

April 2024

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 59th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



President's Message

Showtime! Only 3 weeks until the big day. My poppies, African Daisies, ranunculus, and every possible weed are thriving from these regular rains and mild temperatures. The iris are growing fast and putting up stalks - a little early compared to previous years, but I love them whenever they bloom. Now for the show: I'm really excited to see your amazing arrangements and many flowers. Spring is here: let's top last year. - Kevin Kartchner

'You're So Veined'
(Tasco, 2020)

Marcusen Sculpture Gardens,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2023

'A gush of bird song, a patter of dew, A cloud, and a rainbow's warning Suddenly sunshine and perfect blue: An April day in the morning.' - Harriet Prescott Spofford

Upcoming Events

April 20: TAIS Iris Show, Trinity Presbyterian Church, 400 E. University Blvd. Entries accepted from 6 AM to 9:30 AM. Judging begins at 10 AM. Free and open to the public from 1 PM to 4 PM. In conjunction with the show of the Tucson Rose Society. Click [here](#) for TAIS show schedule with all the details

April 20: [Region 15 Spring Trek](#), Riverside, California

May 11 meeting: 1 PM. TBG's Porter Hall. Kevin Kartchner on how to hybridize irises and plant and grow their seeds

Reminder: Take lots of pictures of irises this month for our annual Photo Contest in September-October

Birthday Wishes to:

Jim Wilcoxon Nancy Rummel
Dorrell-Jo MacWhinnie Shane Smith
Kathy Chilton Joe Fernandes



Photo by Rose Clark

Inside this issue:

Minutes from the March meeting	2
Photos from the March meeting	3
Treasurer's Report	4
More Pollinators - article and photos	4
Pat Olsen's Tips for Preparing Irises for a Show	5-6
TBG's new "Iris Isles" by Adam Ferrell-Wortman	7
What to do in the Iris Garden during April	8
Tips, Bit of Botany and Iris History, Iris Limerick,	8
TAIS Iris Show poster	9

M³ = March Meeting Minutes



9 March 2024 - Seventeen individuals enjoyed a presentation by TAIS member Pat Olsen on tips she's gathered from entering several iris shows. See her tips on p. 5-6.

General Meeting: Kevin reminded us of the following upcoming floral events:

- 4/6 - Master Gardeners [Home Gardens Tour, 9AM to 3PM](#)
- 4/20 - [TAIS & Rose Society Show](#)
- 4/20 - [Region 15 Spring Trek](#)
- 4/27 - TAIS Garden Tours for members - TBA
- 6/26-6/29 - [AIS and Japanese Iris Society Convention](#) in Portland, Oregon

Door prizes of a potted iris, some candelilla, and Cuban oregano (mostly donated by Jim) were won by: Linda, Jim (who declined since he had brought the items), Diane, Sue, Dave, Madeleine, Dan, Bonnie, and Susan. Thanks, Jim!

Show Business: Set up on Thursday, 4/18 at noon. The handyman from the church will

set up the tables. Joyce, Linda, and Cindy volunteered to cover the tables and fill the vases with water. Sales and cashier duties will be handled by Jim, Linda, and possibly Sam. Terry, Joyce, Bonnie, and Diane are raising 140 potted irises to sell at the show. Bonnie will also pot and bring several NoIDs that someone donated. These are to be delivered to the church on Thursday during set-up. Cathy, Joyce, and Cindy will help with the tear-down. Irises will be placed on tables by Cathy and possibly Sally and they will be the clerks. The Hospitality Crew will provide coffee, pastries, and fruit for the judges and similar for exhibitors. Sue will be the tally person. Terry requested two placards with arrows to direct guests to the entrance. Diane handed out directions that her husband Lou made for creating a transport device constructed of PCV pipe similar to Kevin's so that flowers can arrive at the show in the pristine condition in which they left the garden.

RSVP Terry if doing an Artistic Arrangement for the Show



We're on the web!

