



# BC Iris Society Bulletin

**Vol. 9, No. 3, Summer 2014**

*'Iris the flower for all seasons'*

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## President's Message



*Ted Baker, BCIS President*

This issue of the Bulletin is earlier than usual as we wanted to give everyone a chance to see and order from the listing of Guest Japanese Irises from the convention. Once again the hybridizers have been most generous and have given BCIS their introduced plants, and even some seedlings, as a fundraiser for our society. We will be digging the plants in early October. After the BCIS orders are filled we will hold a public sale in Victoria, probably at Abkhazi Gardens. Any plants left after that can go to BCIS members to host them for future sales. If

you are interested in becoming a Host Garden for Japanese Irises, please contact me.

It has been another very busy year for BCIS. The joint Show and Sale with the Victoria Lily Society was wonderful. There were five iris exhibitors with *Spurias*, Japanese, Siberians, Tall Bearded, Border Bearded, and one Louisiana iris being shown. The *Spurias* were the stars of the iris show because they were at peak on June 14<sup>th</sup>. The Siberians also made a

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President's Message - continued

very nice display. We sold most everything brought for sale by members and raised \$480.00 for BCIS. This essentially paid our share of the expenses to hold the event. More details will be in the Winter Bulletin.

The convention of the Society for Japanese Irises, held on July 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, was very successful. Comments I heard and received included: "It was a great party you folks threw for SJI [Society For Japanese Irises] and CANADA! Fabulous!"; "It was the best food I have ever



*Missouri Iron Ore* was probably the most admired Spuria at the June 14<sup>th</sup> Iris and Lily Show.



*Oregon Cream* was judged the BEST SPURIA at the June 14 Iris and Lily Show.

had at a convention"; "Good convention. Good time. Good venues"; "Thank you for a fabulous convention"; "Thanks again for a most excellent weekend"; "The convention was excellent - all of you did a wonderful job." Again, more details and photos will be in the Winter Bulletin.

Remember, we would like to hear from you. BCIS members like to know what others are doing; we can all learn from each others' experiences. *Ted*

All photos, except those explicitly identified, were taken by Ted Baker.

## OKANAGAN ACTIVITIES

On July 30th, a group of four Okanagan BCIS members joined the staff of Summerland Ornamental Gardens bright and early in their Xeriscape iris bed.

After 3 1/2 hours of digging, trimming, washing, labelling and replanting, hundreds of rhizomes from miniature dwarfs to TBs were on display.

Before the afternoon sale even started, early birds, preorders and other workers added over \$100.00 to the public garden's coffers. Staffers Wilma and Trina were delighted with the spruced up beds, public sale and fundraising. Many thanks to my husband Tom, Rose Drewniesz and Jacque McDonald for their enthusiastic and efficient help. *Penny Santosham*



STAFF PHOTO

# Growing *Iris ensata*

Chad Harris, Mt. Pleasant Iris Farm, Washougal, Washington  
(Chad Harris and Dale Grams Photos)

I can think of no other iris that is so influenced by good culture than *Iris ensata*. If the proper culture is met, a typical plant will throw taller bloom stalks, more branches with extra buds, and larger flowers.

The most important need of *I. ensata* is an understanding of its growth habit and why growth diminishes so quickly. If you start with a single strong fan, newly transplanted three inches deep in the fall, that winter and following spring the plant will set up a root system. It should not be expected to bloom, and if it did it certainly would not be typical. The second year, with proper soil, water, and light that single fan should have increased to four to six fans, with good bloom, but also one inch above the old rhizome. The third and prime year, the rhizome mat will be another inch higher with 16 to 36 new fans. Going into the fourth year, again the rhizome mat will have formed on top of the old, but now probably only one half of an inch because it is now at the soil surface. This fourth summer the plant is still strong and increases to 64 to 216 fans! Though the fans may still look good, the root system is starting to suffer and collapse. Still the plant tries to grow into its fifth year, setting new rhizomes on top of old. But above the soil line and with no new root contact the plant begins to die. With this growth habit I like to lift and divide every three years, replanting three inches deep. Mind you, this scenario is of a typical well-grown plant. Some plants, due to genetics, start to collapse in year three and need to be lifted and divided every two years.

To grow strong, healthy *I. ensata* plants is more exacting than difficult, for they truly are tough plants. They are naturally found



The five-year growth pattern of *Iris ensata*.

not only in Japan, but Korea, China and Siberia, growing in rich acid soil that is moist to wet.

The pH factor for *I. ensata* is critical, living at 5.0 to 6.8 but thriving best around 5.8. Garden lime and new concrete are fatal. It has also been reported that bone meal is fatal, but I have not done a trial to confirm this.

The foundation of any garden is the soil and *I. ensata* demands a good solid foundation. Rich, heavy soil with ample organic matter is needed. I start with a good top soil that is approximately 5 to 10 percent clay, and add 20 to 30 percent organic compost (well rotted cow manure) at every transplanting. I also recommend mulching with garden compost (two to three inches deep) as this helps suppress weeds, retains moisture, keeps the soil cool, and slowly feeds the plant for three years.

