

A RED DOT here means your membership renewal is NOW DUE.



BCIS

British Columbia Iris Society

Bulletin

Vol. 12, No. 2, Spring 2017

Content, Editing: Ted Baker

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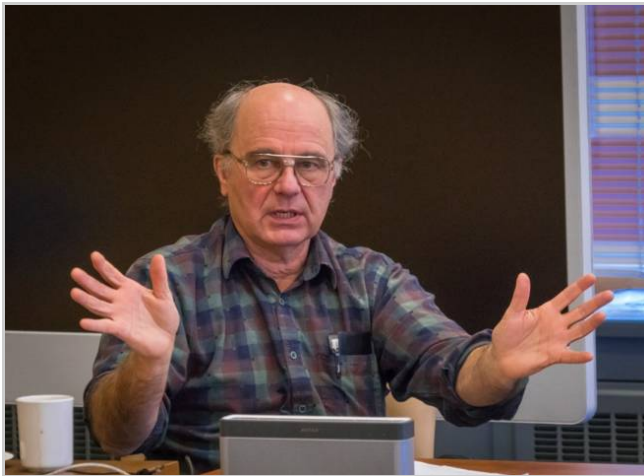
Editing, Production: Joyce Prothero

'Iris, the flower for all seasons'

Greetings from your new president

Richard J. Hebda

BCIS President



BOB IANSON

I am very pleased to be able to take on the role of president, though I must say, I cannot imagine how I will fill Ted Baker's great boots. I thank him enormously for his outstanding service to our Society and also to being the source of a most remarkable array of irises.

My interest in irises began more than sixty years ago on a small and unprofitable farm on the Niagara Peninsula in Ontario. Stunning flags as they were called bloomed by the CNR railroad ditch and under the clothesline. Yellow blue and white were the colours as I recall. My mother seemed not to spend too much time on them yet they bloomed reliably. And their scent was exotic for me. I do

not think we planted them and I suspect they harkened back to the 1930's.

My next strong memory is of the wonderful Siberian Iris collection at the Ottawa Experimental Farm. I believe it was mostly maintained by volunteers and I am not sure it is there any more. Does anybody know? Tens of very large clumps of

irises bloomed in flamboyant showy colours. I wanted to grow these “when I grew up” .

The chance for growing irises came when I moved to the island to my own property, first to Shawnigan Lake and then on the Saanich Peninsula. I ordered bearded irises from Schreiners (some of which I still have) and Siberians from Osiris Gardens in Quebec (none of which I have). During this time I was also growing various *reticulatas* and of course not being able to really keep them going. About ten years ago having seen a great front yard display of tall bearded Irises in Brentwood Bay, I got the “iriditis” again. Eventually I discovered that there was great source here BC and that was Ted Baker! That encounter led me to the AIS convention here in Victoria and as you can see I am now an addict.

Many of you know that I am a trained botanist, so my attraction to irises and the iris family goes well beyond garden plants. In the coming issues of the bulletin I’ll try to explore some of the botanical dimension of irises as well as the challenges and successes of growing them in the garden. I am also interested in how folks grow them in other parts of the world.

I’ll be including an image of my favourite irises with each article especially those that thrive in my Saanich Peninsula garden. I encourage you to submit notes about your

favourites too and maybe we can have a small illustrated Members’ Favourites column in the bulletin.

Orange is a great bearded iris colour. I have tried several in the past few years. My favourite and most reliable is ‘Good Show’. I am pretty sure I bought it from Ted Baker and have been growing it for about seven or eight years. The colour is strong, the blooming regular every year. It increases modestly. Most of all it seems to resist bacterial rhizome rot which is a bit of problem in my garden and leaf spot is not too troublesome if you cut off the most infested leaves.

I look forward to meeting you all in the next while and seeing your gardens too. I have lots to learn! Please consider contributing to the bulletin and sharing your experiences, both successes and failures. Share the Bulletin with neighbours and gardeners, the bigger our group is the more fun it can be.

