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BCIS

British Columbia Iris Society

Bulletin

Vol. 14, No. 1, Winter 2019

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Editing, Production: Joyce Prothero
Dispatch: Richard Hebda*

'Iris, the flower for all seasons'

2018 MORGAN-WOOD AWARD



(SIB) 'Miss Apple' (Marty Schafer Jan Sacks, 2009)
Seedling No. S02 50 1. Height 30", Midseason bloom.

Photo by Ted Baker.

Miss Apple, the 2018 Morgan-Wood Award Winner

Miss Apple was a milestone in the breeding program of Marty Schafer and Jan Sacks in that it was their first red Siberian. True, not a fire engine red but a good red that grew and bloomed well. A worthy recipient of the Morgan-Wood Medal.

President's Message Winter 2019:

Super Siberians and much more

Richard J. Hebda, BC Iris Society President

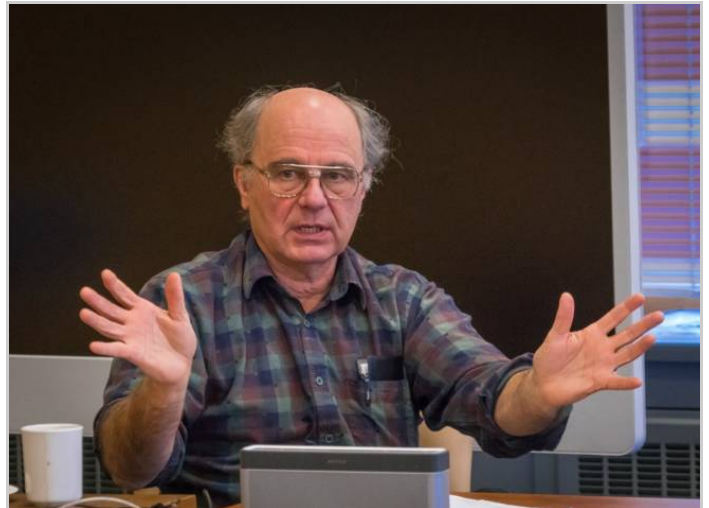
Welcome to the 2019 BC Iris Society (BCIS) annual Bulletin in which you will find wonderfully illustrated articles on a range of topics especially Siberian irises, Miss Apple a delightful showy Siberian being featured on the front cover. In addition to the bulletin we have been sending you by e-mail lots of information from many national and regional societies. We hope you are enjoying these links. We encourage you to use the bulletin to share and exchange information about irises widely with friends, fellow gardeners and societies.

Our bulletin contains several informative articles in addition to the announcements and reports. Ted Baker and I describe the new display garden and our work including a list of the irises you can expect to see in bloom in the coming year at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific (HCP) in Saanich, BC. We look forward to planting more iris beauties this year and filling the relatively large space at our disposal (volunteers anyone?).

We include an amazing article describing the breeding successes at Joe Pye Weed's Garden in Massachusetts, specialists in Siberian irises. A chance cross revealed the potential of the signal patch at the base of the falls leading to spectacular new hybrids and colour patterns. The history of the discovery and breeding are described and illustrated by Jan Sacks.

Penny Santosham, BCIS board member, and Lesia Lalonde describe growing irises in the Okanagan, a bearded iris grower's paradise. Apparently, you just plant them in the ground and stand back; the irises even stopped a fire dead in its tracks. The wonderful text and

Photo by Bob Ianson



Richard J. Hebda, BCIS President

super images are meant to entice you to go on the BCIS Okanagan Iris tour hosted by Penny and Lesia on May 25 and 26, 2019.

Past President Ted Baker shares some of his experiences on the convention circuit through a superbly illustrated colour photo essay. The images of bearded and Siberian Irises are stunning.

In addition, I have a short article on the tall bearded cultivar "Ink Patterns" a great success in my 2018 garden. We also honour Joyce Prothero BCIS member and bulletin technical editor for winning another Award of Merit for her gorgeous Pacific Coast iris Saltspring Sunburst.

Ian Efford (BCIS Director) and the BCIS Bulletin were honoured by the reprinting of Ian's comprehensive article on growing irises from seed in the Species Iris Group of North America (SIGNA) Bulletin.

We have had a very busy year as a Society undertaking the establishment of a display garden at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific in Saanich, BC. Ted Baker and I also held an enjoyable workshop at Government House, Victoria in the spring, amid a fine crop of blooms and gained several new members. In taking the torch of iris lecturer from Ted, I gave a well-attended fall presentation in Nanaimo, again gaining several more members. We made a joint order and import of irises for our members from Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden in Vancouver, Washington, thanks to the able coordination and pick up by Kerry Siefert.

We are taking a slightly different approach to our annual lecture March 16 which will be held at the Horticultural Centre of the Pacific. In keeping with our goal of spreading the word of the iris we will be collaborating with HCP to invite their membership to the lunch and iris presentation. Wanting to lure a larger audience, I will be talking about climate change gardens and the essential role irises can play in them. I'll have lots of colour images. Please spread the word and bring your friends.

Personally, I have been busy renovating my iris plantings neglected somewhat over the years. I am also nursing along transplants from Ted's garden, sadly savaged by a herd of deer over the fall. I added several cultivars from Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden, part of our group purchase in 2018. These have all been planted inside fenced areas or under hooped stucco wire!

I sign off with an image of "Miss Mauve" an Intermediate Bearded (IB) iris introduced by Richard Tasco in

2000 and winner of an Award of Merit in 2005. Miss Mauve blooms reliably in my garden, increasing modestly. My flowers tend toward a smoky lavender as you see in the image rather than the punched-up violet of pictures on the web. It's a good candidate for the mid to front of a border bed and where the wind knocks over tall bearded cultivars.

This coming year promises to be a busy one too with more plantings and maintenance at the HCP, potential participation in other display gardens, more lectures and our Okanagan tour. We'll keep you posted by e-mail. See you at our Annual General Meeting and at my talk at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific on March 16th.

