



## What is a Dwarf Bearded Iris...and Why are Dwarf Lovers so Persistent?

In the beginning, there were no class definitions. The meaning of the term “dwarf bearded iris” was taken for granted, as all the ones being grown in gardens were similar in appearance and distinct from their taller relatives. If you were botanically inclined, you could turn to a reference like W. R. Dykes’s *The Genus Iris* to get a list of dwarf bearded species, and safely assume that your garden dwarfs were hybrids or forms of those species.

The 1939 AIS Checklist attempted to be somewhat more helpful by giving a height range in addition to the list of species, setting the boundary between dwarfs and intermediates (which were stated to be hybrids between dwarf and tall bearded irises) at 17 inches. This doesn’t make sense, though, if it is taken as a definition, rather than just helpful descriptive information. What if two of those dwarfs species were crossed and produced a hybrid over the limit? Or what if a dwarf and tall were crossed and produced a hybrid under the limit? Giving both a definition in terms of ancestral species and a definition in terms of height is inviting contradiction unless it is clear whether ancestry trumps height or vice versa.

Perhaps in recognition of this, the AIS adopted a new classification in 1947, based decisively on ancestry. A hybrid involving only dwarf species would always be a dwarf; a hybrid involving only tall species would always be a tall. A hybrid involving both dwarfs and tall would usually be intermediate, but might be deemed either dwarf or tall if that was the group it most resembled. Although this last provision was strangely vague, the definition at least allowed hybridizers to cross dwarfs amongst themselves

Article by: Tom Waters *World of Irises AIS blog 1/27/2020*

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'Icon' (Keppel, 2008)

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# APRIL HAPPENINGS

## PRESIDENT SHERRY'S MESSAGE

Such unusual and somewhat scary times! But we are lucky, because we are gardeners. We have our place of peace and joy right in our own backyards. Soon we will be seeing the fruits of our love and labor in our lovely irises, other flowers, fruits & vegetables. While we will not be able to share iris at our Spring Show this year, we can share photos of them. Please take lots of amazing pictures, share your iris with us on Facebook, and plan to enter our Photo Contest this September.

Due to our Spring Show venue being cancelled and the community health risks, we have decided to put together an on-line catalog of all the potted iris that would have been there. You will be able to buy them via our new store and safely pick them up from Brenda Griffin's home, where they have been carefully cared for all winter. A huge thank you for the development of the website and catalog goes to Cynthe Brush, Judy Book, and Brenda Griffin. This was a lot of work in a short time! We want to make sure you have the opportunity to obtain these healthy potted irises that are completely adjusted to our altitude and weather. A sincere thank-you to Brenda for caring for nearly 1200 potted iris for the winter, a truly herculean task!

I know from my garden there's an amazing crop of weeds this year, and while it's somewhat of a pain, grooming our gardens gives us something to do and promises an awesome flowering season.

Remember that while we have cancelled our April meeting and our Spring Show, and many of our normal activities may be restricted - the parks are open, the hiking trails are open, the wildflowers will still be blooming, the birds are still singing. Go out to your garden, go for a hike or a walk. The sun and the warmth of spring are the best fighter of the virus and cabin fever.

Stay safe, wash your hands (a lot), keep your distance, stay well, and I look forward to, hopefully, seeing everyone at our June meeting.

Sherry

## PAIS April '20 Meeting:

**April 18th, CANCELLED**

**Board Meeting: 10am**

**General Meeting: 1:30pm**

**Stoneridge Community Center**

**1300 Stoneridge Drive**

**Prescott Valley, AZ 86314**



# 2020 CALENDAR & ANNOUNCEMENTS

## 2020 PAIS Calendar

There's some exciting stuff planned this year! Remember, all members are invited to join us at board meetings and your comments are always welcome. The board meetings are held mornings of the general meeting in the kitchen area next to the community center room where we hold regular PAIS meetings.

The following schedule does not include garden maintenance and other needs that will be scheduled on an as need basis.