Because it grows all summer long, *I. ensata* is very demanding of its water needs. I like to say wet in the spring and moist in the summer and fall. Take a clue from its natural growing site; not in, but next to fresh water, or in a meadow with a high water table. You may say, "But wait, I have seen photos from Japan with



A pondside planting of 'Pleasant Earlybird', planted 15 years ago and still growing in the same spot with no added fertilizer or dividing.

irises growing in the water." If they truly are growing in the water then they are a close cousin, *I. laevigata*, which is a great iris also. But if it is a photo of *I. ensata*, the field was temporarily flooded or potted plants were sunk only for the bloom time. We have a constructed pond that has a sustained water level. I planted three test plants ten years ago, one in the water, one on the shore, and one eight inches above the water table. The iris in the water died in two years by drowning. The plant eight inches above the water died in four years because it grew out of the soil and dried out. The iris next to the shore is not strong and robust, but is still surviving and blooming after ten years. It seems that the soil is so saturated that the old rhizomes rot away leaving the new in contact with the soil so that it can send out new roots each year. Out in the fields we irrigate each bed with four to six inches once a week from spring until the fall rains start on late October.

The light requirement is not as critical as the past three cultural needs (pH, soil, water), though the plants will grow and bloom their best in full sun and/or light afternoon shade.

NOTE #1: This article was originally published in the Winter/Spring 2009 issue of the *BCIS Newsletter*. It is reprinted here to assist members to learn more about Japanese Iris and whether their gardens are appropriate sites for a planting.

NOTE #2: While Chad has surplus water, Japanese Irises can grow very well with two inches of water per week.

For centuries, Japanese hybridizers have been working with *I. ensata* known there as Hanashobu. Using only *I. ensata*, many different flower forms and color patterns have been achieved. Since they were introduced to the rest of the world, other hybridizers have been working with them. Only recently have tetraploid plants and interspecies hybrids using *I. pseudacorus* and *I. virginica* become available. Presently most plants are 32 to 42 inches tall with a grass-like foliage similar to a Siberian iris.

Though the plant is handsome (receiving 50% of the points in garden judging) it is the flower that is so captivating.

A field in bloom seen from a distance will have all shades of violet with a few clear whites to add some sparkle. As you move closer, the violet shades start to electrify or turn to soft pastels from red-violets to pinks, dark purples to stormy sea blue-violets. When viewed up close, it is the patterns that excite the eye -- from the soft random stroke of a paintbrush of colour called a brushed pattern, to wide bands and sharp rims. Also to be discovered are broken patterns where no two flowers look alike. Some flowers have freckles while others have been sanded by a garden pixie with fairy dust. Sunray patterns glow where the veins are lighter than the body. And veined patterns look like a spider webbing laid on the flower. Add to this mix your choice of a flower with three falls (petals), six falls, nine falls or more and you have the makings of a flower for any taste.

I hope I have sparked your interest in Japanese iris for they truly are only demanding and not difficult to grow.

# SALE: Japanese Irises and Pseudatas from 2014 Japanese Iris Convention

The following Japanese Irises and Pseudatas are Guest plants from our 2014 Japanese Iris Convention. The hybridizers who sent the irises generously donated them to BCIS as a fundraiser for our society but, more importantly, it is an opportunity for us to grow these wonderful, new cultivars in our gardens.

<u>Japanese Irises (JI)</u>	<i>Number Available</i>	<i>Catalogue Price</i>	<i>Member Price</i>
Alexisauris	1	18.00	12.00
Amethyst's Sister	8	25.00	16.00
Ardith Anne	10	35.00	18.00
Artesian Spring	9	15.00	10.00
Blue Twilight Moon	1	10.00	8.00
Carol Johnson	7	20.00	12.00
Celestial Emperor	10	15.00	10.00
Christina's Sister	9	15.00	10.00
Columbia Deep Water	6	28.00	16.00
Dalle Whitewater	6	15.00	10.00
Dirigo Circle Pink	5	20.00	12.00
Dirigo Editor	11	10.00	8.00
Dirigo Garnet	11	10.00	8.00
Dirigo Maiden's Blush	7	12.00	8.00
Dirigo Red Rocket	10	8.00	8.00
Early Exuberance	9	Estimated 12.00	8.00
Evelyn White	6	Estimated 12.00	8.00
Flamingo Waltz	3	35.00	18.00
Foolish Fantasy	12	28.00	16.00
Gingham Geisha	4	Estimated 10.00	8.00
Indigo Angel	3	30.00	16.00
Japanese Plum	7	10.00	8.00
John's Fancy	6	10.00	8.00
Kristin Anne	9	Estimated 10.00	8.00
Lady In Pink	6	Estimated 10.00	8.00
Lake Effect	3	12.00	8.00
Margo-No-Sakura	12	8.00	8.00
Midnight Fireworks	5	35.00	18.00
Mulberry Tango	1	12.00	8.00
My Kathleen	9	Estimated 10.00	8.00
Neptune's Trident	11	15.00	10.00
Pure Emotion	4	28.00	16.00
Red Repeater	6	Estimated 10.00	8.00
Red Tessa	7	12.00	8.00
Ruffled White Water	11	18.00	8.00
Simply Stated	6	Estimated 10.00	12.00
Walk Right In	1	8.00	8.00
02JC13-10	10	When introduced 35.00	8.00
99J01-6	6	When introduced 35.00	8.00