Richard



Photo by Richard Hebda

Miss Mauve IB [2000, Tasco]

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BCIS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and SPEAKER PROGRAM

Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, Couvelier Pavilion

505 Quayle Road, Victoria, BC V9E 2J7

Saturday, March 16, 2019

During a four-hour period on Saturday, March 16, 2019, BCIS will hold its Annual General Meeting (10am), serve an hearty lunch for interested persons, and at noon offer an illustrated lecture on **Creating Climate Change Gardens and the Special Role of Irises** by **Dr. Richard Hebda**. HCP members and Garden Club members are invited to join the BCIS for all or part of the day's activities.

The AGM agenda will cover discussions of items such as:

- status of Winter BCIS Bulletin and Summer 2019 Rainbow Goddess Newsletter
- plans for Okanagan Garden Tour, May 25-26 2019
- report on 2018 iris workshop at Government House
- update on HCP iris display bed (with tour after meeting)
- financial reports and on-line Annual Reporting
- social media website changes
- BCIS election of directors
- Iris beds at Government House

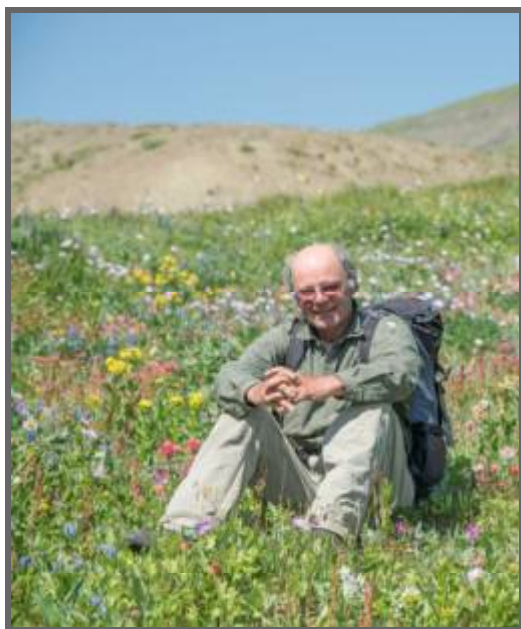
For more information,
contact Richard Hebda
at hebda@shaw.ca
or Bill Dumont
at wedumont@hotmail.com

Invitation to BCIS and HCP Members, Garden Clubs

Saturday March 16, 2019 at 12 noon
at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific

Creating climate change gardens & the special role of irises

An illustrated lecture presented by Richard Hebda, PhD
BC Iris Society, President, and
Royal BC Museum, Curator Emeritus and Climate Adaptation Expert



Courtesy of Royal BC Museum

British Columbia's climate is changing rapidly with warming winter temperatures, summer droughts and a longer growing season.

Learn strategies and techniques to adapt your garden for the future and keep it beautiful.

Discover the roles that remarkably diverse irises can play in our future gardens. Now is the time to start adapting our gardens.

No admission charge for
BC Iris Society and HCP members.

A delicious lunch is available for \$12

Please confirm to
wedumont@hotmail.com
by Monday March 11.



OKANAGAN IRIS TOUR

Saturday, May 25 & Sunday May 26, 2019



All iris enthusiasts are invited to this tour of the scenic Okanagan Valley and its perfect iris climate. Spend the first day visiting private and public gardens in the central Okanagan. The second day explores irises of the north Okanagan. There will be time to stroll through the Penticton Rose Garden, past the heritage SS Sicamous Sternwheeler and beside the lakeshore to the Ikeda Japanese Garden at the Art Gallery

On Saturday there will be a patio dinner at a BCIS member's home and lunch locations will be suggested or organized for both days.

Travel is by personal vehicle ~ car pooling can be arranged. Guests pay for their meals and entrance fees (such as for the Elysium Gardens, Kelowna).

Out-of-towners: please contact the organizers for accommodation options.

Non-BCIS members \$5.00. More details as the schedule is finalized.

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NOTE: This BCIS Bulletin, Winter 2019, 14(1), contains an article on *Irises in the Okanagan* by Penny Santosham and Lesia Lalonde, with 14 photos of the area included. (See pp.17-21)

Ink Patterns Explodes!

Richard Hebda, Victoria, British Columbia

“Floriferous” perhaps a mouthful to say, but a word that absolutely applies to the tall bearded Iris *Ink Patterns* bred by Thomas Johnson (2007). The word means “flower bearing” and it usually means especially flower-bearing. I have had this Iris for several years with little to say about it. But two years ago I moved two fans to the front edge of a slightly raised bed, where the soil is poor, mostly sandy silt with a few stones and rotting blackberry canes. I sprinkled a bit of Osmocote in the root area and watered it maybe two or three times the last two summers. The site gets pretty good summer heat being on a south-facing slope.



Tall Bearded Iris *Ink Patterns* flowering in Richard Hebda's garden spring 2018. *Pirate's Quest* with its orange-yellow flowers peeking out at top centre.



Tall Bearded Iris *Ink Patterns* is a vigorous Plicata type with its faintly stitched colour pattern.

A few flowering stems showed in 2017. This past year (2018) more than 50 stalks appeared each with many blooms! The blooms lasted nearly four weeks showing wonderfully during the full time. Compared to its nearby neighbours, *Pirate's Quest* and *Ola Kala*, it is a standout. *Ola Kala* had a good display but no comparison to *Ink Patterns*. The iris stood up to all the winds in the spring, though they have not been too strong. It is somewhat sheltered by a small pear tree which shades it too. Yet the occasional filtered shade has had no negative effect.

I have been trying for years to get a “big show” such as I have seen in some folks' gardens, but with little success. With *Ink Patterns* I finally succeeded.

I will be moving it to the side of my long driveway where I want to get a spectacular iris display but have had no luck so far. Maybe this one will be the turning point.

