

April 2018

# TAIS Newsletter

Our 53rd year

Tucson Area Iris Society—established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



‘Fun Lovin’ ‘

(Van Liere 2008)

Tucson Botanical Gardens

Photo by Sue Clark, 2016

## President’s Message

It’s show time! I hope everyone is growing well. I’ve got a few irises in bloom, but of course I’m hoping for peak bloom to coincide with our show on April 14<sup>th</sup>. See you there with your flowers. Be sure to take some iris photos to enter into our Fall contest (See p. 11 for details).  
- Kevin Kartchner

**“Whether due to their rock star status as the diva of spring, or their simple familiarity to gardeners of all stripes, bearded irises grow and show well in just about any garden setting that meets their basic biological requirements, in concert with a medley of similarly cultured plants.”**

- Kelly Norris

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## Upcoming Events

**April 14. TAIS Iris Show. Murphy-Wilmot Library, large room. Set-up at 8 AM. Show: 9 AM to 3 PM. Additional set-up the day before at 4-5 PM.**

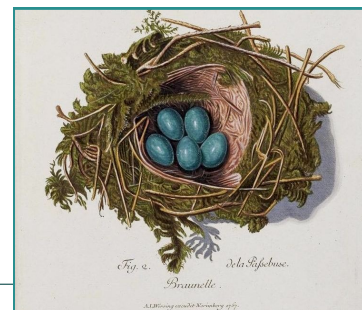
**April 14. Pima County Master Gardener 19th Annual Home Garden Tour, 9 AM to 3 PM. Tickets on sale online and at local nurseries. \$15-\$20.**

**April 20-21. AIS Spring Trek. Phoenix. A wonderful and nearby learning opportunity. Tour four gardens and get ideas!**

**April 28. Spring Iris Exhibit and Potted Iris Sale, Prescott Area Iris Society, 10 AM, Mortimer’s Nursery, Prescott. Info: Dennis at 623-980-6627.**

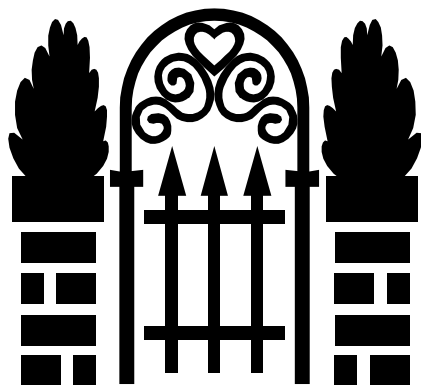
## Birthday Wishes to:

**Susan Oates      Clyda Murray**  
**Carol Peterson      Kathy Chilton**



From: 'Sammlung von Nestern und Eiern verschiedener Vogel.' by FC Gumbel and AL Wirsing, published between 1772 and 1786

# March Meeting Minutes



We ♥ Irises

March 10, 2018

There were 15 present. Sue Clark gave a very interesting presentation from Kristee's New Mexico iris group on grooming irises for the show. There were six names submitted for our show: **Spring into Iris** (Melania's idea) (6 votes), April in Iris (4 votes), Iris Across the Rainbow (3 votes), Iris Color Carnival (1 vote), Garden Essential: Iris, and Iris: Desert Orchids.

The door prizes went to Celia Keener – Osmocote, and to Kevin Kartchner – Miracle-Gro.

The board meeting was called to order at 11:43 AM

Kristee asked for three volunteers to each spend \$300 (including postage) to purchase iris from different growers for our sale in September. The volunteers are Sue Clark, Kevin Kartchner, and Susan Schaefer. They will order, receive, and care for them until the sale.

Fleur de Lis has offered to send us their extra rhizomes for our sale for the cost of postage only.

We discussed having the April show judged by the judges-in-training but since we have already published our opening time as 9 AM, decided this is not the year to do this. (2012 was the last time we had judging). Kevin and Sue will print ballots and name tags for the April show.