Richard



Iris ‘Good Show’

RICHARD HEBDA

THANK YOU!

I was really taken by surprise at the BCIS AGM in March. The meeting was going along fine and we were nearing the end of the agenda when Brenda Burch got up and said there was one more item of business. For you who were not able to attend, she then proceeded to present me with a Certificate of Life Membership in BCIS plus a picture of the hardwood bench with a plaque saying how wonderful you all think I am! [She and Bill Dumont delivered the bench the following week, thank you.] Then she read some very kind words from various iris people here and in the U.S. So yes, I was more than a bit unprepared for it all and just wanted to say thanks so much to all of you who have supported me over the past eleven years and for all those kind words and gifts. They are very much appreciated.



NEIL GILBERT

Ted Baker, BCIS Past President

But a point of clarification. From what was said at the meeting, it seems that members think I was a big influence in getting people interested in irises. True, I might have had something to do with it but I am a firm believer that irises sell themselves and all I do is grow them. The reason more BCIS members come from Salt Spring than other areas is because they have come to our farm and seen what special plants irises are. They are hooked by the irises, not me. So invite people to your gardens when your irises are blooming and they too will start to grow our plant.

I am excited that Richard Hebda is our new president! He is an exceptional person and I look forward to working with him as he leads BCIS over the next decade. Or at least a few years. He has much experience and talents to share with us. He is knowledgeable about irises and, most importantly, he has a passion for them. **Ted**

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*Reflections on Alan McMurtrie's presentation
at the BC Iris Annual General Meeting, March 13, 2013*

Richard J. Hebda, President BC Iris Society

Who knew that there was so much to know about Reticulata irises?

At the BC Iris AGM in Victoria “amateur” breeder Alan McMurtrie, of Toronto exposed us to his great adventure with these early spring irises. He is no “amateur” having an encyclopaedic knowledge of this group of attractive bulbous irises beyond that of many professionals. He has been captivated by Reticulatas for more than three decades, trying to understand their botany and then breeding them to produce more yellow varieties and new colour patterns.

McMurtrie has had remarkable success because more than thirty years ago he collected a diploid of the yellow *Iris danfordiae* in Turkey. The commercially-available yellow variety of this species is a triploid (three sets of chromosomes); nice big flower but useless for breeding. The wild diploid can be crossed with other purple and blue Reticulata diploids and has allowed him to create a stunning array of delightful new cultivars. The remarkable story of these botanical experimentations is available for you to read at Alan's website in a spectacularly illustrated article from the Royal Horticultural Society's *The Plantsman* viewable at Reticulatas.com. His web site has 3,500 illustrations.

Alan's work has clearly been a labour of love, evident through his two-hour presentation to us. This extended adventure has involved visiting Turkey and meeting with the world experts wherever they may be, but especially those in Britain and the Netherlands. He wove elements of this long voyage of discovery through his presentation referring to names of legendary folks such as Brian Mathew.



BOB JANSON

Alan McMurtrie

Alan spent a long time on the botany of these remarkable bulbous irises. We learned where they grow in nature (western Asia) how they are grouped botanically and especially about their chromosome numbers. This point was key to his breeding breakthroughs. Your average iris gardener may have found this botany a bit detailed, but I enjoyed it and took lots of notes. I love this group of irises, particularly because of the early colour they offer, and I particularly enjoy learning about our cultivated species in the wild. We got lots of information on this.

We also learned fascinating details about the Dutch bulb industry; economics, preferences and practices. I now understand very clearly why it's so hard to get some exceptionally delightful plants out there to the discerning market. Did you know that 30,000,000 Reticulatas are sold every year, 70% of them for forcing? One can understand Alan's frustration with getting his beauties out to us; all that work to create them and then so much more work to make them widely available. Two fine new cultivars "Eye Catcher" and "Spot-on" only came on the market to us in Canada in the past couple years. The crosses were made in 1987! Bulbs that produce large flowers and many offsets are key features for commercially successful bulbs.

