



PRESCOTT AREA IRIS SOCIETY

March 2007

Editor: Judy Book

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Spring Iris Culture (March and April)

For Prescott and Surrounding Areas

Barry Golden

Living in what some gardeners call “the high desert” does present some unique problems to growing irises, as well as other gardening plants. This article will focus on what you need to do now to at least ensure some iris bloom for this year. See page 4 for information on starting a compost pile.

I've been spending a little more time in the garden these past few months. Each day, I have been making a point to pull dead leaves and remove some soil from the surface of the rhizomes from those plants that have been covered by the freeze and thaw of the ground. When one cleans up around a bed of rhizomes, it is amazing what can be found: growing weeds and grass, ink markers from last year and lost garden tools. Pull all weeds now so the weeds will not take over the areas. Better yet, get an old kitchen knife to cut out the growing grasses. I like to pull weeds after I have watered as it is easier to get the roots out of the soil. Be careful working around the fans as there will be smaller “baby” fans growing and you do not want to cut or break them. Weeding now when the weeds are smaller will be easier than later when the weeds have a more extensive root system and crowd out the irises.

Fertilize your plants now (March) as the rhizomes are growing and sending up new side fans. Water the fertilizer in with a hose if you have to. So, what type of fertilizer to use? That's a good question. Something like what you would use for regular garden plants- 5-10-10 or 10-10-10. Avoid fertilizers high in nitrogen (that's the first number). I sprinkle the crystals around the plants about one foot away from the fans avoiding direct contact with the rhizomes. I use approximately 1 cup per clump. I'll fertilize the garden when I know there is a storm on its way.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of watering your plants regularly as the lack of any moisture will limit bloom and growth for this year. This is a problem again this year because of the lack of continued rains. Regularly means once every 7 to 10 days if it has been dry. As March gives way to April, make sure you water well to help insure good bloom.

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April 14 Meeting

Linda Smith, a member from Verde Valley, will be speaking to us about reblooming iris. Linda has been doing extensive research and you won't want to miss her presentation and slides. See Calendar, page 3 for meeting location and page 2 for more information about Linda.

Message from the President

You awaken early every Spring.

We watch for you 'neath
melting snow.

Before the season can begin,

Sweet crocus, you must tell us so.

S.K.Johnson



My crocuses are up but not showing color yet, and today, March 6th, I spotted the first tulip bud and counted 20 daffodil buds. In checking my "2006 Garden Notes" I found more than 50 daffs in bloom; Japonica quince just past its zenith; purple and white crocuses out, Star Magnolia, lilacs, forsythia all blossoming out...apparently we're a good two weeks later this year. How about your spring garden? A nice, spring rain would nudge those pampered rhizomes to begin sending up some early bloom stalks!!!

Hope you enjoy the colored photo highlights from our February 10th meeting in this newsletter - courtesy of the new Kinko's on Iron Springs Road - a "freebie" from their Grand Opening event.

- We surprised Stan and Judy Book with gifts of appreciation for their five years of leadership in building PAIS. Barry Golden made the formal presentation, relating personal comments from members very much aware of their contributions.
- The garden stepping stone with the iris motif that Judy is holding was created by an artist and neighbor friend of our treasurer, Linda Rossman.
- Our Region 15 VP, Kathy Chilton, inspired us with her PowerPoint program of the 2006 National Convention in Portland, Oregon.
- "Harriet's Favorite", a seedling hybridized by Charles Maxwell, longtime member who died 12/28/06, was named to honor his wife and was pictured on Charlie's memorial service folder. Your Executive Board is developing an action plan to deal with the named iris varieties bequeathed to PAIS by Charlie's will. In the future we will refer to this plan as the Maxwell Project.

Shirley Eitner, Secretary for PAIS resigned early in February due to a family medical matter. On March 7 the Executive Board appointed June Britton to the secretarial position; you will be asked to approve that action on April 14th.

In addition a By-Laws Revision will be presented for your approval on that date. Copies of the 2004 By-Laws will be available and the 2007 Revision included in this newsletter will be presented by Judy and Vera for discussion and approval.

A print-out of the current PAIS membership is included in this newsletter. Many of you have been requesting this information. Please respect member

confidentiality and utilize this information only for activity within our Society.

