

TAIS Newsletter

August 2017

Tucson Area Iris Society—established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



Grace Upon Grace
Hummingbird iris Garden,
Prescott
Photo by Sue Clark, 2017

President's Message

Going, going, gone... After the heat, fires, and now the record rain, it's time for our annual rhizome auction to help fund our Region 15. I hope you are having a great summer. I saw some incredible wildflowers, and just the plants of the Rocky Mountain iris, in Colorado. Now I'm looking forward to seeing my TAIS friends again. See you soon at the auction at TBG.

- Kevin Kartchner

"like a welcome summer rain, humor may suddenly cleanse and cool the earth, the air and you." - langston Hughes

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Upcoming Events

Next meeting: August 12, 1:30 to 4:30 - Tucson Botanical Gardens - Region 15 Rhizome Auction and an Ice Cream Social for members



August Birthday Wishes to:

Dian Curran Miriam Diamond
Ben Herman Tonita Dellinger
Glenda McCulley



Iris odoratissima jacquin, found on Pinterest



City Lights



Another Woman

Photos by
Carol Peterson
and **Tony Kutz**



Alabaster Unicorn



Bigger is Better



Fit for Royalty



Avery's Hugs



Insaniac

**How to Grow Iris
in Containers**
using the Kristee West method



a publication of the Tucson Area Iris Society ©2017

Our new brochure will be available
for \$1 at the August meeting



Nice Job

Treasurer's Report by Kristee West

date	debits/cks	deposits	balance	details
4/1/17 #1760	(\$16.00)			2 AIS iris presentations on DVD
Pending total	(\$16.00)			
6/28/17 #1759	(\$250.00)			Stout Gardens – club iris
6/28/17 #1758	(\$250.00)			Schreiner's Iris Gardens – club iris
7/31/17			\$5236.99	Ending Bank Balance
7/31/17			(\$16.00)	Pending
7/31/17			\$5220.00	TAIS Balance

"Fieat, ma'am! it was so dreadful here, that I found there was nothing left for it but to take off my flesh and sit in my bones."

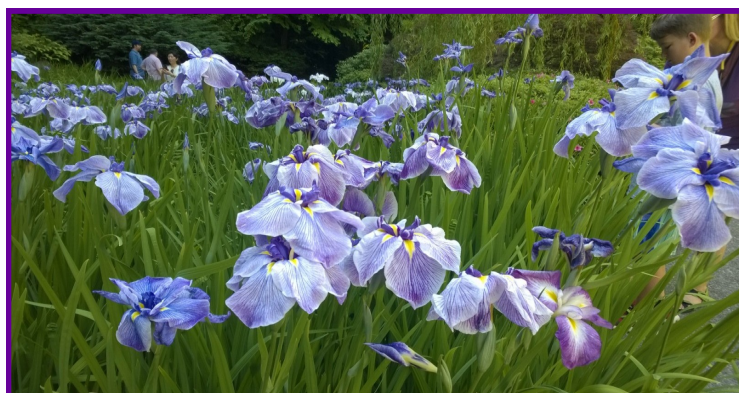
- Sydney Smith, *Lady Holland's Memoir*



Iris Festival in Japan – There was an ancient Japanese festival called the Fifth Day Festival in which leaves of mugwort and sweet flag were hung from house rafters to ward off evil spirits. With the arrival of Westerners in Japan, this festival became more associated with irises than with the less showy sweet flags. In time, it also became a celebration of boys, due to the fact that the leaves of irises (and sweet flags for that matter) resemble swords. When the Japanese adopted the Gregorian calendar, the festival became "Boy's Day," and was celebrated on May 5 each year. It is now know as "Children's Day," and banners of Japanese irises appear throughout the land, although these are greatly outnumbered by carp windsocks in all colors. Yume Japanese Gardens, located near the Tucson Botanical Gardens, holds an annual Children's Day event. Read more at <https://www.yumegardens.org/childrens-day-festival-3/>. - SC



Left, right: Japanese irises in the Portland Japanese Garden. Photos by Jane Lemon, June 2017.