**April 18** ~ CANCELLED ~ Board Meeting 10:00 / General Meeting 1:30 / Stoneridge Community Center

**May 1** ~ CANCELLED ~ Set-up for Spring Show / Mackin Bldg. - Rodeo Grounds

**May 2** ~ CANCELLED ~ Spring Show & Exhibit / Mackin Bldg. - Rodeo Grounds

**June 13** ~ Board Meeting 10:00 / General Meeting 1:30 / Stoneridge Community Center

**July 18** ~ Marking Parking / Brenda Griffins Home - Chino Valley

**July 24** ~ Set-up for Rhizome Sale / Stoneridge Community Center

**July 25** ~ Rhizome Sale / Stoneridge Community Center

**September 15** ~ Board Meeting 10:00 / General Meeting 1:30 / Stoneridge Community Center

**November 14** ~ Board Meeting 10:00 / General Meeting 1:30 / Stoneridge Community Center



## ANNOUNCING!

### A New Online Store to Sell PAIS Potted Iris

As of 4-28-20, PAIS will have an online store [www.PaisIRISstore.com](http://www.PaisIRISstore.com) to sell 1200 potted iris Brenda Griffin has been care taking since last year. The online store automatically adapts to the viewing platform: desktop or laptop computers, tablets or mobile phones, making it very versatile for shoppers.



#### PAIS Potted Iris

Showing 1-16 of 145 results

Default sorting



About Last Night

\$6.00

Add To Cart

Admiral Nimitz

\$6.00

Add To Cart

After The Storm

\$6.00

Add To Cart

Afternoon Delight

\$6.00

Add To Cart

Since the annual **Kaleidoscope of Color** show's venue was cancelled by the City of Prescott (due to community health concerns), a few dedicated PAIS members have been working on this huge project for the past three weeks.

We are very excited to share it with our PAIS members before putting the news out to Arizona's avid iris fans. Mark the date, so you can browse the 145 different cultivars we're offering for sale. (*See examples on page 6*) and plan on placing orders to beautify your iris gardens and support PAIS various 2020 charitable projects.

~ Cynthe, Brenda, Judy and Sherry

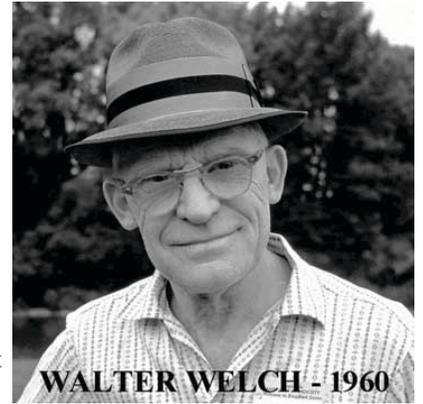
# DWARF BEARDED IRIS... (CONT.)

and register the progeny as dwarfs, without worry about a height limit or other factors.

This classification system was introduced at the same time as Walter Welch was organizing the Dwarf Iris Society (then called the Dwarf Iris Club) and stirring up interest in dwarf hybridizing, so there may have been some impetus to clarify definitions for this reason. Although dwarfs had been widely grown in both Europe and North America for as long as tall bearded, they had not historically received a great deal of attention. Gardeners took them for granted, and although new hybrids were introduced from time to time, there were no hybridizers who focused on them exclusively or had planned breeding programs solely to produce new dwarfs. Welch turned that around, first by organizing a program of round robins, whereby enthusiasts (many of them recruited from gardening clubs and publications, not just iris societies) could discuss dwarf irises by mail, and then by creating the Dwarf Iris Club in 1950. I believe this was the first specialist iris society devoted to a particular type of iris. With the blessing of the AIS, the Dwarf Iris Club even trained and appointed its own judges, just for judging dwarfs!

In 1951, something happened that put the class definition under unprecedented strain. Paul Cook (a friend and correspondent of Walter Welch) introduced the first three irises of the type we now know as standard dwarf bearded (SDBs), from crossing the tiny dwarf species *Iris pumila* with tall bearded. As a dwarf x tall cross, a strong case could be made that these new irises were intermediates, and indeed that is how they were registered at the time. But they were no taller than many of the dwarfs being grown at the time, so this might seem a little inconsistent. Welch and the DIS focused attention on the presence of a small branch in most SDBs, asserting that a branch was disqualifying for being considered a dwarf. Oddly, the list of dwarf species that AIS had been printing and reprinting for many years included amongst the dwarfs *Iris aphylla*, which is copiously branched.