- Notes:
1. To those of you who attended the workshop at Government House, this was the cut iris stalk that you took away
 2. Photos by Richard Hebda

Iris Beds at Horticulture Centre of the Pacific: 2018 Report by the British Columbia Iris Society

by Ted Baker and Richard Hebda



BC Iris Society display beds in their first year at Horticulture Centre of the Pacific in Saanich, BC. Sprouting bearded iris fans are visible in the foreground and centre. Irrigation system is laid out on the surface. Photo by Ted Baker, October 2018.

In mid 2018 BC Iris Society (BCIS) and the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific (HCP) agreed to establish iris beds at HCP. These new beds are to be put in and maintained by BCIS and the first work and plantings took place in 2018 summer and fall. The beds represent a new major project for the Society. The purposes of the iris display are to show a representative range of labelled iris species and cultivars for the public to appreciate, serve to add further aesthetic value to HCP gardens and act as an outreach, teaching site and resource about the value and growing of irises for HCP and for BCIS.

In the summer of 2018 HCP staff and students under the able direction of Head Gardener Linda Petite prepared the area by removing some plants, including an ageing apple tree. Five BCIS volunteers then spread nicely-aged compost provided by HCP and dug it in.

Late in the summer BCIS volunteers planted 33 bearded iris rhizomes donated by Ted Baker and Richard Cypher. These irises represent a range of varieties from dwarf to tall bearded forms with strong constitutions as revealed by their performance in BC coastal gardens (see attached list).

Over the dry days of late summer and into the fall BCIS volunteers watered the newly planted rhizomes and pulled a scattering of weeds from the new beds. Paid for by BCIS, an irrigation system was installed in September in half the garden area where rhizomes had been planted. Aside from one or two dislodged rhizomes the new plants had taken well showing bright new growth.

In fall three BCIS volunteers took the HCP volunteer training course and added more plants including examples of iris species *I. tectorum*, *I. japonica*, *I. crocea* and varieties donated by Ian Efford. Some companion plants were also added.

In the coming late winter and spring we plan to keep on top of the weeds, especially what is expected to be a solid crop of sprouters from the mulch. This will also be prime time to add a wide selection of Siberian irises including the award-winning Miss Apple displayed on the front cover of this bulletin.

You can view this new enterprise of BCIS on March 16 at the HCP by attending the Annual General Meeting and Richard Hebda's presentation on gardening at a time of climate change and the important role of irises.

We invite BC Iris Society members to come and see the performance of some pretty fine cultivars and watch them expand and bring smiles to HCP garden visitors. If you are interested in volunteering in the beds please contact either Richard Hebda or Ted Baker.

IRISES PLANTED BY BCIS AT HCP

Initial planting August 27, 2018

Bearded Irises donated by Ted Baker .

Tall Bearded	Sea Power
Alpine Harmony	Sharp Dressed Man
Alsea Falls	Skating Party
Blackwater	Stairway To Heaven
Celtic Woman	Standard Dwarf Bearded
Conjuration	Absolute Joy
Dusky Challenger	Bluebeard's Ghost
Happenstance	Bumpkin
Haunted Heart	Little White Tiger
Leading Light	My Cher
Merry Amigo	Portland Pink
Midnight Treat	Medium Tall Bearded
Orchid Dove	Dividing Line
Ozark Rebounder	Sari's Dance
Queen's Circle	Star In The Night

Irises planted in September-October 2018

<u>Richard Cypher</u>	<u>Ian Efford</u>
Coral Dragon [IB]	<i>Iris tectorum</i>
Cappuccino Lace [TB]	<i>Iris japonica</i>
Many Mahalos [IB]	<i>Iris crocea</i>
Spice Trader [TB]	
Unconditional Love [TB]	

Ted Baker: Lavender Fair (Siberian)
Spurias (5) will be named when they bloom

Award of Merit

Our own Joyce Prothero has done it again. She has won another American Iris Society Award of Merit [AM] for Saltspring Sunburst, a Pacific Coast iris. Congratulations Joyce! This is no easy feat as you are competing against the best hybridizers in the USA and Canada. Award of Merits were given to only two PCIs last year.



Photo: Joyce Prothero

Saltspring Sunburst is lovely. It was registered in 2010, received an Honorable Mention in 2015. It is 25 cm tall with midseason bloom. Standards are cream overlaid medium rose, darker purple midrib; style arms cream, light rose tips; falls dark rose-maroon, darker blotch, central purple flash, cream edge; flat form, moderate ruffling.

In the past it has always been a very good grower for me. Unfortunately I do not have it anymore!
Ted Baker

Siberian Irises: A Brief Introduction

Richard Hebda and Ted Baker, President and Past-President, BC Iris Society

Siberian Irises include *Iris sibirica* and *Iris sanguinea* and related species and their hybrids. Though they may not be quite as popular and furry as their bearded iris cousins because they are beardless, they are gorgeous and excellent garden subjects in British Columbia. They grow from matted rhizomes forming medium to tall clumps of relatively narrow long grass-like leaves. The flowers rise on generally strong stems placed among or above the leaf clump. Their range extends from examples such as Sugar Sprite (46 cm [18 inches]) to Tall Dark And Handsome at 109 cm [43 inches] high.

The native range of *Iris sibirica* includes central Europe and eastern Asia, but naturalized clumps now occur widely in eastern and western North America demonstrating their adaptability. Siberian iris plants are very hardy, capable of growing in conditions as frosty as zone 4. They are also generally pest and disease resistant.

In the garden, Siberians prefer medium to moist sites though once established they tolerate drought well. Penny Santosham reports that in the hot dry Okanagan climate, regular and frequent summer watering is a must. Neutral to slightly acid soil with humus is favoured, and mulch is highly recommended.

The conventional transplant time is in early spring or fall. The times, of course, differ depending on the climate zone. On the BC coast, late winter to spring (March) transplants are ideal. In the Interior the time to spring-transplant is later. Another excellent time to transplant is when the plants are finished blooming. Regular watering is required for the first two years until clumps are well established and increasing. Do not transplant with the bearded irises in the heat of the summer.

Siberians are widely suited to many garden situations. Conventionally they are used in perennial borders and damp sites such as next-to-water features. They also do well as landscape plants mixed with shrubs or other self-care situations where the gardener's attention is less intense. They do particularly well in focus beds of several varieties or numerous clumps of a particular variety.

