

# TAIS Newsletter

September 2017

Tucson Area Iris Society—established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



*Drama Queen*

Hummingbird Iris Gardens,  
Prescott

Photo by Sue Clark, 2017

## President's Message

It's TAIS' rhizome sale on September 23 so that means we, and hopefully most of our iris, have survived another Tucson summer. I'm looking forward to planting next spring's flower surprises in the cooler weather. See you at the sale.

- Kevin Kartchner

**"For summer there, bear in mind, is a loitering gossip, that only begins to talk of leaving when September rises to go."**

- **George Washington Cable, in The Grandissimes, a story of Creole Life**

## Upcoming TAIS Events

**Rhizome dig - Friday, September 15, 9 AM, TBG - bring digger, Sharpie, scissors, and yourself! The rhizomes will be sold at the Sale.**

**Set up for Rhizome Sale - Friday, September 22, 5-6 PM AND Saturday, September 23, 8-9 AM, Harlow Gardens. Members with rhizomes to donate to the sale can drop them off at these times.**

**Rhizome Sale - September 23, 9 AM to 1 PM at Harlow Gardens nursery, 5620 E. Pima Street. Members-only discount sale 8-9 AM**

**October 14th meeting - 1-4 PM, Murphy-Wilmot Library, 530 N. Wilmot Road - Andy Bessey speaking on companion planting.**

**September Birthday Wishes to:**

**Roger Osgood**



*Iris jaunatre, Vol. 5, Les Liliacees, PJ Redoute, 1809*

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# August Meeting Minutes

**TAIS Board Meeting – 12 Aug 2017**

Meeting began at 2:50. We started with the annual AIS Region 15 rhizome fundraiser. During this silent auction, only a few rhizomes received no bids and they now belong to TAIS.

Kathy will pot them. Kevin auctioned the irises, Janet totaled everyone's share, and Madeleine collected the money. Proceeds totaled \$330.

Our Fall Rhizome sale will be on Sept 23 at Harlow Gardens nursery. Kathy asked for volunteers to sign



up to help with the following: 1. Dig middle bed at TBG on Friday, Sept 15 at 9 AM. Bring digger, Sharpie, and scissors. 2. Set up for sale at Harlow's on Friday Sept 22 at 5 PM. Anyone wishing to donate rhizomes for the club to sell can drop them off between 5 and 6 PM or the following morning between 8 and 9 AM. Iris Bucks will be received in exchange. 3. Rhizome sale on Sept 23 – there will be three shifts of workers, with additional set-up between 8 and 9 AM. It was also decided that members can shop from 8 to 9 AM and receive a discount. We have lots of paper bags left over from last year. Noids are welcome for the sale. We will create grab bags of them and of smaller rhizomes. Melania has placed ads about the sale in various newspapers. She created a poster about it and will email it to Sue to put into the newsletter. Please send the poster to anyone who might be interested and post it where possible. Melania mentioned that we need copies of the following for the sale: 1. How to Grow Irises in Containers booklet. 2. TAIS Iris Culture booklet.

3. "Iris Bucks" which do double-duty as TAIS business cards.

Sue brought in a photo of an Iris Sale banner that she noticed in the Irisarian newsletter some months back. She priced vinyl banners at Ameri-

Copy in Mesa, AZ – \$264 + tax for 4X8' with four grommets. \$152 + tax for 3X6' with four grommets. And \$60/hour for design. Sam mentioned a website Banners on the Cheap – 3X8' vinyl would be \$31.70 - \$1.25/ sq ft versus

\$8 at AmeriCopy). Sue was volunteered to design the banner, and then the board will decide whether to purchase it. It might say "Iris Sale" and "Sale" could be covered with "Show" so we could use it for both events.

There were 15 members present.

Meeting adjourned at 3:10.

Minutes by Sue Clark, substitute secretary, for Janet Gardner, secretary who, along with Madeleine, was substituting as treasurer.

