

# AIS Region 23 Newsletter New Mexico



Howie Dash won the prestigious Zurbrigg-Mahan Award for best seedling at the national convention in Des Moines Iowa

2017

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## Editor's Note

The views and information contained in the articles within this newsletter are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Region 23 Executive Board. Reprinting of articles contained in this newsletter is permitted provided the source of publication, and the author, is given full credit.

Due to rising costs of printing and postage, the Region 23 American Iris Society Members approved the discontinuance of the newsletter in hard copy format, and have authorized the publication of the regional newsletter via electronic format. Society Presidents are encouraged to copy the newsletter to share with their members that do not utilize computers and/or internet services.

The Region 23 Newsletter will be posted to our Website at least once a year. I sincerely hope that you continue to enjoy the newsletter and all the information concerning the AIS members within our Region. All regional members are encouraged to submit news flashes (special kudos, get well wishes and memoriam information), photos, and articles to me at: sdayres2@aol.com. Any comments on format or changes you would like to see implemented, please let me know as well. Since the document is electronic, it is easy to modify.

I sincerely thank Patricia Randall and Rae Phillips of the Enchanted Vista Iris Society for letting me use their Convention bulletin for part of this newsletter.

## Regional Vice President Message, Scarlett Ayres

Scarlett Ayres, Regional 23 RVP

Thank you all, for attending the 2017 AIS Region 23 Regional Convention in Roswell, NM. I hope that all the gardens are doing well after a wet July. It is not often that I can go a month in the summer without watering!

This is going to be exiting year. The Mesilla Valley Iris Society in Las Cruces, NM is hosting an Aril Trek April 7, 2018. Four gardens have been set up for the Trek with many old and new arilbreds irises donated and sent to MVIS. This is my first year as RVP. There are exciting times ahead.

Remember that Region 23 is finally a 501 (c) (3) organization under the American Iris Society. This means that any donations made to the Region are deductible on your income tax return to the extent allowed by law. The American Iris Society has set up Amazon Smile for the AIS and some of the clubs. Amazon will donate \$5 for every \$1000 in purchases to the charity of your choice. So if you do a lot of purchases through Amazon, you might want to consider using Amazon Smile. You must start at <http://smile.amazon.com/> to make your purchases. The site is just like the regular amazon. You can access your wish list and make purchases just like regular amazon. I have used it multiple times and have seen no difference with the regular Amazon.

The first time you use it you must select your charity. Enter American Iris Society in the search box. This brings up 77 possibilities. Scroll down and find the one for Las Cruces, Albuquerque, or Cerrillos. Select one and the next time you use Amazon Smile your charity will be the organization you selected.

Our clubs still enlist the next generation of irisarians through their "Growing Iris Growers program. Their efforts to involve youth in iris growing has been rewarded with the first AIS Youth members within our Region.

Former RVP Howie Dash is now the RVP Representative to the American Iris Society Board. It is nice to have a representative from NM in this important position.

It is only a few years before the American Iris Society will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2020. The 2020 National Convention will again be back east in Newark, NJ. A whole committee is planning to make sure this occasion is something special. AIS is planning an anniversary book and other events to celebrate. Of course AIS is encouraging voluntary contributions, both from Affiliate Clubs and individuals. Should you wish to contribute you can make checks out to "AIS Foundation," c/o Jill Bonino, 3110 Kirkham Drive, Glendale, CA 91206.

Even more exciting news is that MVIS is considering hosting the national AIS convention in 2021. There are many concerns. Las Cruces may not have a big enough hotel, banquet rooms or adequate transportation from the El Paso Airport. The convention may have to be in El Paso with bus transportation to the gardens around Las Cruces. Wouldn't it be wild if the next century of the AIS 101st National convention starts in NM? We as a region has to decide if we want to pursue this endeavor. It will require participation and help from all clubs.

Remember you AIS member status by going to <http://www.aislookup.org/> and entering your last name.

Note that new members joining the AIS or members upgrading their membership to 3-year membership from a one-year membership gets \$25 coupon good towards new purchases from select nurseries. So join the AIS. Included with the voucher will be a listing of participating nurseries that accept the voucher with an order for irises. The listing will show what value each nursery places on the voucher and the minimum order each nursery requires. The list will also appear on the AIS website. Go to [http://www.irises.org/pdf/2016\\_Voucher\\_Program\\_rev\\_1.pdf](http://www.irises.org/pdf/2016_Voucher_Program_rev_1.pdf) for further information and participating nurseries. All the nurseries have a minimum order required (usually \$50). Wildwood Gardens will honor a voucher for the cost of a one-year AIS membership.

## Club News

### Albuquerque Aril and Iris Society (AAIS)

Submitted by Holly Finlay, President

Show Winners (12 exhibitors, 103 entries)

Best in Show  
Silver Medal Winner  
Bronze Medal Winner

Victoria Fall exhibited by Blenda Drummond  
Eva Barry (13 blue ribbons)  
Helen Radebaugh

## Enchanted Vista Iris Society (EVIS)

Submitted by Pat Randall

Our promotion of educational programs continues. Our first few programs are geared towards the promotion of our annual show and features a demonstration on artistic designs. This has helped to encourage new members to try their hand at artistic designs to enter in our show. We always have a great program on getting our irises ready for the show, starting with selecting our best specimens for the show bench, transporting, grooming and staging tips and hints.

