



# PRESCOTT AREA IRIS SOCIETY

September 2011

Volume 8, Issue 7

## President's Message

You can picture it now...the stereotypical scene of a gardener struggling away in solitude in his or her yard. You will find most gardeners work alone. Occasionally we band together to share our favorite pastime, planting. One of these occasions was on August 31 at the Sculpture Garden at Yavapai College. Several irisarians banded together to finish what was started last year by adding 24 Dykes Medal winning iris that were missing from the Dykes iris planting. Thanks to Sharon, David, Patrick, Judy and Stan for adding their personal touch to our college garden. When working together, you can compare and contrast planting methods and come away with a variety of methods of caring for our beloved irises from feeding them to how deep they should be planted, to which direction the rhizome should face. Even if you don't learn anything new, it is fun to work with other gardeners who enjoy the same plants. This group also planted additional irises in other parts of the Sculpture Gardens. I think it would be fun to get more of our members involved in what goes on in planning, preparing and planting irises at the college. Several visits a month are essential during the growing season and Sharon Phelps has shouldered the majority of this responsibility with very little assistance from members this year. Volunteers are urgently needed, so plan to sign up to help at our next meeting.

Now that Labor Day is behind us we look forward to a little less hot weather and my favorite time of year – fall.

I've finally filed away all my iris photos in the computer and log book along with finishing the entire iris planting project in my gardens. I've saved a few good photos for our contest at the September meeting. Hopefully you have done the same. We have some great prizes.

There are infinite learning and sharing opportunities with PAIS.



Let's band together for our next meeting and share our best iris photo choices, find iris related words in our BINGO game and select the next, most beautiful iris plant for your yard. We will have member discussions on growing iris, feeding and caring for them and special emphasis will be on reblooming iris; the iris which will rebloom in our area

and which iris we should avoid because of our short growing season.

See you soon, Carolyn

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25

IRIS PHOTO CONTEST

SILENT IRIS AUCTION

BINGO

DESSERT

1:00– 3:30 P.M.

**YAVAPAI TITLE**

1235 E. GURLEY, PRESCOTT

**At the intersection of Gurley and Sheldon**

## September/October Birthdays

Patrick Beatty

Cathy Craig

Ruth DeVries

Doris Elevier

O.G. Johnson

Roger Osgood

Tony Romano

Linda Rossman

Robert Smith

Valerie Thim

Carol Thomas

## PLANT MARKERS

Purchase plant markers at the September 25 meeting

**12" 25@10.00**

**21" 25@\$12.00**

**What a Deal!!**

**Ice Cream Social, Iris Auction, Photo Contest**  
**September 25, Sunday, 1:00 PM – 3:30 PM**

**Make sure your calendar is marked for the changed date of our next PAIS meeting to the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in September.**

We are sorry we had to change the date, but with nine Prescott blocks closed to traffic the weekend of September 17<sup>th</sup>, we were afraid many of you wouldn't be able to get to Yavapai Title without a huge delay. 40,000 visitors are expected in town for the beginning of the Arizona Best Fest celebration. If you are interested in the activities going on during the Arizona Centennial Celebration go to the [Prescott Chamber of Commerce](#) web site as they are all listed there.

We have a great many different items planned for our meeting:

1. Iris Bingo with prizes
2. NIIPS (newly introduced iris program) silent auction for 2009-2011 iris. Thumbnails are on page 6. [Visit our web photo album](#) for a closer look at the iris which will be available.
3. Photo Contest of your best iris pictures (see article below for details)
4. Discussion on growing and care of iris with emphasis on re-blooming iris
5. Ice Cream



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### Annual Iris Photo Contest

This spring, hopefully, you were like most of us and you tore out of the back door each morning, camera in hand to photograph that fresh new iris blossom and capture its beauty on the camera memory and media cards forever. Or maybe you took many photos at our Iris Garden Tour. Wherever you took the photos is okay as long as it is your photo. Just sort through them and pick out your very best snapshots and bringing them to the PAIS General Meeting on 9-25. A portion of our meeting will be a photo contest. Bring any iris related photo size 4"x6" or larger. The nice part of it is that you'll be sharing the beauty from your garden with our members and reflecting on the wonders of irises.

There'll be prizes and recognition for all, if nothing more than to say that you took part in the activities.

There will be 4 categories as follows:

- \* Landscape/habitat
- \* Individual iris flower or flowers
- \* Artistic (close-up design or Photoshop enhancements)
- \* Something else (people, animal, insect, or etc. along with iris)



Winners will be selected by People's Choice. Everyone will get to vote for their favorite in each of the four categories.