Bonnie Haughton, our Chairperson for the Annual Iris Exhibit, will be requesting volunteers to help her with this year's event on May 19th at Mortimer Nursery. She will have a sign-up sheet at the April General Meeting or call her now at 445-4357. Watch your April newsletter for information on Member Garden Tours in May.

On a final *daff note* this month I'm planning to visit the area of Enchanted Forest near Running Springs, CA to view the outstanding display of daffodils and other spring bulb flowers that I've heard about for many years....yes, I'll take pictures.

Vera

Linda Smith: Iris Lover and World Traveler

Linda's first experience with iris was in the Verde Valley. There were iris in the yard when she moved in and they seemed to grow well. She wanted to learn about growing things in the desert so she took the Master Gardener's class. Somewhere along the way, someone handed her a Cooley's iris catalog and she was hooked. Her goal was to obtain one of each iris in the catalog, but she soon discovered that was not a reasonable course of action.

She heard about our club and started attending meetings and was soon bitten by the iris virus. Last year when we asked for a club member to keep track of reblooming iris for our club, Linda volunteered. Because she has an inquiring mind and loves a winter project when not much is happening in the garden, Linda began researching reblooming iris. She has collected photos and information from the internet and hybridizers and has spent hours creating notebooks of photos and a database to organize her findings. She will share her insights with us at the April 14 meeting.

In her high school days Linda worked for a florist and took photos for the yearbook so her current hobbies have been long standing interests.

Another of Linda's loves, travel, has taken her to all the states except Michigan and to places as far flung as Bangkok, Denmark, Brazil, England, South Africa and Australia. She has lived in Spain, Australia and Western Africa and planted a garden everywhere she has lived. Her long term travel goals include trips to Iceland, Antarctica, Peru and Ecuador.

When she is not gardening or traveling, Linda works with Big Brother, Big Sister as a mentor to high school girls.



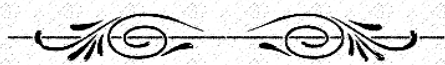
CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- March 24-Early Iris Exhibit-Sun Country Iris Society,
9:00 a.m., Baker Nursery, 3414 N. 40th
Street, Phoenix
- March 31—Barry Golden speaks at Mortimer Nursery—
see article below
- April 14—Reblooming Iris with Linda Smith, Yavapai
College, Bldg. 4, Rm. 116, 2 p.m.
- April— 20-22 Region 15 2007 Spring Trek hosted by
Inland Region Iris Society, Ontario, CA
- May—Members garden tour- to be announced
- May 2-6—Verde Valley Fair (see article below)
- May 11—Sneak Peak with potluck at Golden's Iris
Garden
- May 19 -Spring Exhibit—Mortimer Nursery
- May 26—Member garden tour at Linda Rossman's
Hummingbird Iris Gardens

March 31st: High Desert Iris Gardening and New Iris Varieties

Iris lovers will want to see this slide show by Barry Golden of Golden's Iris Garden. Barry will talk about the tricks of growing irises in our high desert climate and present new iris varieties that bloom well in high desert gardens.

This workshop will be held at Mortimer Nursery, Prescott, Saturday, March 31 at 10:00 AM. Reserve your seat as the space accommodates only 30 people. 776-8000



Bylaws Revisions

Vera and Judy have worked hard to revise our bylaws so they meet the needs of our growing club. Much of the revision was reorganization. The articles now flow smoothly from one topic to the next and the duties of the officers and Executive Board are more clearly defined. Do take 5 minutes to read through the enclosed bylaws and make note of any questions you would like to ask at our April 14 meeting. We will be voting to approve or reject the bylaws at this meeting.

The Executive Board encourages your questions and participation.

Book Review

IRISES; A Gardener's Encyclopedia
Claire Austin
Timber Press 2005

The book is organized into 4 main parts; bearded irises, beardless irises, bulbous irises and cultivation. In reading through this book, what impressed me the most were the very nice photographs with blues that were blue and violet colors that were violet. Most of the format of the book is iris photographs with an accompanying short description of the plant. To my eye, I thought the quality of the photographs were good to excellent. Most of the photographs were of irises from the 90's and earlier. I enjoyed the sections on irises I rarely see, such as Siberian, Laevigata, Japanese, Louisiana and other beardless types. The cultivation section was not inclusive and one would need other books for more complete information. Overall, I thought the book would be a welcomed addition to my library as many of her tall bearded photographs were of irises that I have grown, or are now growing in my garden. I bought the book from Amazon.com.