We had a program on reblooming iris and one on Novelty irises that was also used a one-hour judge's training session. Our September program is for our presentation of show winner certificates and medals. Each winner is also awarded their choice of our club order irises.

Our year is closed with our annual Holiday party and white elephant gift exchange.

As with most societies we gain a few and lose a few members each year. However, our membership remains around 42 members.

We have a great group of members and it has been a pleasure and honor to have served as their President for past two years.

Thanks to all for your support and service to our membership.

## Mesilla Valley Iris Society (MVIS)

Submitted by Cynthia Wilson, President.

2017 has been an active and enjoyable year for MVIS. We continue our efforts to have our meetings focused on Iris by minimizing routine business discussions without sacrificing transparency. The MVIS Executive Board is authorized to conduct routine club business and to propose policies and procedures for the activities of the club. The Board's routine actions are reported to the club at the monthly meetings and are usually accepted by acclamation. Less routine issues often result in spirited discussions. This approach seems to be working as intended. Our meetings have been spirited and well attended.

While several older members are becoming less active, we continue to attract newer member through word-of-mouth, the Iris Show, and the Iris Sale. Many of these new members have become quite active.

### Aril Trek 2018.

MVIS will host an ASI Aril Trek April 6 & 7, 2018 in Las Cruces. The current plan is to have a panel discussion on Friday evening after Registration, to tour four gardens on Saturday with Judges training in a garden. We conclude with a banquet Saturday evening. Keynote Speaker: Pete McGrath.

### Growing Iris Growers (MVIS Youth Affiliates)

We have identified three sponsors for youth clubs and each has several interested youth.

Each of these groups has its own needs and desires. We are still working on how to structure this fledgling program.

### MVIS 2016-17 Highlights

- September
  - 2016 Big Dig (preparation of donated iris for the fall rhizome sale) was moved from two full days on Labor Day weekend to three half-days just before Labor Day weekend.
  - 2016 MVIS Rhizome Sale, the weekend after Labor Day produced record income. A few hundred left-over Iris from our sale were given to other clubs for their sales.
- February. Special Guest Speaker: Dell Perry, speaking on Arilbred Iris.
- April. MVIS Iris Show
  - Report: 118 entries in the show, 117 cultivars, 11 exhibitors
  - ❖ **Best in show – Heart Of Hearts – AB OGB– – Margaret Ritter**
  - ❖ **1st Runner Up – Grab A Grape – TB – Steve Kelly**
  - ❖ **2nd Runner Up – Metairie Ridge – LA – Howie Dash**
  - ❖ **Best Seedling – TAFCS 12-13 – Steve Kelly**
  - ❖ **Best TB – Grab A Grape – Steve Kelly**
  - ❖ **Best AB – Heart Of Hearts – Margaret Ritter**
  - ❖ **Best SA – Harley Jolly – Sally Morge**
  - ❖ **Best Historic – Quaker Lady – Rosemary Anderson**
  - ❖ **Runner Up TB – Frilled To Bits – Steve Kelly**
  - ❖ **Silver Medal – Most Blue Ribbons – 10 – Steve Kelly**
  - ❖ **Bronze Medal – 2nd most Blue Ribbons – 7 – Scarlett Ayres**
- May. 2017 Club Iris Order, from Blue J (Jedlicka) Iris, again emphasized Novelty Iris.
- May. Howie Dash is awarded the Zurbrigg-Mahan Seedling Cup for his seedling ADG 11-02-04

Eight new members for the year 2016-17.

### Pecos Valley Iris Society (PVIS)

Submitted by Pegi Smith, President.

Pecos Valley Iris Society has about 22 members on its roster but only 10 members that are active on a regular basis. We also lost three very good members this year. Verlene Hendicks, Howard Gebel, and Dorothy Cook. We are smallbut mighty!!

We meet at Peachtree Retirement Home and they provide drinks and desert for us at no charge and are so gracious and kind to work with us. We have a member that lives on property and she has planted large pots of iris in different locations on the property and maintains them. Peachtree provided all of the material except the iris. We feel lucky to have such a great place to have our meetings.

Our Iris Show was canceled for the first time in 20+ years due to a scheduling conflict with the Roswell Museum. This actually worked out for the best because the weather was so warm the bloom was way past peak and several of our members had health issues that would have prevented them from being able to participate.

Our rhizome sale was August 20, at the farmers market on the Court House Lawn. We have found that there is built in traffic with no advertising involved. Steve Kelly, Sue, and Wendell Chambers came to our rescue and provided all of the iris we sold.

The main focus this year has been the preparation for the Region 23 Convention August 26-27. With a total of only 7 members working on it the goal is to simplify things as much as possible. It has been our hope that everyone will be relaxed and have a great time and enjoy getting to meet new people and learn something new about iris.

## **Santa Fe Iris Society (SFIS)**

Submitted by Debra Bilberry, SFIS President



**Figure 1 A beautiful May day in Santa Fe showing blooming irises**





**Figure 2 Best Arrangement at the SFIS. Blood of the Samurai by JoAnn Rupert**



**Figure 3 Barbara Mann wins best in show at the Santé Fe Iris Society**

## **Region 23 News**

### **Howie Dash wins cup at the AIS national convention in Des Moines, IA**

Former Region23 RVP Howie Dash won the prestigious Zurbrigg-Mahan Award for the best seedling at this year's AIS convention in Des Moines Iowa for his seedling ADG 11-02-04. The cover shows a

beautiful flower that opened at the Iowa Arboretum. Everyone was enchanted with the color and the rimmed standards. He hopes to have enough stock to introduce it in two years. We can hardly wait.