Recognizing that the future might hold even more examples of such “problem children” from newfangled hybridizing experiments, the AIS suddenly reversed itself in 1954, offering a classification based entirely on height, with ancestry deemed irrelevant. This makes sense in a world where parentages have become complex or uncertain. Height is something that can be established with a ruler. Now the boundary between dwarfs and intermediates was set at a rigid 15 inches, regardless of what species the plants had come from or what characteristics they had. Welch and the DIS refused to accept this definition, appalled at the thought of 15-inch branched “intermediates” masquerading as dwarfs! Welch could be an opinionated and difficult person under the best of circumstances, and now he and his supporters had a righteous cause for contention. This caused a rift between the AIS and the DIS whose repercussions are still playing out today. From 1955 until 1982, the DIS had its own awards system, issuing the Welch Award in competition with AIS’s Caparne Award, despite the fact that it tended to be the same irises winning both awards. Other classification issues were percolating at this time as well. There were movements afoot to recognize the so-called “table irises” and “border irises” as separate from both TBs and IBs. A committee was put together to study all these issues and propose a solution. In 1958, the AIS adopted a classification that has remained in place (with minor modifications) to this day. The dwarfs were separated by height into miniature dwarfs and standard dwarfs, with the dividing line being 10 inches. The border bearded class was created for short TBs, and the miniature tall bearded class was created for the table irises. The DIS had no interest in any of



'Alpine Lake' (Willott, 1980)

a classic MDB from SDB x *pumila* breeding

(continued next page)

# DWARF BEARDED IRIS... (CONT.)



'Little Drummer Boy' (Willott, 1997)  
MDB from pure pumila breeding



'Pearly Whites' (Black, 2014)  
MDB from pure SDB breeding

Photos for this article: AIS Blog

these new classes, not even the SDBs, and so the Median Iris Society was formed with the mission of promoting the five new classes between MDB and TB. A peculiar quirk of this development is that standard dwarfs are considered medians, not dwarfs, in apparent contradiction with their name.

The 1960s and 1970s were perhaps the most exciting time in the history of dwarf iris development. Although the SDBs themselves were deemed too large to be considered true dwarfs, they had an enormous impact on breeding. Dwarf enthusiasts crossed the SDBs back to *I. pumila*, producing many charming hybrids, earlier blooming than the SDBs and quite distinctive in appearance, with  $\frac{3}{4}$  of their genes coming from the dainty *I. pumila*. This became the standard cross to produce MDBs. The class was rounded out by selections of pure pumila ancestry, as well as hybrids from pure SDB breeding that happened to be small enough to fit the definition of the MDB class. These “runt SDBs” did not always meet with the approval of the dwarf purists, although there are a number of fine irises in this category. Indeed, in recent decades these MDBs from pure SDB breeding have come to quite dominate the class, in terms of sheer numbers as well as awards.

In light of this history, one can understand why the DIS has remained rather protective of the little irises under its charge, and reluctant to muddle the boundary between the dwarf MDBs and the median SDBs; the dividing line between the classes was reduced to 8 inches in 1976, in part to protect the MDB class from SDB interlopers. It also explains the misgivings of many DIS members about merging with MIS, which has been suggested on a number of occasions. Any of the median classes might seem to have more cause to have its own society, given that they all have more new irises introduced each year than does the MDB class. Yet our history has set us apart, and perhaps it is the very fragility of the class in the face of the much larger (in numbers as well as stature!) median classes that inspires a certain connoisseur's devotion amongst us.

In 2018, the DIS seemed on the brink of demise, with the president and vice president resigning, and the officers voting to merge with MIS. Rather miraculously, this was reversed in 2019, with a grass-roots rallying of the troops under the enthusiastic leadership of Charlie Carver, historic iris conservation advocate and devotee of MDBs. We now once again have a functioning society with a full slate of officers and a content-rich newsletter in final preparation for publication early this year. If you love dwarf irises and would like to be part of this renaissance, the DIS would love to hear from you!