Diane cannot make the 11-1 time slot she signed up for but Sue said she would be available.

Angela and Diane will have breakfast and lunch items available for us at our show.

Melania thought she might have someone from the Yumi Garden do an Ikebana demo in May and will check on it.

No date has been set for the Fall auction. The Fall sale will be the fourth Saturday in September, the 22<sup>nd</sup>. Kristee will contact Harlow's to confirm the date with them.

News from the Tucson Botanical Gardens: they are going to a more natural fertilizer with fishbone meal and will be supplying it for us as well as applying it for us. They have also increased watering. Our beds there are looking good!

Diane stated she is in need of more cards and postage for birthdays. She needs approximately \$50 for four years worth. Melania motioned and Tony seconded this.

As a last item, Kristee will be giving a presentation at TBG on April 10<sup>th</sup> and we are all invited to attend.

- Janet Gardner, secretary

If you haven't been to a meeting lately, stop by the show on April 14!



We're on the web!

[Tucsoniris.org](http://Tucsoniris.org)

## 'Debby Rairdon,' a Big Winner!

Last month, we learned from Rick Tasco what a painstaking process hybridizing irises is. Usually, hundreds or thousands of crosses are made, and only a few of the ensuing seedlings are selected for registration and marketing. Once, though, a Midwestern gardener named Lois Kuntz, made history as a rookie hybridizer. Her lone introduction won the Dykes medal! Lois had grown irises in her backyard for many years, and one day in the late 1950's, decided to attempt a cross between two pink varieties which she selected upon impulse. From the resultant handful of seeds, 20 seedlings emerged and then bloomed the following year. Most of these were discarded due to the muddy pink color of their blossoms, but the last one to flower was a stunner! Lois named this ruffled yellow beauty after her eight-year-old granddaughter. 'Debby Rairdon' was introduced in 1965 and won the Dykes medal in 1971. Lois Kuntz later reported that she wished that she had accepted the offer of a percentage of the profits from the sale of the rhizomes, but had instead chosen to receive \$150 in cash and \$150 in rhizomes. By 1978, the only iris that Lois grew was 'Debby Rairdon' and most of her garden had been converted to lawn. Her special iris, though, remains a favorite. - SC

Source: [The Gardener's Iris Book](#), by William Shear, 1998, Taunton Press: Newtown, CT.



'Debby Rairdon,' Historic Iris Preservation Society



# TAIS March Meeting



**Photos by  
Tony Kutz**





## Treasurer's Report for March - submitted by Kristee West, Treasurer

Date	Debits/Checks	Deposits	Balance	Details
	1775	\$300.00		Lauer's Iris Order for Fall Sale
	1768	\$30.00		AIS 2018 Registration
<b>Pending Uncashed Expenses Total = \$330.00</b>				
16-Mar	1774	\$42.73		Angela Powers Raffle items
20-Mar			\$220.00	Sue Clark - projector rental refund
20-Mar		\$10.00		markers
23-Mar	1767	\$330.00		Region 15 Auction proceeds
29-Mar		\$300.00		Sue Clark via Zelle - Shady Spot Iris order for Fall Sale
31-Mar	Bank Balance		\$4,852.03	
	Pending Uncashed Checks		<u>\$330.00</u>	
<b>31-Mar TAIS Balance</b>			<b>\$4,522.03</b>	

## Yellow Irises - soft and buttery to hot and sizzly

Although yellow irises are quite common nowadays, they were not always so. In fact, besides some muddy-yellowish *Iris variegata* and *I. pumila*, the first was probably **'Flavescens'** (De Candolle 1813). This pale yellow historic variety can still be found growing around old homesteads and along highways. Yellows improved measurably when one of W. R. Dyke's seedlings was named posthumously for him and introduced in 1926. This clear yellow tetraploid variety is an ancestor of nearly all modern yellow tall bearded and medians. The flecks on its falls are likely the after-effects of an old virus. The heyday of yellow introductions was the 1940's, with 22 yellows receiving the AIS Award of Merit.