**Figure 4 Gary White, president of the AIS, presents AIS Region 23 member Howard Dash the Zurbrigg-Mahan Award for best Seedling at the 2017 AIS national convention.**

### **Aril Trek in April 7-8, 2018 in Las Cruces**

In 2018, there will be an Aril Trek in 2018 that will feature two-year clumps. Sharon McAllister was a member of our AIS Region 23 for many years. When she stopped hybridizing, Malevil iris gardens had many of her irises but they lost many irises when their well failed. They will try to send MVIS their surviving McAllister irises and MVIS will develop a McAllister garden. Wes asked that if anyone has her irises please send the irises to MVIS so they can be on the Trek.

At the Aril Trek, Saturday will start with Continental breakfast at Jacquie Pountney's house, then on to Howie Dash's house, then lunch at the Wilson's gardens and lastly judges training at Scarlett Ayres' garden. Pete McGrath will be our keynote speaker on Saturday. Trek dates are April 7-8<sup>th</sup> 2018. Hotel Encanto will be the conference hotel.

Status ( as of 2017)

1. MVIS will host an ASI Aril Trek at the Hotel Encanto in Las Cruces, April 6&7, 2018.
2. Howie Dash will be the AIS Liaison.
3. Dell Perry has agreed to be the Aril Trek Registrar.
4. We have established four Aril Trek show gardens in Las Cruces, each with 100 - 150 Arilbred clumps. Most of these were planted in early fall, 2016, and we expect to feature many two-year clumps. The first-year growth has been very encouraging!
5. Several hybridizers and growers made rhizome contributions in the summer of 2016, and ASI has contributed aggressively. The gardens have an encouraging variety, with several recent introductions.
6. Pete McGrath has agreed to be our Keynote speaker.
7. Howie provided an introductory Aril Trek 2018 article for the 2016 Notices, and gave a presentation, Introduction to Aril Trek 2018, at the 2016 AIS convention in Des Moines, IA.
8. Wes has prepared handouts and a promotional poster for the Arilbred table at the AIS Convention, which was staffed by Dell, Cynthia, and MVIS member Jacquie Pountney. Lyn will bring the handouts for early distribution at the AIS Convention.
9. The Registration Form is. We still have some costs to be resolved.
10. Cynthia has made bus arrangements: \$975 for each bus (55 passengers). We can reserve 2 busses for 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM on April 7, with cancellation at no charge up to April 2. We understand that ASI will rent the busses.
11. The AIS/MVIS insurance will provide coverage for the hotel events.
12. Howie and Wes have taken pictures of the blooming Show Gardens in 2017 for use in promotions, articles, and presentations for the Aril Trek.

### **Region 23 considers hosting the 101<sup>st</sup> AIS National Convention**

The AIS board of directors informally asked Howard Dash of Mesilla Valley Iris Society if the region would host the 101<sup>st</sup> American Iris Society National Convention. Blue J Iris Nursery is moving from Nebraska to southern New Mexico. This provides an anchor garden for the tour. A minimum of four other gardens would be needed. Two have been potentially identified, but MVIS needs two additional gardens. Suggestions include setting up display gardens at the Farm and Ranch Museum and at the New Mexico State University (NMSU). The horticultural department of NMSU may provide help.

This would be the largest convention ever happening in Las Cruces. Meeting space, enough hotel rooms at the headquarters hotel and transportation to and from the airport are issues that will have to be resolved before a formal invitation is sent to the AIS board of directors. If Las Cruces is not viable, El Paso has the needed amenities, but all the gardens are in New Mexico resulting in 45 minutes travel time each way. The tourism board of NM may help with transportation from the airport. A convention hotel with 120 rooms is planned by Las Cruces but they have not even broken ground and the plans are not finalized. Ramada Palms can be the backup hotel. Hotel Encanto is another possibility, but the banquet room may not be big enough.

The benefits are many. It would be cool if the second century of the AIS starts in New Mexico! This would give national recognition to New Mexico hybridizers and nurseries. Many region23 members who have never attended a national convention would be able to attend since there would be no airfare. There would be positive benefits to the City of Las Cruces as well. Local area artists may be persuaded to sell their art at the boutiques.

## And Our Favorite Irises Are...

We have four irises tied for first place in the 2017 Tall Bearded Iris Symposium Ballet. Our favorite Tall Bearded are...

- Conjunction
- Daughter Of Stars
- Mesmerizer
- Spice Trader

## Region 23 Regional Officers and Club Directors

### REGION 23 Officers

RVP (executive): Scarlett Ayres [sdayres2@aol.com](mailto:sdayres2@aol.com)

Assistant RVP: Cindy Rivera [cinrivera15@gmail.com](mailto:cinrivera15@gmail.com)

Secretary: Fran Days [chatmaison@comcast.net](mailto:chatmaison@comcast.net)

Treasurer: Debra Bilberry [dbilberry@gmail.com](mailto:dbilberry@gmail.com)

Membership Chair:

Webmaster: Scarlett Ayres [sdayres2@aol.com](mailto:sdayres2@aol.com)

Newsletter Editor: Scarlett Ayres [sdayres2@aol.com](mailto:sdayres2@aol.com)