Toward the end of the presentation we finally got to see the new colour varieties that Alan has bred. We were treated to so many more exceptional patterns and stronger colours than we have seen in this group of irises in the past. He has expanded the displays of yellow, white, green, brown and even orange in combinations with blue and purple. Alan has opened a treasure box of jewels which I hope one day may be widely available. I grew 'Eye Catcher' for the first time last year and was very pleased with its display.

On the practical side, we got basic information on the best conditions to grow these late winter delights and get years of bloom:

- Use raised beds with good drainage. This setting mimics the natural conditions in which these irises grow in the wild.
- Protect the long narrow leaves and keep them growing as long as possible to build up bulbs for the next year.
- Use sandy soil and avoid clay.
- Grow them in full sun.

Alan had a lot more to say; he sure loves to share his knowledge and experiences. His work demonstrates that you do not have to be a professional or have doctorate in Botany to make a fundamental contribution to horticulture and show us they way to some wonderful new irises.

For those of you who get the BC Iris Society *Bulletin*, there is more information on Reticulatas in Ted Baker's article in last spring's (2016) issue.

Gardening at Government House



TED BAKER

Ted Baker reports that he, Diane Whitehead and Malcolm Ho-You spent the morning at Government House on April 20th, weeding and planting irises for the BCIS Iris Display Garden. Malcolm brought a few Tall Bearded and Ted brought Siberians, Spurias, Veriscolours and some species crosses.

Ted arranged with Carol Dancer, who is the gardener in charge of the area, to order mulch and have it spread over the area. This will greatly reduce the need for weeding.

BCIS members who are able to do some weeding in the future, please let Ted know. (250-653-4430 or <tedebaker41@gmail.com)

Various Notices and Announcements

Horticultural Centre of the Pacific

On the third Monday of every month, admission to the Gardens at the HPC is by donation, creating a great opportunity to check out the beautiful gardens.

The next visitation opportunity is
Monday, May 15 (gates open at 9am.)
HPC, 505 Quayle Road, Saanich

Travel Opportunities

BCIS members are fortunate that their Secretary-Treasurer also doubles as a travel coordinator. Bill Dunlop has just completed a 4-day trip to see (and purchase!) irises and peonies in Oregon and Washington. His next trip (September 13 - October 4) coincides with the spring flowering in the Cape region of South Africa.

Trip details at www.SouthAfricatour2017.com. Contact Bill at <wedumont@shaw.ca>.

Yoga in the Iris Garden.

June 17, 9am-3pm,
Farleigh Lake, Penticton

Penny Santosham, Okanogan Director of the BCIS, is hosting a major fundraiser on June 17 in support of **Penticton Grandmothers for Africa** (Steven Lewis Foundation).

All guests will be able to enjoy a delicious buffet lunch, iris garden tours, live chamber music, and birdwatching. A morning or afternoon session of yoga is optional. The event is being held at Penny's rural acreage at Farleigh Lake from 9am to 3pm on June 17. For more information, email Penny at <pennysantosham@gmail.com>.

Plant-a-holics Sale

Abkhazi Garden. 1964 Fairfield Road
Sunday, May 21 9am - 12pm

Wide selection of tropicals, perennials, ferns, woodlanders, peonies, geraniums and fuchsias. Cash or cheques only please. Parking at Margaret Jenkins School.



Pat Spiers checking a group of Tall Bearded irises (left); and this wonderful Miniature Tall Bearded iris is very floriferous.

Tall Bearded Irises in Ted and Sonja's Garden



Photos by TED BAKER

Memories of Yesteryear

Richard Cypher, Duncan, British Columbia

Due to a death in our family, I recently found myself going through old photographs. I came across these two pictures taken in 1961 at my parents home in Millington, Michigan. We had over 300 varieties of Bearded Iris in the garden. The white Iris is most likely 'Jake,' my mother's favorite! It was in that garden I developed my passion for irises. The pictures brought back sweet memories.



