

AIS Region 23 Newsletter New Mexico



Patricia Randall, Best of Artistic Design, Albuquerque, NM May 11, 2025.

September 2025

2025

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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.

Regional Vice President Message, Robin Kishbaugh



I was born and raised in San Diego, California. I am the eldest of six children, and attended school there, graduating from The Bishop's School in La Jolia. After attending Pepperdine University for 2½ years, I transferred to San Diego State University and graduated with a BS in--Accounting from their School of Business Management. I was active in several groups including the Junior League of San Diego and Young Friends of the San Diego Symphony.

While accumulating some working experience in my field, I met my husband, Wayne, on a blind date. We fell in love and got married the next year. Wayne and I welcomed two children to our family, Doug and Stephanie, and decided to move to Albuquerque to escape the fast pace of the Southern California lifestyle. As the children progressed in school, I was very active in their Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts and then Boy Scouts and Rainbow Girls, and wound up serving as

President of the Parents Association of Sandia High School for four years. With the kids out of the nest, I focused on quilting and then on irises. While I still enjoy my quilting, the irisarian in me has taken center stage. I have served on the Board of Enchanted Vista Iris Society since I joined. I am currently an American Iris Society Judge and President of the Enchanted Vista Iris Society and grow some 300+ cultivars of iris happily growing in my yard, coexisting with my Great Dane, Titan, and my collection of box turtle

Club News

Albuquerque Aril and Iris Society (AAIS)

Submitted by Rae Phillips, AAIS President

AAIS started 2025 with the underlying knowledge that we were responsible for the AAJS Region 23 Convention this year. (No pressure ...!) Shortly after being asked at last year's convention to host this year, and our membership agreeing to do so, I started the search for location. Fortunately, the Garden Center had the space available in mid-August. Because this was a convention and closed private event, not just an AAIS event, we should've been required to pay \$1600/day; but were able to negotiate down to \$400 due to our active involvement in garden center maintenance & events. If we can get enough regional members to attend the convention. We should be able to make a profit for us and for regional.

Our officers from last year agreed to continue for this year since no one else expressed interest, so running things for 2025 are Rae Phillips President, Candy Scott Vice President, Linn Furnish Treasurer, Jody Kennedy Secretary, and Eva Barry as member-at-large (and a past president). Elections for 2026 will be held in October. We currently have 48 members, and our finances are solid with a balance of over \$7K.

Discussion of the convention, and a review of our 2025 schedule, were the main topics of our February meeting, and planning began that would continue until August. In March, Patricia Randall gave a presentation on "Iris Photography for Show Competition" as we have added this division to our Annual Iris Show this year. Our April meeting was on "Preparing Your Iris for the Show", and included hands-on demonstrations for not only Horticultural Division but also Artistic Design.

Once again, this year we held our ANNUAL IRIS SHOW on MOTHERS DAY. It is a very popular event with the public and we always get a large crowd. (It is a place for people to bring their mom after taking her out to lunch!) We struggle with this being relatively late in the iris blooming season, and certainly have many beautiful iris brought to our April meeting - "a private iris show" -- that won't be available at showtime. But most of our members came through and we had a wonderful show! We had a total of 21 exhibitors, with 143 entries. These included our Artistic Design Division and new this year, our well represented

Photography Division. Best Specimen of Show was TB "Change of Pace" by Beth Schneider, with Runner Up Jody Kennedy with her unusual Species "Iris Tectorum" (nicknamed "Roof Iris" because it grows in the thatch roofs in parts of the world). Silver Metal went to Megan Baldrige, and Bronze to Cindy Rivera. People's Choice was "Rare Treat" by Danya Pauly. Patricia Randall won both Best of Artistic Design and Best of Photography.

Many of our newer members may have lots of iris, but do not know the names of them because they were either there when they moved in, inherited from family and friends, or from other sources that would not have known the names. So, we make a big deal of the Unknown classification at our shows. This year we had as many unknown TBs as we did known! Even though they can't qualify for AIS awards, we provide AIS designed awards to recognize the most outstanding of the flowers. Certainly, many could competitively beat many of our knowns.