SALE - - continued

**Iris Pseudata (SPEC-X)**

	<i>Number Available</i>	<i>Catalogue Price</i>	<i>Member Price</i>
Akimatsuri	4	15.00	10.00
Chaki	9	Estimated 12.00	8.00
Himebotaru	9	Estimated 10.00	8.00
Komano	13	Estimated 8.00	8.00
Kurokawa Noh	5	10.00	8.00
Lemony Snicket	9	Estimated 25.00	10.00
Mayocha	5	Estimated 10.00	8.00
Nagaifuyu	5	(Estimated 10.00	8.00
Sabaku No Michi	6	Estimated 12.00	8.00
Samon	7	10.00	8.00
Shirabayoshi	4	10.00	8.00
Shiryukyo	5	12.00	8.00
Shoryu No Mai	10	15.00	10.00
Sunadokei	14	10.00	8.00
Take-No-Sato	3	10.00	8.00
Taremurasaki	6	10.00	8.00
Yakimatsari	3	10.00	8.00
Yasha	6	10.00	8.00

Please make your selection and send your list to Ted Baker, with payment, by September 24th – unless your plants need to be mailed. Mailing costs are the responsibility of the purchaser and payment for mailed plants can be made after you receive your plants as your invoice will include mailing costs. The plants will be dug and ready for pickup or mailing in early October.

You can see photos and descriptions of most of the cultivars at the following websites:

- Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden, <flowerfantasy.net>
- Ensata Gardens, <ensata.com>
- Mt Pleasant Iris Gardens, <mtpleasantiris.com>
- Draycott Gardens, <draycott-gardens.com>
- Eartheart Gardens, <eartheartgardens.com>.

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## Salt Spring Island BCISers host garden tours in 2014

Among the garden clubs visiting Salt Spring Island in May-June 2014 were the Dogwood Garden Club from Coquitlam and the Galiano Garden Club. BCIS members shared their gardens with the visitors.



Dogwood Garden Club members enjoyed Pat Spiers' garden; they particularly admired the Tall Bearded irises.

# 2014 Stellar Performers at the Japanese Iris Convention



'Sugar Dome' (Bauer / Coble, R-2008 JI) was voted the BEST INTRODUCED JAPANESE IRIS at the 2014 National Japanese Iris Convention.



Chad Harris with his BEST SEEDLING, 08SPEXL1, a Pseudata — more specifically, SPEC-X. Chad donated all his seedlings to BCIS as they all will be introduced in the next few years.

## Some of the Japanese Irises for Sale



'Amethyst's Sister' Harris 2012 JI



'Christina's Sister' Copeland, Jill R-2009 JI



'Gingham Geisha' Hagar 2006 JI



'Indigo Angel' Bauer / Coble 2012 JI



'Margo-No-Sakura' Griner 2008 JI



'My Kathleen' Smith, S 2009 JI



'Pure Emotion' Aitken 2013 JI



'Simply Stated' Hagar 2006 JI



'Shiryukyo' Shimizu 2008 SPEC-X



'Yasha' Shimizu 2010 SPEC-X

# The Japanese Iris Convention

Some People Photos



Bryce Fradley, Malcolm Ho-You, Pat Spiers and Jacq Bradbury spruce up the beds for the Japanese Iris Convention.



During Judges Training, conventioners, including Stuart Scholefield (right), carefully judge the qualities of the irises on display.

## Calendar of Events

### 2014 Activities

**September** BCIS Japanese Iris Sale. For more details, see pages 5-6 of this Bulletin.

**October 11** BCIS Executive Board meets.  
Location: TBA.

### 2015 Activities

**March 7** BCIS AGM, Ardmore Golf Course, N. Saanich.  
Program details: January BULLETIN.

**May 18-23** AIS National Convention. Portland, OR.  
Registration:  
Lodging:

*If you are planning an Iris Event in your area, let everyone know by including it in the BCIS Calendar of Events on the website [bc-iris.org](http://bc-iris.org).*

## BCIS INFORMATION

**Membership Dues:** If you see a RED DOT near your address on the front of this bulletin or read "2013" on your address label, then it is time to renew your BCIS membership.

Annual dues are \$15 for an individual and \$16 for a family. (Might we also remind you that Ted suggests considering the convenience of paying for three years at one time?) Youth dues, \$5 per year, are available for those under 18 years.

Please make your cheque payable to BCIS and mail to: Arlene Ommundsen, 456 Scott Point Drive, Salt Spring Island, BC, V8K 2R2.

**Electronic Delivery:** You have the option of receiving electronic versions of the Bulletin. To request e-delivery, contact Arlene at <[arlenebcis@gmail.com](mailto:arlenebcis@gmail.com)>.

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