Kelly Norris recommends these bright yellows: **'Throb'** (Weiler 1991), **'Sun Power'** (Johnson 2004), and **'Sunblaze'** (Keppel 2004). His suggestions for softer yellows include **'Debby Rairdon'** (Kuntz 1965) (see article and photo on p.2), **'Lion's Share'** (Jameson 1992), and **'Italian Ice'** (Cadd 2001). **'Melted Butter'** (Fan 1994) has white standards and creamy yellow falls. Kelly's favorite historic classics are **'Joyce Terry'** (Muhlestein 1974) which flowers reliably and won the Award of Merit in 1978; and **'Ola Kala'** (Sass 1942) from Nebraska, which is both vigorous and floriferous. **'King of Light'** (Baumunk 2007) is a Colorado-bred toughie with ruffly, well-formed flowers in a clear sizzling yellow. In fact, the latter three are in Kelly's list of tall bearded that everyone should grow. Another from this list is **'Decadence'** (Blyth 2004-2005), with bright yellow standards and burgundy falls highlighted with apricot rims and ruffles - a favorite around the world. If you crave something newer, the bright yellow plicata called **'Around the Sun'** (Black 2016) is available from Stout Gardens.

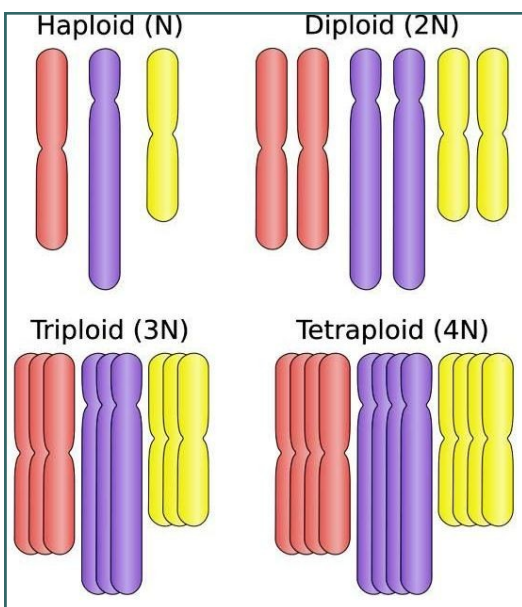
In my own garden, I want to grow **'W. R. Dykes'** and **'Again and Again'** (Innerst 1999), the latter of which Carol Peterson highly recommends for its reblooming and reliability. I received the bicolor **'Makin' Good Time'** (Schreiner 2015) as a bonus with my Schreiner's order. The soft butter-yellow standards are set off by grape-colored falls with a thin white wire rim. - SC



From top: 'WR Dykes,' 'King of Light,' and 'Around the Sun.' Photos from: The Shady Spot, and Stout Gardens (X 2).

## Big Bit of Botany and Iris History: Ploidy

This month, we put our thinking caps on in our quest to learn more about the botany of irises. Just what is a tetraploid iris and how does it differ from a diploid one? Since this is so important to the development of the iris as we know it today, I have broadened my scope of references this month in order to explain it. Within the cells that all organisms are made of are nuclei, and within each nucleus is the genetic material of the cell. These submicroscopic genes are bundled into microscopic rod-shaped chromosomes. The sex cells (in the case of plants - the ova and pollen) each contain a single set of chromosomes, so that when they combine, voilà - the resulting cells have two sets! Organisms with two sets of chromosomes are said to be **diploid**<sup>1-5</sup> (from the Greek, *di* meaning two, *pel* meaning to fold, and *eidos*, meaning form). Nearly all plants and animals are diploids.<sup>2</sup> The sex cells are said to be **haploid** and are notated **n**. Diploid cells are notated **2n**, indicating that they contain twice the number of sets of chromosomes as haploid cells. **Tetraploids** (from the Greek, *tetra*, meaning four) contain four times the number of sets as the haploid cells.<sup>3</sup> (See Figure 1.)



