

A RED DOT here means your
membership renewal
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BCIS

British Columbia Iris Society

Bulletin

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'Iris, the flower for all seasons'

WISTER MEDAL 2016



HAUNTED HEART (Keppel 2010) HM 2012, AM 2014, Wister Medal 2016.

President's Message Winter 2017



NEIL GILBERT

Ted Baker, BCIS President

I would like all members in the Victoria and Lower Mainland area to think seriously about coming to our meeting on March 13th. Details are included in this Bulletin. We have declared this the *Year of the Reticulata Iris*. To spotlight this, we are bringing Alan McMurtrie from Ontario to talk about his over 30 years of hybridizing these wonderful, small, early irises. Alan has made stunning breakthroughs in colours and patterns and is considered to be the premier hybridizer of reticulatas in the world.

If you want to see Iris Heaven on Earth then you should seriously consider the BCIS Garden Tour to Oregon in May. Bill Dumont has done an excellent job of organizing this tour and it will be fun and most informative.

I am particularly looking forward to seeing bloom on the new irises I purchased last year. The Siberians should be very exciting. I have a picture of 'Art In Bloom' by Schafer/Sacks in an article in this edition. It looks very different from that portrayed in their website catalogue. In my garden it is a

plicata with a very dark, almost black edge. Their photo shows a flower with striping. It appears that the colours are more saturated here on the coast.

Now is also the time to start checking the new iris catalogues that are coming online. Keith Keppel is always one of the first to post and again this year he has a wonderful set of introductions. Stunning colours and, as usual, great form and ruffling. An excellent example of a recent introduction is on the cover.

I will be finishing my eleventh and last year as president of BCIS this March. Richard Hebda will be taking over as president and he will be an excellent leader of our Society. Richard received his PhD from UBC. He has worked at the Royal BC Museum since 1980 and as curator of Botany and Earth History since 1986. Richard has also held a faculty position at UVic since 1984 in the School of Earth and Ocean Sciences. He is also very organized and maybe, most importantly, Richard has a real love for irises and has an excellent collection.

With this Bulletin it means that I, along with various other production people but mainly Joyce Prothero, have produced over thirty Bulletins. I know that our new President will be looking for someone to take on this task. So please consider helping out. And don't count yourself out if you do not live in the Victoria area. The Editor of the New Zealand Iris Society lives in Australia!

On a more personal note, 2017 will be the last year I will be selling plants including irises. It is over thirty years since

I started my modest operation and for practical reasons it is time to reduce the workload. I might continue purchasing and distributing Joe Pye Weeds' new Siberian and other selected introductions as they are such incredible irises and it is good to have them growing in Canada. And, I will continue gardening! However, if anyone knows of a younger person, say less than 50, who

is very interested in irises, I would like to work with them to build up their collection so they can carry on the work.

It has been a privilege being your president. I wish all of you the very best for 2017. May your iris bloom season be wonderful this year.

Ted

All photos in this issue are by Ted Baker (unless otherwise indicated)

Tips for Iris Presentation

Ted Baker, Salt Spring Island, B.C. and Chad Harris, Washougal, WA

Irises as Cut Flowers

They last about a week. Cut when the first bloom on the stalk is just opening or has opened that morning. Condition them by cutting in the evening or morning and set them in a bucket of cool water in a shady place. Stalks cut the evening before can be ready for sale in the morning.

For TBs I often cut the long stems a second time just above the first branch. This makes them much more manageable and easier to arrange in a vase. Remember that as the flowers wilt they can 'bleed' and if a dark colour can drip and stain so make sure they are not on a white or light coloured cloth.

Finally, deadhead the faded blooms each day. The new blooms will be smaller than the earlier blooms but look very nice. Change the water as needed.

Ted Baker

Preparing Irises for Show

One of the most important things to do is conditioning the plants you are going to show. This will ensure your blooms do not wilt before or during the show.

The cutting depends on the iris, Bearded usually in the early morning one day prior to the show when in the ballooning stage. This means the bud is about to open.

Siberians are cut after opening the evening before as they do not like to be cut in the ballooning stage (they get all twisty looking).

All can be cut in the evening on a first-day-open flower (remember that the show is the next day when the flower will be on its second day) and will last two more days if kept cool. It is important to store the cut blooms outside under cover and not indoors as that will age the flower a whole day.