**See you at the Rhizome Sale on September 23! Members only 8-9 AM!!!**

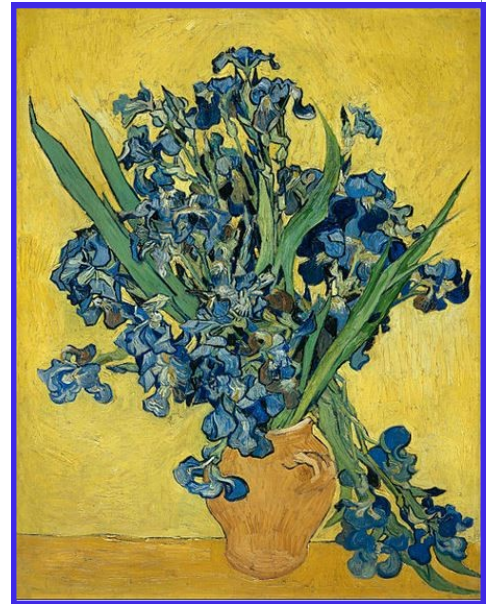


**We're on the web!**  
**[Tucsoniris.org](http://Tucsoniris.org)**

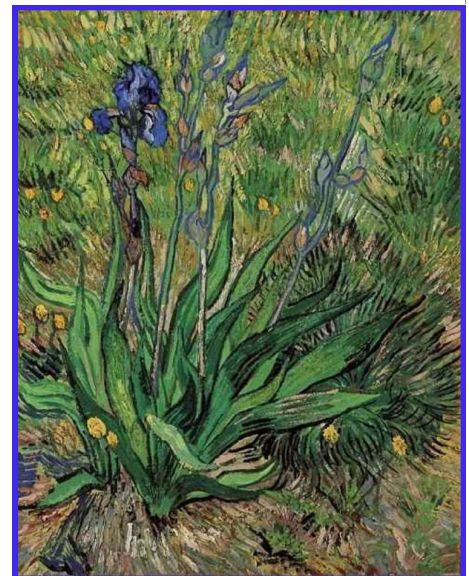
## Vincent Van Gogh's iris paintings



**Irises, 1889, oil on canvas, 28X36", Getty Center, Los Angeles**



**Still Life with Irises, 1890, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam**



**The Iris, 1889, Oil on paper on canvas, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa**

First two images from Wikimedia, third from [http://www.vangoghgallery.com/catalog/Painting/243/Iris\\_The.html](http://www.vangoghgallery.com/catalog/Painting/243/Iris_The.html)

## TAIS August Meeting - Region 15 Auction & Ice Cream Social



Photos by  
Tony Kutz



**Shepard irises sought:** If you have any irises hybridized by Don Shepard of Shepard's Iris Garden in Phoenix, please contact Dennis Luebkin of the Prescott Area Iris Society at 623-980-6627 or [dluebkin@q.com](mailto:dluebkin@q.com). PAIS is honoring Don by installing a bed of his irises in the Sculpture Garden at Yavapai College in Prescott. A complete list of Don's varieties can be found at <http://wiki.irises.org/Main/Bio/HybridizerShepardDL>.



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

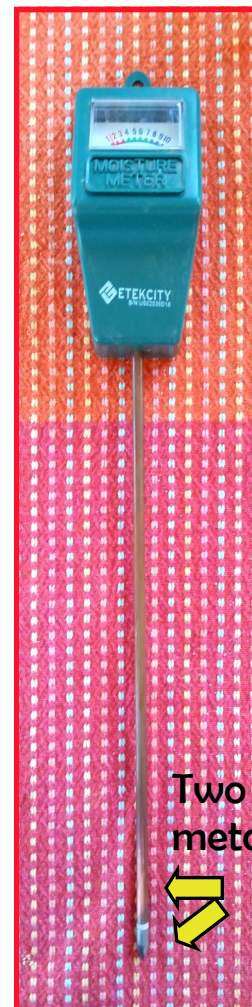
Date		Debits/Checks	Deposits	Balance	Details
<b>Pending/Uncashed Checks Total</b>		\$0.00			
9-Aug	Cash for Auction & Sale	\$100.00			
14-Aug	Deposit		\$330.00		
17-Aug	Quick Pay - Melania Kutz	\$24.00			ice cream
31-Aug	ALS - ck# 1760	\$16.00			2 iris presentations
31-Aug	<b>Bank Balance</b>			\$5,426.99	
	Pending/Uncashed Checks			\$0.00	
31-Aug	<b>TAIS Balance</b>			\$5,426.99	
31-Aug	Cash on hand			\$100.00	
	<b>Total</b>			\$5,526.99	

**"By all these lovely tokens, September days are here. With summer's best of weather, And autumn's best of cheer." - Author Unknown**