One of the unique aspects of AAIS is our involvement not only with the American Iris Society and Region 23, but our membership in the Council of Albuquerque Garden Clubs (CAGC) and hence the Albuquerque Garden Center. Almost half of a member's annual AAIS membership dues goes to cover their individual membership in CAGC. This can bring many benefits (such as free space for our meetings and most our annual activities), but also has some strings attached that otherwise wouldn't be part of an Iris Society. It also means we operate on a tighter budget than most: (keeping less of their membership dues in our treasury), plus we additionally have to pay CAGC 25% of any profit we make at any event held at the Garden Center (such as our iris sale).

We want our judges to know how much we appreciate them each year! They are so patient with our members eager to learn more and gladly answer questions. Rather than our officers taking judges out to lunch, our membership provides a wonderful potluck for the attending members and the judges, which provides this opportunity to interact. (A sad note was not having Fran's day with us this year.)

Due to us taking on the regional convention this August, we postponed our annual summer iris sale until September period we are interested to see if (1) it will be cooler in September for digging and hence we'll get more iris to sell, and (2) if we will still get first year bloom off of rhizomes planted this late in this season. We will finish out the year with our usual holiday party, always a great way to end a great year! Next year's schedule has been on the books since January of this year; if we want specific dates we have to request them over a year in advance. So at least that's done!

We just finished helping CAGC celebrate it's 50 Anniversary of the Garden Center June 20th. This exposure gave us the opportunity to promote our organization to the public & dignitaries that attended. In the spring we participated in the Garden Center's Spring Plant Sale, where we sold potted iris. Coming up next month (July) we will participate in their Annual

Albuquerque Garden Show, where not only do our members compete (yes, many grow other flowers than just iris!) but we as a chapter have a group competition with the other 13 garden clubs within CAGC. Basically, anytime they hold a city-wide event, we are participants, which gives us great exposure we wouldn't otherwise get.

As a member club, we are expected to help maintain the large gardens that surround the garden center. We have one dedicated iris bed at the center we planted several years ago and recently updated with new compost and new iris. Plus, we are in the process of adding a new large garden area that will be a "Historic Iris Garden" recognized by the Historic Iris Preservation Society; we have about 50-100 historic iris ready to go in the ground. While all this can mean more time and effort volunteering beyond AAIS, it also enriches our members submersion in all kinds of plant-related opportunities. Many of our members also belong to one or more of the other clubs. I think all these extra activities help us attract a younger group of people eager to be involved.



Figure 1 Bumper cars. An action filled multi-rhythmic artistic design with emphasis on two or more rhythms with one rhythm



Figure 2 Cotton Candy (also known as fairy floss). A traditional mask design featuring the color pink.



Figure 3 Clowns. A still life design, either traditional or creative grouping of functional clown props and plant material. The clown props are more prominent than the plant material. Plant material may or may not represent a floral design.



Figure 4 House of Mirrors. A reflective design featuring a single iris that gives back images of light to the viewer using reflective materials. No staging in front of or on a mirror



Figure 5 Educational Exhibit. Wonderful World of Iris



Figure 6 Photography. Irises in a Landscaped Garden

Enchanted Vista Iris Society (EVIS)

Submitted by Robin Kishbaugh, rgkishbaugh@yahoo.com, EVIS President

Our year began with a potluck celebrating Valentine's Day. At the meeting we began to plan our annual Iris show, to be held Saturday, May 3rd. The theme of the show would be "A Fleur de Lis of Dreams". Although our membership is not large, everyone was more than happy to see each other after a two-month break.

In March, I gave a judge's training called "Iris Culture & Care in Container Gardening." It was very well-received and as we have members who have patios and small areas for planting iris, there were lots of new tips for the 1n to absorb. Topics discussed were: container selection, dirt suggestions, fertilization requirements for optimal growth, pest control, and watering guidelines. Judges and judges-in-training were eligible for a one-hour credit.

April is a wonderful month for iris people, and our meeting was augmented by a training by Patricia Randall called "Iris in Photography". Patricia had a slide show of photographs that had been entered in our show in the past, and encouraged members to enter their iris photos in the show in May. This training also gave members a one-hour credit for training.