*Spring Flowers*



# PAIS NEW ONLINE IRIS STORE

From historic to recent iris cultivars, tall bearded, medians, and spurias, iris lovers can find special iris they have been waiting for among 145 cultivars PAIS is offering on our new online store. We even have some handsome NoIDs that, hopefully, will be identified one day with some persistence by our iris detectives.



An Iris Sampling from the Past Two Decades (shown top to bottom):

Roman Song (1993 Blyth), Artistic Web (2010 Tasco), Blueberry Bliss (2004 Schreiner) Battlestar Atlantis (2008 Aitken)

Photos Courtesy of Cynthe Brush,



## Spuria Iris



**Historic Iris**  
add elegance to  
our collections  
& garden beds  
(Limited Quantities)



(Left to Right, Top to Bottom)  
Historic TB Iris: Alcazar,  
Easter Bonnet, Madame  
Louise Aureau, & Othello

See Francelle Edwards &  
Margie Valenzuela iris too,  
like Chili Spots (below).

Photos Courtesy of Judy Book,  
Cynthe Brush & Mike Unser



Top to Bottom)  
**Spuria Iris:**  
Star Rider, Media  
Luz & Countess  
Zepplin

Photos Courtesy  
of Riley Probst  
& Jan Lauritzen,



# CONTACT INFO. BIRTHDAYS

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*Best Wishes to Our Friends with  
 May, June & July Birthdays!!!*

### May

Vicki Hughes ~ May 24th



### June

Sherry Williams ~ June 3rd  
 Barbie Harlib ~ June 17th  
 Gerry Snyder ~ June 17th  
 Barbara Kyte ~ June 23rd  
 Thomas Ziffer ~ June 26th



### July

John Bernardi ~ July 14th  
 Sharon Phelps ~ July 23rd



# SPRING GARDENING ~ IRIS CARE

## Spring Gardening ~ Iris Care *by Dennis Luebkin*



It is now mid-April and spring has sprung in the Prescott area! Our daytime temperatures are warm, night temperatures for the most part are mild. Flowers are blooming, trees are leafing out and our irises are showing substantial growth, either blooming (Crimson King) or showing bloom stalks.

We have had a wonderful moist winter which is excellent for our irises. With our irises growth increasing, so are the tasks we need to do in our gardens.

Here are a few tips:

**GROOMING:** If you have not cleaned around your irises, now is the time to do that. Remove dead fans and old bloom stalks. Also clean any leaf debris from around the rhizomes and remove any soil from the tops of the rhizomes caused by freeze-thaw. **REMEMBER!** Rhizomes like some light and air. This will also help prevent rhizome rot. If you should notice any soft rhizomes during cleanup, apply some Ajax or similar cleaner on top and around the rhizome. The chlorine will assist in killing the rot causing bacteria. Remove weeds, so they do not compete with the irises. Keep weeds and grasses under control.

**FERTILIZING:** If you have not fertilized yet, you can use Best 6-24-24 (nitrogen-phosphorus-potassium) fertilizer around your irises. A good 10-10-10 general garden fertilizer with other trace elements and minerals such as iron, calcium, magnesium, sulfur, boron, manganese, copper, zinc is also helpful for irises overall health. **NITROGEN** promotes good overall growth and green fans. **PHOSPHORUS** and **POTASSIUM** help in the development of a strong root system, disease resistance, and produce abundant bloom.

**PEST CONTROL:** Thrips and aphids lay their eggs at the base of the fans and with the warmer weather they are beginning to become active. You can direct spray Malathion on the insect infestations. Soap and water will also reduce, but not eliminate, insect problems.

**WATERING:** With the warming weather, we need to watch our watering for the bloom season. We have been blessed with gentle rains this spring, but with the onset of higher temperatures, watering will need to be done about once a week to produce good bloom. If the ground begins to look dry, check three inches below the surface to see how moist the ground is. If it is dry, water with a deep soaking. This should be a great year for bloom.

**Happy Gardening!!**

*TB Iris 'Center Line' (2011 Johnson) available soon at [www.PaisIRISstore.com](http://www.PaisIRISstore.com)*

SPRING