### Moisture meters

One way to see if a plant needs watering is to use a moisture meter. These simple devices are inexpensive: Amazon sells them for about \$10. They consist of a probe made of two types of metal that extends about 7 1/2" below a needle dial in a plastic case. The dial ranges from Dry (red) to Moist (green) to Wet (blue). I asked my son the scientist how they work, and this is what he said: "The kind that doesn't require a battery works the same as a battery. Any two different metals will hold their electrons with different strengths. If they're in contact with an electrolyte (like impure water), electrons go from the metal with a weaker hold on its electrons to the metal with a stronger attraction. So the more water is in the soil, the better the battery works, which moves the dial." He said that some things that can cause a false reading are if the probe touches the side or bottom of a pot or even a rock. I think that the material the pot is made out of also affects the readings, because I have some containers whose soil read "Wet" for weeks, even though they were receiving no water. I lost a couple of rhizomes because of that. I need to do some experiments to figure it out. One of them had a plastic pot inside of a ceramic pot. Any ideas?

Some Moisture Meter tips from the Amazon listing: Insert the probe to its full length. Wipe clean after each use. Clean probe with steel wool or fine sandpaper when it is no longer shiny. The probe can be damaged easily, so don't touch hard objects with it. Do not leave it in the soil or put it into water (such as a cup of water. Water in soil is fine). Moisture meters can be used for readings in the ground, as well as for soil in containers. - SC with help from Shane D. Smith



Two metals

Photo by Sue Clark

## TAIS iris grower's interview #7

Shirley Andrews splits her time between Sun City Vistoso, north of Tucson, and West Bloomfield, Michigan. She has been a member of our group since the early 1990's. She became interested in purposefully growing irises in the 1970's when she first came across some new ruffled varieties. Shirley was living in Detroit at the time, and joined an iris society there to learn more. She had grown irises for many years before that, and mentioned that they were much more difficult to acquire than they are nowadays. She recalls that her mother always had huge bouquets of flowers in their house in Spring and Summer. Spring meant irises and lilacs.

In her Arizona garden, Shirley amends her soil with potting soil and/or peat moss. She adds something to it annually, including worms from Michigan. Although she does not add any fertilizer when planting her rhizomes, Shirley begins dosing her irises with Super-Bloom (or equivalent) on Valentines' Day and continues to do so every two weeks throughout the bloom season. She recommends planting irises with the fans facing east to start the day with the morning sun.

Pests have not been an issue for Shirley, but she mentioned that last Summer something ruined about half of the irises in her Arizona garden. There were many holes and the rhizomes were just gone! That mystery is still unsolved. Shirley's irises are watered via a drip line every morning for 20 minutes year round. From May to September, this is supplemented by 15 minutes of watering every evening. Division is done as needed, usually every three to five years.

Her favorites? Tall bearded irises! After her Arizona irises bloom in April, Shirley returns to a brilliant display of blossoms on 150 irises in her garden in Michigan! She collects rebloomers, especially those with large numbers of flowers per stem. Ruffled blue and purple irises are special favorites. Shirley also grows roses, which look lovely with the irises.

One thing that she does not grow is heirloom irises, as she does not like the look of them.

Shirley still buys irises whenever she sees ones that appeal to her. Back when irises were harder to find, she bought from Cooley's, Schreiner's, and a few local nurseries. Varieties that do not perform well are discarded, but only if they grow poorly for about three to four years.

Shirley's irises grow in mixed beds and in isolated beds. She notes that they do better in isolated beds, and best on the north side of her house in front of bougainvilleas. She told me that much of what she knows about irises was learned by trial and error over the last many years.

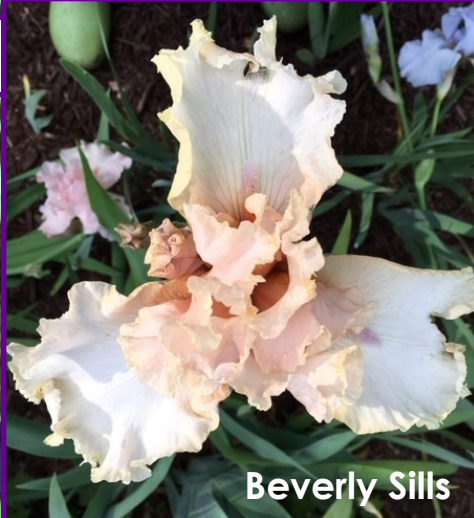
**Her best tip? "Join the American Iris Society for interesting and helpful advice on how to care for irises in your area."**

**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](mailto: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

**Please volunteer - this is the last interview in my stockpile.**



**Some of Shirley's irises in her Michigan garden**



**Photos from Shirley Andrew's gardens in Michigan this May.** Several things made it a spectacular bloom year - perfect temperature, perfect amount of rainfall, and perfect amount of sunlight following the removal of a honey locust tree! Some of the irises had not bloomed in years! All photos by Shirley.

