of \$30.00 includes shipping and handling. Information pertaining to this new publication can be found at the AIS Storefront on the AIS web site.

For a listing of items available at the AIS Storefront and ordering procedures, visit the AIS web site: www.irises.org-----and click on AIS Storefront, or check the AIS Storefront listing in each AIS Bulletin. The AIS Storefront can be reached by e-mail: aisstorefront@juno.com, or by mail: AIS Storefront, P.O. Box 956, Sandy, Oregon 97055.



NEW A. I. S. DUES

Effective April 1, 2005

Annual: Single - \$25 Dual - \$35 Triennial: Single - \$60 Dual - \$75 Life: Single - \$450 Dual - \$545
Youth without Bulletin - \$5 Youth with Bulletin - \$9

Sent To:

Tom Gormley

AIS Membership Secretary

P. O. Box 28

Cedar Hill, Missouri 63016-0028

(636) 247-6149

e-mail: aismemsec@earthlink.net

IN WARM MEMORY

Dr. Lloyd Zurbrigg 1925 -2005. Dr. Zurbrigg passed away on February 4, 2005. He will be best remembered for his hybridizing work with the reblooming iris, and many of his famous introductions, IE: Immortality '82; Sign of Leo '77; Brother Carl '83 and Earl of Essex '80. Per Lloyd's wishes, memorial gifts are to go to the Region 4 AIS General Fund.

THE FOUNDING OF THE AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY

A New York Story by Anner M. Whitehead

In the words of Dr. N. L. Britton, Director of the New York Botanical Garden at Bronx Park, who welcomed those attending the founding meeting of the American Iris Society at eleven o'clock in the morning of January 29, 1920, the weather that day was "*arctic*." This must have caused the organizers great trepidation as they in planning had only dared hope for enough attendance, perhaps two dozen enthusiastic folks, to bring the proposed new group to life, and foul weather might endanger their dream. Various illnesses inevitably made the rounds in January, and did so in 1920 as well; indeed, Dr. Henry Allen Gleason, the Assistant Director of the Garden, who was supposed to do the welcoming that day, was sick at home, which was surely a great disappointment to him, and to others, for his support had been generous, and he had been instrumental in planning the new group, in conferring upon it sterling legitimacy, and in pointing it in the right direction.

But neither illness, nor inclement weather, nor lingering hangovers, for Prohibition also became effective January 29, 1920, could quell the momentum toward founding the organization. This momentum had been growing for the past year, or five years, or ten, or even twenty years, as one might count it, and upwards of sixty intrepid souls from several parts of the country and diverse segments of the horticultural world answered the private entreaties and public announcements which had gone out in previous weeks, and trudged through those arctic conditions to the meeting. They came to enjoy the company of like-minded folks, and to organize a national Iris society, and when they left the Garden later that day, they had one.

John C. Wister, a young landscape architect who played an important role in planning the AIS and become its first president, often said that America's rebirth of interest in garden Irises was attributable to Bertrand Farr's work, specifically Farr's importing a large collection of Irises from England and issuing elegant illustrated catalogs beginning in 1908, but most especially his having sent an exhibition of Irises, including some new ones he had raised from bee pods, to the Pan Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco in 1915, where they were seen by many visitors and received a gold medal. Undoubtedly, this is part of the story, although many other people were working with Irises in Europe and America well before 1915, including J.N. Gerard, who wrote a series of important articles for the magazine *Garden and Forest* and encouraged the hybridizer E. B. Williamson's early work; Sidney Mitchell of Canada and, later, California; George Peterson, nurseryman, of Chicago; Jennett Dean of Southern California, a pioneer Iris hybridizer and importer of new French originations; and, in the Midwest, the Rev. C. S. Harrison, nurseryman and author, and the Sass brothers, of Nebraska. Grace Sturtevant had also been very active, and in 1917 won highly publicized prizes from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society for her Iris introductions. Many of these people knew each other, or knew of each other, and much of their activity reflected renewed international interest in Irises in the wake of the work of Sir Michael Foster and his circle in England, work which had culminated in the 1913 publication of William Rickatson Dykes' botanical study, *The Genus Iris*. In other words, if the seeds sown at the organizational meeting for the AIS grew like Jack's beanstalk, and they did, it is because those seeds fell on well-prepared ground.

The months preceding the meeting saw some public literary activity concerning Irises, possibly well-coordinated public literary activity. B.Y. Morrison of the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington, who was enormously knowledgeable, published several informative articles, including one in the upscale magazine *Country Life* for June 1919, called "Irises for all Gardens." This ran to sixteen oversized pages and featured scrumptious watercolor illustrations,

some reproduced from Mr. Dykes' tome. Along with Robert Sturtevant, Grace Sturtevant's younger brother, a landscape architect who had worked in the Olmsted Brothers firm before the War, Mr. Morrison also sent several intriguing shorter pieces to *The Garden Magazine*, an influential horticultural journal published by Doubleday, Page and Company of Garden City, New York. These pieces fostered a growing dialogue on Irises in the press and in September 1919, Leonard Barron, editor of *The Garden Magazine*, who would later attend the organizational meeting, published a series of letters, including one by Arthur Bliss of England, originator of the famous new Iris 'Dominion', under the intriguing and energizing heading "World-Wide is the Interest in Iris."