May 3rd we held our iris show and sale. Every year attendance is growing, and we gleaned a few new members this year, which is very exciting. In addition to the show, we also sell potted iris, which were grown in pots since our rhizome sale last year by Eva Barry and myself. We advertise each year and had the largest turnout to date for this year.

This is one of our largest fund raisers for the year, and this year we made more money than in the past, which will help to pay for our various projects. For example, we have instituted an "Acquisition Committee" by which members who meet certain criteria may receive an iris rhizome from a major grower each year, with a credit of up to \$50 to cover the cost of the rhizome. The idea is that these irises will increase, and those increases will be brought back to the club as potted iris at the iris show or rhizomes at the sale in August.

Because several of our key members attended the AIS Annual Convention in Billings, Montana this year, we cancelled our meeting in June. But in July we had another full meeting

and Celebration Potluck, and welcomed three new members, It was decided that we wouldn't have enough irises to hold a rhizome sale this year, so it was cancelled.

The August meeting is dedicated to the recognition of our Iris Show Winners, by awarding them gift irises and medals. It is also the month that the members have an opportunity to win rhizomes for their own garden in our annual raffle.

We will round out the year with a talk by Teresa Romine called "Designing a New Iris Bed", and election of officers for next year. In December we always have a Holiday Party and Potluck, with a White Elephant Gift Exchange-always a big hit to end the year!



The Enchanted Vista Iris Society

Presents

Our 12th Annual Iris Show and S

A Fleur de Lis of Dream

Sabana Grande Recreation Center

4110 Sabana Grande Avenue

Rio Rancho, New Mexico

Saturday, May 3rd, 2025

Entries taken from 7:00 AM – 10:30 AM

Judging: 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

FREE to the Public

1:00 – 4:00 PM



Figure 7 Queen of the 12th Annual Enchanted Vista Iris Society's show. The winning iris was Drama Queen grown by Jody Kennedy.

Mesilla Valley Iris Society (MVIS)

Submitted by Scarlett Ayres, mvis.newsletter@gmail.com, MVIS President

Membership Update: As of May 2025, MVIS has a total of 95 members, including 10 life members and 1 paid youth member for 2025.

Scholarship Investment: MVIS decided to invest an additional \$10,500 into the NMSU Endowment Scholarship. The original scholarship of \$26,250 provides \$500 to two students at a 4% return. The new investment should add enough for another \$500 disbursement to the scholarship program.

Garden Care: The club continued to care for the MVIS Farm and Ranch Iris gardens.

Polo Shirts: Polo shirts with the club logo were ordered in tan, light blue, and purple (new). The cost is \$30 for club members, but new members pay only \$15.

Awards and Achievements: Karin Hite, a member of MVIS and principal of Sonoma Elementary School, was awarded Principal of the Year for Southern NM. She submitted irises on behalf of her school in the MVIS iris show and has entered her students in the AIS youth program.

Events and Programs:

September: The Rhizome sale was a great success, with \$11,254 worth of irises sold, an increase in revenue from last year. The September program focused on Rebloomers. Members were polled about future programs, and companion plants were of high interest. Members brought seeds and bulbs from companion plants they grow in their own gardens and shared them with fellow members.

October: MVIS had a potluck in Scarlett Ayres' garden on October 20. The club purchased enchiladas from Roberto's Restaurant, and everyone brought additional food. It was delicious.

November: Scarlett presented "Growing Iris in the Southwest" as the program. There were many questions from new members.

December: MVIS held its annual Holiday Party at the Sunset Grill. For those who wanted to join in, there was also a gift exchange, MC'd by our very own "Grinch," Roy Covey.

January: A program on "Iris Terms and Terminology" was given since the club had many new members.

February: MVIS guest speaker was well-known hybridizer David Toth from Nebraska (Region 21). David gave a presentation on his iris hybridization work, including showing pictures of his and his daughter's creations. He spoke about the challenges and rewards of iris hybridization

and the genetics involved in creating new varieties. He discussed his work with variegated foliage irises and his greenhouse growing techniques. He will be the source of the club irises for distribution in August.

March: The program was on grooming and show rules to prepare everyone for the April show.