Chad Harris

Here are the links 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>

BACK YARD IRIS HYBRIDIZING

Penny Santosham, Penticton, British Columbia

Hybridizing irises is one of the most fascinating activities in my life.



'Kristique' (Santosham, R2015) is a median named for Penny's daughter-in-law.

It's like being pregnant with scores of babies at the same time; first hoping for fertilization to occur, then watching for seeds to germinate, and finally, waiting a year (or more) before delivery. Time and patience are necessary but little can match the satisfaction of watching your creation grow or the thrill of seeing a blossom unfurl for the first time in history. Although most offspring end in the compost because they are dull or weak, amateurs need to keep in mind that professional breeders may only keep three or four out of 10,000 seedlings.

I started hybridizing bearded irises twelve years ago and registered my first clone in 2009 for an inaugural member of BCIS who turned 100 that year. Since then, I've registered six more.

None of them will win awards but it is a great pleasure to call them after family members and friends - who are delighted to be recognized. *Iris* 'Lavinia Campbell' was won by a young woman in a school fundraising auction and named after her grandmother. Every registered iris of mine has a story and some I keep just for fun. One such is a vigorous broken-coloured rose/cream clone I call 'Streaker' after my six-year-old nudist grandson. Every time I see it in the garden I chuckle, even when it isn't blooming. Pin-striped "Prankster" was named for an old friend who loves playing tricks.

Before starting to make crosses I read everything that I could find - a single chapter each in two books. The internet was just becoming general available in 2006 and my library had nothing to offer. I eventually sent away for the American Iris Society self-published "The World of Irises" (1978) plus a paperback (2002) which a local store discovered. Their information about hybridizing was varied and often conflicting but I tried every technique described.

The following are their recommendations, plus my experiences and strategies.

All photos by
Penny Santosham.

Choosing parents: Have a goal before making crosses and choose parents with desirable characteristics: irises with clean colors and good form/branching, strong stems, disease-resistant foliage, high bud count (over 7) and good increases. My aim is to create tall bearded irises in the shorter range, between 27 and 32 inches and I'm hoping for a pink beard on blue or vice versa.



'Lavinia Campbell' (left) and 'Prankster' Both are 2016 median registrants.

Making the cross: Pick a warm, dry, calm day and have all your equipment at hand. Use several small glass bowls for your pollen. Plastic ones can easily tip or blow over. I use small sticky notes to ID the pollen bowls. As I do several crosses at a time I cut off bright surveyor's tape, number each one on the end and stick them to the tray along double-sided scotch tape. You'll need tweezers, scissors, a record book and black paint ball pen (available at car stores). I put everything on a tray stuck with duct tape to a light-weight portable TV table that is easy to carry around the garden. Flowers chosen to form the pod should be freshly opened. The anthers are projections right above the beard and contain the pollen. The stigmatic lip is behind the anthers. (See drawing on p7.)

1. Remove the lower petals (falls) and the anthers from the flower of the parent who will be the 'mother' and from

the pod. This is so that a bee can't land on the bloom later. Tie a numbered surveyor tape below the bloom to show it is fertilized.

2. Using tweezers, take several ripe anthers from your chosen pollen parent (1 or 2 days open) and place them in the labeled dishes. Check there is fluffy pollen on the anther- some irises are sterile.

3. Rub the anther on the sticky stigmatic lip of the pod parent then gently press it closed against the style arm. I often leave the anther stuck on the lip.

Keep detailed records: number the crosses each year 1, 2, 3... or A, B, C..., record the date, time, weather of

attempted crosses and names of parents: Pod parent X Pollen parent. This I did conscientiously and it was invaluable. Note if crosses take and if so, the number of seeds produced, how many germinated, when they bloomed and a description of the blossom. Take lots of photos and note what died out and what you kept or discarded. It will help in planning future crosses. In case you want to register it, record height, fragrance, branching, bud count and special qualities such as purple- or red-based foliage.

Watch seed pods carefully and harvest them when dry and starting to crack open. This is impossible to predict so once a pod starts to form (3-7 days after fertilization) I enclose it in plastic mesh (garlic bags) and tie it closed around the stem with the numbered surveyor's tape used when making the cross. I waited too long at first and lost the seeds of one pod when it opened and the seeds dispersed. Some professional growers who make hundreds of crosses, cut the stems and keep them in water as soon as the pod starts to turn brown.