Tucsoniris.org

Board Meeting: Sue placed orders for the Auction and Sale rhizomes with Mid-America Gardens. Kevin mentioned that we sold 1000 rhizomes in 2023 before the end of the Sale, and wondered if we might need to order more for this year. Joyce suggested that we could probably sell at least 100 more, and pot any leftovers to sell at our next show. She reported that that white and dark purple were the slowest sellers in 2021. Two-toned ones sold first. She had organized the rhizomes by color so that she could track which sold best and worst. She'll find photos and data for the Sale rhizomes again. There were some NoIDs left at the end of the 2023 Sale. These have been potted up to sell at the Show.

Member contributions for the Sale (estimates): Terry - 2 dozen arilbreeds, Susan - 10-20 TB, Pat - perhaps 100. She is moving her irises from Illinois to her new home in Vail. Does it matter when we place another Club order if we want more for the Sale? Sue will ask Thomas Johnson. [He said by August 10.]

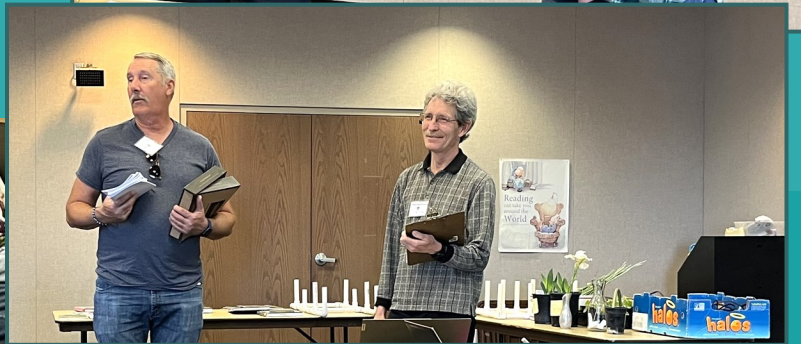
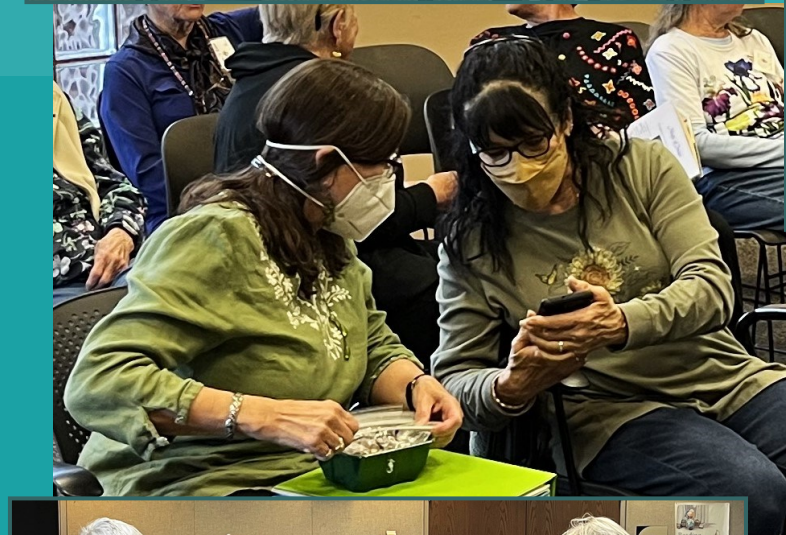
Some ideas for hybridizers to speak to us - Don Murphy, Jim Hedgecock. Ideas for our 60th anniversary in 2025: Bus trip to see irises in and around Prescott? Lunch or dinner at Kevin's during bloom time? A logo contest?

Hospitality - more on the Show breakfast: plan to serve 15-16 judges for the two shows and provide bottled water.

- Sue Clark, secretary



March Meeting - photos by Dave Smith



Treasurer's Report for March - submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

DUES

INC	500.00		
	+15	+515.00	TOTAL INC FROM DUES
EXP	-13.60	-13.60	postage
		-36.00	refreshments
		-500.00	web
		-213.41	books
		-45.00	AIS
		-120.00	region 15
		-928.01	TOTAL EXP FROM DUES
		-413.01	ACT BALANCE

This report shows year-to-date amounts



Above: a mouse lemur snacking on flowers and being dusted with pollen in the process (Duke.edu)

SHOW

INC	0.00	INC TO DATE	
EXP	-115.44	schedule	
	-39.00	entry tags	
	-154.44	TOTAL EXPENSES FOR SHOW	
		-154.44	ACT BALANCE