### Local Iris Club Directors

Albuquerque Aril and Iris Society: Steve Speights [smspeights@q.com](mailto:smspeights@q.com)

Enchanted Vista Iris Society: Rose McClain Rocky Ford

Mesilla Valley Iris Society: Cynthia Wes [wes-wilson@comcast.net](mailto:wes-wilson@comcast.net)

Pecos Valley Iris Society: Pegi Blackwell Smith [peginaranjo@gmail.com](mailto:peginaranjo@gmail.com)

Santa Fe Iris Society: Henry Day

## Region 23 2016 Annual Honorary Awards

### Judges Award

This year judges award went to a person who visited 14 gardens over the past year. One garden was as far away as Tennessee. Congratulations to Pegi Blackwell-Smith of the PVIS. A great time for her to win the award since PVIS is hosting the 2017 convention.

### Service Award

This year service award went to Debra Bilberry for service at the local, regional and national level. She has been described as very reliable and saw a task to completion. Debra has served as various officers and chairs for the local society and is Treasurer for both the regional and Novelty Iris Society. Very deserving of the award.

Below is a list of previous award winners

Hybridizer's Award	Distinguished Service Award
Howard Shockey	Barbara Figge
Luella and Henry Danielson	Karen Bergamo
Pete McGrath	Pegi Naranjo
Sharon McAllister	Jim Reilly
Steve Kelly	Floyd Stoppani
Howie Dash	Ann Colwell
	Cindy Rivera
	Phil Doonan 2014
	Maxine Perkins
	Pat Randall
	Reita & Scott Jordan
	Pat Feather 2015
	Fran and Henry Day, Cains 2016





**Figure 5 Debra Bilberry wins the 2017 service award.**

### **Hybridizer's Corners**

Other New Mexico hybridizers continue to create spectacular new irises. Besides Howie Dash, Steve Kelly of Las Cruces has an established iris breeding program.



**Figure 6 Grab A Grape is hybridized by Steve Kelly of Las Cruces, NM**



**Figure 7 Desert Reign hybridized by Steve Kelly of Las Cruces, NM**



## 2017 Regional Convention-Roswell Notes



**Figure 8 Pecos Valley Iris Society President Pegi Blackwell-Smith welcomes everyone to the Region 23 convention in Roswell, NM.**

Numerous people from the 5 clubs participated in this year's convention. The following is the tally

- AAIS 5
- EVIS 5
- MVIS 8
- PVIS 9
- SFIS 10

This convention had presentations on novelties and a type of iris that most of us do not know too much about - Louisiana irises. The name "Louisiana iris" comes from the naturalist and artist John James Audubon. His assistant painted *I. fulva* at a time when irises were known as flags. Audubon added to this painting by painting a pair of parula warblers. He then used the term 'Louisiana Flag' to describe the painting. Louisiana's are the state wildflower of Louisiana though they can be found in the wild ranging

from Kentucky to Florida. Louisiana flowers exhibit all primary colors except green. They can have a true red flower while true red will never be found in the TBs.



**Figure 9 Jerry Turner wins a really big iris for finding the largest Pecos Valley Diamond in the “goody” bag set at the banquet tables at the regional convention held at the Venue in Roswell, NM. These crystals are only found along the Pecos River near Roswell. They were formed 300 million year ago. Evaporation of the Permian sea left gypsum beds. Year of erosion have exposed these quartz crystals.**



**Figure 10 Banquet for the convention was held at a building that Pegi's father use to own.**

### **Bonnie Nichols Gave Judges Training on Novelties**

Bonnie Nichols is the co- owner of Hillcrest Iris gardens in Dallas, TX and is current president of the newly formed Novelty Iris Society. First Bonnie gave a history on novelty iris. Novelty Irises have been around for a while. The first iris that could be considered a novelty was a flattie. A flattie is an iris that has six falls and six visible beards and no standards. Flatties have the six falls that arranged in a horizontal to downward arching pattern. Little Freak and Flopsy are examples of flatties. Flopsy lives up to its name but is awfully cute. She has noticed that many flatties have Snow Flurry in the background. Bonnie said that Top Down, hybridized by her husband Hooker Nichols, is her favorite flattie. It has a double dose of Snow Flurry in its background. Orbison is her second favorite flattie. It is huge and grows very well. Bonnie is introducing an iris called Wichita Falls next year that was registered by a Mr. Bensen over 40 years ago. He didn't introduce it because it was so weird. She was approached by Bensen's granddaughter who gave her multiple rhizomes. Bonnie was enchanted with Wichita Falls and it will be introduced next year despite being registered over 40 years ago. Some flatties buds are round and hard to open because there is a thin tissue layer over the bulb. You may need to remove the tissue so it opens.





**Figure 11 Guest speaker on novelty irises Bonnie Nichols and Steve Kelly discuss his latest hybridizing efforts at the Banquet. The Banquet was held at the Venue in Roswell, NM.**

Next she talked about tulip-shaped irises like Blue Tulip. This is the opposite of flatties. Tulip-shaped irises have all standards and no falls.

Broken color (BC) or random color application has become very popular in all types of flowers including irises. Some BC have their colors produced by a virus and others have variable color patterning produced by an unstable gene. These flower can look different even in the same clump. She showed a picture of Hotdogs and Mustard and says she loves it when an iris matches it name. Don't Doubt Dalton is a must-have, consistent BC, good grower and looks good on the show bench. It is her most popular seller in the garden. Splitter Splatter, a LA out of Australia is yielding beautiful LA BC seedlings. She showed many pictures of other types of BC flowers like Delft Blue Dutch Iris which is a striking blue/white BC. BC are becoming popular throughout the flower world.

