



# PRESCOTT AREA IRIS SOCIETY

## April 2010

Volume 7, Issue 2

### President's Message

Wow! Spring is really here!! We have had some really beautiful days and it is so nice not to have rain, sleet or snow falling down around us. I hope you have all been out in your gardens pulling dead leaves from your irises and watching for those pesky aphids and thrips. I've seen only a couple of plants that had signs of eggs at the base of the leaves in my yard. If you haven't already placed Bayer Rose & Flower Care (systemic fertilizer and insect repellent) around the plants, now is the time to do so. It is good for 30 days so if you did it after our February meeting it would be good to do it again. After this last feeding of Bayer you can start fertilizing with any fertilizer that has 10 or less nitrogen. I use 'Joy Juice' (liquid formula) that I buy from our own PAIS member and commercial iris gardener, Linda Rossman. Linda maybe you could bring some to our April meeting to make it easier for our members to shop. How about it? You can also get Arizona's Best All Purpose fertilizer (10-10-10) in granules from Mortimer's Nursery, Lowe's Garden Supply or Ace Hardware. Irises need lots of food to grow and bloom in such a short time. My irises seem to be growing so fast that I can almost watch them grow from day to day. It really makes me anxious to see those bloom stalks start to appear.

I really get gardening fever when spring arrives and the days get longer and warmer. I just had to start another flower bed so I moved 2 small bushes & 3 large butterfly bushes away from the east side of our backyard lawn and tore up the cloth and rock pebbles around the area to uncover the earth below and I now have a new bed. I joined the new Daylily Society last month and purchased from Mortimer Nursery 14 new daylily plants in 1 gallon cans. They are now planted in this new bed with room for guess what ...more irises. I have very few pink irises so my goal is to buy pink irises and I'll call the new bed 'Pretty in Pink'. There is already a row of very dark purple or black irises in front of this bed so it will be a nice contrast. By the way this is a great time to plant Daylilies and they have a huge selection at Mortimer's now. If you plant them now you will be able to enjoy their blooms all summer after the irises have finished their spring blooms. Good luck and happy gardening.

### Spring Trek Reminder

Have you sent in your registration to join the Tucson iris family for the Spring Trek? It is not too late to send in your \$40. If you haven't quite got the spring fever yet, seeing all those beautiful irises in bloom should do it for you. The Spring Trek is April 16 and 17<sup>th</sup>. Remember to write down the names of the irises you love, take your camera and get photos of the irises you would like to add to your gardens because we will be auctioning those very irises this summer to help our Region 15 grow.

*(Continued on page 2)*

**Sun Country Iris Society—Spring Show—April 3, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.**

**Baker Nursery 3414 North 40th Street, Phoenix**

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held at *Yavapai Title*, 1235 E. Gurley, Prescott, Gurley at Sheldon intersection.

**April 11, Sunday, 1:30 p.m.**  
**Yavapai Title, Prescott**

April 16-17 Spring Trek, Tucson

May 8-Spring Show  
Mortimer Nursery

May 11-16 AIS National  
Convention, Madison, WI

May 16 Garden Tour

July 17 Iris Auction/Ice Cream  
Social

July 24 Marking Party

July 31 Prescott Rhizome Sale

August 1 Yarnell Sale

August 7 Chino Valley Sale

October Fall Trek, So. Calif.

November 6 General Meeting



Dusky Challenger from AIS presentation, *Stalking the Best of Show*.

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## April 11 Meeting

We really need you to come to our Sunday, April 11<sup>th</sup> general meeting at 1:30 – 3:30 PM as we will be covering getting ready for the May Iris Show. Judge Gerry Snyder, from Sedona, will be discussing how to pick the winning iris stalk. We will be giving you the tags you need to put on each stalk you enter for judging and making sure you know how to fill them out properly. Having completed the tags ahead of the show will speed up the process of entering the competition. Last year we got behind almost an hour between not getting all the entries done in time and the judging taking longer than expected due to the large number of entries we received. We have changed 3 items in this year's show to correct these problems:

1. All entries for the competition must be groomed and labeled by 8:30 AM or they will be not included in the judging.
2. We added more judges for a total of 9 judges this year.
3. We are inviting the public to start viewing at 12 noon.

We will have the handouts ready at our meeting with all of the guidelines for the show and times of events. We are looking forward to seeing you at our next meeting.

## Brain Teaser

Learn Answer at April meeting

Braingle: What Am I?

1-2-3-4-5-6 (6 letter word)

I am a 6 letter word.

Letters 6-5-2 spell out a drink

Letters 4-5-2-3 spell out a fruit

Letters 1-2-6 spell out a pet

Letters 3-2-6 spell out a pest, which often gets eaten by 1-2-6

## Iris Society Contacts

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## Online Iris Encyclopedia

The AIS is creating the Iris Encyclopedia; an online, information resource in a wiki format which allows registered users to upload comments and photos. These pages are verified by knowledgeable docents who create and or monitor pages for accuracy. The rock on which this data is built are the registrations created by the international Registrar. The Wiki always be viewable freely and universally. <http://wiki.irises.org/bin/view>

Hello Iris Lovers!