There is no standard form for a Siberian iris bloom. The Society for Siberian Irises encourages hybridizers to introduce all types which adds greatly to the appeal of these irises. The flower can be similar to that of the species with narrow petals and no ruffles. On their long slender stems, they blow so wonderfully in the wind. Or they can be of the modern type, bearing wide, ruffled, overlapping petals which give an excellent clump of colour. Style arms can be long, short, feathered or smooth and the standards can be a prominent feature or almost absent. The result of this variation are blooms that are exceptionally interesting and give variety to the garden.

Today the number of varieties is exploding as hybridizers are making breeding breakthroughs. Among the features of attention are the **signals** which vary greatly in size, colour and pattern. The signal can either be present or absent on an iris. If present it is located at the base of the fall and is different from the fall colour, presenting a solid colour or display as a pattern. The signal is believed to have evolved to attract bees for pollination.

The article by Jan Sacks reveals how a focus on using the colours and patterns of the signal has produced a wonderful new array of modern Siberian Irises for the garden.

Signals Gone Wild

Jan Sacks, Joe Pye Weed's Garden, 337 Acton Street, Carlisle, MA 01741-1432

Marty and I have been having a lot of fun with signals lately. It wasn't planned, and we came to it from two different directions. One project is what we've been calling "expansive signals," and the other we call "clean signals."

The expansive signal project came out of nowhere - one day in 2010 a seedling bloomed with the biggest signal we'd ever seen. The falls were a lovely soft yellow and decorated with intense red-violet veining and dotting. I would have to say that, as usual, Marty was thrilled with this novelty, and I was wary, thinking it rather gaudy. Marty proceeded to put its pollen on as many other seedlings as possible and continued to do that for several years until its children began to bloom.

*Around the same time we noticed a seedling that had a nice yellow signal with only a few veins and dots and dashes. It reminded us of an exotic iris we have only seen in photos called *Iris cycloglossa*. The prospect of a siberian with an unmarked signal intrigued me. In 2012, Marty made a single cross with this seedling and the next cleanest seedling we could find, expecting it would take a number of generations to create a clean signal patch, but thinking it might be worth the effort.*

What follows is the tale to date of these two projects.

Looking back a bit, early siberian introductions (1900s to 1950s) were mostly selections of *Iris sibirica* or *Iris sanguinea* and some hybrids between them. The signals on both species (except for the alba forms) were white with some self-colored veining, and the area closest to the hafts (the structure where the falls connect to the rest of the flower) usually had some brown, brick, or green markings. The *I. sibirica* signals were larger and kind of disorganized (one might say messy) and the *I. sanguinea* signals more sedate.



Iris sibirica



Iris sanguinea

This article was first published in *The Siberian Iris*, Spring 2018, Volume 4, Number 3. Reprinted with permission.

In the next several decades, as there were more man-made crosses, I think you could say that a preference developed among hybridizers for the sanguinea-style signal. It became fashionable for signals to be quieter, more organized, and maybe, if possible, hidden or non-existent. Then came Bob Hollingworth and the world of siberian signals would never be the same.

In Spring 1984, there was an article in *The Siberian Iris (TSI)* by Currier McEwen in which he used the term "sunburst pattern" to describe signals he had seen in Bob's seedlings. He did not use the term to describe color (i.e. sun), since they were white for the most part. He wrote, "The 'sunburst' is not only large but, to me, suggests an explosion." Do we still use this term today? I don't know, but I do know that Bob's development of this pattern has produced incredible results, from Jewelled Crown'87 and Sultan's Ruby'88 through many others including the 2017 Morgan-Wood Medal winner Judy, Judy, Judy'10. The contribution to garden siberians is immeasurable.



Judy, Judy, Judy'10

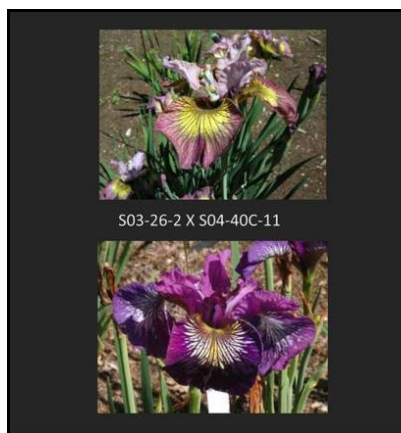
I would have to say, during this time, Marty and I were not particularly concerned with signals; we were all "about color" - deepening, warming, and saturating yellow and using yellow to create new color combinations. As I look back now, we had more and more seedlings and introductions with yellow signals rather than white signals, but we weren't tuned into it or did not think of it as notable. Uncorked '02 had a splendid large yellow signal, but we were more focused on the oddness of the coloring of the blue overlaid on the yellow. Later, Miss Apple'09 and Sugar Rush'08 both had significant yellow signals, but we were more concerned with the new colors of pink and red. Nevertheless, yellow signals have been adding a great deal to the look of modern siberians and we are no longer missing out on their significance — which leads us back to the "gaudy" seedling with the expansive signal, S08-16-2.



Sugar Rush'08



08 61 -2



The new signal didn't really come out of nowhere. One final cross was necessary to bring this signal out in an extreme form. S08-16-2 and its sibling, Carnivalito'15, came from a cross of two seedlings with kind of large signals (at least for then), one yellow on a rose flower, the other white on a large magenta flower.

These were from two mostly different backgrounds. The rose over yellow parent had yellows and pink and

reddish overlays with *I. sibirica* Snow Prince'90 way back in the lineage. The other parent had Tall Dark and Handsome'07 (a child of Sultan's Ruby) crossed with a seedling from a bunch of large and nicely ruffled children and grandchildren of Careless Sally'96. And there was a bit more Snow Prince in the way back as well. So it isn't too much of a stretch to think of these new signals as a merging of the large and disorganized *I. sibirica* signals with the explosion of Bob's Sunburst signals.