Flowers are boring on most of the irises that have variegated foliage (FV). I Pallida variagata and I. Pallida Argentina are two examples with FV with colored foliage. There is also a jumping gene can cause dots that are not plicata.

Novelty can be in a separate section in your AIS accredited show. A special class can be outlined in the show schedule. SFIS has a special section for novelty while MVIS has one for Space-age irises. As a judge, you just judge it according to the section in which the iris is listed. This does not mean you can enter Thornbird in the novelty section, another Thornbird in the TB section and still another in the historic section. You, as a presenter, are only allowed to enter one Thornbird (unless it is in a collection). However, you can enter Thornbird in one section and other presenters can enter Thornbird in the other sections. The question is what if each of the Thornbirds win their respective sections and all three are on the show bench for Best in Show? The judges may go nuts.

Familiarity with the variety being evaluated is essential to the intelligent judging of an accredited AIS show. Few of the novelties in flower form or foliage variegation are consistent but must appear at least 65% of the time. Bonnie would like the percentage higher.

Williamson Farm Flowers in Tennessee and Blue J Irises are good sources for novelty irises. Note that Blue J Irises is moving to southern NM in the next year. The owner is Jedlika. Jedlika has some full moon flounces where the flounces lies on the petal.

## Highlights of Hooker Nichols Judging Franciris in Paris France

Hooker Nichols is the owner of Hillcrest Iris gardens in Dallas, TX and is past president of the Greater Dallas Iris Society. He owes much of his enthusiasm for irises to his aunt Theda. She was a judge for iris shows but never wanted to judge irises in the garden. Hooker has been both a show judge and garden judge since 1974. He was fortunate to get judges training from some of the biggest iris people at that time. Now, he notes, that he has given judges training to the biggest names in irises today. Presently he is real fond of LA and flatties. He likes his iris Chunky. Chunky gives you almost double flowers.

There are several international competitions for Irises; France, Italy, Germany and Russia. Hooker Nichols gave a presentation during the evening banquet of his trip to France to judge the Franciris International Competition. The government of France pays for the competition since the Fleur De Lis is the national flower. It pays all the expenses for the judges except airfare. All they require is that the judges take home the winners trophies and mail to the trophies to the recipients once they get back in the states. So, for a cost of \$36 in postage, the Nichols got a free trip to Paris, France. Where do I sign up? Hooker said Kathy Chiton recommended him to become a judge at Franciris. You have to be invited to be a judge at these international competitions. Interesting note is that Russia doesn't allow women to judge their international competitions.

Part of the judging in France involved smelling the iris. Hooker had to let the other judges do that task since his sniffer doesn't work properly. They went wild over anything smelling of chocolate. As well they should. This competition used point scoring systems. Every judge was provided sheets for each iris entered into the competition. A hybridizer was allowed to send in 2 of a variety and both must be in good form. The French television interviewed the judges on the last day of the competition. They had to wear shirt and ties for the shooting. The shooting showed them judging the irises.

Apparently the French think Americans eat only hamburgers. Anyway, the Nichols were provided great food, ate duck all the time, and dined at the Eiffel Tower at the same table at which President Trump ate several weeks later. They stayed in an old French building. It had no air-conditioning so they opened the skylights to let in the breeze. Unfortunately, it also let in 1 ½ inches of cotton willow fibers from nearby trees and it covered everything.



**Figure 12 Hooker Nichols from the Greater Dallas Iris Society and co-owner of Hillcrest Iris Gardens was the guest speaker at the regional convention in Roswell, NM.**

Hooker told us there are no pink iris in Europe. They don't know if there is not enough sunshine, too wet or something in the soil but pink irises do not grow in Europe. Franciris has 9 judges, 2 are Americans and one American is always chosen as president. He also showed pictures of many of his irises including some beautiful Louisianans.

### **Hooker Nichols Judges Training On Louisiana Irises**

Hooker Nichols gave us judges training on Louisiana's (LA) on Sunday. LAs are pogon meaning without beard. First, he showed us LA seeds. The irises seeds are encased in corks. Hooker provided to the group articles on growing and germinating Las. The articles are later in this newsletter. He keeps the seeds in the pods until fall. Then he removes the seeds from the cork. He gently cracks the cork and then gets inside to get to the grape-seed size seed. He buys hundreds of jewelry bags at Hobby Lobby to store the seeds. He thinks that the store probably thinks he is the biggest drug dealer in his home town.



**Figure 13 A Louisiana seed pod. The seed pods are encased in cork allowing them to float on top of debris in water. The seed is at lower right.**

If the LA do go dormant, don't start watering when it is 100 degrees. It would kill them. LAs likes 8 x 8 x 8 fertilizer. You cannot over fertilize a LA. He says it doesn't have to be acid fertilizer. They do move and can grow underneath sidewalks.