Join us to celebrate
CHILDREN'S DAY FESTIVAL
 MAY 5TH, 2013
 Traditional celebration featuring Yukata for youngsters, gold fish netting, origami, toys, Taiko drumming, and much more!
 AT
YUME JAPANESE GARDENS
 2130 N. ALVERNON WAY, TUCSON, ARIZONA
 520-445-2957
 TUCSONJAPANESEGARDENS.ORG



Summertime Care and Watering of Irises in the Desert

Several of my irises kneeled over and died this summer. Although I did not think that I watered them too much, they continued to succumb. I used a moisture meter to be sure that I was not overwatering. I asked for help everywhere. Someone that said that irises can never be watered if the temperature is above 85°. That sure didn't seem logical. Another person said that someone had told them not to water irises at all in the summer. That seemed rather dicey, unless there were regular summer rains. And it certainly did not seem like the thing to do to potted irises. Some of my friends who grow irises were having issues with watering and others whose irises were watered with driplines said that their plants were fine. Darol from the Sun Country Iris Society in Phoenix responded to the inquiry that I put in to their website. And Ardi Kary of Kary Iris Gardens in Scottsdale answered my email plea. Watering from above, such as I was doing with my sprinkling can, causes the base of the leaf fan to essentially "cook" as the water trapped there heats up in the sun. The rhizome will be damaged, causing it to rot and die. I noticed that the leaf fans could go from looking healthy in the early morning when I watered, to becoming semi-transparent and falling over by the afternoon. *See pictures 1 and 2, below.* At temperatures of about 85° and higher, irises should be lightly watered at their base about once a week, being careful not to saturate the soil. Watering in the evening or at night is best because it is cooler and the sun is not so intense. Drip emitters and dripline soaker hoses are good choices. Normal summer die-off of some leaves is to be expected and is related to the plants' dormancy period. Leaves turn brown at the tips and can eventually brown all the way down. *See picture 3, below,* which also shows some leaves with heat stress from the block wall. Avoid trimming the browned parts from the leaves, as they provide some shade. If they are trimmed, the leaves will just brown again from the top edge. It is fine to remove any leaves that are brown all the way down and have fallen over. Potted irises should be relocated into full shade from May through September, and should be watered as described above. Do not fertilize during the summer. This is a good time to year to decide on a spot for new irises. An ideal iris bed receives shade on summer afternoons. The place that we choose in September will not have the same amount of sun as it does now in the middle of summer. Good luck to you all! And thank you and three cheers to Darol and Ardi! - SC



Photos 1 and 2: Leaves are dying, probably due to the fact that they were watered from overhead, which allows some water to be trapped between leaves at the base of the fan. This water heats up and essentially cooks the leaves. Soft rot moves in quickly and the rhizome will most likely die. Read more about soft rot in two places on p. 6.

Photos by Sue Clark, 2017



Photo 3: Irises showing typical summer stress with browning on the tips of the leaves, which occasionally brown all the way down. Their heat stress is exacerbated by proximity to the block wall, which likely causes the yellowing. Thanks to Madeleine for suggesting the dripline soaker hoses!

TAIS iris grower's interview #6

Carol Peterson travels to our TAIS meetings from her home in Casa Grande. She has been growing irises since she was a child. Her eight-year-old self and a cousin found an iris in a dump, which they took home and planted. A serious attraction was born that day! From an ad that she saw in *Better Homes & Gardens* magazine, Carol ordered five irises for \$9 from Cooley's Gardens in Oregon (which closed in 2011). She has been growing the flowers with intention for about six years. She searched for a club online and joined TAIS about two years ago. Carol's irises, all 65-80 of them, grow in pots. She mentioned that last Summer's heat took quite a toll on her garden, both irises and other plants.

Her soil of choice is Miracle-Gro Moisture Control. When planting, she adds Osmocote (the regular yellow-orange type) to the lower portion of the pot. She places a single variety in each pot. Starting in mid-February, the irises get a dose of Miracle-Gro Bloom Booster once each week. Reblooming varieties are dosed for about six months, and the others for about two months. Carol's irises have not had many issues with pests, except for the first year when they were attacked by white flies from the adjacent cotton fields. Carol's pots are all on a drip system. In the summer, they are watered more than in the cooler seasons. They receive water twice a day for 15 minutes, which Carol thinks may be a bit too much. Carol divides her irises whenever they look crowded, rather than on any particular schedule.

Her favorite? Tall bearded irises, especially rebloomers. Features she loves include the sparkle and velvety look of the petals, which show up well in the many photos she takes. Some particular favorites from the 1990's include *City Lights* (she has six pots of it!) and *Again and Again*, a rebloomer. Both of these grow and flower well for her. Carol still buys irises. In fact, this Fall she will consider purchasing about four unique varieties, probably

from Iris4U. She bought some from Schreiner's last Fall. When I asked if she discards varieties that do not perform well, Carol replied that that this is not an issue for her. [I *really hope* that I am able to say this same thing one day...]. Some plants have taken two years to bloom, but she will give them the time. Carol reports that her iris mishaps have all been with watering - overwatering, and the fact that last Summer, she noticed that in her containers, the top layer of soil was dry and the bottom portion was soaked.