Stratification of seeds: Seeds have an inhibitor which needs to be removed before they will germinate. They also require a minimum 6-week cold period. I tried every suggestion: damp seeds in bags of peat moss in a fridge, seeds in pots of soil in the fridge, seeds in bags of soil outside, sandpapering and nicking seeds, planting them fresh from the pod, waiting for them to sprout and then planting them in pots inside. After continual losses to mold, damping off, rotted and ungerminated seeds I decided to let nature take its course. For eight years I've planted and left them outside with 75% success. Barry Blyth, a premier Australian hybridizer told me that he dried his seeds for a few days then put them into an old nylon stocking, keeping varieties separate by knotting. He puts the filled stocking into a toilet tank for a week. Each time the toilet is flushed the inhibitors are washed off. I put the stocking into a bowl of water on the kitchen counter and rinse it off several times a day for a week. Iris seeds will remain viable for seven years and I've had a few surprise clones appear which I believe originated from discarded seedling soil.



Seeds tied in nylon stockings and soaking in water to remove germination inhibitors.

Planting the seeds : I plant the seeds half-an-inch deep with half-an-inch spacing in loose sandy/gravelly garden soil in a punctured wallpaper trough sunk in a garden bed and let my local winter temperatures (around -20°C) provide the cold needed for germination. Planting in a container keeps the seeds from getting lost. In October I cover the troughs with alfalfa pellets which absorb moisture and become a mulch. The alfalfa is a soil conditioner not a fertilizer but it contains a hormone that stimulates bud development. Seeds need to be kept well watered and weeded in the first few months and the following spring. Separate varieties with sturdy labels that correspond to their numbers in your record book.



In October, alfalfa covers the trays for winter.

Plenty of garden space is needed as seedlings should be transplanted at least 1 foot apart. I tried 6-inch spacing once and by the end of the second year varieties had grown together and identities were confused so dividing was a nightmare. Transplant when the grass-like seedlings are 4 inches high into loose soil; preferably 1/3 sand, 1/3 compost and 1/3 garden soil. Seedlings sprout over a two-week period in early spring. The photo (next page) was taken the third week of August. Some will bloom the following year and promising clone clumps should double or triple in size the first season. All should bloom by the third season.



When seedlings are 4" high, transplant seedlings 12" apart, and leave 2-3 years.

Hybridizing is unpredictable and that is part of the fun. Some years I've had only a few crosses take which resulted in just a couple of dozen seeds. In 2011, 17 of 33 crosses produced 744 seeds and

eventually about 60 blossomed. One pod had 40 seeds and 20 plants bloomed the second year within a few days of each other - each flower was different which was amazing! Modern irises are tetraploids, meaning they have three sets of additional chromosomes so the possibilities are endless and characteristics of clones depend on recessive and dominant genes in the parents. The photo below shows the pod parent '**Naples**' and the pollen parent '**Laced Cotton**' beside their 20 second-year offspring. Eight more bloomed the following year. Some faded away, some I gave to friends instead of tossing them out, 'Kristique' was registered and I'm evaluating two more for future registration. Next spring 25 of my 2015 crosses could bloom for the first time, which is exciting to anticipate.



The twenty Year Two offspring of pod parent 'Naples and pollen parent 'Laced Cotton'.

Registering a new iris is a fairly simple process because the American Iris Society (AIS) Registrar handles all new cultivars throughout the world. The application form is on line. You print it off, fill it out and mail it with the fee of \$15 US. The tricky part is choosing a name which hasn't been used already. The best way to check is to google "Tall Bearded Iris" and the name you want to use. It will be identified if it already exists. Applications need to be submitted by the end of September and can take up to two months to process.