You can use five-gallon buckets to grow LAs. You can drill holes 2 inches from the top so the rhizomes don't sit in water. In the wild, the seed floats due to the cork and attaches to debris on top. Roots grow in the water, but rhizome sits above the water. Bee pods are almost always self-pollination. Note that 10° F degrees can kill a plant. Plant rhizomes 2-3 inches deep. Fertilome Fire Blight Spray stops rot. Dial soap no longer works. It works well and stops rot dead. Crystol ink pens are the BIC pens that are the best to write on iris leaves. It will write on wet leaves and are cheap. Hooker says they make great cut flowers. He also says they smell terrible-like old socks.

He didn't hybridize LA until he got to Dallas. He jokingly referred to the head honchos of the Society of Louisiana Irises as the Louisiana mafia. He believed that originally they did a terrible job of marketing their introductions. A lot of LAs were registered but not introduced. They are worried that the LA will get too ruffled and we will lose the look of the five recognized LAs species. If you want to win awards



you got to get these irises spread out to other parts of the country. In Las Cruces they bloom with the TBs. In Dallas, they bloom with the Spurias. How can you tell the difference between LAs and Spurias? LA have spotted green peppered leaves visible in strong light while Spurias are solid green. Yes there are rebloomers like Red Velvet Elvis.

Louisianas are pogon meaning without beard. It is the state of Louisiana state wildflower. The five recognized native LA species are:

- *Iris fulva*
- *Iris hexagona*
- *Iris brevicaulis*
- *Iris giganticaerulea*
- *Iris nelsonii*

There are other varieties in the other states like Florida, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi that will readily hybridize with LAs.

*Iris hexagona* is the oldest discovered Louisiana iris species and was first discovered in North Carolina in 1788. *Iris fulva* has small size (3-4 inches in diameter) and drooping petals. *Iris brevicaulis*, also called the "ZigZag iris, has a stalk that follows a zigzag path. The species does not require as much water to survive, like other Louisiana irises. It has been named the "show horse" for the Louisiana iris species. *Iris giganticaerulea* is the most recognizable Louisiana iris species and is an extremely large blue native plant. *Iris nelsonii* prefers aquatic habitats with shallow water and full shade.

LAs gets a large number of points (25 points) for distinctiveness. LAs should possess distinctiveness as well as beauty. There must be a minimum of 2 increases but they are considering upping the number to 5 increases. Some rhizomes can be 12-14 inches long which may be how they can go under sidewalks and driveways. You may need to transplant every 2 years. Rhizomes can be big, long or the size of your little finger. There is no set standard for size of rhizome. Individual flowers should be open for at least 3 days.

A very tall LA stalk may have to be placed on the ground in order to be viewed and judged properly. LA's stalks can be from 10 inches to 60 inches. There should be no preference given by the judge to a variety with a taller stalk. They should be judged equally with LA of shorter stature. One interesting note, Hooker mentioned the petals are almost indestructible. Great care has to be taken with TBs in order to not damage the petals when transporting to the show. This is not true with LAs. They can be transported laying down in the trunk of the car. They don't even have to be placed in water. The stalk seals almost immediately. Note, that you cannot add to a stalk. Hooker was horrified to hear a foreign judge describe how to pin a flower back on the stalk.

Most LAs are diploids but there a few tetraploids. Very few people hybridize with the tetraploids because of the low quantity of seeds produced. A diploid seed pod may have dozens of seeds while a tetraploid seed pod may have only one seed. Tetraploid should not be given special consideration over diploids on the judge bench.



Leaves almost go dormant in dry climates. According to Hooker, the leaves taste pretty nasty. Hooker chewed on one as a child and got terrible heartburn. The more of the blue-green color in the foliage, the less you have to worry about leaf spot. Many LA leaves are yellow in early spring. This is normal. Crinkling or pleating of the leaf is not a fault and is just the leaf responding to warm and cool cycles in the weather.

The yellow tip of a LA leaf should be trimmed off for the show bench but do not trim or modify the spathes. Good news is that petals won't break unlike the petals on a tall bearded iris. When judging in the garden, flowers must be able to open. Stalk shouldn't interfere with opening. A lot of times the mid or bottom flower will open first and not the terminal flower. This is not a fault. The stalk should have the upper 2/3 of the stalk have blooms distributed proportionally. Clump should be in bloom 2 weeks.

#### LA math according to Hooker Nichols

- There are 4 or more positions for buds on tall stalks
- There should be 2 buds per position and 3 buds in the terminal
- At least 6 buds per stalk
- Minimum of 2 increases (expect to be changed to 5 increases).

Hooker sees that people want contrasting clear colors that are pleasing to the eye. He likes bi-colors. Hybridizers are presently are working on oranges and lines in the flowers. Pronounce signals are popular. Though he says signals are like toes on a woman. It might not be the first thing you notice. Many LAs have the underside of a petal be a completely different color which is only visible in ruffles. Some non-BC with BC parents will show BC on the underside.

There is only one true LA plicata. It was found in the fifties by a person who was hiking with Frank Chowning (well-known LA hybridizer). However, Frank claimed it and named it Finders Keepers. It is sterile. There are many plicata-like LA's on the market but they are not a true plicata. Marvin Grange found the only double LA found in the wild. He began hybridizing with it. He won the hybridizer award for this effort despite not being well known. The Society of Louisiana has 2 best of shows and possible three Best in Shows. The judges get to vote, the members get to vote and sometime the public get to vote. The Greater Dallas Iris Society will have two shows, one for bearded irises and one for beardless irises.

So go check out the Journal of the Society for LA iris call Fleur de Lis.

