



# ***RAMBLING RHIZOMES***

*February 2008*

*Newsletter of the Tucson Area Iris Society*

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



## **TAIS MEETING SATURDAY, MARCH 15TH**



**ROMA CAFÉ  
4140 W Ina Road  
(between I10 and Thornydale)**

**Lunch 11:30**

**Program 12:45**



**“Hybridizing Iris”**

**By**

**Margie Venezuela**



Oh my goodness it's March already – that means green beer, corned beef goes on sale, **and** its the start of our IRIS season here in the Old Pueblo!! It has been more than a few years since I have participated in the sport of green beer (I prefer the ambers now), but I did notice that A Mountain's "A" has been painted green already.

#### Garden hints:

It is easier to clean your iris beds and/or containers of dead leaves before they start to bloom (now is good). I have found (from experience) that if you try doing it when you have bud stalks, no matter how careful you are, you will knock off the bud that you have been waiting since last year to see.

Fertilizing for blooms should be high on your "to do" list(s) right now. Some irisarians prefer an even numbered fertilizer (20-20-20), others recommend a bloom booster type (the middle number will be higher). Try to schedule your watering so that the garden dirt doesn't get too dry between waterings.

Who is that and where did it come from? Verify your iris are what you have them identified as being when they bloom. I have had Beverly Sills (a pink) for about 5 years and it has never bloomed for me. Last year I moved it into a container and all of the sudden it grew like crazy and threw offsets like there was no tomorrow. It looked GREAT (I was so proud) – about 2 weeks ago it sent up 3 bud stalks (now I'm really getting excited). They are just starting to open up and they are looking like they really want to be yellow (hmm) instead of pink. Guess I'll try to figure out who it really is (I hope its at least pretty).

Hybridizing is fun, its also an addiction - and there are a few of us in town that would love to be your enabler! Helping you validates our insanity. Margie Valenzuela will be giving us a presentation on hybridizing at our March 15th meeting at Roma Café on Ina and Old Father.

Margie also wrote an article on hybridizing that was published in this spring's edition of Tall Talk! Way to go Margie! We will also be doing a Round Table on the subject of show hints at the March meeting.

Grubs: Can't tell you how much I hate grubs. Lowes has Bayer Grub Control on a clearance right now.

Aphids: Aphid only appear on my iris occasionally - but they will settle in with the whole family, and the extended family, when they come to visit. A natural exterminator for aphid is garlic juice diluted in water and sprayed on the aphids/plant. They like to hide in the base where the leaves overlap and in stalk and bud pockets.

#### Scattered thoughts I'll just throw out at you:

A number of members, or family members, have had health issues so far this year and I hope things are getting better for all of you.

Kathy Chilton is presenting a program on Showing Iris at the April 1 meeting of Sun Country iris in Phoenix. {[www.suncountryiris.org](http://www.suncountryiris.org)}

Gordon Jensen is our new newsletter editor, he took over the job from Kathy Chilton. PLEASE send him inputs / photos / etc. for our newsletter. It's a better newsletter with more "stuff" in it – it doesn't have to be your life story or even a long article, sharing is good. {[redheadclan@cox.net](mailto:redheadclan@cox.net)}

The Spring Show is right around the corner. I surely hope you are planning to enter – even just one entry would show you care! Not sure how many of you are planning to bring plants to sell, but we will have tables for that as well.

Iris websites and catalogs abound this time of year – thank goodness – although it does make it difficult to choose what to order. Don't throw those old catalogs away – we need the pictures for our sales.

Home Depot on Thornydale had half whiskey barrels available for \$20. The first time I saw them it was raining and they were swollen stuck together, the next time I went back they were gone. But, they may get more in, or they might still have some at other Home Depots.

Our member and Colorado friend, Bob Van Liere, was elected 2008 President of the Tall Talk iris organization – a great issue this spring! {[www.TBISONLINE.com](http://www.TBISONLINE.com)}

This Spring's AIS bulletin had a great article on haft marks vs. no haft marks. It always has informative articles and addresses of iris growers to order from. **2** Please consider an AIS membership if you aren't a member already. {[www.irises.org](http://www.irises.org)}

If you have a wish list you might want to send it to Gordon for the newsletter, or if you have something to sell that is garden related....

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his March meeting will be the last general meeting until the potluck in August. There will be a Board meeting in June and it is open to everyone. Date and place TBD.

We need to buy a projector screen.