## Gardening Methods

Roger Osgood

What sort of gardener are you? Traditional plant in rows, or have you become more adventuresome and decided to try a new method?

A trip to the library makes one aware that there are decisions to be made before you decide to start digging. The Yavapai Library Network carries many books on gardening and two of my current favorites are:

*Lasagna Gardening*, Patricia Lanza, 1998, Rodale Press and *Square Foot Gardening*, Mel Bartholomew, 1981, Rodale Press.

As I see it, there are pros and cons to every method and you may want to check out these books and see for yourself. I have tried both methods in my garden, but have not decided to concentrate on one exclusively.

Lasagna Gardening requires a heavy layer of newspapers on the bottom and then a construction of raised beds consisting of garden clippings alternating with layers of peat moss and carbon based dead material such as kitchen scraps. Once the raised bed is in place, you let it age for several months while everything stews under a plastic cover. Peat moss is expensive and I do not have fresh grass clippings, or other nitrogen rich material to make a compost, so I have been challenged to get a pile going.

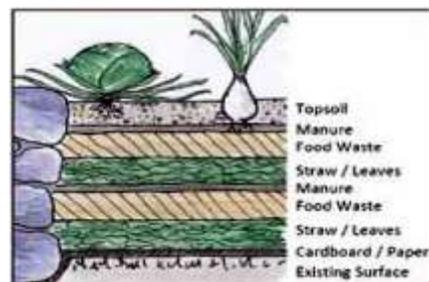
Square Foot Gardening is also a raised bed technique and its author specifies a mixture of equal parts perlite along with mulch and peat moss. Again, some of the ingredients are a bit expensive, but gardening this way makes reaching and weeding quite simple and allows for a concentrated planting of your crops.

Traditional row planting is still my primary choice, but this coming year I want to work with drip and soaker hoses for watering instead of the spray irrigation technique so many of us use. The investment in hoses is a one-time thing and perhaps, if I find I really do save on water usage, it will pay for itself over the course of the summer.

Why reinvent the wheel when others have already done the work. Much of the joy of gardening is sharing your work with others.

I bought 2 bags of the 16-20-0 fertilizer and I used about 1/2 a bag (20 lbs) in my lasagna beds. Without the nitrogen, the beds cannot decompose. I'll leave them alone until November, when I will turn them under and let them rest until spring. Hopefully, the high nitrogen will have been consumed and the soil will be safe for the iris, which will grow all winter in the greenhouse. I know it is a lot of nitrogen, but I need to break down unaged manure, straw and other things not yet decomposed. Mortimer Nursery has a few bags left in stock, 50# bags for \$29.99.

Here is an example of what a finished lasagna bed might look like in cross section, with alternating layers of manure, straw, and organic materials. The exact materials you use to create your lasagna beds will probably be different, depending on what you have readily available.



For more information you may want to read this [article](#) online.

### Computer Corner

This August marks the two year milestone for the [Iris Encyclopedia](#), sponsored by the American Iris Society. Each entry gives the official registered description of the iris and many entries also contain photos. The goal is to eventually have most of the registered iris and their photos online.

Don't forget to check out our club web site:

<http://prescottirissociety.org/index.htm>

### Iris Society Contacts

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### “Miss Kitty Patch”

This photo of my new kitty planter is holding my newest SDB iris, “Meow” by Paul Black, 2006. This iris garden is mostly \*SDBs, BBs and IBs with TBs to the back of the deep bed and they all have cat names.

The “Meow” iris came from Kathy Chilton along with a lot more of the smaller varieties of iris sent to PAIS. If you haven't thought about planting these smaller

iris, think again, as they will bloom earlier than your TBs and they fit nicely in the front row of the bed.

We still have some of Kathy's small variety iris remaining after the rhizome sales. I have potted them and they are all growing nicely. You will have an opportunity at our September meeting to either win one of these or bid on them during silent auction.

\*standard dwarf bearded, border bearded, intermediate bearded



### Daffodils

It's time to start planting fall bulbs. Every year I plant daffodils in the fall and I've been doing this since 2005 so I'm at about 700+ daffodils. I just bought another 220 daffodils this week and I have started to plant them in between my irises. Since I keep adding iris flower beds there is always a need for more daffodils. I love it when they are nearly the first flower to bloom in the very early spring (February - March), sometimes with snow all around them. Their sunny bright color really warms up the garden area. It's one of the few bulbs the wild critters leave alone. By the time the daffodils finish blooming, it is time for the SDB iris to bloom, then the Dutch iris and from then on there is something in bloom in my yard until late fall around November, when the pansies and chrysanthemums finish blooming.