**Figure 1. Ploidy states of chromosomes.**<sup>3</sup>

By Haploid\_vs\_diploid.svg: Ehamberg derivative work: Ehamberg (talk) - Haploid\_vs\_diploid.svg, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=13308417>

Tetraploidy may occur naturally, as in *Iris trojana*, *I. mesopotamica*,<sup>2, 4</sup> *I. cypriana*,<sup>4, 5</sup> *I. kasmiriana*,<sup>5</sup> and the cultivar called 'Amas' (also known as *I. macrantha*)<sup>4</sup> (all from Asia) or it may be induced by using the chemical colchicine. This deadly poison is extracted from the bulbs of *Colchicum*, a relative of autumn-flowering crocuses, and is applied to plant embryos. While most plants treated with colchicines die, some of those that survive will have been converted into tetraploid plants.<sup>1,2</sup> Now, this is *not* considered a mutation, since no genes were altered.<sup>1</sup>

Why go through all of this, you may be wondering? Well, tetraploid iris plants are bigger, more vigorous, and have additional potential for variation<sup>1,2,4,5</sup> - things that make a hybridizer's heart race! Tetraploid iris flowers have more substance, are larger, and possess deeper and richer colors, presumably due to each cell containing double the amount of pigment.<sup>2</sup> They may also be more fragrant.<sup>5</sup> Hybridizers of the late 1800's to early 1900's, not knowing any of this, made crosses purely upon instinct that crossing this with that just might turn out to be something lovely. And it often did! In "...the nearly fantastical nature of their passion, a pursuit of beauty so authentic...even ignorance didn't foil their ultimate success."<sup>5</sup>

By 1925, nearly all introductions were tetraploid. In 1939 Clara Rees introduced 'Snow Flurry,' considered to be the first truly modern iris and one of the most important tall bearded irises in history.<sup>2</sup> (See the article about 'Snow Flurry' in the December 2016 issue of this newsletter).

If you've ever wondered why some of your irises thrive and others do not, that is also a factor of their genetic make up. Irises developed from the Asian tetraploid species may be less cold-hardy and less moisture-tolerant (based on the native habitat of the Asian irises), while those with more of the European species' diploidy in their ancestry may be tougher in those regards.<sup>2</sup> For those of us in the desert, irises with lots of Asian genes would probably be best! - SC

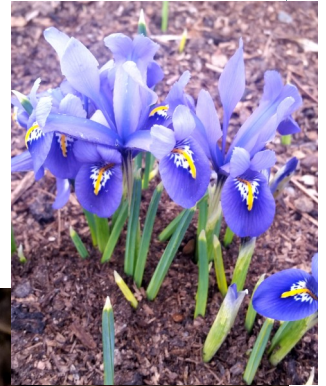
Sources: 1. "Still Confused About Genetics?" compiled by Darol Jurn and Jim Morris - most is from a 1967 article by Dr. Currier McEwen titled "Toward Tetraploid Spurias," in *Irises: the Bulletin of the American Iris Society*, Spring 2017 issue, p. 22; 2. *The Gardener's Iris Book*, by William Shear, 1998, Taunton Press: Newtown, CT; 3. "Ploidy" and "Polyploidy" articles, [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com), accessed 17 Mar 2018; 4. *Classic Irises and the Men and Women Who Created Them* by Clarence E. Mahan; and 5. *A Guide to Bearded Irises*, by Kelly D. Norris, 2012, Timber Press: Portland, OR.

**Editor's Message** - I did not have an interview report for this month. Hopefully, this feature will return next month!



