

Prescott Area Iris Society

Iris by Barb McCurry

President Message

Greetings to All,

This the first year in over ten years that we did not have our summer rhizome sale at the Sharlot Hall Museum. Despite some logistical issues and getting used to a new facility, the sale was a great success and people from all over the state and beyond made it to the Yavapai Title building to buy iris. I spoke to people from Colorado and Las Vegas. A big thank you to Bill Walter and his team of dedicated volunteers for putting this successful marking party and sale together. Bill and his wife Robin are newer members who moved here from Louisiana (The Swamps) and have been with PAIS for a little over a year. He graciously accepted the call when asked and did a fantastic job. Thank you Bill!!! Linda Rossman did a wonderful job hosting the marking party. The food and conversation were great. We got much done and actually finished early this year. Thank you to all those who contributed irises. We had many volunteers, both old and new members, joined us to help out for both events. We have one of the highest active member participation rates in the region. Our membership has now grown to 78. Several new members joined during the sale. Although we do not have an official tally at this point, the sale was a great financial success and will help us move forward with our outreach programs. We sold close to 170 varieties on Saturday and were almost cleaned out. We all had to go home and dig a second round to provide enough for Sunday's sale which also went well. Saturday people were lined up outside the door and in a long line inside to buy the irises. Great Job PAIS!!! Holding our sale at Yavapai Title had its advantages in that we were in air conditioning all day, did not worry about the rain, had a kitchen and toilets handy. It was a plus.

The featured speaker at our next General Meeting, August 27, will be Riley Probst, President of the Reblooming Iris Society and a reblooming Iris hybridizer. This will be a wonderful presentation, so be sure to attend.

Our 2016 season is beginning to wrap up, so do not forget to join us for our photo contest, ice cream social and auction in September. Our Fall Potluck, which will be a morning brunch this year, and round out our season with our annual elections in November. Many of our board members and committee chairs will be leaving the board this year, having completed their terms. If you are interested in helping to guide PAIS into the future and continuing our community outreach, please contact one of our Board members. I will be moving into the Past Presidents position again to help guide the board through 2017 as an advisor and then finally retire to devote more time to family, traveling and Sharon.

Stay tuned for more information regarding the expansion of the Marcusen Sculpture Garden and the Embry Riddle University Memorial Garden. Portions of these garden expansions should be ready to plant in the fall or early spring and we will need your help to accomplish this.

Best Regards to All, Dennis Luebkin, President

Coming Events

- Aug. 27- Riley Probst, Rebloomers
- Sept 17— Iris Photo Contest,
Silent Iris Auction,
Ice Cream Social
- October 14-15 — Lomoc Valley Iris
Society - AIS Region 15
Fall Meeting
- Oct 22 - Rebloomer Potluck,
Eugene Zielinski—Species Iris

Welcome New Members

JD Greenberg
Brenda Griffin
Cheryl Madvig
Marilyn McCarthy
Jim & Marilyn Robbins
Carolee Sargent
Sharon Simmacher
Nancy Simpkins
Kellie Smith



Reblooming Iris Riley Probst August 27

Our August 27th morning meeting (9:30-noon) on Saturday at Yavapai Title will feature re-blooming iris. This is your chance to learn about planting and growing these wonderful iris that not only bloom in spring, but in the fall also. This will be a presentation with slides showing what color and form you can have if you add these iris to your garden. The speaker will be Riley Probst, a commercial grower and hybridizer, whose *Fleur de Lis Iris* garden features rebloomers. A meeting not to miss!