It's important to make sure the information you use in your application is accurate; size, bloom time, fragrance, description of blossom and beard, parentage and so on. Experienced hybridizers will advise you to grow a new iris for at least three seasons before registration to ensure it doesn't die out and retains desirable

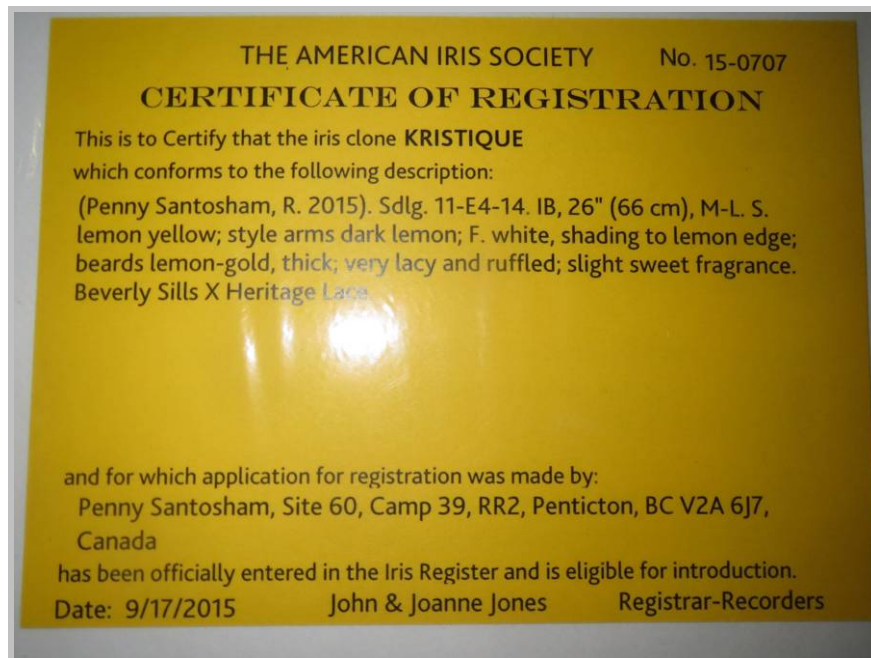
qualities with preferably unique characteristics. This is an official registration certificate.

After a new iris clone is officially registered, the hybridizer is asked to enter its description plus a photo into the AIS online Wikipedia. Every ten years the AIS publishes a manual of all irises registered in that period. "Introduction" means making the iris available for sale and entry into flower shows.

If you try hybridizing and have even one successful bloom you'll be hooked. Or just plant seeds from pods created by insects (called bee pods). You'll be pleasantly surprised with the beautiful and varied blossoms.

Feel free to email me with questions or comments.

pennysantosham@gmail.com



Certificate of Registration for 'Kristique'

Irises: Ideal Companion Plants for Rhododendrons

Ian E. Efford, Duncan, British Columbia

Mid-summer and only one rhododendron, *Rhododendron dauricum*, has a few flowers and, as the temperature creeps above 30°C, it is too hot for outdoor gardening in the middle of the day. One of the coolest activities is to drink a glass of cider and allow the mind to plan changes to the garden. Some rhododendrons must be moved because they are either in too much shade or too much sun. Trimming back the shade trees will also make a difference especially if some of the branches have grown to hinder the arc of the watering system. There is also the issue of companion plants. Which ones should be moved because they have outgrown their welcome or are just not “right” where they sit at this time? New companion plants to complement rhododendrons is the subject of at least a couple of ciders and two afternoons lazing under the trees. There is quite a choice but it is essential to watch some of the ground cover choices as they can become invasive if left to their own devices.

In an earlier article, I suggested that some of the smaller flowering trees [eg. *Halesia*, *Styrax*] with fairly delicate leaves are an ideal contrast to the larger-leafed rhododendrons as they provide light shade when needed in the summer whilst not giving the heavy dark shade created by many of our local conifer forest trees.

Sonja Nelson, in her book on “Rhododendrons in the Landscape” briefly mentions irises as ideal companion plants. She says “No woodland garden should be without the spiked foliage of the genus *Iris*, its strong, vertical lines contrast with the often horizontal lines of rhododendron foliage.” As someone who grows 200-300 irises from seed each year, I could not agree more but to be successful it is necessary to consider just which irises one is going to plant as, like rhododendrons, they all have

their individual habitat requirements. It must be remembered that, in principle, irises are sun-loving and prefer alkaline soils which contrast with rhododendrons that are normally considered shade-loving and preferring acidic soils. This has to be taken into consideration when planting the two complementary genera together.