Last year I bought a garden tool at Mortimer Nursery that really makes quick work of planting bulbs. This morning I planted 100 daffodil bulbs in less than an hour with this tool. The handle is about 3 feet long and the metal bulb cylinder is about 10" deep. The best part of this tool is the bar you press down on with your foot, it goes into the soil real easily and you bring out all the soil from the hole in one lift, then drop in your bulb and cover with the soil that's still in your tool with just a tap on the cylinder. See photo of bulb planter in front of my new “Checkers” – black & white iris bed. You will also see another garden tool in the photo that I find invaluable when spreading granular fertilizer around bulbs and digging up weeds in between irises. This tool also came from Mortimer's and we have one of them to give away at our September meeting.



Happy Planting, Carolyn

Ed Note: When planning your iris garden you may want to consider some of these suggestions. If you have visited Carolyn Alexander's garden, you know she has many iris beds devoted to various themes. One of her new beds, "Checkers", features black and white iris. Ruth DeVries has a bed devoted to iris with her grandchildren's names. The possibilities are endless. Let us know what great ideas you have for a themed iris bed. [jbook@cablone.net](mailto:jbook@cablone.net)

### Themed Iris Gardens

~ Mike Unser, [garden.of.mu@gmail.com](mailto:garden.of.mu@gmail.com)

Most folks begin their iris collections with whatever irises they are given or come their way, happily trying any and all. Over time, as the 'iris virus' takes hold, many folks become more discriminating. They start weeding out varieties they don't like and seeking out new varieties to add. Often certain tastes develop - a particular hybridizer, pattern, class, or era becomes a favorite - and a theme garden is born.

- \* **Names** - The most obvious place to start is with themes built around varietal names. Collect varieties with the same name as family members, or how about a garden full of irises all named for various ladies? Political figures? Celebrities? Literary characters? The possibilities are endless. Collections could be built around birds, food, music, or colors in the name.
- \* **Hybridizers** - Many people settle on one or more hybridizers whose varieties they really enjoy and attempt to collect either a comprehensive or representative collection of their work. It is these types of collections that are most important in preserving rarer varieties that may not otherwise remain in circulation.
- \* **Eras** - Collecting all available irises from various eras can be fun. A courtyard garden filled with pre-1900 diploids would be charming in spring. Perhaps a long border of those famous 40's and 50's pinks? Pick a timeframe of note and start a list of must haves.
- \* **Novelty irises** - Many of today's most dominate classes of iris once started as occasional novelties that would show up in breeding programs. Broken color, space age, and flatties all were once uncommon traits and were often viewed as negative mutations, but later became desirable new classes. Here's a few suggestions for small collections that can be fun conversation pieces in the garden:
- \* **'Flatties'** - bearded iris with the flat form of Japanese irises - have been introduced sporadically over the years.
- \* **Sports** - why not get all of 'Honorables' sports in a bed? There must be other well known sports and their parents still about. it would be nice to have them together and documented.
- \* **Broken color** - Broken color irises used to be a rarity and not a trait that was deliberately bred for, but many came on the market over the years anyway. A comprehensive collection of them would be a whimsical riot of color.
- \* **Space agers** - Years before space age irises became a new form class various beard appendages appeared here and there. The varieties that started it all might make an interesting collection, and are definitely worth preserving.
- \* **Medians** - Most historic collections focus on tall bearded irises, but many medians were also being introduced across the years as well. This is an area that could really benefit from the attentions of a diligent detective.
- \* **Beardless historic** - For areas that have trouble with bearded irises why not collect beardless historic? One species or several, here's a chance to have a really unique collection.
- \* **Almost historic** - Irises from more recent decades tend to be overlooked when thoughts of preservation come up. Right now varieties from the 70's and 80's are falling out of circulation as they sit in that bubble between new modern forms and colors and really classic historic. Young collectors could do the future a favor and find the worthy varieties of almost historic now before they are just pictures in old catalogs.
- \* **Geography** - How about a collection of irises hybridized in your state? Or varieties named for places in your state? Local flavor can be a nice touch with a display garden.



Silent Auction Photos: for a more detailed view of these iris, visit the [web photo album](#) and click on a photo.