S08-16-2 is not to be introduced. For all its fabulous signal, it doesn't have the best bud count, height, or shape for the very large flower that it is. As a parent, it's been a star. Marty made half-sib crosses of S08-16-2 with two seedlings that had the same pod parent as S08-16-2, but whose pollen parent was Miss Apple. One resulted in Fiddles on Fire'17, with bright red falls and large, neatish bright yellow signals. The signal is big and loud, but not too gaudy. We are already seeing children of Fiddles On Fire and the large yellow signal pattern continues.



Fiddles on Fire'17

The second cross of S08-16-2 with a child of Miss Apple produced S10-45-13. Upon seeing this seedling, a friend said it looked like a psychedelic tie! We would have loved to introduce this flower, but again, it had qualities other than flower that made it not possible. We are continuing to breed with its children and its outrageousness continues.



S10-45-13

Another cross of S08-16-2 with a seedling whose parents were a sibling of Cinnamon Sugar'10 crossed with Miss Apple produced Juniper Leigh'19. This one is definitely high on the gaudy meter. (As you may have guessed, I have now embraced Paul Black's philosophy that "gaudy is good"). The magenta flower has a huge yellow signal, covered throughout by magenta veining.



Juniper Leigh'19

And just as exciting are many of its children which have all kinds of large signals, including the lovely rose and yellow S14-62-1.



S14-62-1

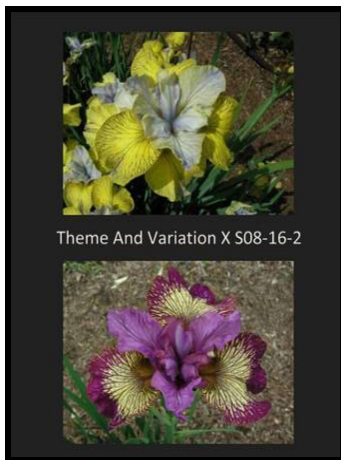
Remember I said that Marty crossed S08-16-2 with everything. In crossing it with a medium blue over yellow seedling, he got a purple with a very large but pale yellow signal. This seedling is producing purple and red-violet blends in the next generation with large flowers and signals. And he crossed S08-16-2 with Solar Energy'14, which is yellow with a white fall rim, and got giant reds and magentas plus the largest yellow siberian we have ever seen. This yellow crossed with Fashion-Forward'16 created S14-22-0 and S14-22-10, two soft gold siberians with interesting large and more subtle signals.



S14-22-0



S14-22-10



Saving the best for last, the most dramatic results came from the cross of S08-16-2 with Theme and Variation'15, which is a blue overlaid on yellow where there is more yellow showing in the falls than the subdued blue. One could describe it as having huge yellow signals, or yellow falls with a few soft blue veins. This cross had many fascinating seedlings in it, most red- or blue-violets with one outrageous signal after another. One of these we introduced last year, Purring Tiger'17, purple with a big yellow signal that dominates the falls, but probably the smallest signal in the cross. Each of the others has less and less fall color and more and more yellow! It makes me wonder when a yellow signal becomes so large that it is just a yellow fall as in S11-16-10, Follow the Honey'19, and S11-16-13.



S11-16-10



Follow the Honey'19



S11-16-13

There are already many wonderful children of these seedlings, but perhaps the most interesting on the signal front are the children of Follow the Honey,

— from the soft and subtle S14-46-11



— to the bold and beautiful S14-47-10A and S14-47-12.



Where can we "expand" from here?



I mentioned at the top that we have two signal projects underway. The second is what we call clean signals. It started by crossing a single seedling that showed a lot of unmarked yellow in the signal with what seemed like the next cleanest mate for it.

We thought we might get a few seedlings from this cross that could be sib crossed and gradually clean the signal over a couple of generations. To our great surprise, the original cross produced exactly what we wanted, and in many of its seedlings. That almost never happens, so it was a delight. The flowers were all done up in shades of blue- to red-violet, with the signals practically clean of veining except for some markings close to the hafts as in S12-41-1 and S12-41-6.



These signals were larger and cleaner than the best parent. The signals are medium to pale yellow, and some lighten to white in the heat. The colored parts of the falls are also not typical of most siberians. They are missing the usual darker veining. Instead, the areas closest to the signals are dotted, almost like plicata in bearded irises. This could be an opening to a whole new look for siberians. We have had very positive feedback from local irisarians on these irises and we have already selected and introduced one this year as Clear The Way. These seedlings are tailored and light in substance and will benefit from breeding for more shape and durability. Marty has been working on that, as well as matching them with some other signals that are either cleanish or interesting in some other way. He has sib-crossed them, of course, and crossed them with some of the expansive signals. From these crosses we are getting some lovely things with somewhat better form, interesting white as well as yellow signals, and continued appearance of plicata-like dotting. A few examples are S14-84-10, S14-84-13A, and S14-82-1.



The sib-cross results were more extreme and had less shape. And the clean by expansive crosses were as wild as might be expected, as in S15-62-1 and S15-62-2.



So, what is a signal? This question should probably have been asked back when So Van Gogh'05 came along. What amazed me as I wrote this piece is how little we have thought about signals until recently. We have been going along doing our best to make attractive flowers on good plants, and suddenly these new developments appear. When we look back, we can see the changes begin to develop in the ancestors of what is discussed here. (Let's hear it for digital photography and the comparisons it allows plant breeders to make over many generations!) In the past it took us a couple of generations to recognize the effect yellow was having on color. Now we are conscious of the potential that signals present in flower decoration. Is plicata next? Will it have the impact on siberians that the plicata pattern has had on bearded irises? Siberians have so many wonderful features that can add to the interest and beauty of the flowers - color, shape, size, substance, stylearms, signals, rims, blazes. How about seeing signals moving up into the standards, or even the styles? It has started. There is so much to do! So much fun!