I can only recollect two gardens where irises have formed the dominant ground cover. In Dunedin Botanic Garden one area of the large stands of mature rhododendrons had a metre-deep ground cover of the crested iris, *I. wattii*. This



Iris wattii

species is from Western China and India and may not always survive here but a related crested iris, *I. Japonica*, grows well in my garden. It is usually shorter, about half-a-metre, but over time it should spread and provide a colourful cover in a semi-shade situation. Two other North American crested irises do well in a moist, semi-shade situation and are grown by gardens on this island but rarely as ground cover. They are *I. cristata*, the common one, and the very

much smaller *I. lacustris*. *Iris cristata* is from the Adirondack and *I. lacustris* from around the Great Lakes including the shores on the Canadian side. Given the right conditions, both will flower profusely although *I. lacustris* is very small and one has to be careful not to rake it up accidentally during the dormant period.

The other crested iris that should be grown by all gardeners and one that would do well in a semi-shade rhododendron garden is *I. tectorum*, sometimes called the Japanese Roof iris. The flower of this iris can be white, blue or purple and it almost always has a conspicuous white crest. It has complexity and beauty to rival some of the orchids and grows well in most parts of the continent.



Iris tectorum

The second garden where an iris was used as a groundcover was on an iris tour in North Carolina. Like most garden tours, we were running late and the last garden was reached in early evening on a very warm day. The whole garden was perfused with a strong smell of plums. The source was *I. Gramanea*, a relatively small Spuria iris which formed a complete ground cover under the bushes. It grows to about 30-40 cm and is characterized by dark green thin leaves. Most Spurian irises have a grey tinge to their leaves. The flowers are dark blue-purple with a touch of white or yellow and appear among the leaves rather than standing above them as in most irises. The perfume from these flowers was overwhelming, so much so that I have no other

recollection of the garden nor the other irises there. It is easy to grow and highly recommended as a ground cover in a shady and moist location.

Most Spurian irises are tall and are excellent contrasting companion plants for large rhododendrons planted in the open. The species can be a metre high although a few reach more than a metre and a half. *Iris crocea* and *I. orientalis*, have very large flowers that are a brilliant golden yellow [*I. crocea*] or white and yellow [*I. orientalis*] and flower in July when most rhododendrons are over for the year. These plants form very strong clumps of upright "sword" blades topped with the flowers. Apart from the species *I. crocea* and *orientalis*, there are a number of hybrid Spurians that have very bright colours ranging from red through bronze to blues and white and yellows. These plants are very tough and are ideal garden plants although they have to be divided every few years.



Iris crocea

The most common irises grown in gardens are the bearded irises that originate in the dry summer climates that surround the Mediterranean. They can be used as companion plants when rhododendrons are grown in full sun although one has to be careful as these irises prefer dry summer conditions and will rot if there is too much water. Some of the dwarf forms would be suitable as edging plants around a bed where they will flower before most rhododendrons.



Three Spuria hybrids



A flower bed with a *Davidia* as the feature tree and young spurian irises growing up amid rhododendrons. The white one is *Rhododendron* `David Dougan`, pink is *R. `Aglo`* and in the background is *R. ambiguum*.

This preference for the dry soils also applies to most of the bulbous irises which can be found naturally from the Atlantic coast all the way through to the India-Pakistan border. Lovely plants but not ideal companion plants for a genus that prefers moist acid soils. There are exceptions, some of the English/Spanish/Dutch bulbous irises [Xiphium] can be put in patches in some beds as long as they are in full sun much of the growing season.

I am sure that some readers are asking "What about the Siberian irises?" For pure architectural structures, the Spurian irises cannot be touched. They are usually tall with sword-like grey leaves and topped by striking flowers. Siberians on the other hand tend to be shorter, most are about a metre high at flowering, the leaves are narrower, curved and softer and they have beautifully coloured flowers in a very wide range of colours from stark white, through yellows and blues. Some of the most recent hybrids are well into the reds. Like almost all irises, Siberians are not shade plants but they do well along the edge of a bed in the semi-shade or out in the open sun. Their softer form complements the form and colour of rhododendron plants and their flowering is later in the season, after most rhododendrons and before the spurian irises.