April: The show was held on April 19. It had 15 exhibitors, 129 entries, and 125 different cultivars entered. Types of irises entered included TB, BB, IB, MTB, SDB, MDB, and AB. The Best Specimen of Show was won by a new member Marlene Nagel who entered for the first time with Black Comedy IB. Seedling Judged Most Worthy: A CN-FH-2115 AB presented by Howard Dash. Exhibitor with Most 1st Place Ribbons: Steve Kelly with 14 1st place ribbons. People's Choice Award: Jedi Princess presented by Leslie Simpkins. The annual garden tour was held on April 26 and included Scarlett Ayres, Jacquie Pountney, and the Wilsons' gardens.



Figure 8 Marlene Nage; won best in show in Las Cruces for the IB Black Comedy. This was her first time exhibiting.

May: Guest speaker was Jeff Anderson from the New Mexico State University Agriculture Department. He is a long-standing club member. He spoke about soil health management in the Las Cruces area for sustained plant growth. He also discussed the biosolids available at the waste treatment site and emphasized the benefits of biosolids for soil and plant growth.

Next year MVIS will host the Region 23 convention. The club has decided to change the meeting date to April to have garden judging training and open up members gardens to the convention attendees. Details to come

Pecos Valley Iris Society (PVIS)

No report this year

Santa Fe Iris Society (SFIS)

Submitted by Diane Brennan, SFIS President, SantaFelris@gmail.com

In 2025, the Santa Fe iris society hosted the Spring show, and it was a great success. We saw many entrants with a couple of new participants. The membership really stepped up to set up and staff the event.

In August, SFIS had a rhizome sale in which again the members really came through with rhizomes and potted iris.

Upcoming goals include redoing the public garden at Cornell Park and seeking ways to increase membership.



Figure 9 Dividing Line, MTB (miniature tall bearded) won Best of Section at the Santa Fe Iris Society Iris Show on Saturday May 17,2025. Shown by Marilyn Bennett.

Spring is here!!!!

The Santa Fe Iris Society

42nd Annual Iris Show

May 17, 2025

DeVargas Center



Region 23 Affiliate of the American Iris Society (AIS)

***OPEN TO THE PUBLIC 12 pm– 4pm
FREE ADMISSION***

Region 23 News 2025

Welcome to our new members

Rae Phillips and AAIS welcomed new American Iris Society members to their region. AAIS also took this opportunity to welcome new members to the various clubs. AAIS hopes your association with the regional and national members about our favorite flower will prove to be beneficial and educational and that you make many new life-long friends. The following is her welcome speech.

We chose a theme for the convention that we believe will be of interest to all of us: HISTORIC IRIS. We often put so much emphasis on the acquisition of the newest and

greatest iris, that we forget about all the tried-and-true older iris that got us interested in iris in the first place, and should still hold a special place dear to our hearts. Older iris can often be a part of our history; we can remember circumstances when we acquired some of them in the first place. All my first iris came from my father -who had always grown them as long as I can remember - to go in my first garden in my first purchased home out of college. Through all my moves a supply of special iris always moved with me. Most are tied to a special memory of how they were acquired, many under unusual circumstances.

So, I thought it fitting to enjoy these moments of nostalgia through the presentation from our special speaker, Gary White. If you will review his bio (elsewhere in these pages), you will see that he is perhaps the most qualified person in the American Iris Society to show and tell us about them. And through his training this afternoon, may we learn to better appreciate them when viewed at future shows, learn what the judges look for in an historic iris, as well as equip our Region 23 Judges to be knowledgeable when judging them at our shows. Each of you are receiving an historic iris in your Welcome bag today! But just in case you are expecting the Live Auction to be historic also, rest assured they are, as usual, new -either 2025 introductions or within the past few years. We have about fifteen each from Superstition Iris Gardens and Mid-America Iris Garden, plus five 2025 introductions from Howie Dash, active AIS/Region 23 hybridizer from Las Cruces.

Please also enjoy perusing our many silent auction items. We're sure you will find an item you can't live without! You will have plenty of time to look at them all during our lunch break and our afternoon break before bidding closes at 3:30 pm.

ENJOY THE DAY! ALBUQUERQUE ARIL & IRIS SOCIETY Rae Phillips, President

2025 Region 23 MINUTES August 16, 2025

Call to Order: Robin Kishbaugh (EVIS; Region 23 President) introduced herself, shared how her mother became interested in irises, and welcomed convention attendees.