SALE

INC	+339.48	rhizomes	
	+339.48	rhizomes	
	-2483.73	rhizomes	
EXP	-2144.25	TOTAL EXPENSES FOR SALE	
		-2144.25	ACT BALANCE

AUCTION

INC	0.00
EXP	0.00

CHECKBOOK BALANCE 31 MAR 2024 8649.06

Pollinator(s) of the Month, Part XII: The rest of the bunch

We conclude our survey of pollinators this month, beginning with one which surprised me - snails! Researchers in India discovered that the Graceful Awnsnail, *Lamellaxis gracilis*, pollinates a small morning glory called *Volvulopsis nummularium* or *Evolvulus nummularium*. These snails do their work on blustery days when honey bees don't venture out to do it. The special term for pollination by snails and slugs is *malacophily*.

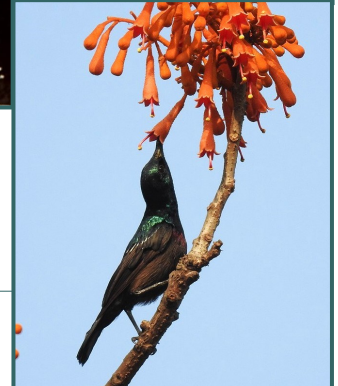
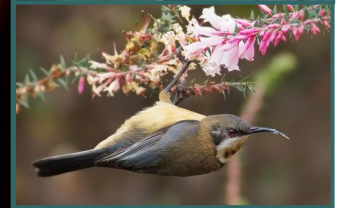
Honeyeater birds and Sunbirds are two important types of pollinators. Honeyeaters are a large, diverse group of birds vital to the pollination of many plants in Australia, New Zealand, New Guinea, and other Pacific Islands. There are 186 species, and most have a brush-tipped tongue that they poke into blossoms to extract nectar. They tend to follow the flowering of their favorite food plants. Many also feed on fruit and insects.

The 151 species of Sunbirds are spread out over Africa, India, Indonesia, and Australia. Like hummingbirds and honeyeaters, they feed mostly on nectar, thereby pollinating while they are eating. They tend toward tubular red-to-orange blossoms, and since Sunbirds cannot hover, these flowers are borne on sturdy stems. Spiderhunters are a kind of Sunbird found in forests of southeast Asia. They have long beaks and are known to pollinate wild bananas and ginger while searching for nectar. Their nests are suspended from the undersides of banana leaves using the silk of foraged spiderwebs. There are 14 species.

Our last two groups of pollinators are mammals, specifically primates. Similar to the aforementioned birds, there are types of lemurs that love nectar. They pull flowers apart to reach the tasty treat, becoming covered in pollen as they feed, and then they spread this pollen to the next bloom they find. They also eat pollen, and partake of at least 60 plant families in their native Madagascar. There are about 100 species of lemurs.

Humans pollinate more plants than any other pollinator. In some cases, the intent is to create new varieties of plants, for example the new varieties of iris present in the beautiful catalogs we receive each February. In other cases, it is to better ensure fruit-set on crops such as tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, corn, pumpkins, and strawberries. People who garden on urban balconies where bees seldom visit or in greenhouses must hand-pollinate. This is typically accomplished by transferring pollen from a male flower part to a female flower part using a soft brush. Kevin will demonstrate his hand-pollinating technique with irises during our May meeting. - SC

Sources: [16 Examples of Pollinators \(with Pictures\) - Wildlife Informer](#), [Pollination By Snail | Learn Important Terms and Concepts \(vedantu.com\)](#), Snail-pollination in *Volvulopsis*: <http://repository.ias.ac.in/49071/1/55-pub.pdf>, [PDF] Snail-pollination in *Volvulopsis nummularium* | [Semantic Scholar](#), Wikipedia articles on "[Honeyeater](#)," "[Sunbird](#)," "[Little Spiderhunter](#)," and "[Lemur](#)," and [Learn Hand Pollination. Why It's Great For Your Garden. - Life Is Just Ducky](#)