### Miniature Dwarf Bearded Irises

Here are some pictures of miniature dwarf bearded irises that were blooming last week at the Denver Botanic Garden. About the same height as a crocus (4”), they share that flower’s bloom time. What a welcome sight they must be after a snowy winter! As Gertrude Wister noted, “The flowers of late winter and early spring occupy places in our hearts well out of proportion to their size.” Pretty impressive for the hobbits of the iris world! - SC





## TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2018

Kevin Kartchner – President

Vice President—open

Janet Gardner – Secretary

Kristee West – Treasurer

Carol Peterson—Membership Chairperson

Melania Kutz—Program Chairperson

Madeleine Glaser - Asst. Program Chairperson

Angela Powers - Hospitality

Tony Kutz - Photographer

Sue Clark – Newsletter Editor

## What to do in the Iris Garden for April:

As your irises bloom, verify the flower against the name to be sure it is correct. Redo labels if incorrect or faded. Remap the bed. Inspect and repair drip line.

Carefully remove spent flowers for maximum visual impact. Trim flower stalks at their base after they finish blooming, using scissors to help protect the rhizome from injury.

Continue applying a fertilizer high in phosphate for up to two months after bloom time.



## Tip Exchange

“If there are any rules when it comes to choosing perennials, beyond grouping those with similar cultivation requirements, it’s that bearded irises often need space - they are the diva, after all. Many dwarfs and medians will easily succumb to competition from taller, more robust plants that shade them out in the months following flowering. Tall bearded irises pack a little more staying power, but no clump will look its dandiest shoved in the shadows of shrubs.”  
- Kelly Norris, in [A Guide to Bearded Irises](#), 2012, Timber Press: Portland, OR, p. 50-51.

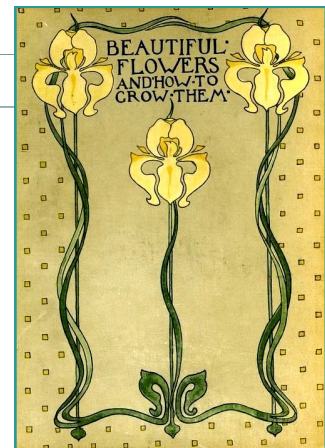
## Iris Haiku:

One yellow iris  
Mirrors the rising sun’s rays.  
The garden awakens.  
- Sue Clark

## Did You Know?

In Roman mythology, Flora was a goddess of flowers and the season of spring. While she was otherwise a relatively minor figure in Roman mythology, being one among several fertility goddesses, her association gave her particular importance at the coming of springtime. Her festival, the *Floralia*, was held from April 28 to May 3, beginning in 240 BCE. Symbolizing the renewal of the cycle of life, it was celebrated with dancing, drinking, and flowers. Source: Wikipedia.com.

“Early blooming TBs are better for...mild spring (or toasty summer) gardens, in southerly or coastal venues.”  
- Kelly Norris [I think this likely applies in the desert, as well. - SC]



## A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

This month, we dig deeper into the legacy of Vilmorin-Andrieux et Cie, the world’s largest and most successful seed company during the first three decades of the 20th century. Before the 1800’s, nearly all garden irises were hybrids of *Iris pallida* and *I. variegata*, both European species. There was not much new and exciting happening in the iris hybridizing world. The discovery of natural tetraploid tall bearded irises in the latter part of the century was the key that led to our modern bearded irises. (See article on p. 5). Of course, no one knew that they were tetraploids at the time. But crosses between them and existing diploid irises resulted in some new and exciting irises. In 1904, Vilmorin-Andrieux et Cie introduced the first-ever polyploid irises to the trade: three triploids and one tetraploid. At least two of the four still grace historic iris gardens, with ‘Isoline’ being particularly popular in the early part of the 20th century.

