

TAIS Newsletter

May 2017

Tucson Area Iris Society—established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



Wine Time (with bumblebee),
Tucson Botanical Gardens
photo by Sue Clark, 2017

President's Message

As my iris patch winds down, I think back on our show. It was interesting to me what my friends and visitors prefer in an iris versus what me, an iris guy, likes (and "knows" is good). I received a number of compliments about the show. They ranged from "I had no idea there were so many colors" to "You actually grew these in Tucson?" But best of all were our many volunteers. Thanks everybody for your many hours of service that made it all happen.

- Kevin Kartchner

*"Sweet May hath come to love us, Flowers, trees,
their blossoms don; And through the blue heavens above us
The very clouds move on."
- Heinrich Heine, Book of Songs*

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Upcoming Events

Next meeting: May 13, 1-4 PM Wilmot Library's small room. AIS videos - Color Patterns in Iris, It's Show Time, and Storybook Garden. This will be the last meeting before August. NOTE: If you are growing any test irises for the club, please bring photos of their blooms and a report on how the plants are doing.

May Birthday Wishes to:

Deborah Schneider

Kevin Kartchner

Fred Thorpe

Margie Valenzuela

and Happy Mother's Day to all the moms!



<http://bumblebutton.blogspot.com/search/label/Iris>

April Iris Show

The Tucson Area Iris Society held its annual show on April 8 at the Kirk-Bear Canyon Library. Over one hundred people dropped by

to marvel at our blooms. Members contributed 31 stems of irises from their gardens. Guests voted for their three favorites, and it looked like

most of them struggled to narrow their choices. Many commented that they wanted to vote for them all!

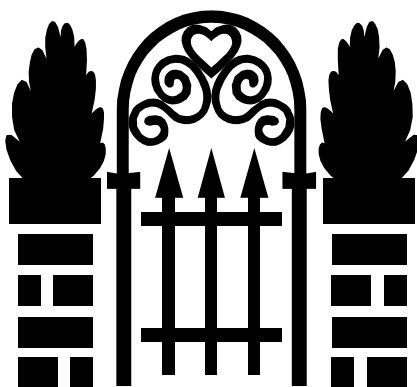
A warm winter seemed to interfere with members' plants blooming at just the right time for the show. Carol reported that many of her irises had bloomed earlier than usual, leaving her with none to bring. Kevin, Kristee, Madeleine, Diane, Gary, and Melania and Tony brought several stems each. I brought my only one, which I had refrigerated from Wednesday until Friday. It opened just in time for the show. Angela was our official greeter and ballot distributor, and Diane graciously provided donuts and lunch! Janet, Carol, Shirley, and Kathleen worked shifts through-

out the show and members who had brought irises stayed for all or most of the day. Encouraged by Angela and others, numerous visitors

bought our pamphlets, "Iris Culture in Tucson" and our new one, "Growing Iris in Containers" for \$1 each. A noteworthy guest was hybridizer and iris judge Charles

Rumbaugh of Indianapolis, who shared his expertise with some of our members.

The viewers choices? The top two irises were Kevin's - **Double Time** and **Scoonchee**. Madeleine's **Mesmerizer** was third, followed closely by Kristee's **Celtic Dancer**. See photos on the next page- SC



We ♥ Irises

We had 101 visitors
at our Show!



We're on the web!
Tucsoniris.org

Iris4U - "Growing and Hybridizing Tall Bearded Iris for Beauty, Performance and your Pleasure"

Bob Van Liere began growing and selling irises in 1994 in his garden in Denver, Colorado, a garden which has grown to almost three acres. When one of his landscaping customers asked about a pink iris, "Iris Bob" starting hybridizing irises in 1998 and introduced his first varieties in 2005. Some things that Bob breeds for are prolific and lasting blooms. He expects flowers to last three to four days in the sun and a stem to last two weeks or more, due to a high bud count. Out of a field of about 4,000 seedlings, Bob might select 250-300 to be dug up after their third year. These are replanted, and the following year they will be narrowed down again until about 10-20 standouts are selected. So far, Bob has introduced over 60 varieties! The one shown below, award-winner Global Crossing, has a long bloom time, exceptional foliage, and myriad flowers. You may order from Bob's website at <http://www.iris4u.com/>.