The Flower Grower, published in Calcium, New York, by Madison Cooper, less glossy and sophisticated, perhaps, than the aforementioned magazines but certainly no less earnest in its approach to gardening, also carried articles on Irises and in early January 1920, published the formal announcement of the upcoming meeting in Bronx Park, "The Proposed American Iris Society," written by Grace Sturtevant, who spoke of the recent increases in varieties of garden Irises, and the accompaniments need to make good information about them available to the public. She said: "*It is high time that some central body should gather together information on Iris matters whether it is the history of our garden favorites, the records of our present varieties or the opportunities for the future.*" Additionally, she shared the very exciting news that Dr. Gleason and the New York Botanical Garden had suggested a cooperative scheme of Trial Grounds with the proposed new society. Now the gestating AIS had a distinguished sponsor, a highly respected public face, and a clearly articulated mission of service.

In his article on the founding of the AIS published in the "Golden Anniversary Issue" of the *AIS Bulletin*, January 1970, Mr. Wister tells us that the invitation to the meeting which was mailed directly to selected members of the horticultural community was written by Dr. Gleason himself, and signed by several prominent parties, including James Boyd, president of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, who would chair the upcoming meeting; Lee R. Bonnewitz, nurseryman, of Ohio, president of the American Peony Society, founded in 1903; W. F. Christman, secretary of the Northwestern Peony and Iris Society, founded in Minneapolis in 1917; Mrs. Francis King, writer, of the Garden Club of America; Miss Sturtevant; Mr. Morrison; and himself. This letter proposed several goals for the new society, among them compiling lists of varieties; undertaking research on pests and diseases; collecting cultural information for different climates; and promoting popular interest in Irises through shows, articles and lectures. In preparation for the gathering, Mr. Wister also conferred with Frank Presby, a prominent New Jersey businessman and horticulturist, about the legal and business aspects of the undertaking, and a preliminary "constitution" was drafted for discussion at the organizational meeting, where, article by article and amendment by amendment, it was pondered and polished.

Many people instrumental in founding the AIS came from the world of Peonies. In addition to those mentioned was Bertrand Farr; Mrs. Edward Harding, author of a recently published book on the subject; and Professor A. P. Saunders, a chemistry teacher at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, who edited the Peony Society's Bulletin and took the minutes at the meeting on January 29. All were personally interested in Irises as well as Peonies, of course, but there was also a perception that they might do for the Iris what had been done for the Peony earlier in the century when Bertrand Farr and others working closely with Cornell University had planted trial gardens at Ithaca and, over a course of several years, sorted out the egregiously muddled names so that the *Genus* could be vigorously promoted to the horticultural public. A lot had been learned in that process, and it was thought that much the same sort of thing could and should be accomplished

for the Iris. Indeed, as A. P. Saunders recorded that day, Dr. A. C. Beal, head of the Department of Horticulture, brought to the meeting, "a plea to establish at Cornell a trial garden of the Society, and after long discussion on this matter it was turned over to the Board of Directors directions to cooperate in every way possible with Cornell, but to establish the complete collection at Bronx Park." Professors Saunders and Beal, along with Robert Sturtevant, who was elected the first Secretary of the AIS, were also responsible for drafting the final version of the "*constitution*," which provided six Regions with vice-presidents. The first RVP to the Eastern states, including New York was B. Y. Morrison.

The AIS was fortunate that her founding was affected not only by enthusiastic people, but also by thoughtful, industrious types, many of whom were, or would become, influential in the world of horticulture. We have mentioned some, but also there were Louise Beebe Wilder, the author of many popular garden books and a columnist for *The Garden Magazine*; Mary Helen Wingate Lloyd, of the Garden Club of America who would develop her famous "Iris Bowl," a remarkable garden in Pennsylvania visited by thousands during the 1920's; and Ethel Anson S. Peckham of New York, who managed the Bronx Park AIS Trial Gardens and edited the Society's 1929 and 1939 *Alphabetical Iris Check Lists*. Each in their time became a Director of the AIS.

The March 1920, issues of *The Garden Magazine* and *The Flower Grower* featured long articles in Robert Sturtevant's elegant prose about the new American Iris Society. The piece in *The Flower Grower*, which had been selected as house organ for the AIS, and role it would fulfil for several years, carrying news to the members while the first *Bulletins* addressed important cultural and historical issues, announced the birth of the Society, and declared it had already attracted well over two hundred and fifty members. It also identified the group's officers and directors; described an ambitious range of proposed projects and the progress that had already been achieved; encouraged members and prospective members to communicate their needs and ideas to the Secretary; and conveyed tentative details for the first annual meeting of the AIS, planned for June in Philadelphia.

All these remarkable developments, and, indeed, the eighty-five years of the American Iris Society and its work which have followed, were largely made possible because on January 29, 1920, people with vision and gumption, encouraged by leaders of the New York Botanical Garden, gathered in Bronx Park to meet each other and talk, to have a nice lunch and to organize a national Iris society. They came in the dead of winter. Putting aside other business, they came on comparatively short notice. Some traveled considerable distances from Tennessee, Virginia, Ohio, or Quebec. They gathered to bring their combined experience and clout to an exciting and important task, and with enthusiasm and cooperation, they accomplished it.

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