The Vilmorin-Andrieux et Cie’s origins date to 1743, when a Mademoiselle Goeffroy opened a seed shop in Paris. She married Pierre Andrieux, and the company’s name was born in 1775 when their daughter Adélaïde married Philippe-Victoire de Vilmorin. The business continued to supply plants and seeds to the king, a role begun by Andrieux. In this capacity, Philippe-Victoire came to collaborate with the premier botanist Antoine Duchesne, whose knowledge of plant breeding laid the foundation of Vilmorin-Andrieux et Cie’s grand hybridizing programs. Duchesne, also a talented botanical artist, created the company’s first catalog, which made them famous across Europe. Vilmorin’s son André took the helm upon his father’s death, and business prospered as beet seeds were needed for the 79,000 acres which Napoleon decreed must be planted with sugar beets in order that France need not import sugar. André began a hybridizing program to increase the sugar content of beets. He soon purchased two large estates - Louis XIV’s hunting lodge south of Paris, which became headquarters for the company’s hybridizing and plant collecting concerns (including their vast iris collection), and the *domaine des Barres* at Nogent-sur-Vernisson. This 700-acre estate became the center of the company’s tree-growing and tree-breeding concerns, now considered the origin of forest genetics in Europe. André belonged to several plant societies and published extensively. One of his most important articles proved that it was possible to selectively breed domestic carrots from the wild carrot, Queen Anne’s Lace, in only three generations, rather than over thousands of years! More next month... - SC

Source: [Classic Irises and the Men and Women Who Created Them](#) by Clarence E. Mahan

# The Magic of Iris

**Region 15 Spring Trek 2018**

**Hosted by Sun Country Iris Society**

**Phoenix, AZ**

**April 20 & 21, 2018**

**Featured banquet speaker Steve Schreiner**

**In-garden Judges Training by Kathy Chilton**

**Trek Headquarters**

**Four Points Phoenix North (by Sheraton)**

**2532 W Peoria Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85029**

## *Schedule of Events*

### *Friday, April 20, 2018*

<i>2:00 pm to 9:00 pm</i>	<i>Registration in the Lobby</i>
<i>5:30 pm to 6:30 pm</i>	<i>Region 15 Board Meeting (Plaza I &amp; II)</i>
<i>5:30 pm to 8:00 pm</i>	<i>Raffle &amp; Silent Auction (Phoenix Room - winners to be announced at the banquet)</i>
<i>5:30 pm to 8:00 pm</i>	<i>Dinner on your own</i>
<i>8:00 pm to 10:00 pm</i>	<i>Judges Training by Gerry Snyder - (Plaza I &amp; II) - all registered guests welcome to attend</i>

### *Saturday, April 21, 2018*

<i>7:00 am to 8:00 am</i>	<i>Registration in the Lobby</i>
<i>7:30 am to 8:00 am</i>	<i>Load Busses</i>
<i>8:30 am to 3:30 pm</i>	<i>Bus Tour:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>Denise &amp; Bill Stine's garden</i></li><li><i>Cheryl &amp; Al Dreska's garden (includes Judges Training by Kathy Chilton)</i></li><li><i>Lunch at the Arizona Historical Society Museum</i></li><li><i>Kyria Peavy's garden</i></li><li><i>Nancy Evans's garden</i></li></ul>
<i>5:00 pm to 7:00 pm</i>	<i>Raffle &amp; Silent Auction (Phoenix Room - winners to be announced at the banquet)</i>
<i>6:00 pm to 7:00 pm</i>	<i>Social Hour (Phoenix Room)</i>
<i>7:00 pm to 10:00 pm</i>	<i>Banquet - guest speaker Steve Schreiner</i>



## 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Master Gardener Home Tour

The Pima County Master Gardeners are pleased to announce their 19<sup>th</sup> annual Home Garden Tour to be held on Saturday, April 14, 2018 from 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. Four beautiful and distinctive gardens will demonstrate art and design in the mid-Tucson setting. A wide variety of informative garden related topics will be discussed at each venue including garden design basics, dealing with small or shady areas, using grey and rain water, encouraging wildlife, and even raising chickens in the city. The Demonstration Gardens at the Cooperative Extension Service will also be open for touring at 4210 N. Campbell Ave.