## Articles

### Louisiana Culture

By Hooker Nichols

*Hooker Nichols gave a presentation on Louisiana's at the convention in Roswell. He kindly gave permission for us to use his articles in this newsletter.*

**Starting Rhizomes.** Sterilized rhizomes can be placed in clean water until they can be planted. Before planting, take scissors and cut away dead mushy roots next to the rhizome or peel them away with your hands. Plant rhizome an inch below the surface of the soil. Water often but don't keep the soil wet until new growth begins.

**Bed preparation.** Louisiana iris will grow in almost any garden soil that can be kept moist. They do better in soil that has been well amended with organic matter. Sphagnum peat moss, cotton seed meal, cotton seed hulls, alfalfa pellets, and bagged manure are all good organic amendments. Use all the amendments you think you need and then some, preferably 3 to 5 inches of organic matter to each bed. The lighter the soil, the more quickly the plants become established. Sand can be added for drainage and its weight may help hold the plants down. leaf mold and homemade compost are also good soil amendments. If the soil is very alkaline, soil sulfur or aluminum sulfate can be added.

**Lined Beds and Containers.** A great way to grow Louisiana iris is to line entire beds with heavy black plastic several sheets thick or rubber ornamental pond lining material. It is only necessary to dig down 12 to 14 inches. Allow a 3 x 3-foot area for each plant. So for a double row, dig a 6-foot-wide bed with the length being a multiple of 3. Throw all the soil to one side, line the bed, and place the soil and amendments back inside. An easier way is to dig down 7 or 8 inches and add a border of 2 x 6's to the top of the existing soil line. Line the bed and place the soil and amendments back in. This will minimize the work by not having to remove as much soil and will give you a 5-inch area for the organic material you will add. If the bed is to be level with the ground, some soil will have to be removed to allow for the organic matter. Entire beds can be built above ground and lined. Treated lumber, rocks and the new concrete wall blocks make for many choices.

Large containers such as ½ barrels can be sunk into the ground to plant Louisiana irises in. Holes can be drilled about 4 inches below the top of the container so the soil at the top can dry out. You can compensate for overly wet soil by planting the rhizomes high in the containers where they seem to do extremely well. The soil will stay wet and may sour but the rhizome is high enough in the growing medium to get plenty of oxygen. Even sunken kiddie pools can make great growing containers but look better if sunk in the ground where the colored plastic doesn't show.

Planting. Plant in the fall after the plants have become established in their pots and the weather has cooled. Place the plants on 3 foot centers and plant the rhizomes a little higher since the soil may stay extremely moist through the fall and winter. Light mulch will help conserve moisture and keep the weeds down. A weak solution of liquid plant (Miracle Gro) should be applied at planting. Do not fertilize heavily in the fall because rampant soft growth may be hurt by cold winter weather and the rich soil will provide sufficient nutrients. Mulch newly planted irises to give rhizomes protection from freezing. Additional layers can be added just before a freeze.

## Preparing a Louisiana Seedling for Planting

By Hooker Nichols

When I first started hybridizing Louisiana irises, I asked several noted Louisiana hybridizers how to plant the seed. The following methods proved useless to me because germination was next to nothing.

1. Plant the seed just before the pod on the stalk turns brown.
2. Nick a corner of the seed in number 1, then plant it.
3. Plant the seed without removing any cork from the brown pods.
4. Plant any seed you have in the fall.
5. Freeze the seed, then plant it in the fall

Forget trying any of the methods mentioned above. Here is my tried and true method which results in wonderful germination for me. This takes place over a nine-month period before I dump the pots in which the seeds were planted.

All pods are allowed to turn fully brown on the plant stalks. Pods are then placed in cups until the fall in which I shell the seeds from the pods and with pliers, I carefully crack the cork containing each seed and remove the seed. If some cork stays attached to the seed, that is fine.

I place the seeds in labeled plastic jewelry bags and store them in a shoebox until February. I never freeze the seeds. Gallon black plastic pots are filled with bedding mix soil up to within 3 inches of the pot's top. All seeds from each individual cross are placed on the top layer of the bedding soil mix and then covered with two inches of Miracle-Gro Potting soil. Pots are watered to keep the soil moist. Germination begins within four weeks usually depending upon the soil temperature. All pots are placed in full sun.

When plants are 3 inches tall, they are removed from the pots, separated, and planted in individual gallon pots. Watered with liquid fertilizer each week, each one is left in the pot until September. At that time, the seedling has increased nicely. Each clump of seedling is tapped out of its pot and planted into the ground. I get nearly 100 per cent bloom the following spring.

After the little seedlings are removed from their pots, I set the pots in an area getting full sun all summer. In August, I break the crust on the pots and begin watering the pots with liquid fertilizer. The

seeds which failed to come up in the spring, come up in the fall. The pots are watered throughout the winter and the process is repeated in the spring. Then the pots are dumped.

So, in nine months I get the germination of 90 percent of the seeds. one must remember that here in Dallas, our climate gives us over 200 days of frost free weather. In colder climates, you will not be able to get the percentage of first year bloom that I get.