<https://theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com/2015/08/the-tall-bearded-irises-of-bob-van-liere.html>

April 8th TAIS Show - "Putting our Best Blooms Forward"



L to R: Alpine Castle, Artistic Web, Autumn Explosion, Barbara My Love, Big Duke, Braggin' Rights, Coral Point



#1. Double Time



**Photos by
Tony Kutz**



#2. Scoonchee

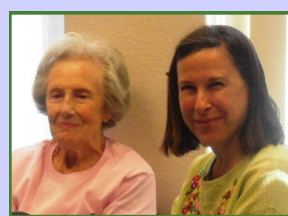
L to R (below): Double Wedding, Echo Location, Elegant Girl, Exotic Notions, Faux Pas, Finish Line, Lullaby of Spring



L to R: Mesmerizer (it is actually white), Midnight Tocatta, Notta Lemon, October Sky, Purple Passion, Reverse, Summit Gold



#3. Mesmerizer



#4. Celtic Dancer



L to R: Thornbird, Treasure Trader, Triple Dip, Violet Music, Noid, Noid

Treasurer's Report for April - submitted by Kristee West, Treasurer

Date		Debits/Checks	Deposits	Balance	Details
	Pending Uncashed Checks Total	\$0.00			
1-Apr	Beginning Bank Balance			\$5,884.13	
11-Apr	Debit Card - AZ Corp Commission	\$10.00		\$5,874.13	501 (C) 3 registration
12-Apr	Quick Pay - Sue Clark	\$7.64		\$5,866.49	printing - postage
12-Apr	Debit Card - USPS	\$9.80		\$5,856.69	stamps
17-Apr	Quick Pay - Melania Kutz	\$7.89		\$5,848.80	show publicity
18-Apr	Dues - Patricia Murray		\$15.00	\$5,863.80	
18-Apr	Brochure Sales		\$37.00	\$5,900.80	
20-Apr	1753 - Action Printers	\$46.48		\$5,854.32	Brochure Printing
24-Apr	1754 - Jill Bonino	\$75.00		\$5,779.32	France iris Presentation
25-Apr	Check Order	\$23.95		\$5,755.37	
30-Apr	Bank Balance			\$5,755.37	
	Pending Uncashed Checks			\$0.00	
30-Apr	TAIS Balance			\$5,755.37	

Companion Plants for Iris

I have recently been considering planting things amongst my irises. Rather than growing them in isolated beds. Ben Futa, director of the Allen Centennial Garden at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, suggests boldly combining iris plants with grasses to boost the visual appeal of both. The contrast between the structural shape of the iris leaves and the delicate and feathery grasses extends the season of interest beyond the brief month of iris bloom. Some low-growing ornamental grasses that he uses to emphasize the boldness of iris leaves include purple love grass, *Eragrostis*, and tufted hair grass, *Deschampsia*. Here in the desert, we might choose pink muhly grass, *Muhlenbergia capillaries*. Grasses play with and accentuate the iris foliage due to the difference in texture, and create a composition that is pleasing year round in desert regions, or until the iris leaves freeze in colder climates. Other plants found in the Allen Centennial Garden's Iris Meadow include coneflower (*Echinacea*), allium, salvia, and anemones, to name a few. Read more at <http://awaytogarden.com/multi-season-perennials-allen-centennial-garden-ben-futa/>. I think that the airy silhouettes of Autumn Sage, *Salvia greggii*, and Chocolate Flower, *Berlandiera lyrata*, would work well. Both are available at Harlow's. Stock, *Matthiola incana*, would also have the desired effect. Our president, Kevin Kartchner, grows Oriental poppies with his irises, albeit serendipitously. Former newsletter editor Roger Osgood sows marigolds amongst his young irises. One of Melania's friends has yellow columbines planted with hers. At the Tucson Botanical Garden, I noticed desert bluebells, *Phacelia campanularia*, growing between the irises. Desert bluebells grow well from seeds scattered in the Fall. Seed packets are available at the Tucson Botanical Garden or Native Seed Search. **Continued on p. 5.**



Left- Pink muhly grass

- Source: by Stickpen - Own work, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8031353>

Center - Autumn Sage,

- Source: Lee Page, https://www.wildflower.org/gallery/result.php?id_image=31925

Right - Oriental poppy

- Source: Sue Clark, photo taken in her own garden.



TAIS iris grower's interview #3

In our continuing series of interviews, we have the second in a row from someone who is fairly new to growing irises. Our secretary, Janet Gardener, lives in Casa Grande, Arizona, which is about 70 miles north of Tucson. She has been growing irises for about a year and a half. Janet's quilting friend, Carol Peterson, mentioned our iris society to her, and they started coming to the meetings together. Janet became very interested in irises at that time. About ten years ago, she moved to Arizona from Illinois, where she had grown vegetables, lilacs, and daylilies, but not irises.

Janet's irises are currently growing in containers, some of which are self-watering. She also has irises in pots of terra cotta, ceramic, and plastic. When she planted the rhizomes, she used Miracle-Gro potting soil over a layer of rocks. She has not amended the soil yet, since the plantings are fairly recent. Janet added Osmocote fertilizer in with the rhizomes when she planted them. In the Spring, she applies Bloom Booster (9-56-9) once a week. So far, no pests have been noted. Janet waters her irises by hand and is considering buying a moisture meter after Kristee's talk.

Last year, a friend who was moving away gave Janet two pots of irises. One of those needed dividing when she got it, and by now, both of them do. Janet will divide them this Fall.