Much the same thing can be said about the Japanese irises that flower about the same time as the spurian irises. They do prefer wetter soil, however, so are better planted in a separate bed, possibly near to a rhododendron bed beside a small stream or pond. In this same site can be grown other water-loving irises such as the Louisianans. These have very large flowers although the plants tend to be "floppy." As their native habitat is the southern US, some people consider that they cannot be grown in Canada. This is untrue as I have grown them successfully in Ottawa [where the winter

temperature dropped as low as -35°C] as long as there is a good snow cover.

Sonja Nelson recommended Pacific Coast irises [PCI] as companion plants that are tolerant of shade but, although they will grow under these conditions, they are really edge of forest or open glade plants and their flowering is greatly improved with plenty of sun. Because they are short, usually no more than 30 cm they are ideal border plants around a rhododendron bed. This group of irises must have evolved quite recently which means that the various species are closely related and cross fertile. The result is that they generate hybrids with very diverse flower patterns and colours.

There are a few Siberian related species that are found in the same Asian forests as rhododendrons, usually in damp glades between the bushes: *I. clarkei*, *wilsonii*, *chrysographes*, *forrestii*, etc. These are all very beautiful plants but most are relatively short and do not offer a structural contrast with rhododendrons. I recommend them as garden plants but not in direct association with rhododendrons.

Most irises, except for those that are part of a desert flora, are very easy to grow from seed and will give you flowering plants within three years. Seeds can be obtained very inexpensively from various iris societies such as the British Iris Society and the Species Iris Society of North America [SIGNA], the North American Rock Garden Society [NARGS] and other such groups. For plants, the only specialized iris nursery in British Columbia is Baker's Gardens on Saltspring Island.

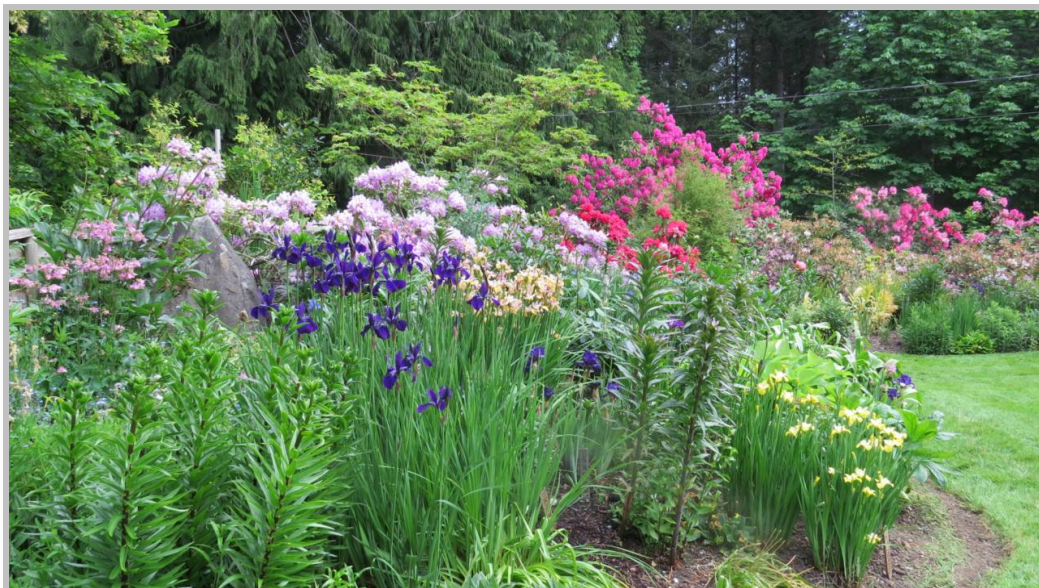
I hope that this overview is clear, if not, blame it on the hot weather and the Irish cider! If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at efford@telus.net or 250-597-4470.

Photographs are by Ian Efford except for *Iris wattii* which was taken by Stan Stebs.

This article was first published in the *Cowichan Valley Rhododendron Society Newsletter*, Vol 27:6, September, 2016.

Why I Grow Siberian Irises in my Garden

Ted Baker, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia



Mixed Border with Siberians, Lilies, Peonies and Rhododendrons

I just love to see Siberians growing in any garden but especially my own. First, because they are so beautiful and second, because they are so easy to grow, third, because they have few, if any enemies, except slugs here on the west coast but they can be eliminated easily enough; fourth, because once established they are relatively drought tolerant, and finally, because they attract a good number of humming birds to our garden.