On behalf of our fearless Twiki project leader, Bob Pries, and the rest of the Twiki team, I'd like to invite you all to come see the amazing progress we've made AND invite you all to sign up for uploading access to the Twiki and start CONTRIBUTING your photos and comments! You can sign up for your FREE access here:

<http://wiki.irises.org/bin/view/TWiki/TWikiRegistration>

You do NOT have to be a docent in order to contribute your content to existing Twiki pages, but you do have to sign up for uploading access. If, however, you want to be able to add new Twiki pages or edit existing content, you do need to request to be made a docent. You can request docent status by contacting Bob Pries directly at [robertpries@embarqmail.com](mailto:robertpries@embarqmail.com).

It's time to start taking the TWiki to the next level of participation and THAT MEANS YOU! We know that our most valuable contributions (not to mention our most accurate proofreading) to the TWiki will come from Iris Aficionados like you. This is why we are inviting you NOW, before we open the Twiki to the general public on the AIS website, to come and add your photos and comments to Twiki iris pages. This will help create the resource that will WOW the public and bring more people into our passion.

We now have about 14,000 iris cultivars of all classes represented with their own pages in the Twiki (and more being added daily), including most of the more current intros and many older irises. This is only a large drop in the bucket in terms of the total number of irises registered with the AIS, but it's a mighty fine start. Still, this is very much a work in progress, so it's likely that you'll find some of the iris pages to which you would like to contribute not yet created. If you do encounter not-yet-created pages, please feel free to submit them to Bob or to me and request that they be added. We'll give them priority for addition and get them up for you ASAP. Please, however, make sure the irises you request are not yet in the TWiki before submitting them for addition. While exploring the TWiki, you may very well stumble across typos or other inaccuracies. Please submit these to Bob or myself, as well, so that corrections can be made. The more eyes proofreading the TWiki, the better!

We can't wait to see our iris community Twiki flourish and grow. Be part of the TWiki fun. CONTRIBUTE YOUR CONTENT!!!

Laurie Frazier



### **Alfalfa Tea Recipe**

- Choose the size of container and make sure it has a tight fitting lid.
- Use 4 cups of alfalfa pellets or alfalfa meal to every 5 gallons or 20 liters of water. Make sure the alfalfa has no salt, corn or molasses added..
- Add ¼ to ½ cup of Epsom salts (magnesium sulphate crystals) to every 5 gallons of water used.
- Fill with water, put on a tight lid to prevent mosquitoes from breeding in your "swamp"
- Let stand for about a week in a warm out of the way spot in the yard, stirring daily until it bubbles with fermentation.

You can then apply the liquid to your iris beds once every couple of weeks. The left over alfalfa mush at the bottom of the container can be worked into the soil as organic matter.

B. J. Jackson– Iris Talk

### **Alfalfa The Magic Elixir of Plant Life**

by Terry Aitken

Some ten years ago, we in Region 13 were treated to a display of spectacular iris culture in Elmer Price's garden in Tacoma, WA. Alfalfa was the cause. Earlier, during the Region 15 Spring Trek in Tucson, Arizona, we were once again treated to spectacular garden culture in Gail Barnhill's garden. Once again, alfalfa was the magic ingredient. In the intervening years, our own use of this additive has increased to over four tons (3600 kg) per year, applied to approximately two acres (8 hectares) of ground in which we have been planting intensively in irises for about fifteen years.

Alfalfa, like many other forms of compost, adds humus to the soil which enhances plant growth in almost any type of soil from the acidic rain leached soils of the northwest to the sandy, granular, alkaline soils of the arid southwest. What makes alfalfa special is a chemical called TRIACONTANOL which is a growth stimulant. In discussion with other people, several other theories have been presented. Some or all of them may be a factor. When any form of raw vegetative matter is added to the soil, decomposition occurs which generates heat. Warmer soils, relatively speaking, would stimulate root growth. Another theory suggests that fermentation of vegetative material generates alcohol, another growth stimulant. (I would be delighted to hear from any reader who would feed their freshly transplanted iris a bottle of wine, or unpasteurized beer -- just no end of joy!)

Alfalfa (*medicago sativa*) is readily available from local feed stores in several forms. Meal is a finely ground powder form. Rabbit feed is a compressed pelletized form

which expands dramatically when wet. Horse cubes are coarsely compressed into two inch (50 mm) squares. Perhaps even bails of alfalfa would work, but I have not tried this, nor heard of anyone else doing so. The meal or pellets are easiest to work with. They come in fifty pound or eighty pound bags. A fifty pound bag will cover about five hundred square feet.

We add alfalfa to our soils annually at transplant time, and rototill it into the top six to eight inches (150 - 200 mm) of the root zone. We plant immediately. The plants seem to establish a new root system very quickly and do not put up top growth. (This is important when the plants are trying to go dormant for the winter.) Since the value of most compost is used up within the year, an annual application is important. It can be added as top dressing or applied as a soil drench as "alfalfa tea". We have also applied a handful of alfalfa meal around the base of reluctant spring starters which seems to be a benefit before bloom time.