SUMMER IRIS CARE

- * Continue to keep your iris beds weed free
- *Water —check about 3 inches down to make sure the soil is dry before watering. The monsoons have been a big help. Cut back on watering as the weather cools
- *Fertilize if you have not already done so—sprinkle fertilizer around the clump not on the rhizomes. Use a good 10-10-10 or similar low nitrogen fertilizer
- *Cut blooms stalks off at the base and remove dead leaves
- *Be on the lookout for soft rot and treat the rhizome immediately. As you are doing cleanup, remove dead leaves and sniff their base. The scent should be earthy. The slightest smell of rot means it is time to take action before any visible damage occurs. Use Comet or Ajax cleanser on the rhizome to dry it out after cutting off and discarding the rotted part of the rhizome. Sulfur can also be used for drying out the rhizome.
- ***Dig and pot 2-3 iris rhizomes of several varieties for the spring exhibit/sale. Normally we pot the leftover sale iris, but since there are none, we really need you to pot iris or we will have nothing to sell and the spring patrons want to purchase iris.**
- * Any mystery iris that were not true to name and have no id can be dug and potted for the spring exhibit/sale. If you have a photo, locate it and send it to Judy (jbookaz@gmail.com).
- *Verify that plant markers are correctly placed and have not faded - remark as needed

2016 Rhizome Sale Wrap Up

Volunteers	24
Iris Varieties	192
Sales before expenses	\$9000
# of customers approximately	+300
New members joining	6

CONTACT US

President : Dennis Luebkin dluebkin@q.com 623 628-4860

Vice President: Barb McCurry bj4mccurry@hotmail.com

Secretary: Joella Cheek joella@commspeed.net

Treasurer: Eugene Zielinski eez55@earthlink.net

Director at Large: Sue Crabtree sue49@cableone.net

Membership: Carolyn Alexander—artwest@cableone.net /Sharon Luebkin 623-980-6627

Sculpture Garden: Patrick Beatty patrick.beatty@att.net

Hospitality: Sharon Sundval 615-800-0298

Newsletter: Vicki Hughes vimticki@hotmail.com

PAIS website: <http://prescottirissociety.org/>

Prescott Area Iris Society P.O. Box 11918, Prescott, AZ 86304

Sculpture Garden Update – Patrick Beatty



The iris beds in the Richard Marcusen Sculpture Garden at Yavapai College were cleaned up, blossom stalks removed and several clumps were dug on Saturday 7/16. Most of the usual suspects were present to help and all were rewarded with a pittance in un-expired, freshly printed Iris Bucks. There seemed to be minimal work done in the Sculpture Garden towards the revision and enhancement of the irrigation system for the new planned beds in the lower parts of the SG. Irrigation seemed to be generally lacking despite the puny monsoon rains.

Yavapai College Sculpture Garden photos by Marilyn McCarthy.





8th Annual Photo Contest September 17, 2016

By: Carolyn Alexander

Today is a perfect day to get out my saved iris photos on camera's memory card and start selecting the best shots. It is too hot to be outside and with the air condition on it is delightful to sit at the computer and go through last springs saved photos of irises. It is a way to enjoy my irises all over again when the blooms have been long gone. I hope you have many photos to sort through and a perfect day to reflect on those beautiful blooms. It's time to select the very best in four categories as only one allowed per category which is as follows:

Category A: Habitat — Landscape or iris scene

Category B: Individual Iris flower or group of irises — single or cluster

Category C: Macro Close-up Design — Artistic or Photoshop enhancements of iris

Category D: Something else — Iris with insect, animal or people

The winner will be selected by all the members present by secret ballot. The name of the photographer will not be displayed during voting. To enter you must have taken the photo yourself but it can be of any iris anywhere. It could be taken at one of our iris functions like digging at Citizens Cemetery or the iris show. Maybe you toured someone else's garden and took the perfect shot of a beautiful iris. In order for everyone to see the photos on the table while standing up we request you limit your size to either 5X7 or 8X10". Please no mats and no frames, we are judging the best photo, not all the fluff.

We have lots of special prizes this year, including the garden sign displayed above. Please join us as it is way more fun when everyone participates. There are 8 chances to win as we have a gift for both 1st and 2nd place in each of the four categories.