Roll Call:

Club	Count
Albuquerque Aril and Iris Society (AAIS)	24
Enchanted Vista Iris Society (EVIS)	11
Mesilla Valley Iris Society (MVIS)	7
Pecos Valley Iris Society	1
Santa Fe Iris Society	7

Old Business:

Prior minutes approved (motion: Rae Phillips; second: Cynthia). Scarlett will send a signed copy to Deborah Bilberry; one correction was noted.

Policy proposal approved (motion: Candy Scott; second: Bill Burkhart): The RVP shall be reimbursed for up to \$2,000 for (1) the spring AIS annual convention and (2) the fall AIS Board of Directors meeting, covering registration and travel expenses. To receive reimbursement, the RVP submits receipts to the Regional Treasurer. Some members noted this should be included in the bylaws (currently intended for Rules & Policies). Region 23 funds regional awards and the website costs.

Treasurer's report presented by Deborah Bilberry.

New Business:

- Darlene Maestas was nominated as Assistant RVP (motion: Patricia Randall; second: Scarlett Ayres). Officers are now as follows:

Officer	Name
Regional Vice President	Robin Kishbaugh
Assistant Regional Vice President	Darlene Maestas
Secretary	Scarlett Ayres
Treasurer	Debra Bilberry

- MVIS shared preliminary plans for a spring convention in Las Cruces next year (during growing season). Judges' training would be held in the Wilson garden, and members' gardens would be open for weekend tours.
- Ideas were discussed to increase membership:
 - ✓ Offer more engaging programs; AIS is developing a presentation database to support in-person or Zoom speakers. The list would be released to the RVPs.
 - ✓ Handle routine business in advance (by the club's board) to shorten meetings.
 - ✓ Consider lunch or potluck meetings.
 - ✓ Promote events via regular member emails.
 - ✓ Outreach: present at Home & Garden shows and Master Gardener programs.
 - ✓ Incentives: iris giveaways/drawings at meetings (must be present to win); consider a birthday iris.
 - ✓ MVIS provides a coupon for the fall rhizome sale when members vote for their favorite iris at the spring show.
 - ✓ Remind members about webinars; next webinar by Bonnie Nichols, geared toward new members.

Adjournment: Business meeting concluded at 12:17 p.m.



Figure 10 Lunch at the Regional Convention.



Figure 11 Mid-morning was good too.

An iris lover knows!

By Rae Phillips

It starts so humbly

This most majestic of flowers ... A small nodule called rhizome

A few green stalks clinging.

Why give it a cherished spot In a garden of floral profusion?

With spring ...oh the surprise! Growth explodes overnight

'Dead' plants find rebirth.

Fall stalks of green, strange shoots with odd knobs on the top

Extend heavenward in the sun --

An iris lover knows!

A riot of colors and shades! Unimaginable in their variety

Encompassed in large blossoms

That 'stand' in parts and 'fall' in others

*Covered with ruffles and laces
And amazing fragrances too -
Ah ... an iris lover knows!*

AIS Region 23 2025 Annual Honorary Awards (presented by Patricia Randall)

Please get your nominations ready for next year. The awards can be purchased ahead of time and be ready for the convention next August 2025. Listed below are those Region 23 members who have received our prestigious awards in the past years.

The past Hybridizer Award Winners have been: Howard Shockey, Luella and Henry Danielson, Pete McGrath, Sharon McAllister, Steve Kelly, Howard Dash, Paul Hill.

The past Distinguished Service Award Winners have been: Barbara Figge, Maxine Perkins, Floyd Stoppani, Ann Colwell, Karen Bergamo, Patricia Randall, Jim Reilly, Reita and Scott Jordan, Cindy Rivera, Pat Feather, Pegi Blackwell-Smith, Phil Doonan, Fran and Henry Day, Rosemary and John Cain, Debra Bilberry, Eva Barry Cynthia and Wes Wilson, Scarlett Ayres, Howie Dash, David Ferguson and Ann and Dave Curley.

The past Judges Award Winners have been: Cindy Rivera and Debra Billberry

Debra Bilberry will take over awards next year.