IRISES in the OKANAGAN: A Stairway to Heaven

Penny Santosham, BCIS Board Member, Penticton, British Columbia

Lesia Lalonde, West Bench, Penticton, British Columbia

During the Okanagan Iris Garden Tour in 2013, inaugural BCIS president Ted Baker made a memorable comment when viewing a two-meter-wide clump of tall bearded iris (TB) *Edith Wolford* in a Penticton roadside bed. Amid gasps of admiration from the viewers, someone asked the proud garden owner what she did to create the magnificent display. Her answer, with a shrug, was '*nothing*'. Looking bemused, Ted declared, "The Okanagan is the capital for iris growing in BC."



Photos by Lesia Lalonde

Edith Wolford (TB)

The Okanagan Valley is a 250 km long region from Salmon Arm in the north to Osoyoos near the US border. (Vancouver Island is 290 km N-S) Running through the valley are numerous rivers, creeks and lakes. The largest is the Okanagan Lake (135 km long) between Penticton and Vernon. Other large lakes are Skaha, Vaseux, Osoyoos and Shuswap. The half way point in the Okanagan is its largest city of Kelowna with a population of 115,000 followed by Penticton with 45,000. Average seasonal temperatures range from -6°C to 30°C in Osoyoos representing a semi desert climate. Considered the warmest region in Canada, the economy is based on vineyards, orchards, tourism and recreation. There is little industry and the clear air combined with dryness and mild winters make it a haven for seniors and snow birds (people) from Northern and Eastern Canada. The central Okanagan climate is the most moderate and attracts birders, fishermen, hikers, triathletes, boaters, campers, skiers and summer youth hockey school participants. The White Lake Dominion Astrophysical Observatory, the Summerland Research & Development Center for Agriculture and the Penticton Dragon Boat Festival have gained world-wide popularity.

After trying to grow irises in Vancouver for thirty years, with dismal results, and then growing them with great success in the Okanagan for twenty years, Penny believes that Ted's evaluation of the Okanagan as a perfect area for irises is absolutely correct.

Well, actually, it's only true for bearded irises of all sizes. They transplant easily,



Photo by Penny Santosham

Penny's sub-alpine garden, May 2013

multiply well and many, even though not classified as such, rebloom. In Lesia Lalonde's Westbench, Penticton, garden the gorgeous stalk of Stairway to Heaven (below left) bloomed throughout September 2018 and into October. *Gibson Girl*, an old classified rebloomer, sent up two bloom stalks in Penny's new town garden after being moved in May from sub-alpine acreage.



Stairway to Heaven:
September 2018
(Photo by Lesia Lalonde)



Gibson Girl
-Reblooming
September 25, 2018

Bee pollinated seed pods form easily and its exciting to see the beautiful surprise Standard Dwarf Bearded (SDB) hybrids which often bloom their first seedling year and form clumps quickly, like the one to the right.



Photos by Penny Santosham

Bearded irises love our hot, dry summers (30°C+) and cold, dry winters (to -15°C). In her sub-alpine garden, Penny grew spurias and siberians in their own bed and watered them by hand three times as often as the bearded varieties. Several times she tried to grow Japanese, Louisiana and California irises over her winter-warm septic tank but they couldn't survive freezing temperatures and heavy snow pack. And disappointingly, after two years of bloom and TLC a pretty 15 cm clump of *reticulata* iris completely disappeared from a sheltered perennial bed. Penny feels that the key to bearded iris success in the Okanagan is dryness. Pests and bacteria can't survive the summer heat. As long as the rhizomes aren't planted in full shade, among heavy roots or where they sit in water, they will thrive. Unfortunately, invasive *Iris pseudacorus* - yellow flag - does like to grow in water and has invaded some of the Okanagan waterways. Agriculture Canada has asked gardeners not to use it.

Many gardeners in the Okanagan mulch lightly in spring or fall with inexpensive city compost. A \$12.00 scoop fills the back of a pick up truck. And in Penticton, it's free twice a year.

The region's soil can contain heavy deposits of clay. Penny plants irises in a mix of sand,



Above (left) is an example of abundantly blooming irises which had an April dose of "Ogogrow" city compost.



Above (right) are varied soil amendments and fertilizers used in the Okanagan.

Photos by Penny Santosham

Ogogrow, soil and a bit of slow release fertilizer or bone meal. Every two weeks during the summer she gives rebloomers and new hybrids a feeding of diluted 15/30/15 fertilizer and irrigates 20 minutes, twice a week in hot weather.

Luckily Okanagan wildlife, especially deer, feral horses and pocket gophers don't enjoy eating irises.

After the first hard frost some iris growers (including Penny) scatter a handful of alfalfa pellets on their clumps of irises. It's a soil conditioner, not a fertilizer, and contains a hormone that stimulates bud development. The pellets swell with rain and snow to become a featherweight "carpet" which protects rhizomes from freezing. In spring the pellets disappear into the soil.

Bearded irises are classified as xeriscape plants (low water). Their rhizomes also seem to have fire prevention qualities because they are full of moisture and, as the region is vulnerable to forest fires, this is a big asset. A woodland border planting of irises on the Lalonde's property was scorched last spring by a neighboring agricultural burn pile that got out of control. Even though the tops of the rhizomes were charred, the irises grew and bloomed as well as, if not better, than ever.

Have you heard of a Guardian Garden? Jacquie McDonald in Penticton is part of this



An agricultural burn pile charred the tops of rhizomes last spring — but the irises bloomed well, if not better than ever. later in 2018.