That's about all I can think of for this month. Enjoy your bloom season, and keep checking for re-bloomers. If I actually get a bloom this year from those I have hybridized y'all will know about it. I'll have Gordon make it front page

### Tucson Botanical Gardens (TBG)

#### Update By Stan Jankowski

I went to TBG this week and fed the beds, planted a couple of potted iris I had, and delivered more flyers. Everything looks pretty good and there is a new Curator of Horticulture, Kenny Bell/Bee? that I will be working with. Michael is still the Director of Horticulture. One good thing about Kenny is that he plans to prune those darned Fairy Dusters, and said that he figured he and I would just as soon see them gone. However, Michael told me last year he thought we shouldn't mess with them because they were the best Fairy Duster examples in the Gardens. So, I guess pruning is all we can hope for.

Attached picture might show that most plants are robust and leaves are a few inches high, with some notable exceptions. His Royal Highness and Apollo's Touch are about to bloom. Doesn't look like we lost very many and the staff cleared a new area that we can use – over on the right by the fence where there were some cholla and ocotillo before. A great crop of low weeds now, and a bit of grass. Both will be easier to pull in a couple weeks, after the fertilizer. Some may be re-seeded alyssum, but I'm not sure yet.

I spoke with Nancy Laney, Executive Director of the Gardens about holding a Hybridizing Class on 4/12. I told her it would be open to TBG members also (and perhaps the public). I guessed it might be around 30 people or so. She was supportive, and said there is normally a charge for the classroom (if we need it) but we could probably "work something out". I took that to mean she would probably give it to us free because of my charm, good looks, (or whatever). I offered that we could write a blurb for the TBG e-bulletin, advertising the event.

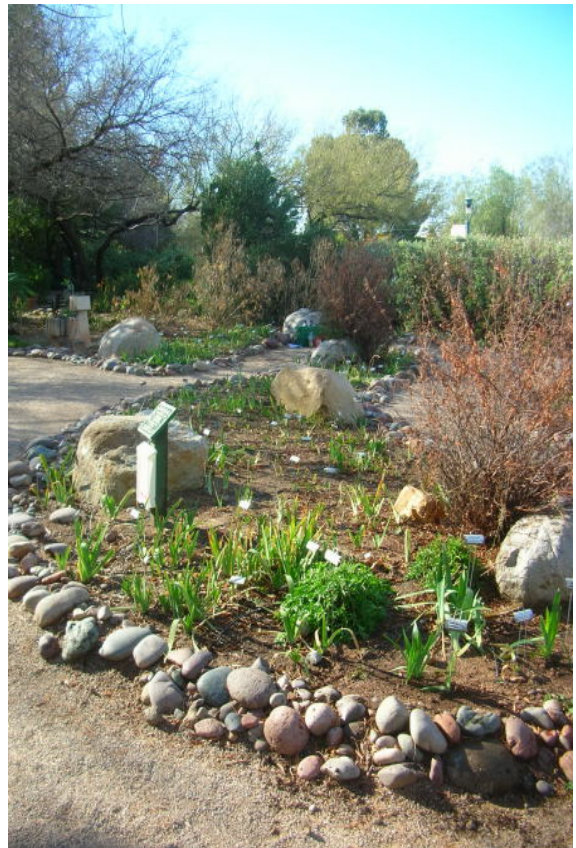
### IRIS HYBRIDIZING CLASS AT TUCSON BOTANICAL GARDENS

Did you ever wish you could have a beautiful new flower introduction named for you? Well here is your chance, thanks to the Tucson Area iris Society. A hands-on demonstration of the iris hybridizer's art will be given by Stephanie Lee, an experienced local iris hybridizer and President of TAIS.

With instruction, attendees will have the opportunity to make, and tag, a pollination cross. If seedpods develop, the seeds will be germinated, grown and evaluated, by TAIS members. The whole process from pollination to flower takes more than two years. However, If one of your crosses is judged to be worthy of being registered with the American Iris Society, you will be given the opportunity to name it

The demonstration will take place at the TAIS iris beds at TBG on April 12, 2008 from 10:00 AM - Noon. The activity is open to TAIS, and TBG members, as well the general public with a paid admission to TBG on 4/12. To register for this fun event contact :

[SLee555@peoplepc.com](mailto:SLee555@peoplepc.com) 531-1030



Starting from scratch

By Gordon Jensen

I've always liked gardening. I got started with Iris when I got married in 1997 and my wife said she liked Iris. She found an ad from Coolies in Sunset magazine and coaxed me into ordering them. That was all I needed to get hooked. Through the next ten years I accumulated a collection of over 100 cultivars of Iris.

Last year we were considering moving from California to the Tucson area. I wanted to make sure I could grow my Iris so I googled "Tucson Iris" and found TAIS. I talked to Peggi several time and even visited her garden. While our house was being built I spent hours planning how I was going to landscape my new place. Somewhere along the way I heard that, if you want to plant something in Tucson, you dig a hole several times larger than your root ball, throw away the dirt and replace it. I have also learned that, if you want a \$1,000 plant, you need a \$1,000 hole. So my plan was to put everything in raised beds and have good soil delivered.