From top: snails pollinating (from [source #4](#)), female eastern spinebill, a type of honeyeater (by [JJ Harrison](#)), Loten's Sunbird feeding ([Dr. R. Kasambe](#)), Little Spiderhunter feeding on nectar on a banana plant (by [sasiharanmanekkara](#)), and hand-pollinating with a small brush ([16 Examples...](#))

Pat's Best Tips for Prepping Irises for the Show

Search catalogs for iris descriptions that say, "Shows well on the bench," or similar. These will have the desired candelabra shape. They do take up more room in the garden, though. Try growing some of these to show

Debris around irises can contribute to formation of soft rot, so remove it

She uses [Plantstep](#) software to keep track of her irises. \$50 with free annual updates

Be careful not to get water on flowers or leaves. Leaves can be trimmed - just follow the natural contour

Part of our goal is to educate the public, so bring different types and colors of irises. Consider bringing a potted iris. Consider growing one in a pot just for the show

A week or so before the show, start gauging which irises might be selected for the event. Look for straight undiseased stems, lots of buds

A day or so before, see which of those preselected (or other) stalks have fresh, clean blooms

Most entries will be tall bearded, so other types have a better chance of winning their section. NoIDs may be shown, but are not eligible for awards

Cut stalks as long as possible in the garden. You can trim later - stem must reach nearly to the bottom of the vase. Hold cut stem by the base or by the papery spathe under the top flower to avoid fingerprint marks

A cool, dark room or closet may delay a bud opening, and a warm, humid room may encourage opening. Small strips of tissue paper gently wrapped around buds can delay opening

Verify the name of the iris to be sure it matches the flower. It may be disqualified if it has the wrong name in the show

You can start grooming at home. Practice with some stalks before the show. Use soft, clean brushes, such as make-up brushes. *Softly blend* any blemishes from the stalk, but do not remove all of the "bloom" (the powdery coating)

Remove any aging, wilted, or faded blossoms, as these are heavily penalized



Keep proportion in mind

Leaves and stems must not touch the vase

A spent terminal flower can be groomed off *if* there is another bud in that socket. Otherwise, the whole top must be removed. Carefully pull back the spathe, and then use your fingers to snap off the decaying bloom with its ovary

Wedges must be below the rim of the vase. Stem must be straight in the vase

Tags: the Division, Class, and Group come from the Show Schedule, p. 9-12. The portion with your name on it gets folded over for anonymity

Decide which side of the stalk displays the best and place a fall front and center. Position the tag exactly in the front of the vase so that the whole thing gets situated like that on the show table. No additional grooming may be done after the flower is on the show table (aka show bench)

Pat's Best Tips for Prepping Irises for the Show, continued...

A syringe or eyedropper is good for carefully topping off the water in the vase

Deductions are taken for: tears in petals, any insects (even ladybugs), water spots, lack of pollen on stamens, trickery (glue, splints, etc.)

Transport irises with great care - space stems out in wine bottles or a PVC device à la Kevin's. Be sure they have enough water

Grooming is to be done solely by the exhibitor. Coaching is acceptable, but no other help is allowed. Grooming counts for a large proportion of the points awarded

Single Bloom entries - ones that get broken off or the last flower on a stalk, etc. - these can be shown in test tubes. They are judged but are not eligible for awards. [We do not have this category this year]

At the Show:

Arrive early

Unload very carefully

Check in

Plan on 10 minutes of grooming per stem

It is OK to remove some leaves

Do a final inspection to double-check everything

Only the show chairman, judges and their apprentices, and the clerks are allowed in the showroom during judging



Clerking is an excellent way to learn from the judges and improve your exhibiting skills

Allow for serendipity. Pat noticed a gorgeous stalk of '[Holiday in Mexico](#)' in her garden as she was loading the car. She cut it and it ended up winning Queen of the Show!