If someone, especially a new gardener, comes for a visit and wants irises I always send them home with some Siberians. They are such a garden worthy plant that I do not hesitate to recommend them to everyone.

I use Siberians in my garden in different ways. As I sell irises I try to have as good a selection as possible and now keep over 130 cultivars. I have a small scale operation so the bulk of my Siberians are in the gardens close to the house. I do not generally advertise so

people come during bloom season and select what they want. I try to have the Siberians blooming among other plants so a visitor can visualize what they will be like when planted in their own garden. I do not plant in rows but rather as clumps. Because we have a relatively small garden area (except when I am weeding) and because we sell plants, I only have a relatively small number of plants of the same cultivar so you will not see the large sweeps of the same cultivar that is so effective in larger gardens. However, I do get a similar effect by planting sweeps of similar colours.

When it comes to colour, my garden is arranged to have blues in one area, and, as you move along it transitions to lavenders, to purples to pinks and so forth. Yellows and oranges have their own area. Using this very simple technique I find that visitors think a lot of planning has gone into the garden when really it is a very easy way

to retain a sense of flow and organization. When I buy a new plant I know the area it will go in, just not its exact location. I use other colours as highlights, such as white or very dark colours, in all of the beds. A soft yellow like 'Flying Fiddles' can be fitted effectively into the blue or purple areas as well as yellow areas.



'Flying Fiddles' (Schafer/Sacks 2010)

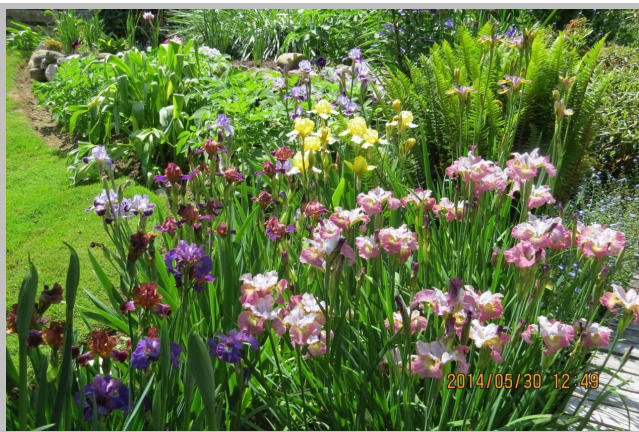
Companion plants are also critical to give interest the entire growing season. Fortunately Siberian foliage is great. It looks so good all year long but texture as well as colour in the garden is so important. A favourite companion plant of mine, and probably yours, is the

Brunnera called 'Jack Frost.' As the Siberians are growing in the spring the stems of long lasting, small, bright blue flowers brighten up the garden. After weeks of bloom the flowers end, and large heart-shaped, frosted leaves appear in the *Brunnera*. There are many other plants that can be used as companion plants which compliment the form and timing of Siberian bloom.

The sixth reason I love Siberians is because hybridizers have created the most beautiful colours, combinations of colours, and patterns on plants that are mostly wonderful even when not in bloom. These newer cultivars add so



'Art in Bloom' (Schafer/Sacks 2016)



Siberians in a Mixed Border



'Gem Quality' (Hollingworth 2007)
Lovely new colour

much beauty and interest to the early summer garden. I also take advantage of sequential bloom by placing these exceptional cultivars where they show well during the summer. 'Devil's Dream' [photo] never fails to give excellent extended bloom.



'Devil's Dream' sequential bloom on July 20, 2016, six weeks after primary bloom

And we must not forget the older Siberians. The flowers are simple and many of the plants are graceful and add so much to the mixed border.



Siberians of similar colours growing as a group.

I cannot imagine having a garden without Siberians. For year long appeal, ease of care and stunning results I think they are one of the stars of any garden. Congratulations to all those hybridizers who bring these excellent plants to us year

An earlier version of this article was published in *The Siberian Iris*, Vol 12:10, Spring 2016.