Region 23 Convention Speaker Gary White “Historic Iris: A Retrospective)

Education and personal

I received a BS and MS (1988) in Biology, with most undergraduate coursework in Botany, and all of the master's work in Botany. Master's thesis work was an ecology study of aquatic plants in two rivers in Appalachia. Then I attended pharmacy school and received a BS Pharm degree (1982). Along the way, I also completed an MBA (1990). All my formal education was in West Virginia, at Fairmont State College and at West Virginia University (WVU).

I am retired after 35 years as a hospital pharmacist, having worked in hospitals in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Nebraska. I have been married to my wife, Linda, for 45 years. We have lived in Lincoln, Nebraska for the past 30 years.

Iris growing history

I have been around irises for as long as I can remember. I started growing Tall Bearded irises of my own after college. The first irises I purchased were from Cooley's Gardens, then Schreinners and from Exline Irises, a West Virginia grower. Then I soon added Siberian and Japanese irises. Living in West Virginia, the first iris society we joined was the Pittsburgh Iris and Daylily Society (Region 3) in the late 1980s. It was a 70 mile drive each way, but there were no iris affiliates in northern West Virginia (Region 4) at the time. Once we moved to Nebraska, we joined the Lincoln Iris Society (LIS) in Region 21. There were several experienced hybridizers in that local club. In addition to TBs, those hybridizers specialized in median irises. So, I started growing median and dwarf bearded irises as well as more Siberians, Spurias, species, Japanese and a few Louisianas and Arilbreds, and TBs of course. So, I have grown representatives from nearly all classes of irises, with the exception of Pacific Coast irises, pure arils, and 40 chromosome siberians which just do not live through the bitterly cold winters and the hot humid summers of the northern plains. I have always been interested in history, so AIS history and historic irises were natural progressions. And I had also joined the next closest iris club, the Greater Omaha Iris Society. A primary function of that affiliate is to maintain the Sass Memorial Iris Garden, a garden of mostly historic irises, in honor of the Sass brothers and their introductions. So, over the years, I have added a large number of historic irises in several classes.

Iris Society involvement

On the local level, I have twice been president of the Lincoln Iris Society and have served as the LIS show chairman or co-chairman for most of the past 29 years. In the late 1990s, I began and edited the local LIS monthly newsletter for 6 years. Regionally, I was Treasurer, then Assistant RVP, then RVP of Region 21, and am also a past editor of the Region 21 Bulletin. I am currently the Region 21 Secretary. I served as Chair of the combined Region 21/TBIS Convention and tour in May 2004 in Lincoln, Nebraska. I was Chair of the combined Region 21/Median Iris Society 50th Anniversary Convention and tour in May 2007 in Lincoln, Nebraska.

I served as president of the Historic Iris Preservation Society (HIPS) from 2011 to May 2015. I have also served on the Society for Japanese Irises (SJI) board of directors, and then VP of SJI. Effective January 2022, I became President of SJI.

I was elected First VP of the Society for Siberian Irises (SSI) with term beginning January 2023 and to run through December 2024. Became President of SSI in January 2025.

I was chairman of the AIS Scientific Advisory Committee for 5 years (2004-2009) and have continued as a member of that committee to the present.

I am Chairman of the AIS Finance Committee and serve on several other AIS committees. For 3 years, I was the Section and Cooperating Society Liaison for the AIS. I have been a member of nearly every AIS Section and Cooperating Society in recent years.

I have been an AIS judge for 26 years. I have conducted Judges Training (both classroom and in-garden, and by ZOOM) sessions in several regions, and at national conventions and in Florence, Italy. My status is now Emeritus Judge.

After 6 years as AIS Director, followed by terms as AIS Second Vice President, then First Vice President, I was elected AIS President in November 2015 and served through 2018. I then served as Immediate Past President of AIS for three years.

I was Co-chair of the 2017 AIS Convention in Des Moines, IA and was Co-chair of the 2020 AIS Centennial Convention in Newark, NJ, until it was cancelled due to COVID-19. I am now Co-chair (with Andi Rivarola and Jill Bonino) of the 2026 AIS Convention in Newark, NJ. I was the Honorary Awards chair for HIPS for seven years, and for AIS for three years.