The latest breaking rumor on the alfalfa story suggests that it may also be a factor in reducing crown rot. Since much of crown rot is caused by late spring freezes fracturing tender early growth, there may be some relationship. Alfalfa is a low nitrogen fertilizer, and nitrogen applied too early (before bloom) is frequently the culprit in crown rot.

*This article appeared in the October 1996, American Iris Society Bulletin, pp.45-46 .*

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### **Happy Birthday**

**Cookie Best      April 2**

**Richard McDonald      April 20**

**Annette McDonald      April 29**

### **Welcome New Members**

**Shelly & Lance Godfrey**

**Pauline Hagler**

**Nola Mertes**

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### **April 11 Meeting**

**Catalogs will be available, for members who qualify, to select a recently introduced iris for our NIIP members order.**

**See you at the meeting!!**

## Stalking for the Best of Show

Grooming your iris beds - There are only two absolutely essential requirements for winning consistently. A respectable iris planting and a willingness to spend the time and effort to present quality specimens. Clean your beds in early spring, watch for signs of leaf spot. Wash away heavy infestations of aphids with a garden hose equipped with a spray nozzle.

### Finding Your Flowers

When to look - When the stalks start breaking the fan, watch for promising stalks. Remember, proportion, buds well spaced, number of open blooms you will have and branching.

Where to look – Any and all iris must have been grown by the person entering the show so the best place to look is in your own garden.

What to look for - Healthy, disease free stalks with good bud count, good branching and excellent proportion.

When you have found it – Stake it so it doesn't get knocked over, make a note so you don't forget it is there, tag it so you don't forget what variety it is.

When to cut – A few days before the show, cut the stalks before the bud opens – showing about half its color. This avoids potential damage from rain, wind, hail or sun fading.

Best time to cut – Early in the morning, the next best time is late evening. It is important that there be as much water in the stalk at time of cutting as possible.

How many stalks should I bring – It depends on how obsessed you are, but generally, the more the merrier. Bring only one of each variety and only the best.

### Preparing for an Iris Show

Transportation-When transporting your iris make sure they don't bounce around and get damaged on the way to the show.

Potential carriers – six pack or wine case, wire mesh in a tub, newspapers rolled and set in a bucket 1/3 full of water.

Prep tools for the show – Entry tags, pen, scissors, knife, q-tips, cosmetic brush, wedging material, show schedule.

Preparing your Iris – Exhibit the stalk at height which presents the best proportion. Remove fingerprints from the stalk, trim or remove all diseased or discolored foliage.

Position the stalk – Place the stalk in the container so that the most presentable side is facing front. When grooming is complete, check to be sure the entry tag is properly completed and placed in the front.

Show Schedule-The schedule is the law, what it says is what is. The Show Chair is the enforcer of the law. The Show Chair's opinion of the law is final.

Exhibition Tag – Fill out both portions of the tag: division #, section #, group or class if entering an arrangement, variety name, your name and address (address labels are permitted).

### The Main Objective

Iris Shows are primarily to educate and thrill the public even though winning ribbons and medals is fun too! Exhibits at plant sales and Iris Shows are a great way to promote our favorite garden flower. The public is often eager to learn from gardeners who have grown irises themselves and have knowledge of local conditions and the species and varieties that flourish in your area.

(Information and photo taken from the AIS presentation *Stalking the Best of Show*).



Super Dancer

# Tucson 2010 "Low-Tech Trek"

(All the Fun - No Frills!)

Tucson, AZ

April 16th & 17th, 2010

Contact: Kathy Chilton 520-591-1729 Ranchiris@aol.com

Headquarters: **Ramada Inn & Suites Foothills** www.ramadafoothillstucson.com

6944 East Tanque Verde Road  
Tucson, AZ 85715  
Phone (520)886-9595

**Reserve by phone & mention "Iris Society" for rate: Regular room \$64.95 - Suite \$ 74.95**

Free Breakfast & Happy Hour @ 5pm. All rooms have coffee maker, microwave & refrigerator.

## Schedule

Friday, April 16th, 2010 Registration 2pm - 7:30pm

3:30pm **Region 15 Board Meeting**

4:30pm **2012 Convention Committee Meeting**

(Dinner on your own)

7:30pm **Judges Training -1Hour "Ethics" Karen Bergamo**

Saturday, April 17th Registration 7:30am- 8:30am

8:30-11:30am -- 1pm-4pm : Garden Tours

Maps & schedule available @ registration.

No busses - provide your own transportation. Lunch on your own.

6:00pm Buffet dinner & Meeting @ Hotel

(Chicken Divan, Grilled Veg., Salad, Rolls, Dessert)

Speaker: **Hugh Stout , Dancing Tree Iris & Daylilies, OKC**

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## Registration Form

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Email (for confirmation) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ State & Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**FULL REGISTRATION** - includes Garden Tour & Banquet # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$40.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Partial reg. (please circle choice) **GARDEN TOUR** or **BANQUET** Only # \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$20.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to TAIS.

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Send form & payment to: **MAXINE FIFER**, 4527 N Camino Cardenal, Tucson, AZ 85718 (wetypefast@aol.com)