Definitely Not Irises! Ted Baker, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia

In recent years I have had the privilege of seeing two very impressive cactus and succulent gardens. While a long way from most irises, I know that many of us are 'gardeners' and like a range of different kinds of plants. The first stunning cactus garden I visited was at the The Huntington Library, Art Collection and Botanical Gardens near Pasadena when the American Iris Society held it's National Convention in Ontario, California. The second was the desert Wirikuta Cactus Botanical Park in San Jose Los Cabo in Mexico. If you are ever in the area of either of these gardens they are so worth a visit.

The Huntington Library Art Collection and Botanical Gardens

As stated on their website, The Huntington is one of the world's great cultural, research and educational centres. It was founded in 1919 by Henry E

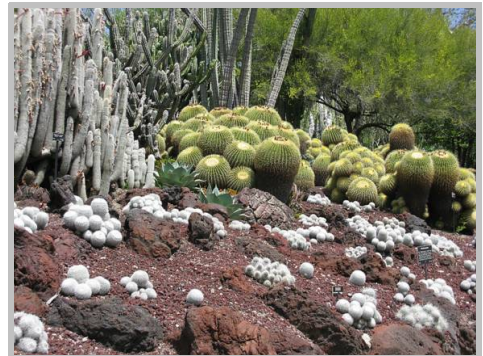


Huntington who had a special interest in books, art, and gardens. In the library we saw a Gutenberg Bible on vellum, in the art collection Gainsborough's *Blue Boy* and Lawrence's *Pinky*, and some of the over twelve speciality gardens covering 120 acres with 15,000 plant varieties.



The staff went out of their way to make us feel welcome by decorating the research lab with irises, planting accent irises throughout the general landscaping and setting up a special area in the Gift Shop with an iris themed display.

While all the gardens were stunning and very well kept I will focus on the Desert Garden as I have never seen anything like it before or since. It is one of the largest and oldest collections of cacti and succulents in the world. The 10-acre display is about 100 years old so the plants are huge. The garden features more than 200 species of desert plants. Definitely an inspiring place to visit.



Wirikuta Cactus Botanical Park.



Sonja and I visited Wirikuta Cactus Botanical Park last November in San Jose Los Cabo, Mexico. It consists of a very large plant nursery, a large garden area with three large manmade pyramids and a field where over twenty large statues made of various materials are displayed. The pyramids are ringed with concentric circles of large boulder resulting in terraces in which potted cacti were placed in various designs.

The area was hit very hard by a class four hurricane in September, 2014 and there was a lot of damage to the gardens. For example, at the top of each pyramid there used to be a thatched hut, but they are gone. Many of the planting areas were flooded and plants killed. But probably most distressing was the loss of seventeen large Bismark palms that ringed the edge of a fan-shaped planting of over 10,000 barrel cacti. Recovery is slow but the place is still amazing.



Gardens before 2014 hurricane damage (image from website)

We were very fortunate to have the manager of the nursery as our tour guide. We knew no Spanish and he very little English but we did communicate. I was so impressed with his knowledge and especially his passion for his plants! He knew the Latin and common names of all 1,500 varieties, plus, where they came from, how to propagate each of them, when they flowered, and what colour and form the flowers were. They water the nursery area once a month.



Another must-visit garden!



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 a 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

BCIS AGM and Speaker Alan McMurtrie on *Reticulata Iris*. March 13, 9:30am-2:00pm, Pacific Forestry Centre, 506 W. Burnside Road, Saanich. Info: Bill Dumont or Ted Baker.

BCIS Oregon Garden Tour. May 12-15.

Four-day bus trip from Victoria to Port Angeles, Salem, Portland, Swartz Bay and back to Victoria. Info: Brenda Burch.

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

Spuria Iris Society (SIS), May 5-6. Los Angeles, CA
Details: www.spurairissociety.org

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 p19 of this Bulletin.

REMEMBER

Monday, March 13th – ALAN McMURTRIE speaks on RETICULATA IRIS during BCIS AGM, held from 9:30am to 2:00pm in the Pacific Forestry Centre in Victoria, 506 W. Burnside Road, Saanich.

BC Iris Society www.bcirissociety.com / www.bc-iris.org

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Electronic Delivery

You have the option of receiving electronic versions of the Bulletin. To request e-delivery, contact Diane at voltaire@islandnet.com.

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