The other issue was to get my rhizomes moved without loosing them or loosing track of their names. I made a photo listing of all the Iris that bloomed last year. Then I divided my plants and packed two of each cultivar in shredded news paper. When I arrived in July, I planted them all in temporary beds with a sprinkler system on a timer that was set for 15 minutes a day.



My blank canvas

Once I arrived, I found a good, reasonable landscape builder and started my project. First, I had a large raised bed built along the garden wall.



The first raised beds

I filled the beds half way with top soil from Pioneer and the rest of the way with their Mulch Mix. I then used my electric Mantis roto-tiller to mix some of the soil into the mulch. This gave me a humus rich soil that holds water well.



Finished beds

I continued to add hardscape and plantings and added some artificial turf. The finished project looks like this.



## TAIS CALENDAR 2008

March 15<sup>th</sup>: Margie will present on hybridizing iris. Round table discussion on the art of showing iris. Roma Café, 11:30 lunch, 12:45 program.

April 12<sup>th</sup>: Hybridizing at Tucson Botanical Gardens from 10-noon.

April 13<sup>th</sup>: Spring show at the Foothills Mall.

April 19<sup>th</sup>: TAIS carpool trip to Phoenix for garden tours with the Sun Country Iris Club. Contact Gordon or Ginny.

August 23<sup>rd</sup>: Potluck and iris auction – at the home of Dr. Paul Bessey.

September 13<sup>th</sup>: Tucson Botanical Garden dig for sale.

September 20<sup>th</sup>: TAIS sale at Harlow's Nursery

September 27<sup>th</sup>: TAIS Tucson Botanical Garden Sale

October 4<sup>th</sup>: Fall meeting with recap of AIS convention in Austin by Kathy Chilton, election of new officers.

## TAIS FINANCIAL STATEMENT

11/1/07-2/29/08

Balance on hand 1/31/08  
\$5,351.94

### Receipts

Dues 83.00  
5,434.94

### Expenditures

Lee/Judge Expense 21.50  
U-Store-it (4 months) 212.00  
264.75

Balance on hand 2/29/08  
\$5,170.19

## **TAIS Contact Info**

### **President, Stephanie Lee**

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### **Secretary, Marilyn Lesh**

(520) 906-8761  
[mlesh@cox.net](mailto:mlesh@cox.net)

### **Treasurer, Maxine Fifer**

(520) 743-7993  
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## 2008 Tucson Area Iris Society (TAIS) Membership

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name(s) Please Print PLEASE

\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
Street or PO Box City PRINT

\_\_\_\_\_  
State Zip Phone

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to TAIS. ✓ Category below:

Single \$10 \_\_\_\_\_ Dual \$13 \_\_\_\_\_ Youth \$5 \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this and your check to: Dian Curran, 1132 N. Solar Drive, Vail, 85641

✓ here \_\_\_\_\_ if you would prefer to get your newsletter by email.

**Membership dues enable us to bring in guest speakers, purchase iris for our sales, bring in judges for our spring iris show, purchase new iris for volunteer appreciation gifts and for our pot luck auction, newsletter costs, and all sorts of good things. If you have not yet renewed your membership for 2008, I beg of you to do so.**

**Thank you all for your support – S. Lee – TAIS Pres.**

I have the following members as current with TAIS 2008 dues. If you have paid and do not see your name, please HOLLER!! (EXCEL might have eaten you)

JEANNIE ALLEN, SHIRLEY ANDREWS, KAREN BERGAMO, RANDY & ANDREA BLACKBURN, KATHY BODKIN, SUE BURG, PAUL BESSEY, CHERYLE & ROGER BIGELOW, GARY CARRUTHERS, RUTH CELY, KATHY CHILTON, HELEN CLARK, CAROLYN COWAN, DIAN CURRAN, TINA D'AMICO, BERT DETWILER, PHILIP DOONAN, GRETTA DUNNIGAN, ED & CAROLINA ENCINAS, PAUL FICKLE, MAXINE FIFER, JOHN HARLOW, BEN HERMAN, GINNY HESTER, PEGGI & RICHARD ISHMAN, STAN & JILL JANKOWSKI, GORDON JENSEN, TONY & MELANIA KUTZ, ARLENE LaFROMBOISE, STEPHANIE LEE, MARILYN LESH, CHARLEY LILLARD, SUSAN OATES, FRANK & RUTH OVER, JANE PARKS, LUCILLE SKERSTON, HL SWAIN, FRED THORPE, BOB VAN LIERE, EVELYN WALLMAN, IRENE WATKINS.



Tucson Area Iris Society

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