



# PRESCOTT AREA IRIS SOCIETY

## July 2007

Volume 4, Issue 4

### Death On The Arizona Highlands

Barry Golden - Golden's Iris Garden

Death of a number of my garden plants has come swiftly for some and drawn out for others. Of the 25 years of gardening in the Prescott area, this one has been the most challenging. Let's explore why.

Prescott normally receives 19" of rain per year, while year to date for 2007, as of 13 July, has been 3.3". Our area has been in a drought since 1999. Additionally, April had some killing frosts that stressed plants. Add these events together and this helps explain the lack of iris bloom in my garden. I had about 10% of my iris plants bloom this year and even that number is generous. Looking through the plants, I have observed many aborted bloom stalks that points to the action of frost prior to bloom.

Some of my irises are looking a little crispy, yellow looking leaves with some drying out. Many of the other plants are fine. I have been supplementing my drip irrigation by watering the most stressed looking plants by hand with my hose 3 times per week. I'll water and then with my trowel, stab the soil to get below the wet area, and water again really wetting the area around the roots. These plants have responded by actually greening up after only a week of this treatment

Look around your own garden and see what needs additional water attention and take action. It does look like our area will get some moisture this week. This is also a good time to fertilize your irises. I use 10-10-10, but use anything you have.

### Annual Rhizome Sale August 4

It is almost here! Just 3 weeks until our annual rhizome sale under the canopy at Sharlot Hall Museum. Start planning now to dig and divide your iris which have increased and need to be revitalized so they continue to bloom. The extra rhizomes which you don't choose to replant can be donated to the club for our annual rhizome sale. For tips on how to dig and divide your iris, see page 3.

This year's sale will feature recently hybridized iris from Mid-America Gardens in addition to historic iris from several local gardens. Plan to come to the member's pre-sale from 8:30 to 9:00 a.m. for the best selection.

### Iris Lists Needed

Linda Smith has graciously offered to maintain a database of club iris but in order to do so, she needs your help. Take the time to make a list of your irises and send it to Linda. We can use the list for trading irises among club members. Linda can be reached via email [irisgrower@cablone.net](mailto:irisgrower@cablone.net) or you can mail the list: 2290 W. Running Iron, Cottonwood, AZ 86326. All she needs is the names of the irises, your name and your city. Please help.

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### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

July 27- Rhizome sale marking party 8:30 a.m. at Linda Rossman home

August 4 - Rhizome Sale members only 8:30-9:00 a.m. public sale 9:30 until sold out Sharlot Hall Museum 415 W. Gurley Prescott

Sept. 8—Silent Auction/Potluck

## President's Message

*Rocky Mountain high!* Jim and I have returned from our annual trek to Estes Park, Colorado, where my husband's family has owned a cabin since the '50s, right inside the Rocky Mountain National Park – Moraine Park, for those of you familiar with the Park. I now have my yearly "fix" from gazing at the grandeur of the mountain scenery! The rain had not been sufficient to settle the pollen and clouds of the Ponderosa pollen were visible on the only Ranger-led flower walk I attended this year.....which is where I photographed the Rocky Mountain iris you see here in close-up. I harvested some seeds from a 2006 pod, and will try to grow some.



Coming back to Prescott - where the temps have been 95 and higher, for three weeks or more – has been really challenging. There are many tasks for us irisarians during July, and the heat really hampers our activity level. When I worked the Farmers' Market July 14<sup>th</sup> the people attending were more interested in food and fresh, cut flowers than bare or potted rhizomes that would require laboring in the sun. Lots of interested citizens stopped by to ask questions and talk iris culture in the quad-city area, so it was a valuable experience. PAIS members plan to staff a booth July 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>, and again after the Rhizome Sale – August 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. Please call Judy Book if you'd like to participate a couple hours on one of those Saturdays.

We were saddened to learn of the death of member Barbara Melton, formerly of Chino Valley, who died in California last month. Barbara was a generous, warm and giving person – you may recall her garden was the first one on the Member Garden Tours of 2006.

I want to announce a couple Executive Board changes: Ruth DeVries is our official Plant Person to coordinate raffle and door prize plant activity at General Meetings. Marge Larson has stepped in to complete Barry Golden's term as Director-at-Large. Marge brings a wealth of experience with iris, and will continue the advisory/resource position that Barry performed so well for several years.

The day is fast approaching for the Marking Party at Linda Rossman's home – Friday, July 27<sup>th</sup>. This is the work party to prepare donated rhizomes for the Annual Rhizome Sale at Sharlot Hall Museum, August 4<sup>th</sup>. We need more helping hands for both dates. Call Linda at 777-8110 to volunteer to help prepare rhizomes, or Stan Book at 776-7217, if you can help out at the Rhizome Sale. At Linda's we'll start at 8:30 a.m. and will be brown-bagging lunch – beverages will be provided.

If you are donating rhizomes please remember that Thursday, July 26<sup>th</sup> is the last drop-off day. Three locations are available: Judy & Stan Book, Linda Rossman, and my home.

The *Fearsome Five* worker bees have dug and potted approximately 150 irises from the Maxwell Garden. Those "named irises" that bloomed this spring were dug first, and this week we'll be digging those named iris that didn't bloom. Linda Rossman, David Nicholson, Stan & Judy Book, and yours truly make up the crew. You will have an opportunity to purchase iris from Charles' garden at the August 4 Rhizome Sale. If you can't wait, you can purchase these iris at Farmers' Market Saturday, July 21 or 28 at Yavapai College.

Dates to put on your calendar: Mortimer Nursery Autumn Outreach Faire, September 15 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. and Region 15 Fall Meeting in San Diego at the Seven Seas Lodge, Saturday, October 13<sup>th</sup> – there is a social gathering Friday night for those coming from afar, like us. More information will be available soon on both these special events.