Photos by Lesia Lalonde

Gerry & Lesia Lalonde's Okanagan acreage had irises blooming every month from April to November in 2018

April	<i>Alpine Lake</i> (MDB), <i>What Again</i> (SDB), <i>Forever Blue</i> (SDB), numerous SDBs
May	SDB's continue to open, IB, MTB, BB, & TB varieties are all opening daily
June	MTB, IB, TB all continue to bloom plus <i>Rigamarole</i> (Siberian) & <i>Raging Tide</i> (Siberian)
July	<i>Forever Blue</i> (SDB-rebloom)
Aug	<i>Champagne Elegance</i> (TB-Rebloom), <i>What Again</i> (SDB-Rebloom), <i>Forever Blue</i> (SDB-Rebloom), <i>Spun Gold</i> (TB-Rebloom), <i>Immortality</i> (TB-Rebloom).
Sept	<i>Many Mahalos</i> (IB-Rebloom), <i>Stairway to Heaven</i> (TB-not classified as a rebloomer), <i>Immortality</i> (TB-Rebloom)
Oct	<i>Immortality</i> (TB-Rebloom)
Nov	<i>Immortality</i> (TB-Rebloom), <i>Spun Gold</i> (TB-not classified as rebloom)

Definitions: MDB - miniature dwarf bearded iris; SDB - standard dwarf bearded iris, IB - intermediate sized iris; MTB - miniature tall bearded iris; TB - tall bearded iris; BB - border bearded iris

In 2018, Gerry & Lesia Lalonde's acreage had irises blooming every month from April to November. See Chart above.



Photo by Jacquie McDonald

One of the immaculately cared for iris beds at the Lalonde's Sage Hill Farm & Gardens in mid May 2018.

special program. She is an active member of the Historic Iris Preservation Society (HIPS) and has a lovely town Guardian Garden with old and/or rescued irises from North America, Europe and England. The aim of the program is to preserve rare and endangered historic irises. Among her favourites are *Anointed* by Cayeux from France, and *Tapisserie* which was part of a rescue dig in South Carolina. Members of HIPS can participate in many club projects including international rhizome sales (shipping to Canada) and a new Breeder Program plus they receive the twice yearly published ROOTS magazine www.historicirises.org.



Photos by Jacquie McDonald

(Also see Richard Hebda's article *Historic Irises: Treasures not Forgotten*, Winter 2018 *BCIS Bulletin*.)

Jacquie McDonald's
Guardian Garden of
historic, endangered and
rescued irises



Photo by Penny Santosham



Photo by Jacquie McDonald

Harold and Lydia Baumbrough's sun drenched, hillside property above the old resort town of Naramata backs onto crown land and is well known to gardeners in Penticton. One highlight is the long curved driveway leading up to their home which is lined with colourful bee pod dwarfs.

Lydia & Harold Baumbrough's hillside garden in Naramata, overlooking Okanagan Lake.

Discarded irises thrown over the road fence are almost as floriferous as ones in their cultivated beds. Growing conditions in the Okanagan are so favourable that seeds from numerous plants have made their way (birds? wind?) into crevices and onto rocky outcroppings behind the house, and with just sparse natural rainfall, gain footholds, grow, blossom and multiply.

Beautiful gardens with irises flourish throughout northern Okanagan as well as in the south. In fact, the *Vernon Garden Club* holds the only Iris Garden Show in Western Canada. Vernon is also the hometown of the late Berthe Canarty who hybridized and registered sixteen irises in the 1990s. Among them are Okanagan Lass, Okanagan Blizzard, Okanagan Peach and Okanagan Twilight. Marianne Unruh has a commercial iris garden named *Iris Obsession* fifteen minutes east of Vernon. One day of the 2019 BCIS garden tour (See announcement in the Bulletin on page **xx**) will be spent in the North Okanagan.

Today is January 12th here in south Penticton near Skaha Lake ~ an unusually warm, balmy +6°C. Snowdrops are blooming, tulip foliage is an inch high, Penny's backyard pond thawed overnight and elegant Hooded Merganzers are bobbing around enjoying their breakfast. Oldtimers call this a 'false' spring as it is usually in the coldest, snowiest month of the year. It will be interesting to see how her May 2018 transplanted irises will react. Why not come to the *Okanagan Iris Garden Tour* May 25/26 and find out for yourself!

Spring 2018 Meeting Garden Tours

Ted Baker, Photoillustrator, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia

Tour #1: Region 13 Spring Meeting Garden Tours

Smaller conventions are usually excellent. There are few to no meetings to attend with good gardens to visit and good friends to spend time with. I was fortunate enough to attend two this past year. We saw so many wonderful irises it is difficult to cover everything but I will try to give you a feeling of what we experienced.

The first stop was the American Iris Society (AIS) Region 13 Spring Meeting in Portland. Richard Cypher and I travelled together and on the way we stopped at the Whitney Rhododendron Garden and Nursery on the Olympic Peninsula. Fortunately many of the rhodos were at peak bloom and we really enjoyed our time there.

Rhodos in full bloom,
Whitney, Washington



There were four BCIS members who attended the iris meeting and tours; Brenda Burch, Bill Dumont, Richard Cypher and myself. It was very well organized and we saw excellent displays of irises in the four gardens that we toured.

BCIS members and Keith Keppel
[From left: Richard Cypher, Brenda Burch, Keith Keppel, Ted Baker, Bill Dumont]



A highlight for me is always visiting Keith Keppel's garden. He has cut back to about one fifth of what he used to grow a few years ago but when you look across his field you just have to think 'quality'. It is not by chance he has introduced so many Dyke's Medal winners over the 60-plus years he has been hybridizing.

Keith Keppel in his garden making a cross
Salem, Oregon



We also travelled on our own to Kevin Vaughn Iris Garden (Salem), and visited Larry Lauer Flowers (Independence), Miller's Manor Gardens (Canby), Mid-America Iris Gardens (Salem) and Schreiners Iris Gardens (Salem) on the official tour. There were so many irises that I thought were stunning and as usual I took many pictures. Here are some of them.

Dark Universe
[TB Keppel
2019] was
05-69C



Table For Two [TB, Schreiners,
2016] This iris won the Best in
Region Award.



Brevette [PCI Seedling, Debbie
Cole] This was a very nice Pacific
Coast Iris.