Learn More:

On YouTube: "[Grooming Iris for a Bench Show - Mt. Diablo Iris Society](#)"

AIS website - irises.org

[AIS Judges Handbook](#) - free download from the AIS iris wiki. Chapter 7 is called "[Judging Tall Bearded Iris](#)" and it is applicable to most types of irises. Appendix B is also good - "[Preparing Iris for Exhibition](#)"

Miscellaneous:

Diane mentioned that she saves milk cartons and juice cartons. When filled with a bud vase surrounded by wadded newspapers, they make good holding places for stalks

Some use the term UFO (Unidentified Flowering Object) rather than NoID (No ID)

Some put these in a category called "Grandma's Garden" at the Show. Joyce saw this in Prescott

Historic irises (from 1994 or before) are welcome - they have their own section in the show

"[Iris care - pre-bloom](#)" on YouTube

- SC, checked by Pat Olsen



Note - the following article is copied from the Spring 2024 edition of the newsletter of the Tucson Botanical Garden. Thank you, Sam Wymer!

Irises, Irises

by Adam Ferrell-Wortman
Director of Horticulture, TBG

Our Iris Garden is one of the most beloved spaces at TBG, so it was no surprise that when we moved it, our members and guests were concerned. But fear not; I believe that irises will thrive in their new location - the island beds around the Butterfly Magic Greenhouse and the old Rose Garden. I now refer to these spaces as the Iris Isles.

The original collection was donated, planted, and cared for by the Tucson Area Iris Society. So it was only fitting that they graciously came out and assisted us with the move. The original collection focused on cultivars of Tall Bearded Iris, *Iris x germanica*, because of their proven success in our native soil and extremely hot climate. These irises originated in Afghanistan and Turkey (that's why they can take our heat) and have been in cultivation for thousands of years. They are some of the most hybridized plants, with over 100,000 different names given to them by their hybridizer. Over the past few years, I've focused on music-based names when growing the Bearded Iris collection. However, the genus *Iris* includes over 300 species native across the northern hemisphere, including all lower 48 states, and is adapted to a wide variety of growing conditions. The iris family, *Iridaceae*, is obviously much larger and spans the whole globe.

This new location provides an opportunity for us to trial and expand our collection beyond our beloved Bearded Iris. The Iris

Isles offer different sun exposures and the ability to have different soil and watering profiles since they are separate beds. Therefore, we can accommodate the needs of many different species. This collection expansion has been made possible by a grant we received from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust. We will be trialing a large variety of species and cultivars with a new focus on North American natives. But not to worry; many still have musical names, including my favorite, *Iris x louisiana* 'Red Velvet Elvis.' I'm excited to see this bloom because the Bearded Iris don't have a true red in their color palette. And since Iris takes the name from the Greek word for rainbow, I think we should have a red one.

A great benefit of diversifying the collection is lengthening the blooming season. In the past, the iris garden looked amazing in April but really rough in July. By adding different species, I hope to have at least one blooming every month of the year, though we will still have our big bloom in spring. Like all new plantings, it may take a few years for our new Iris Isles to establish. I am sure there will be quite a few failures as we are trialing species not regularly grown in ground in Tucson. I'm also confident we will find some that do remarkably well.



“It doesn't have to be the blue iris, it could be weeds in a vacant lot, or a few small stones; Just pay attention...” - *Praying* by Mary Oliver

TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2024

Kevin Kartchner - President

Cindy Long - Vice President

Sue Clark – Secretary, Signatory on Account

Jim Wilcoxon – Treasurer, Asst. Secretary

Diane Pavlovich & Sally Vega - Programs & Publicity

Cindy Long, Linda Briggs, Kathleen Marron,
and Evelyn Jacobs - Hospitality

Bonnie Else and Susan Schaefer - Door Prizes

Taffy Holvenstot - Membership

Dave Smith - Photographer

Sue Clark - Newsletter

What to do in the Iris Garden during April:

Maintenance: Keep iris plants hydrated during this interval of rapid growth. Monitor with moisture meter. Check for aphids and other pests. Remove weeds and debris. Verify flowers to names using the [Iris Wiki](#) or other source. Replace faded labels.

Organic care: Feed with fish emulsion every other week and with feather meal and alfalfa meal (or alfalfa pellets) monthly. Apply humic acid as desired.