Barry Golden

EXHIBIT OPPORTUNITY

MARGE LARSON

One of the goals of our club is to make the public aware of and to promote iris. A little known event for Yavapai County is the Verde Valley Fair. It will be held on May 2-6 at 800 E. Cherry St., Cottonwood, AZ. You can google Verde Valley Fair for more information and a premium book will be available at our next meeting. Entries will be received on April 30, and they classify by color and NOT by name.

There is also a section for floral arrangements, so some of your cute little SBD's will have a chance to shine. The winners will get ribbons and cash rewards.

Last year Marge Larson was awarded "best of show," so come to our side of the mountain, bring your blooms, watch the 4H kids show their animals and enjoy some barbeque.

Iris Society Contacts

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Let's Talk Crap...the Lowdown on Compost

Barry Golden

Composting depends on having something to break down, adequate water to wet the mass, and a plastic cover to cover your pile. You don't need fancy/schmanzy compost starters. Find an area of your garden that is fairly level and start piling leaves, grasses, weeds (I omit those weeds that have gone to seed) and kitchen scraps like vegetables (no meat). As one adds materials, just sprinkle the mass lightly with water. Try not to soak the pile, but if you do, nothing bad will happen. Just do it!

I like to add some form of manure, like horse manure, to get the pile composting faster. This is all about bacteria, fungi, yeasts, worms and other insects that will use the pile of material for their nutrients to grow and reproduce. Your pile should get hot from the energy released from bacterial growth and reproduction. Never underestimate the power of microbes like bacteria. The bacteria need water and adequate nutrients to grow. Turning the pile with a shovel every month or so will help the bacteria grow. Many of these composting bacteria need oxygen and that is why you turn the pile every so often to aerate the pile.

I also cover my pile with a plastic tarp to retard water loss, but you can cover the pile with anything available, like plywood. I get a kick out of feeling the compost pile for heat and that lets me know that compost happens!

Life is a journey; enjoy the ride and have some fun.



Board Meeting Highlights

March 7, 2007

- June Britton was unanimously approved as Secretary
- Bills were submitted for newsletter printing and postage
- After January renewals, we have 45 members
- Details for April 14 meeting were finalized
- Recommendation approved to purchase fertilizer for Yavapai College Sculpture Garden and the Maxwell project
- Progress on publicity in local magazine reported
- "Iris Splendor" was chosen as the name for the Spring exhibit
- Bylaws revisions were completed subject to membership approval
- Recommended that the club distribute our newsletter electronically. Members without email will still receive the newsletter via USPS.
- Stan and Berry will contribute plants for next month's door prizes.

Electronic Newsletter

The Executive Board has recommended that the newsletter editor distribute our club newsletter electronically. This will enable the club to save money on printing and postage and will allow the inclusion of colored photos on a regular basis.

A Membership Directory has been sent with this newsletter. Please check your directory listing to verify its correctness. If anything is incorrect, please call or email Judy immediately: 776-7217 or jook@cablone.net Thank you for your cooperation.

Spring is just around the corner and the gardener, whose patient is almost gone, is eagerly waiting its arrival. Having survived a little snow, cooler than normal winter temperatures in our area, and enough wind to blow leaves into the yard and empty planting pots out of the yard, it is now time to weed, rake and check the drip irrigation for leaks caused by pesky four footed creatures with nothing better to do than bite through the drip lines.

But don't despair. If you want gorgeous color and can't wait for your irises to bloom, go to the internet and look up the web sites for the following gardens: Cooley's Gardens, Schreiners' Iris Gardens, Joe Ghio's Bay View Gardens, Superstition Iris Gardens, Mid-America Garden, Fred Kerr's Rainbow Acres, Zebra Gardens, Lauers Flowers, Suttons Iris Gardens, Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden, Chapman Iris, Burseen Iris, and Iris Colorado to name a few. These hybridizers have dozens of new introductions just waiting to be ordered. You can also purchase color catalogs from Cooley's Gardens, Schreiner's Iris Gardens, Mid-America Garden and many other iris gardens.

"A flowers appeal is in its contradictions-so delicate in form, yet strong in fragrance, so small in size yet big in beauty, so short in life yet long on effect." Adabella Radici