I have given numerous programs on irises for many audiences, both AIS affiliated and non-AIS related gardening groups, as well as for the New Zealand Iris Society.

I have been involved in the AIS Zoom Webinars from their inception to the present and gave the first two webinars in July 2020. I have also given Judges Training webinars. I now manage the AIS Webinars and am moderator for most of these webinars.

Iris Honors

Linda and I have been given honorary Life membership in the Lincoln Iris Society. We together have also received the Region 21 Distinguished Service Award. I was awarded the HIPS Distinguished Service award at the 2017 AIS Convention in Des Moines, Iowa.

I was awarded AIS Distinguished Service Medal at the AIS Convention in April 2019.

I was invited to judge International Iris Competitions in both Florence, Italy (Firenze), where I was president the jury and in Paris, France (Franciris). Those competitions were conducted in May of 2019. I have been given Honorary Membership in the French Iris Society (SFIB).

I was invited to be a judge for the first International Iris Competition in the U.S., June 2021 at Presby Memorial Iris Gardens in New Jersey. I have been honored by the AIS Board of Directors with AIS Emeritus Judge status.

Highlights of Program

- Program: Gary White, "Historic Iris: A Retrospective," with a look at early iris history.

- What counts as “historic”: HIPS defines historic irises as introduced 30+ years ago (or by registration date if the introduction date is unknown). All iris classes are included.
- Awards and show placement: Historic irises are no longer eligible for AIS garden awards (exception: Board of Directors Award). Historic cultivars may be entered either in the Historic Section or standard show sections (entrant’s choice). Historic irises may win Best in Show; if equal to a newer variety, the newer variety should place higher.
- Entry guidance: Generally, only one stalk per cultivar may be entered (except collections).
- Judging perspective: Judges evaluate against cultural perfection for that cultivar and against the standards applicable at the time of introduction.
- Fun history notes: Gary’s take is that the earliest crosses were undoubtedly “bee pods.” The first book on irises was published in 1909 by Reverend C. S. Harrison, who had the finest collection of perennials west of Chicago. His motto: “Let this be your motto, have it engrained in your soil, Beauty is Wealth.”
- Rebloomers: Reblooming irises were often discarded in the old days because gardeners had too much to do; the Sass brothers began working with them in 1926. Gary showed the evolution of whites, pinks, neglectas, amoenas, and blacks. Many of his photos are on the American Iris Society YouTube channel where he has given three webinars on Historics.

Judges Report by Patricia Randall Judge’s Training Chairman

The roster of judges includes: Suzanne Andrego, Beth Schneider and Candy Scott as Apprentice Judges; Scarlett Ayres, Eva Barry, Debra Bilberry, Howie Dash, Steve Kelly, Robin Kishbaugh, Jacqueline Pountney and Loui Reyes as Garden/Exhibition Judges; Pegi NaranjoSmith, Henry Day and Cindy Rivera as Master Judges; and Patricia Randall as an Emeritus Judge.

Last year the American Iris Society added Certified Artistic Design Judging to their roster. Henry Day, Cindy Rivera and I were approved as Artistic Design Division Judges. I am submitting a couple of names to include for current judges who are qualified through the National Council of Garden Club judges to be included in the AIS roster of Artistic Design Judges.

I know some of our judges worry about not getting enough hours of credit each year. You need to remember that the required hours for both classroom hours and in-garden training is extended over a three-year period, not just for each year. All of our regional judges are in great standing. Next week will find me recording the hours of training and submitting them to the AIS Judge’s Training Chairman.

I was happy to see the number of Region 23 society members who were able to make it to the AIS National Convention held in Billings, Montana this year. Our judges took full

advantage of attending both classroom and in-garden training provided. No matter how many hours we attend training I have always come away with having learned something new. Congratulations and many, many thanks to all who provide the necessary duties of judging each year as just another step in the right direction in your service to each of your Societies, the Region and the American Iris Society.

Website News

The website has the name of club officers for each of the clubs. It can also show events. Just let the webmaster know of any changes.