Her favorite type? Janet feels too new to growing irises have a favorite one. Like me, she is just hoping for some blooms! She does not have any heirloom irises. Janet still buys irises, and admits to buying a few more than planned at our Fall rhizome sale. She now has eight pots, and has moved them around in her yard to find a spot that they like best. If one variety does not perform well, she'll discard it and replace it with another one. Janet has one iris in each pot, and does not grow any other plants in the pots with them.

Her best tip to offer others? **Keep learning! And try moving containers around.**

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

Companion Plants for Iris continued from previous page

Our past president, Kristee West, grows onions and garlic by her irises to repel aphids.

Bob Van Liere offers a list of suggested companion plants for irises on his website, <http://www.iris4u.com/iris-guide/iris-companion-plants/>. He emphasizes that personal preference is more important than any type of rules. From the list that he suggests, some that might grow well here in the desert include roses, pansies, dianthus, lupines, and euphorbia (succulents, many of which are from southern Africa, which include spurge, Firesticks, and the so-called "pencil cactus." The latter two would be too tall to put between irises, but perhaps behind them).

On the Schriener's Gardens blog, Ray Schreiner shares some tips from his plantings in the company's display gardens, where he likes to have color year round. He recommends grouping plants with similar light and water requirements and choosing drought-tolerant perennials which require full sun, some of which bloom with the irises and some which bloom later to extend the season. Some of Ray's suggestions that could grow in Tucson include alliums, larkspurs, Icelandic and Oriental poppies, lupines, lavender, and *Gaillardia* (Blanket Flower). Besides aesthetics, reasons for companion plantings include nutrient production, controlling pests, and attracting pollinators. Read more at <https://schreinersirisdgarden.wordpress.com/2012/08/13/i-deal-companions-for-your-bearded-iris-beds/>.

When adding companion plants to your iris beds, be sure the irises still get the sunshine they need. **What do you grow with your irises? Please send responses to taisnewsletter@yahoo.com.** - SC



Stock,
Desert
Bluebell,
and
Larkspur,
S. Clark'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 May:

Apply Super Bloom (12-55-6) or a similar fertilizer (at least 0-45-0) approximately two and four weeks after bloom time to give the plants a boost for the growing season.

Remove iris stems after they finish blooming. Using scissors, cut at an angle close to the ground. Remove dead leaves the same way.

Keep area free of leaves, weeds and pests.



Tip Exchange

Dark-colored iris flowers absorb more heat and tend to crisp along their edges after just one day. Plant them so that they get some afternoon shade. - KK

A good soaking of soapy water delivered via a sprinkling can before bloom time will help keep aphids away from irises. - MG

Plant irises with fans facing east. - SA

Join an iris society to learn from like-minded people, thus avoiding having to learn by trial and error! - SA

Iris Limerick:

There once was a king named Midas
Who thought he'd like to grow iris.
Just yellow and golden,
"I'll hug 'em and hold 'em,
And write all their names on papyrus!"
- Sue Clark



Did You Know?

The word rhizome is from the Greek word *rhizoma*, meaning "a mass of roots." Rhizomes grow *diageotropically*, or perpendicular to the force of gravity. Source - www.wikipedia.org.

"You are as welcome as the flowers
in May." - Charles Macklin

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Henri-Antoine Jacques is credited as the father of the iris craze in France. Jacques was born in 1782 near Paris. In 1811, Napoleon appointed him as the head gardener of the royal estate at Raincy. This country manor, situated on a beautiful park which rivaled the gardens of Versailles, contained several water features, a zoo, and many deer. Jacques was granted the position of head gardener for Louis-Philippe, the Duc d'Orleans, who was Louis XVIII's cousin. Now Jacques was in charge of gardens at Neuilly-Villiers, the Duc's 500-acre estate, and well as those at Raincy and Mousseaux. Jacques grew iris from seeds prior to 1830 and was authorized to dispose of his excess stock to nurserymen and gardeners. When Louis-Philippe became the king of France in 1830, Jacques found himself the king's head gardener. Unlike other French kings, Louis-Philippe enjoyed mingling with his people and entertaining them at his estate. Here they had a chance to see the extensive collection of irises that Jacques had amassed for the king. "People have always emulated the behavior and adopted the tastes of their monarch. This is why the iris garden at Neuilly was the spark that fired the explosive interest in garden irises first in France and then throughout Europe in the third and fourth decades of the 19th century," according to Mahan. Jacques' collection of irises was often mentioned in the horticultural press, so was well-known to nurserymen, florists, and both professional and amateur gardeners. He also famous for breeding and distributing roses (such as the *Rosier de l'Île de Bourbon*) and for creating the first hybrid mock orange. Jacques was a founding member of the *Societe Horticole de Paris*, now the *Societe Nationale d'Horticulture de Paris*. When King Louis-Philippe fled to England during the Revolution of 1848, Jacques and his nephew, Victor Verdier, were able to rescue many of the irises, roses, and peonies from Neuilly before mobs ransacked the chateau and burned it to the ground. Verdier likely sold the plants at his nursery in Paris. During the last two decades of his life, Jacques co-wrote volumes 1-3 of the classic *Manuel General des Plantes*. - SC

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