I'd like to close with some thoughtful words from a placard I spotted at the sign-in desk at Loma Linda University Medical Center, Proton Radiation Treatment Center (where my husband Jim begins treatment for prostate cancer on July 30<sup>th</sup>):

*Kindness is more important than wisdom, and the recognition of this is the beginning of wisdom.*

Theodore Rubin

See you soon – either at Linda's or Sharlot Hall Museum.....Vera

### Iris Web Sites to Peruse

The HIPS (Historic Iris Preservation Society) has recently been updated and is a good source for photos, the history of historical iris and a list of sources for purchasing these iris. <http://www.hips-roots.com/visitors/v-main.html>

Laurie Frazier is an avid irisarian and her site is full of photos and good information. <http://lfrazier.com/iris/index.html>

## Barbara Melton Remembered

If there was ever a true lover of iris, it was Barbara. Her Chino Valley yard was absolutely full of iris. Not just itty bitty clumps, but large circular clumps of gorgeous, well cared for iris. Barbara was especially fond of historic iris and big showy iris.

The Chino Valley Review featured an article on Barbara and her garden in May of 2004. Here are some excerpts from that article: "I have always grown irises and so did my mother, for as long as I can remember," she said. Barbara admits to having a very green thumb and said she always loved to garden. Barbara said she loves to sit on her porch and look at all the beautiful flowers. "I enjoy having them in my yard even if they aren't show blooms," she said. "I'm just a farmer at heart. Planting and seeing the flowers bloom is very peaceful to my soul."

Barbara was our first secretary when the club was officially formed in 2002 and was always present to give a helping hand at our spring exhibits, rhizome sales, and marking parties. Due to her travels this year she missed our spring exhibit where, in the past, she had been a greeter and a resource for verifying the identity of the irises entered into the exhibit.

Barbara's cheerfulness, enthusiasm for iris and willingness to help whenever called upon, will be sorely missed.

These iris were photographed in Barbara's yard during the 2006 Garden Tour.



**Indian Chief**  
Ayers, 1929



**Ambrosia Delight**  
Niswonger, 1984

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## Digging and Dividing Irises

You may have noticed that bloom of your prized irises begins to decrease in vigor and quality. What is happening is that irises are heavy feeders of the soil's nutrients and are competing for what little nutrients remain. Digging, dividing and replanting your irises are the steps to take to remedy poor bloom problems. If the clump only has two fans, you may only want to replant and not divide the iris if it has not bloomed for several years.

July and August are the months to transplant and/or divide iris in the Prescott area. For the best bloom, it is recommended that iris clumps be divided every 3 years. Dig up the clumps with a shovel, spade, pitch fork or other similar tool. When dividing the iris, break off the rhizomes from each other and replant only the largest fans. Trimming the fans (leaves) is unnecessary. Throw out rhizomes with old blooms stalks. Donate the extra rhizomes to the Iris Society for their August 4 rhizome sale.

When digging up a lot of iris, dig up only one variety at a time so you are not mixing up the varieties. Keep the plant label with the iris at all times. If you are moving a variety to another location, be sure to remove all the rhizomes to avoid mixups when the irises bloom next spring.

Because irises are heavy feeders, it is wise to replenish the soil before replanting the iris. Add 3-5 gallons of compost to each hole.

*(cont. page 4)*

(*Digging and Dividing Cont.*) Mix well into the soil. Then add the following amendments: 1 cup triple super phosphate and/or 1 cup bone meal and 1 cup 10-10-10 or other low nitrogen fertilizer. Mix well. Water the planting hole thoroughly. Replant several rhizomes of the same variety in the hole about 8 inches apart. The roots should be placed down in the hole. Pack dirt firmly under and around the rhizome so no air pockets remain. Space each variety 1-2 feet apart with the top of the rhizome exposed to the sun. Water 2-3 times a week unless we get a good rain. Let the soil dry out between each watering. The goal is to encourage growth as indicated by new leaf production. This may take 2-3 weeks. Once new growth is well established, water 1-2 times per week.

After you have replanted your rhizomes, make sure each variety is accurately labeled and update your garden map.

### Instructions for Donating Rhizomes



1. Thoroughly wash the soil from your rhizomes. Let them dry.
2. Cut the fans in an inverted "V" leaving them about 10 inches long.
3. Using a permanent felt tipped marker, print the following on the middle leaf of the fan:  
Name of iris, color of standards/color of falls. For example: Ambrosia Delight white/apricot
4. Place each named variety in a separate paper bag.
5. Label the bag with as much of the following information as is known: iris name, color, and type— i.e. tall bearded, border bearded, arilbred, etc. If you do not know the name of the iris, but know the color please provide us with that information.
6. If you have a photo or catalog illustration, be sure to write the name of the iris on the back of the photo. Place photo in zip lock baggie and staple it to the paper bag.
7. Deliver the rhizomes to Linda Rossman, Vera Stewart or Stan Book no later than July 26. If you are planning to work a couple hours at the marking party, July 27, bring the rhizomes with you.
8. The marking party will begin at 8:30 a.m. Beverages will be provided but you will need to bring your lunch. No previous experience is needed. Just come and help, meet your fellow club members and feel a sense of accomplishment when you have finished. Stay as long as you can. We will be grateful for whatever amount of time fits your schedule.
9. We need large, paper grocery bags. If you have a supply, please bring them along or call 776-7217 so we can arrange to get them from you.
10. If you have questions please call: Linda—777-8110

#### GOLDEN'S IRIS GARDEN

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Diamond Valley  
Prescott 445-0503

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3166 Willow Creek Rd.  
Prescott—776-8000

#### Iris Society Contacts

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