## Website News

Past newsletters are now on the website. Go to [www.aisregion23.com](http://www.aisregion23.com) and click the newsletter tab. Some of the newsletter date back over 30 years and still have articles relevant to today

## Geek Corner

There is many resources available on-line like AIS region 23 newsletters and PowerPoint presentations developed by club members are available. These exist at [www.aisregion23.com](http://www.aisregion23.com). Click on Newsletters or Presentation. However, there are many other resources. Go to [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) and type American Iris Society in the search box. There are videos on care, fertilizing, dividing, pruning etc. There are videos on Louisiana irises. There are no videos on arils or arilbreds

Some clubs have videos on you tube about their club, shows and garden flyby using drones. It would be cool if we can do the same. We can feature the president or a personable, charismatic club member answering questions from an out of sight reporter about the club and irises. Then there can be videos of the show (if allowed by the owners of the location of the show) or a slideshow on show winners. Just think about having a presentation on YouTube advertising the fun your club has. Specifically, you can have video about

- Show
- Video of gardens
- Club members having fun
- The sale

Note that PowerPoint can be turned into a video with voice over and timing information saved. First, create your PowerPoint presentation. Then click on Slide show->Record Slide Show and begin speaking to your slides. Advance the slides as you keep talking. When finished hit Esc. Then save the file as a Windows Media Video file. So click File->Save As. Click Browse and change file type to Windows Media Video (WMV). It can take a while. Upload to YouTube and send the link to [sdayres2@aol.com](mailto:sdayres2@aol.com) so a link is placed on the website. If you are not sure on how to load to YouTube or create a PowerPoint video, go to YouTube and in the search box enter your question. Chances are if you can ask it, someone has made a video on how to do it.

It would be nice to have a YouTube presence from each club. It also would be nice to video tape the presentations at the Aril Trek. We can interview some of well-known hybridizers and ask them questions like:

- How should one get started growing arilbreds?
- What are the basic needs of arilbreds?
- What fascinates you about arils and arilbreds?
- Tell me an interesting fact about arils or arilbreds
- What is a benefit in joining the Aril Society International?
- How many different cultivars of arils and arilbreds do you have in your garden? Do you have a favorite?
- What does the future hold?

Then Arilbreds will have a YouTube presence.

## American Iris Society News

**Future AIS Conventions Locations:** The 2018 AIS National Convention will be held in Louisiana and will feature of course Louisiana irises.

Looking ahead the American Iris Society will be celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2020. It will be an exciting time and the 2020 National Convention will again be back east in Newark, NJ. We hope that one of the Convention gardens will be the NY Botanical Gardens, where AIS was formed in 1920. AIS is planning an anniversary book and other events to celebrate. Of course AIS is encouraging voluntary contributions, both from Affiliate Clubs and individuals. Should you wish to contribute you can make checks out to "AIS Foundation," c/o Jill Bonino, 3110 Kirkham Drive, Glendale, CA 91206.

Note that AIS is scanning old catalogs and articles on irises. They presently have 1,354 catalogs as part of that 2,000. AIS suspects that there are over 6000 catalogs out there. They are adding 600 catalogs a year so it may take a while to catch up. They are asking for anyone who has really old catalogs to let them know. This will be for an on-line library that will be available for research. The Biodiversity Heritage library is currently scanning journals and catalogs from all over for all plants. Each week that consortium of libraries puts up about 1,000 new journals, catalogs, etc. Usually about 10 catalogs are concerned with irises. They are working on year 1926.

That year contain a wealth of Iris nurseries. So suddenly years like 1926 are represented by 60-70 catalogs. It seems it takes a month or two for the USDA to get through one year. It may take ten years to arrive at the twentieth century.

This is what Bob Pries said about the old catalogs “Finding catalogs is important to do immediately. Each year many of our members die or go into nursing homes. The Iris literature they have collected goes into the dumpster. It is critical that we have an organized effort to find and save this information NOW. My dream for the library is that it becomes the primary research area for Iris. Presently it functions for some research. But no one knows what is in the physical library. The online version is searchable a number of ways. But as I have pointed out is far from complete. I have prepared a word document snapshot to show what catalogs we have online. It is downloadable at <http://wiki.irises.org/Hist/InventorySnapshotOfCatalogsByNursery> I would appreciate all the help I can get in adding catalogs to the online library.”

You can get to the AIS library. It is free. Go to the <http://www.irises.org> then click on Irises Encyclopedia and scroll down until you see the AIS Hager/Dubois Memorial Iris Library. Click and enter. It is organized by year going back centuries. So if you have a catalog and want to see if it has been “saved” to the library, go to the library, scroll down to the year of interest. Click on the nursery (if there) and see if your catalog is listed. If not, then don’t throw that catalog away! The AIS wants to scan it. Go to its mission <http://wiki.irises.org/Hist/IrisLibraryMission> to [See how you can help!](#) They need people to scan and people to type. There is also a video library. It has fly by’s and how to’s.

## Judges Report by Patricia Randall Judge’s Training Chairman

Our new three-year cycle of judging credits begins August 1, 2016.

In reviewing the Judges Activity Reports our regional judges have been very busy visiting gardens locally and nationally. Hours recorded run from 2 to 14 garden visits.

Another great aspect of our judge’s achievement for this year is the number of hours of classroom and in-garden training tabulated. Several judges served as instructors for H training sessions. For this, we appreciated your dedication to assure we required our needed hours of credit to meet our hours to retain our certifications.

One note – my computer crashed 2 weeks ago, so please check with me to see if I received your reports via email and/or snail mail. If I have not received your report, I ask that you mail a copy to me ASAP. Reports to our national are due by Sept 15<sup>th</sup>. Thanks

There is nothing

Does inspire us

Like the beauty

Of an iris