**Tickets** will be available on March 2, 2018 at the following garden centers: Arbico, Bachs, EcoGro, Harlows, Mesquite Valley Growers, Plants for the Southwest, Rillito Nursery, and at the Cooperative Extension Service.

Tickets may also be purchased on line at: <https://uacals.org/70f>

Tickets will be available on the day of the tour at each home garden and at the Cooperative Extension Demonstration Gardens on Campbell Avenue.

Tickets are \$15.00 in advance and \$20.00 on line and on the day of the tour. For more information call 626 5161.

### **The Featured 2018 Home Gardens:**

#### **The Gardens at La Finca: 4540 E. Cerro de Aguila**

Good gardening practices and skillful design have transformed this overgrown and neglected four acre property into a gorgeous respite in the desert. Water flow and usage, animal life, seasonal changes, and views were some of the many factors considered in the long term planning. You will experience a pollinator garden, raised bed vegetables growing, a nature walk among rescued native plants, and take in a panoramic view of the city.

#### **Topics:**

The Basics of Designing a Garden  
Re-vegetating with Rescue Plants

#### **Funkadelica: 5433 E. Burns**

Art is everywhere in this delightful garden! It has been developed from a mid-century, ordinary city lot into an enchanting expression of personality and creativity. Plants have grown and multiplied to create a lush environment with minimal water usage, but there is much more! A trip to Barcelona and the art of Gaudi were the inspiration for much of the tile art and ceramics that greet you at every turn in this fun and “funky” retreat.

#### **Topics:**

Funksional Art in the Garden  
Creating a Lush Garden in a Small Space

## **Cacti, Citrus, and Chickens. Oh My! 602 N. Miramonte**

A corner city lot with existing vegetation presented many challenges to these new owners. Mature citrus and other trees were a plus, but other trees that were damaged or diseased had to be removed. The grass that required so much water was removed, while more desert friendly plants were introduced to add shade and an inviting atmosphere. Cisterns, creative iron work, raised beds for vegetables, and, yes, chickens are just the thing to complete this colorful inner city respite.

### **Topics:**

Passive and Active Rainwater and Grey Water Harvesting  
Raising Chickens in an Urban Garden

## **An Old Arizona Garden, 2548 E. 7<sup>th</sup> Street**

This 1926 home on a corner lot was lush with an Aleppo pine, date palms, juniper and arborvitae when purchased almost twenty years ago. A slow but steady process began to make it into the magical garden it is now. Found and re-purposed items have cleverly added a touch of whimsy and repose. A pond and fountain offer running water and plants provide food and cover to qualify this charming city garden as a Natural Wildlife Habitat.

### **Topics:**

Creating a Certified Wildlife Habitat  
Gardening in the Shade



*1<sup>st</sup> Annual*

# **TAIS *Photo Contest***

October or November Meeting

Bloom season is imminent. Snap your pictures now!!!

## **Categories**

- 1. Single iris flower or stalk**
- 2. Macro (close-up) view of an iris**
- 3. Miscellaneous: landscape (wide-angle), Photoshopped image, etc.**

Photographs will be shown via a PowerPoint presentation. Please submit up to 15 pictures to Kevin via email, CD, or memory stick. He is willing to scan a few if you have prints.