And, along similar lines, can anyone help Barry Elmer who writes - -

I am trying to obtain the Tall Bearded iris "Mrs. Andrist" which is an old variety that dates from about 1919. Do any of your membership have this iris and are willing to sell a plant to me? Or do you know of a Canadian nursery that sells this plant. I could not find a nursery.

Best regards, Barry Elmer. Nanaimo, BC.

Please respond to: BCIS, Brenda Burch, 1-866-442-0044 or 250-743-1638, or <me@brendaburch.ca>



BRETT BARNEY

Linkages to get you to the British Columbia Iris Society Online:

Website: <http://www.bcirissociety.com/>

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/britishcolumbiairissociety>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BCIrisSociety>



YOU ARE INVITED

You may have heard that we are selling our farm. Yes, it is true so this will probably be the last year you will be able to visit our garden. We have lived here 42 years and will leave with mixed feelings. I can take a good selection of perennials to our new home in Fulford but it is the shrubs and trees that will be missed.

We have opened our garden to the public for over 30 years each Spring and early Summer so many of you have visited, some many times. We generally open on Fridays and Saturdays in May and the first two weeks in June and other times by appointment to make sure I am here to answer questions.

If you plan on coming I have listed some of the plants we have and approximate bloom time so you can pick when you would like to come. If not on a day we are open please e-mail <tedebaker41@gmail.com> or call [250 653 4430] and we will work something out. The address is 185 Furness Road, Salt Spring Island.

PHOTOS: TED BAKER

April: Hellebores and daffodils [a good selection of newer cultivars], **Mid to late April:** Standard Dwarf irises, Primulas. **Early May:** A good selection of Rhododendrons planted 34 years ago. **Mid May to mid June:** : Peonies, Itoh or Intersectionals and Herbaceous [about 35 cultivars, some recent introductions], Wisteria, double purple and very fragrant, Tall Bearded irises [over 300 cultivars], Siberian irises [over 140 cultivars including the latest introductions in a range of exciting new colours and patterns]. **Mid June:** Hostas, Clematis [36 cultivars], roses [a small collection, about 30 cultivars], Spuria irises, early Japanese irises. Lilies bloom from **May to August** depending on the type with tall Phlox putting on a good show in July. Hardy Fuschias start peak bloom in **late July**.

With the strange weather we have been having it might be good to call ahead if there is a particular plant you would like to see. So come for a visit and come as many times as you wish.

Ted Baker

BC Iris Society 2017 AGM Minutes

Monday, March 13, 2017, 9:30 AM to 3:00 PM

Present: Ted Baker, President; Malcolm Ho-You; Joyce Prothero; Brenda Burch; Richard Hebda; Jan Hemming; Pat Spiers; Diane Whitehead; and Stuart Scholefield. **Regrets:** Bill Dumont. The attached list is from reception sign in: it includes members and invited guests. **Guest speaker:** Alan Mc Murtrie.