GROWING IRIS IN A CHALLENGING AREA

by Darrell Levi

Attracted by the area's natural beauty, in 2001 and 2002 Lavon and I had our home built over a creek in an arroyo between Camp Pine Rock and the Mountain Club, southwest of Prescott, at an elevation of 5,600 feet. The house foundations rest on either side of the creek, with a large box culvert between them through which the creek can flow. The house itself is a kind of bridge over the creek. After heavy rain the creek can become a rather raging torrent.

Our undulating, rocky environment is quite diverse. A fifty-foot high mound of ancient granite boulders occupies most of the 1.2 acre lot, relegating home and garden to the eastern side. The native flora includes large ponderosas, mature alligator junipers, several varieties of

oak, cottonwoods, claret cup and prickly pear cactus, and manzanita. Wildflowers include sunflowers, wild geranium, yarrow, axhead bitterweed, asters, and thistles. We have introduced agave, yucca, desert willow, a couple of small maples, Colorado blue spruce Christmas trees, a large exotic cottonwood, honeysuckle, poppies, salvia, trumpet vines, native wildflowers, succulents and various non-native wildflowers.

Deer, javelinas and coyotes follow their long, established paths along the creek, around our home and through the culvert under it. Chipmunks, squirrels, and rabbits are common. We feed and water hummingbirds, quail, nuthatches, woodpeckers, finches, wrens, chickadees, titmouse, doves, jays, towhees and rarer seasonal avian guests.



Our governing garden philosophy is to try to understand and to live within the limits of our natural environment. Really there is little choice other than wholesale reconstruction of the native environment, destroying what attracted us originally. Except for one small area protecting plants along the front of the house from critters, fencing is not an option. The terrain is irregular and divided by the creek. Fencing would mar the natural character of the land, and it would be very expensive.

Thus, one of our challenges, is adapting to the forays of deer and javelinas and the gnawing of smaller mammals. Contrary to others' experience, I have found that critters *will* eat iris. Sometimes leaves are nibbled to the ground, presumably by rabbits or rodents. Deer eat iris blossoms; recently I saw a doe eating the blossoms of "Red At Night" and "Princess Beatrice." That was not an isolated deer attack. Javelinas don't eat iris, but they root around in newly-planted beds and often step on plants, damaging them. Wildlife can be frustrating but they are perhaps not the biggest challenges of growing iris on our property.



One larger challenge is the "soil," if that's not too grand a word for it, decomposed granite with lots of rocks, some quite large, some impossible to dislodge. My scattered iris beds, perhaps two dozen or so, are each small affairs of a few square feet or less, which I've dug out of the ground with pick, shovel, and digging bar. I can rarely dig deeper than twelve inches, far from ideal. Naturally I have to use soil amendments. I've had a little success in building beds above the ground, using rocks to hold the amended soil in place, and plan to do more of that in the future. I try to plant new rhizomes at least twelve inches apart, though that's not always possible. I'm trending toward fewer plants per bed and fewer varieties through attrition. I have about sixty varieties overall.

The biggest challenge is water. Ours comes from two wells shared with three other households, and the continuing drought is a great concern. I hand-water to make sure the water gets where it's most needed, and I prioritize, watering the more desirable plants more consistently than others, which have to fend for themselves (some do quite nicely). Avid birders, we have three birdbaths, but these and bird feeders attract javelinas and deer.



The relatively small area available for planting, perhaps less than a quarter-acre, features several different micro-environments. To the west is a steep slope where I've planted some "Crimson King" and some unnamed iris given by a neighbor; this is a low-priority area, difficult to work on, which



nonetheless provides some modest rewards. To the east is an area of many beds where I've had some success in the past, but which was pretty dismal this year with the exception of nice late blooming by "Lightshine." This area gets a lot of sunshine, needs a lot of water, and requires that beds be renewed every other year. I think the intense sunlight breaks down the soil amendments rather rapidly. Some varieties planted here, such as "Brickle," will do well one year and produce nothing the next or even die. I'm gradually transplanting from this area to more promising ones.