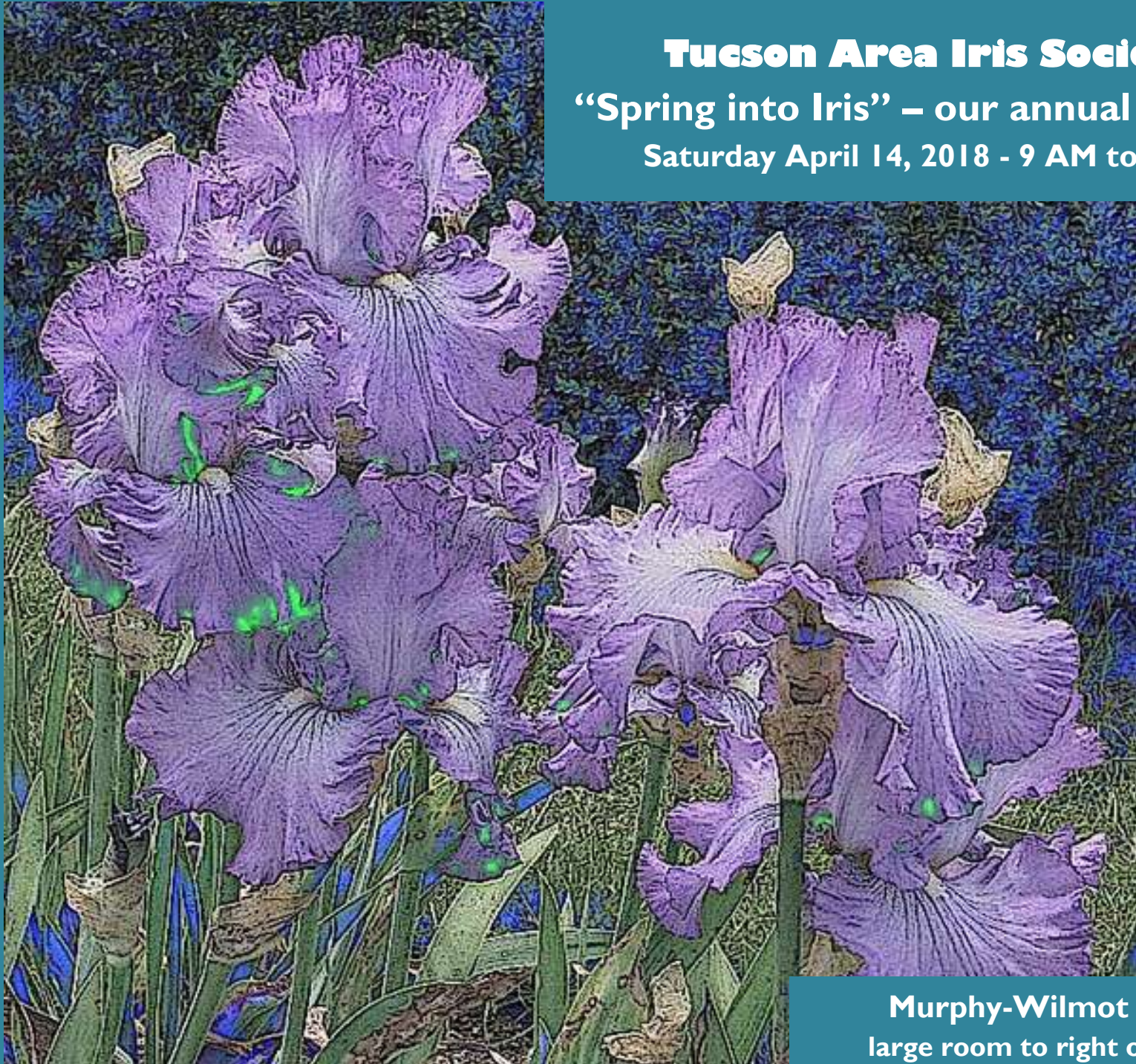
All photos must be your own, although they are not restricted to your own garden.

*TAIS Iris Bucks will be awarded to the winner in each category!*





**Tucson Area Iris Society**  
**“Spring into Iris” – our annual show**  
**Saturday April 14, 2018 - 9 AM to 3 PM**



Art by Margie Valenzuela, 2007

**Murphy-Wilmot Library**  
**large room to right of entrance**  
**530 N. Wilmot Road, Tucson**