Carol loves to spend time in her garden, where she calls each iris by name as she works near them or speaks of them, while listening to the tinkling water of her fountain. She has started using the Kristee West method of growing irises in containers and says "Wow" about the results.

Her best advice: Be sure that rhizomes are about an inch below the soil surface to protect them from the Summer sun. And enjoy the irises in all stages because they will reward you!

Editor's Message - In the spirit of sharing, learning, and building community, I have begun interviewing members of our group about their iris gardens. These interviews will be featured in the newsletter in the coming months. Please contact me at taisnewsletter@yahoo.com if you wish to be interviewed. I will e-mail you a list of questions. You can call me on the phone, I will take notes, and then write an article. - SC



Role Model has the biggest flowers in Carol's garden.

TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2017

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 August:

Keep area free of leaves, weeds and pests.

Think about what colors of irises you plan to buy at our members-only auction, as well as our sale!

We will have rhizomes from Stout Gardens and Schreiner's Gardens at our September sale. See their introductions at <https://www.stoutgardens.com/collections/> and <https://www.schreinersgardens.com/>.



Tip Exchange

Avoid soft rot or root rot with the following horticultural practices:

1. **Good drainage - consider raised beds**
2. **Sunny location**
3. **Adequate spacing between plants to avoid overcrowding**
4. **Rhizomes planted fairly close to surface**
5. **Never compost any iris parts**
6. **Avoid fresh manure (good advice in any situation, it would seem!) - SC**

Iris Limerick:

There once was an iris fairy

Who lived a life so merry!

She pollinated her irises

**With small strips of papyruses,
And the help of a yellow canary.**

- Sue Clark

Did You Know?

Iris soft rot or root rot is caused by the bacterium *Erwinia carotovora*. The initial symptom is yellowing at the middle of the leaf fans. The center turns brown and the fan collapses. At this point, the rhizome will smell terrible. If the whole rhizome is mushy, it must be thrown away. If only a portion of it is affected, cut off or scoop out all diseased parts using sterilized tools. Resterilize after use. Allow rhizome to dry for a day or two. Treat the wound with chlorine cleanser. Alternatively, rhizomes may be treated in-situ with Dial anti-bacterial soap containing triclosan. - SC

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

In this month's chapter in the history of the iris, we travel to London, where John Salter, a cheesemonger, took up the hobby of growing flowers at age 30. He became a charter member of the Metropolitan Society of Florists and Amateurs in 1832. Mr. Salter won gold medals for his dahlias in at least two flower shows. After becoming obsessed with chrysanthemums, which were imported from south China, he bought property in Versailles and started a nursery at age 40. Both land and glass were cheaper in France than in London, and there were many English citizens living in Paris and its surroundings following the exile of Napoleon. Chrysanthemums were popular in France and the climate there was perfect for growing them. Salter offered chrysanthemums (including the recently imported Pompon variety), dahlias, pelargoniums (zonal geraniums), and irises. His English catalog of 1845 offered 76 varieties of irises, including many of Jean-Nicolas Lémon's introductions, making Mr. Salter the first nurseryman to offer such a selection of iris cultivars to British gardeners. He offered 117 irises in his 1848 catalog, including 14 new varieties that he had bred. This was the first instance of a British nurseryman offering irises that he himself had hybridized. The same year, due to growing unrest in France, Salter moved back to London and opened a new business called the Versailles Nursery. It became one of London's most-renowned nurseries, partly due to Salter's elaborate greenhouse displays. He is the suspected author of several unsigned articles in the *Gardener's Chronicle* about improvements in irises and the advantages of using them in the garden. Although he introduced scores of new iris varieties, most are now lost. Survivors include *Queen of May*, *Mexicana*, and *Gypsy Queen*. *Queen of May* "enjoyed celebrity status in gardens for almost 70 years." Gertrude Jekyll was especially fond of it and used it extensively. Charles Darwin consulted with and cited Salter in his books. Three cheers for Mr. Salter, who followed his dream at age 40 and spent the next 30 years doing what he loved!!! - SC

Source: *Classic Irises and the Men and Women Who Created Them* by Clarence E. Mahan