- 1. Welcome and Introductions:** Meeting convened at 9:45 AM. Welcome via Ted, plus self-introductions. Ted sent best wishes from all of us to Bill who is recuperating from surgery. Agenda accepted as presented.
- 2. Adoption of Minutes of last AGM Meeting:** Moved by Malcolm; Seconded by Richard. All in favour. Minutes approved.
- 3. Committee Reports:**
 - **Election/Confirmation of officers:** Richard Hebda confirmed as the incoming President. Moved by Malcolm. Seconded by Stuart. Ted is Past President. Jan Hemming is resigning as a Director at Large. There were no other changes in officer status reported.
 - **Treasurer:** Ted reported for Bill and a copy of the financial statement as at January 31, 2017 is enclosed for the record.
 - **Membership:** Diane reported that she has 106 paid up for 2016 and 10 in arrears. There are 21 members from Salt Spring Island. Her report was tabled for the record.
 - **Government House (GH) Display Garden:** Ted talked about the new display garden at GH. In order to volunteer there, the BCIRIS needs to take out a Friends of Government House membership. **ACTIONS:** Ted asked for volunteers to help weed the beds etc. Stuart, Malcolm, Richard and Ted volunteered. No signage is allowed on the garden beds. A small plaque will be made for one of the rocks at the entrance in the bed. Membership at GH to be paid for.
- 4. New Business:**
 - Ted asked for help with writing; editing and producing the bulletin. He was looking for a volunteer to help coordinate it. It is produced 3 times a year and the issue size is 12 to 24 pages. Design and layout is done in Microsoft Publisher program. Joyce agreed to stay on one more year to do the design work. In addition to overall coordinator, it requires a volunteer for mail out distribution. Next one is due out in April. **ACTION:** Richard agreed to edit the content. Ted and Joyce to work on next production.
 - **Website Overview:** Brenda Burch provided an overview on the BC Iris Society Website. <http://www.bcirissociety.com>. She has had positive feedback on it and the Facebook page. Every time she posts there is lots of activity with respect to the pictures etc. For \$300/year it is money well spent. Host is Enrique out of L.A. California.
 - **BCIS trip to Oregon Gardens:** Still a couple of seats left. Poster handed out. If anyone still interested contact Bill ASAP. Some members at the AGM are already signed up and looking forward to it. In addition, there was a folder on a trip to AFRICA that Bill is guiding. **Overview:** Brenda Burch provided an overview on the BC Iris Society Website. <http://www.bcirissociety.com/> She has had positive feedback on it and the Facebook page. Every time she posts there is lots of activity with respect to the pictures etc. For \$300/year it is money well spent. Host is Enrique out of L.A. California.

- **AIS NATIONAL CONVENTION, Des Moines, Iowa: May 23 to 27. Information posted at: www.irises.org.**
- **Society for Japanese Irises Section Convention, Seattle Washington June 23 to 25. Information posted at www.scoji.org** Patrick and Margaret Spence were in attendance at our AGM. Patrick is the new President and Coordinator for that group. There will be 3 gardens on the tour: 2 public and 1 private, the Spence property. Good price on the convention: \$125 US judges training will include: How to pick the best Iris for your garden.

5. 2018 Activities and Suggestions and Open Discussion:

- Bearded Iris Sale in August; Siberian Iris March to end of Bloom time; Members donations? **ACTION:** Further discussion required and to be determined.
- Garden Tour: coordinated with a lower mainland garden club? Langley; Surrey; Thomas Hobbs? **ACTION:** Ian Efford and Richard will look at some options.
- Tours for 2018? Time to look at the Okanagan again? Bearded Iris: no spot and love heat. **ACTION:** Contact Penny Santosham to see what might be possible.
- **Time for another joint purchase of Iris? ACTION:** Ted to negotiate with some hybridizers and coordinate Phyto Certificate and mail out. More information to come. Interested members to contact Ted directly.
- Richard suggested we might host some workshops for the gardening public: activity with the availability of plants; how to plant; what to choose; companion plantings; how to care for etc. Joint session with Lily Society? **ACTION:** examine the budget and determine how that could be done.
- Look at other sites and what they are doing: Historic Iris Preservation Society (HIPS). They have an excellent Slide Show and PowerPoint presentation. Maybe look at a Membership opportunity including Specialized Iris groups. Another good source is the British Iris Society. No Actions concluded.

6. Next AGM March 2018 at the Pacific Forestry Centre: Date and Booking to be confirmed.

7. Special Surprise Presentation:

- Today was Ted's last day as President of the Society. Brenda spoke of his work as the founding member; tireless supporter; fearless leader; head gardener, weeder and unwavering cheerleader for us. He is looking forward to retirement and his new home with Sonia and family. Several members sent well wishes including a moving tribute from Penny. Brenda then presented Ted with an Honorary Membership; and a picture of a bench with a plaque commemorating his service. We all wished him well. He noted he won't be gone as he will now be Past President.