Got The Picture [TB, 2016, Ghio]



Mixed Signals [TB, 2016 Keppel]



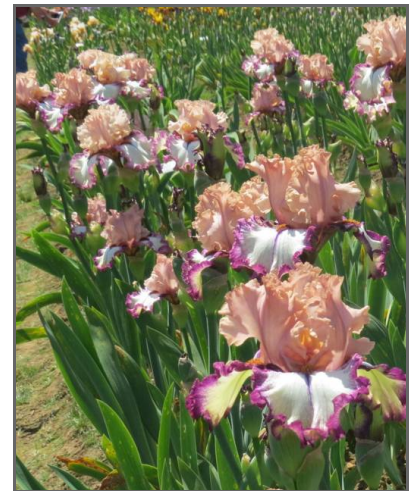
Black Comedy [TB, 2017, Black]



See No Evil [TB, 2018, Black]



Celebratory [TB, 2014, Ghio]



All By Design [TB, 2014, Ghio]



(LEFT) Argyle Knight [TB, 2015, Blyth]



(RIGHT) Royal Mystique [TB, 2014, Blyth]

We were fortunate to visit the irises at Mid-America's new farm.



This is a field of Mid-America TB seedlings ready for second year evaluation.



The field of newly planted TB seedlings planted out.

While we were at Mid-America, Thomas Johnson gave an excellent Judges Training on Tall Bearded Irises.

Because the weather could have been better, he brought material into the barn rather than take us into the field. He stressed how important it is for judges to take their job of voting for awards very seriously. It not only tells the gardening public what irises they should purchase for their gardens but it is also important to reward the efforts of hybridizers. Remember, this is how some people make a living.

Also, anyone can attend Judges Training even if you are not officially in the program. It is an excellent way to learn how to select good irises for your garden.



Thomas Johnson



Convention participants at Schreiners Gardens.



Cut flowers ready for sale at Schreiners.



The red flares are a very unusual feature in herbaceous peonies.

We also visited Adelman Peony Gardens in Salem. They have an excellent show of cultivars in their large display building.

Also over the last few years they have developed a most beautiful display garden with dozens of peonies and companion plants in bloom.



Not many of their field peonies were in bloom but I did get a chance to talk with Carol Adelman and her son Steven, and she showed me some of their recent seedlings.

Tour #2: The Society for Siberian Irises 2018 Convention



The Society for Siberian Irises 2018 Convention works to bring us such wonderful creations. The Society for Siberian Irises holds a Siberian-Species Convention every three years. This is where you can see the very latest introductions and visit with the hybridizers and see those responsible for planning the convention and doing the work to make it happen. This past convention was hosted by the Francis Scott Key Iris Society in Maryland, USA, at the end of May. It was celebrating 25 years of Siberian conventions.

We were treated to wonderful gardens, lots of bloom, good food and friends. The host club held their early show at the convention hotel which added a lot to our enjoyment. The only negative was the very hot weather, over 30°C (90°F). All of us from the west coast felt it!

Along with the wonderful Siberian irises we saw, was the most amazing show of peonies.

There was an excellent display of guest Siberians at Carol Warner's Draycott Gardens. The plants were well grown and there was excellent bloom.

As we entered the garden there was the best display of *Iris tectorum* that I have seen.

Following are some of the other irises we saw during the convention:



Iris tectorum mass planted under a tree canopy



Fiddles On Fire [Sib, Schafer/Sacks, 2017]



Hail To The Chief [Sib, Hollingworth, 2012]



Fashion Forward [Sib, Schafer/Sacks, 2016]



Siberian seedling, S12S1A15 [Hollingworth]. This impressive iris has huge blooms much like Swans in Flight, a close relative.



Simply Brilliant [Sib, Hollingworth, 2017]



Petite Purple [Sib, Hollingworth, 2012].



Jaunty Jewel [Sib, Calvin Helsley, 2008]



Edge Of Tomorrow [Sib, Dunlop, 2015].



Zablesk [Sib, Zdenek Seidl, 2015]

The next Siberian-Species Convention will be hosted by the King County Iris Society in 2021. Because it is in the Seattle area it gives us a wonderful opportunity to attend. All we have to do is register, organize rides, and have a great time!

LANKOW MEDAL 2018



JOIN IN (Paul Black 2015)



SWEET AND INNOCENT
(Thomas Johnson 2010) HM 2012

A Tie for First

AIS Region 13 Spring 2019 Convention and Tour Portland, OR, May 17-19, 2019

Greater Portland Iris Society is proud to be hosting the 2019 Region 13 Spring Meeting/Tour, May 17-19. See two large iris farms/gardens (Mt. Pleasant Iris Farm and Aitken's Salmon Creek Gardens) filled with new introduced guest plants along with their own private iris collections.

Convention program and registration form at greaterportlandirissociety.org

Registration: \$100 fee per person must be received by May 3, early registration by April 20

Hotel: Shilo Inn Suites Portland Airport. Reservations at 1-503-252-7500

Special hotel room rates until April 17: \$119

This is your chance to see what is new to the iris world and to make new garden friends. A special Judges Training will also be taking place. Come Join us.

AIS National Convention San Ramon CA 94583, April 23-27, 2019

The Sun Sets On Rainbows, the AIS National Convention at the San Ramon Marriott Hotel. Reduced registration until March 1, deadline of April 15, 2019. More details available at the convention website <http://aisconvention2019.org>

DYKES MEDAL 2018



HAUNTED HEART (Keppel 2010)

HM 2012, AM 2014, Wister Medal 2016, Dykes Medal 2018

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

AIS National Convention,
April 23-27, 2019, San Ramon CA.
Info: aisconvention2019.org

AIS Region 13 Spring Convention/Tour,
May 17-19, 2019, Portland OR.
Info: greaterportlandirissociety.org

BCIS Okanogan Iris Tour,
May 25-26, 2019, Okanogan WA.
Info: Penny Santosham
pennysantosham@gmail.com
or Lesia Lalonde
SageJHillFarmGardens@gmail.com.
Also, see [Bulletin](#) article, pp17-21

AIS Siberian-Species Convention,
in 2021, Seattle/King Co. Iris Society
Info: Ted Baker, 250-653-4430

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Membership Dues

If you see a **RED DOT** near your address on the front of this bulletin or read "2019" 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.

Here are the on-line links to the British Columbia Iris Society:

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

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

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