Geek Corner

Have you ever had an iris pop up in the garden and thought, “Now what was your name?” It happens to all of us. Maybe you dug out an iris years ago but left a small piece of rhizome behind—only to have it bloom again three or four years later. Maybe you were sure it had died and tossed the label. Luckily, there are a few ways to play iris detective. “Google Images” (previously Google Image Search) lets you search the web using a photo. You click on Google images and then click on the camera icon, then you can upload a file from your computer. you’ll see a page of thumbnails, and clicking one brings up a larger image and the webpage where it appears. Another handy tool is the phone app “Instant Iris.” It’s free, and it helped me identify an iris that showed up in the compost pile! You can point your iPhone camera at a picture while using the app or choose a photo from your phone. This app has a limited database of 3000 irises. These apps are getting better and AI may improve their success rate eventually. Still, my favorite method is the simplest: ask your iris club—chances are excellent that someone is already growing it.

Region 23 Regional Officers and Club Directors for 2024

AIS Region 23 Officers

Regional Vice President	Robin Kishbaugh
Assistant RVP	Eva Barry
Secretary	Scarlett Ayres
Treasurer	Debra Bilberry
Membership Chair	
Webmaster	Scarlett Ayres
Newsletter Editor	Scarlett Ayres

Judges Training Chairman
Awards Chairman

Patricia Randall
Patricia Randall

Society Officers

Albuquerque Aril and Iris Society

President Rae Phillips
Vice President Candy Scott
Secretary Jody Kennedy
Treasurer Linn Furnish

Enchanted Vista Iris Society

President Robin Kishbaugh
Vice President Beth Schneider
Secretary Eva Barry
Treasurer Jennifer Martinez

Mesilla Valley Iris Society

President Scarlett Ayres
Vice President Colette Bullock
Secretary Leslie Simpkins
Treasurer Dale Ellis

Santa Fe Iris Society

President Darlene Maestas
Vice President Rhyannon Brightwater
Secretary Krishna Picard
Treasurer Debbie Strauss

Iris Blessing

*Sensual iris, Kissed by the morning dew,
Each drop mirrored reflecting the light
Regal in Purple, Lilac throat thirsting,
Passionate glory.
Mystical Iris, Goddess of the heavens,
Chaste in your purity, Faithful to your season,
A Fleur 'de Lis of dreams,
Blessed Messenger Of the Gods.*

American Iris Society News

Future AIS Conventions Locations: The 2026 AIS National Convention will be in Newark, NJ and New York, May 18-23. This replaces the convention in 2020 that was canceled due to the Covid pandemic. The 2027 AIS Convention will be held April 27- May 1 Oklahoma City

The revised *Handbook for Judges and Show Officials Show* is now available for purchase at \$14.00 (includes shipping and handling). 40 pages (front and back).

2026 Membership Drive begins January 1, 2026. New members are eligible for a second year free when purchasing a new 1-year membership.

The AIS integrated online system can now process gift memberships! To purchase a membership as a gift to someone else, go to <https://system.irises.org/membership> and check the "This purchase is a gift" box. You will be prompted for the recipient's name, address, and email address (if applicable).

On the Lighter Side

Don't Panic Grow Irises

Those Who Plant Irises Grow Happiness

Keep Calm and Garden On

To Plant An Iris Garden is to Believe in Tomorrow

A Beautiful Iris Garden is a Work of Heart

Poetry

Here is a short poem written for the 1995 Fall Newsletter. Author unknown. The Symbolism of Irises in Poetry Irises are not only known for their stunning beauty but also for the rich symbolism they hold in various cultures. In poetry, irises are often used to symbolize courage, wisdom, faith, hope, and even resurrection. The vibrant colors and unique shape of irises make them a popular subject for poets looking to convey deeper meanings through their verses

He Who Plants the Iris

He who plants an iris, plants beauty;

He who tends it while it grows,

A radiant throbbing rainbow

Pleases many as everyone knows

He who plants the iris, plants splendor;

*Breathless rapture flung, across the sod,
A light to shake the soul and lift the spirit
Up to the high celestial throne of God.*

*He who plants the iris, plants triumph;
Mastering the brown, reluctant soil,
He lifts at last a brave, bright showing
Of beauty, splendor, triumph for his toil.*

Much of this newsletter was pulled from the Booklet prepared by Rae Phillips, AAIS officer & EVIS member

Iristatically Yours

Scarlett Ayres, editor