8. Open questions: how to deal with slugs: One suggestion was half and half water with household ammonia; and Safer's slug bait from Evergro. It is a company that sells large quantities in Victoria.

NOON: Delicious Buffet lunch catered by Chef Graham Little, Island Culinary Services and his staff. It was great to see him again. Dessert was a special cake honoring Ted and wishing him happy retirement as our 'IRIS KING'.

Guest Speaker: Alan Mc Murtrie is a renowned Iris reticulate breeder and expert from Ontario. He gave an excellent Power Point Presentation with colorful slides and beautiful one of kind specimens. He had handouts for all members attending.

Meeting Adjourned: 3:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of Bill Dumont,

Jan Hemming
nitinat@shaw.ca

Society for Japanese Iris 2017 Convention and AIS Region 13 Spring Meeting June 23-25, 2017 Seattle WA

The King County Iris Society is very pleased to host the 2017 Society for Japanese Iris Convention and AIS Region 13 Spring Meeting in Seattle, Washington on June 23-25.

We offer a tour of four gardens, along with two hours of in-garden judges training. The three gardens on Saturday are: **Highline SeaTac Botanical Garden, Bellevue Botanical Garden, and Cascadia Iris Gardens** where Don Delmez, St. Charles, Missouri will offer 2-hour Judges Training on Japanese Iris. On Sunday, an optional self-guided tour of **Kubota Garden** is available. On Friday and Saturday evenings, dinner will be followed by meetings, Region 13 iris redistribution and SJI iris auction.



Jl 'Dalle Whitewater' (Harris 2011)

Hotel Booking. Our host hotel is the Hilton Garden Inn Seattle/Bothell at 22600 Bothell Everett Highway, Bothell (425-486-0400 or www.seattlebothell.hgi.com). Our special group rate for

rooms will be \$149 for a King Room and \$159 for a Double Queen Room (U.S. Funds). Deadline for booking rooms is May 26. Please mention the Japanese Iris Society when booking to receive this special rate.



Jl 'Second Wave' (Aitken 2005)

Convention Registration. \$125 U.S. funds per person includes Friday and Saturday dinners, Saturday lunch, and bus transportation for the Saturday garden tours. Please send completed registration form and cheque for \$125 (U.S. funds) per person to Ann Booth, 6117 150th Place SW, Edmonds, Washington 98026.

Please cut here and return this section, along with your cheque, made payable to: **King County Iris Society**, to Ann Booth, 6117 150th Place SW, Edmonds, WA, 98026.

Name _____

Address _____ City _____

State/Province _____ Country _____ /zip/Code _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Menu choices for Friday and Saturday dinners and Saturday lunch have not been finalized. Please note any dietary restrictions below.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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]

2017 Conventions

Median Iris Society (MIS). May 18-20. Lafayette, IN
Details: www.medianiris.com/misventions.html

American Iris Society (AIS). May 23-27.
Des Moines, Iowa. Details: <https://ais2017.wordpress.com/registration>

Society for Japanese Iris (SJI) and AIS Region 13 Spring Meeting, June 23-25, Seattle WA.
Details: Ted Baker and p11 of this Bulletin.

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Membership Dues

If you see a **RED DOT** near your address on the front of this bulletin or read "2016" on your address label, then it's time to renew your BCIS membership.

Annual dues are \$15 for an individual and \$16 for a family. Youth dues (\$5/year) are available for those under 18 years. Please make your cheque payable to BCIS and mail to:
Diane Whitehead, 5088 Clutesi Street,
Victoria BC, V8Y 1X4.

Questions? voltaire@islandnet.com or 250-658-5640