## 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 September:

Plant new rhizomes starting late this month. Choose a spot that will have afternoon shade during the summer. Dig a hole with enough depth so that the top of the rhizome will be level with the surface of the ground. Leave a mound of soil in the center of the hole and fan the roots out over it. Any dried roots should be left attached, as they will help stabilize the rhizome. Drip lines appear to be the best way to water irises here in the desert. Emitters with adjustable flow will give you the most control, e.g., turning them off after a rainstorm. I use Raindrip Adjustable Full Circle Stream Bubblers.

## Tip Exchange

-  If drainage is an issue, try planting irises in a raised bed and/or add 1/3 builder's sand.
-  Keep rhizomes cool and dry until planting in late September. Never refrigerate them.
-  Disinfect new rhizomes in a solution of 10% bleach: 2 c water (36 T) and 4 T bleach. Dip for about 1 minute, rinse thoroughly, & let them dry.
-  Rhizomes can develop fresh roots if their bottom surface rests in water for 48 hrs pre-planting.
-  After planting, water deeply. Keep soil damp (but not wet) until new growth appears. Water less often after plant becomes established, more during bloom time, and then less until Fall.
-  Morning sun is preferable for irises.

## Iris Limerick:

There once was a fine handsome fellow  
Who grew irises in all shades of yellow.  
Some mellow, some bold,  
Some buttery, some gold.  
And he played them all songs on his cello.

- Sue Clark



## Did You Know?

In botany, a “sport” is another way of saying a mutation. - Wikipedia

*“Having been consumed by my creation of the garden, I continue the story with my successor, the gardener. Between us, with help from Nature, we nurture the future.”- Vitruvius*

## A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

In tracing the history of two irises whose names got mixed up, we can gather a sense of several important individuals in the history of irises. Let's look at the people first. Jean-Nicolas Lémon likely bred both varieties. Jean Witt, a botanist, attempted to untangle the two irises, *San Souci* and *Honoribile*, which she published as an article in 1971. A New York nurseryman, A. B. Katkamier, introduced two vegetative mutations of *Honoribile* (or was it *San Souci*?): *Kaleidoscope* in 1929 and *Joseph's Coat-Katkamier* in 1930. These two mutations continue to be popular today, as each flower in the clump looks a bit different from every other one. *Kaleidoscope* has yellow standards and falls that are yellow splashed with irregular red-violet markings. *Joseph's Coat-Katkamier* has standards splashed in ivory and yellow, and falls with reddish-brown and raspberry markings. A top authority on irises, Seraphin Mottet, published an article about a system for classifying irises based on color, “Classification des Varietes d'Iris des Jardins,” in 1923. His description of *San Souci* as having dark yellow standards and distinctly veined falls and of *Honoribile* as having dark yellow standards and solid-colored falls, is considered accurate. These were, though, preceded by similar descriptions in a book from 1909, [Manual on the Iris](#). This booklet, which sold for 25¢, was written by the Reverend C. S. Harrison and was widely read. One of America's pioneers in iris growing and selling, Mrs. Jeanett Dean of Moneta, California, prepared an annotated list of iris cultivars for the 1916 edition of the [Manual on the Iris](#). Her descriptions of the two irises in question agree with Mottet and Harrison. The Sass brothers of Nebraska bred many award-winning irises from a tetrapod blue seedling that Jacob Sass grew from a seed of *Honoribile*. Another award-winner, the yellow iris *Virginia Moore*, was derived from *Honoribile* by Marion Shull. Martin Kohankie's 1915 variety, *Sherwin-Wright*, is another mutation from *Honoribile*. Ethel Anson S. Peckham “brought order out of chaos” in the iris world by compiling an “Alphabetical Iris Check List” in 1929 and 1939. - SC

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



**ANNOUNCING**

# **GIGANTIC IRIS RHIZOME SALE**

**Also a limited number of potted iris plants**

**Sponsored by Tucson Area Iris Society**

**WHEN: SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23<sup>rd</sup>**

**WHERE: HARLOW NURSERY, 5620 E. PIMA**

**HOURS: 9am – 1pm**

**CONTACT/MORE INFO:**

**[irisgrowinaz@gmail.com](mailto:irisgrowinaz@gmail.com)**

**OR**

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