My favorite environment is to the south, between the house and Sunnyside Road. This is a creek side area shaded by cottonwoods, ponderosas, and junipers, which nonetheless gets enough sun for iris. The soil, perhaps enriched by decomposing foliage over the years, seems a little better here. I reworked most of the beds in this area last summer, and many plants are still settling in, but "Princess Beatrice," "He-Man Blues," "White Hot" and "Red at Night" (a surviving bud/blossom after deer attack) were great this Spring. The shadiness of this area makes for less watering than on the east.

A pleasant surprise in May was on the north side of the house between a stem wall and the creek bed, a spot I regarded as marginal. Last summer, with minimal soil preparation, I planted "Crimson King," "Amas," "Uncle Charlie," "Dearie," and "Skyblaze", not expecting much. I didn't give them a lot of water and fertilizer. Yet eighty percent of the plants, and all the varieties, bloomed on stalks that were taller than usual for my iris. Gardening has its mysteries.

Despite the challenges of our environment, I find growing iris to be very rewarding. Trying to understand what's going on is mentally stimulating; it's a never-ending learning process. The work is good exercise. While I'm outside I enjoy not only the singing and fluttering of birds, but the activities of small mammals, lizards, bees, and butterflies. I can put up with deer and javelinas. The iris are beautiful, of course. Experience has taught me not to expect miracles in our rugged, rocky place, and to accept what is, in its own way, very good.



Web Resources

The Backyard Gardener is a newspaper column written by Yavapai County Agent, Jeff Schalau, which covers horticultural topics and relevant local information. Past articles can be accessed here: <http://cals.arizona.edu/yavapai/anr/hort/byg/>

The Master Gardeners produce a bi-monthly newsletter full of gardening information on a variety of subjects. <https://extension.arizona.edu/sites/extension.arizona.edu/files/resources/augsep2016.pdf>



Volunteer Impressions - Jan Conwell

The life blood of every hobby or interest group is its volunteers. Having belonged to groups over the years, I've learned that unless I pitch in and help, I don't enjoy the meetings and events of the group nearly as much. So as a new member, I signed up for the "summer stuff"—a dig at the Sculpture garden, the marking party, and the iris sale itself.

The Sculpture garden dig made me raise my brow at first, because the last time I was there, it didn't seem like much needed digging. I was right; we were told of only six or seven cultivars that needed a little help, and the rest was clean-up. It was easy work, for the most part, and satisfying because it all looked so tidy after the dead leaves and weeds are cleared. Patrick was a fine foreman, and a good visit was had by all, at least when we were within earshot of each other. Plus, we netted some beautiful iris for the sale.

The marking party was a shock to me, for two reasons. First; I'd never seen Linda's beautiful property. Row upon row of iris beds! This was a resource I had no idea was so close to me. Second; the sheer volume of iris it takes to have one of these sales! Even after so many of us had brought our contributions in, somebody backed a truck up and bag after bag of iris were unloaded, needing to be cleaned, cut, marked and priced. I realized just how tiny my collection of iris is by comparison. But we all got situated with iris, scissors, markers and bags, and got to work. I was not able to stay the duration, but I remain amazed that so much work could get done in such a short time.

The best part was the sale itself. Being new to the group as I am, I was not sure what to expect. What I discovered was this: the "veterans" of years of sales have this down to an organized science, even with an unfamiliar venue! What impressed me most was the system for presenting the iris to the customers. I wish I had helped with the pre-sale setup, because it was clear much work was already done. Good thing because people started lining up long before the sale started! Sales were fast and furious for the first couple of hours and then lighter but constant through the rest of Saturday. On Sunday we came back having dug more, because there was so little selection left. At cleanup time, I was again impressed with the organized efficiency of this group—grab a box, a bag or a rag and get to it!

Aside from the very real need this group has for helping hands at every event, the return on volunteer time invested is well worth it. Good times, developing friendships with like-minded people, and valuable learning about iris...which is why we joined, after all.