Non-organic care: Apply weekly or every other week: Scott's [Super Bloom](#) (12-55-6), Miracle-Gro [Bloom Booster](#) (10-52-10), [Schultz Bloom Plus](#) 10-54-10), or Ferti-lome [Blooming & Rooting](#) (9-58-8). Mix as indicated on package. - SC



Tip Exchange

Iris-growing problems are featured in the Fall 2023 issue of *Irises AIS Journal*, v. 104, #4 - KK

Add 2-4 T of alfalfa meal/gallon of potting mix when planting [irises] in new pots. - from the Down to Earth alfalfa meal box

Rhizomes with exposed tops are vulnerable to freeze damage and to attack by crickets and grasshoppers, so Jim Hedgecock of [Comanche Acres Iris](#) advises planting rhizomes just below the surface. He admits that this is a controversial topic. [Note that this is based on his long experience - SC]

- Comanche Acres e-newsletter of 3 March 2024

Iris Limerick:

A mouse dwelt in a tulip,
The one in which he grew up.
It was cheery and yellow,
And he felt rather mellow
After having a tiny mint julep.
- Sue Clark



Source: [Flower Bulb Growing Club - The Old Farmer's Almanac](#)

Did You Know?

Alfalfa meal and its pelleted form are a good source of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium, along with other nutrients: calcium, iron, magnesium, zinc, vitamins A, D, B1, B6, E, K, and U, and triacontol, a fatty acid growth stimulant. The analysis is 5-1-5, so it has a low-enough concentration of nitrogen for irises, which tend to rot at nitrogen numbers higher than about 10. It's also a wonderful soil conditioner. The pellets are less dusty than the meal. - SC Sources: [www.rose.org](#), [www.waltsorganic.com](#), information on Down to Earth alfalfa meal box

"When one flower blooms, spring awakens
everywhere." - John O'Donohue



A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Isabella Preston has been called "the Grand Lady of Canadian Horticulture." She was born in England in 1881 and emigrated with her sister to Ontario, Canada in 1912. Isabella soon enrolled in the Ontario Agricultural College. She worked and gave tours at the Central Experimental Farm for 26 years. Miss Preston taught herself how to hybridize and created more than 200 hybrids of roses, lilies, Siberian irises, lilacs, and crabapples. She highly recommended the pairing of irises and lilacs, and lamented that the irises at the experimental farm were grown in alphabetical order rather than in such a way that each one's colors would compliment those near it: "...much of the delicate coloring is lost by having unsuitable neighbors."

Miss Preston's boss encouraged her to hybridize Siberian irises. Little work had been done with them before the 1920's. This type of iris, which is native to Central Europe, has many excellent qualities, including "hardiness, ease of culture, and lack of insect troubles." Isabella started out by crossing *Iris sibirica* with an *I. sanguinea* called '[Snow Queen](#)' (Barr & Sons 1900). She was attracted to 'Snow Queen' because she thought that it would be much improved if its flower stalks were a foot taller. (*I. sanguinea* is considered by many botanists to be a kind of Siberian iris). In 1924, all 92 seedlings from this cross bloomed in various shades of blue. By 1936, second-generation seedlings were a mixed bag not only in height, but in color, as well - there were white flowers amongst the blue ones.

Between 1926 and 1936, Isabella introduced 23 irises from the aforementioned cross, each named after a Canadian river. Of special note are '[Ottawa](#)' (1928) and '[Gatineau](#)' (1932). Both are still recognized as being significant contributions to the species. Isabella Preston never got the tall-stemmed, wide-falled white Siberian iris that she dreamed of creating, but said this of her contributions, "I think that I helped a little to popularize the Siberian Irises." She once commented, "As in all plant breeding work, there were disappointments." She would be thrilled to know that a white Siberian won the Dykes Medal in 2016 - '[Swans in Flight](#).' It has the wide falls she had worked so hard to achieve. - SC

Source: "Isabella Preston (1881-1964), The Grand Lady of Canadian Horticulture," by Edwinna von Baeyer, Canada - reprinted in AIS: 100 Years Bold issue #1 of 5

**The Tucson Area
Iris Society
and the
Rose Society of
Tucson
will combine for
a fabulous spring
flower show
Sat., April 20, 2024**



**At Trinity Presbyterian
Church
400 E University Blvd.
Open to the Public
1-4 p.m.
Free Admission
Free parking behind
church**

**Potted iris, rose plants
and bouquets for sale**