

TAIS Newsletter

Our 53rd year

Tucson Area Iris Society—established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Strawberry Freeze'
(Johnson 2012)

Region 15 Spring Trek,
Phoenix, AZ

Photo by Sue Clark, 2018

President's Message

It is with great sadness that I report that Ben Herman passed away in June. Ben was a long time member of TAIS and contributed much to our shows and sales. As a fellow science-oriented person, we often analyzed iris cultivation, but Ben had always grown better iris than I have. I remember several years ago driving to Schreiner's seedling field in Oregon and seeing a familiar face: Ben. Time for more analysis. In addition to flourishing iris, Ben had a variety of plant interests including roses, and grapefruit that I had been enjoying for years. His tomato expertise continues in my garden. For more regarding Ben see: <http://has.arizona.edu/tribute-benjamin-ben-m-herman>.

- Kevin Kartchner

**"I heard a bird sing in the dark of December;
A magical thing and sweet to remember. 'We are
nearer to Spring than we were in September,'
I heard a bird sing in the dark of December."**

- Oliver Herford, *I Heard a Bird*

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Upcoming Events

No meeting this month. Happy Holidays!

January 12 meeting - Greg Starr's presentation "Madagascar: a World-renowned Island of Megadiversity" begins at 1 PM. Doors open at noon. Mr. Starr is the author of Cool Plants for Hot Gardens and Agaves: Living Sculptures for Landscapes and Containers. Invite your gardening friends! Murphy-Wilmot Branch Library, small room, 530 N Wilmot Rd.

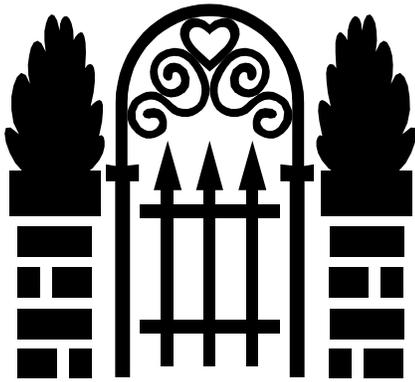
February meeting - Bob Van Liere of Iris4U. All are welcome.

Birthday Wishes to:

Cathy Scire Madeleine Glaser Ann Cotton
Phil Doonan Terry Southard



November Meeting Minutes



We ♥ Irises

Fifteen individuals enjoyed a delicious potluck lunch, as well as a slide show of photos from last month's contest. Kevin announced that our January 12 speaker, Greg Starr, will present 110 slides showing the wide variety of plants and animals in Madagascar. Mr. Starr is the author of Cool Plants for Hot Gardens and Agaves. Doors will open at noon and the presentation will begin at 1 PM. Please invite your gardening friends.

Rather than holding an AIS-sanctioned show in April, we decided to invite judges-in-training from the Phoenix area to our show. Diane suggested that we take a field trip there to see the Sun Country Iris Society's show and learn what is involved. That event is April 13.

Door prizes of recently-introduced rhizomes were won by Bonnie, Diane, and Nancy Hook, our newest member. Bonnie and Diane graciously gave theirs to

Nancy so that she could start an iris garden right away. Well done, ladies!

Kevin brought an orchid to show, because although he had irises blooming last week and will have them blooming next week, none were open now.

Dave took pictures for the newsletter this month, as Tony was under the weather. Bonnie gave everyone a reindeer ornament that she made from a tiny terra cotta pot.

Dues are due at the January meeting. Sue will include a membership application with the newsletters in December and January.

The garden where Kevin's prize-winning photos were taken is the JC Raulston Arboretum near Raleigh, North Carolina, and his unknown iris was 'Concertina.'

Meeting adjourned at 2 PM.

- Sue Clark, secretary

**No meeting in
December. See you
on January 12!**



**We're on the web!
Tucsoniris.org**

Copper Irises



© Schreiner's Iris Gardens



c. Country Delight Iris



From top: 'Cinque Terre' from Schreiner's website, 'Ruffled Copper Sunset,' 'Terre De Feu,' and 'Starburst' from the AIS Iris Wiki.

TAIS November Meeting



Welcome to new member
Nancy Hook!



Photos by
Dave Smith





Treasurer's Report for November

Beginning Balance	\$7033.88
Check 1782 (AIS – auction proceeds)	(\$243.00)
Check 1789 (Angela Powers – cake)	(\$19.99)
Check 1791 (Sue Clark – copy and mail two newsletters)	(\$8.59)
Balance	\$6762.32



Left to right: 'Copper Mountain,' 'Copper Capers,' 'Witching,' 'Rustler,' and 'Bronzette Star,' all from the AIS Iris Wiki.

Copper Irises Shine in the Garden Like a New Penny

Irises are known for color, and after featuring every color of the rainbow, plus brown, black, and white - what now? Metallics! In a month known for all things shiny and sparkly, metallics seemed a good choice. And since we live in the Copper State, copper is our starting point. There is a species of iris, *Iris fulva*, that is referred to as "the copper iris." Discovered along the banks of the Mississippi River near New Orleans, these Louisiana irises have a light fragrance. Hummingbirds and butterflies love them! If you have a pond or wet area in your garden, you might consider buying some *Iris fulva* from [Prairie Moon Nursery](#) for your pollinators.

The oldest hybridized copper iris that I found, 'Copper Luster' (Kirkland 1931), is hardy and does well across the country. It won the Dykes Medal in 1938, and cost 60¢ in 1957. (Don't we wish for rhizomes at that price today?!) Compare this to the cost of 'Bold Copper' (Sass 1950), which sold for \$20 in 1950! This beauty is ruffled, floriferous, and well-branched.

The Schreiner family figures into the copper iris story with several varieties, beginning with Robert Schreiner, whose 'Bronze Bell' (1950) is a vivid copper self that rings true in all aspects - form, substance, stout stems, and high bud count. 'October Ale' (1968) is bright copper and a parent of their 'Copper Mountain' (1978), which won an Award of Merit. This bold copper cultivar blooms in early midseason, so might do well for us in the desert. Their 'Copper Nugget' (1980) is a brilliant and ruffled self, and 'Cinque Terre' (2011) is unusual with its plum standards and coppery falls.

James Gibson hybridized some attractive coppers, including 'Copper Capers' (1970), whose large flowers are ruffled and plentiful, 'Ruffled Copper Sunset' (1988), a reddish-copper with peach in the center of the falls split by a copper stripe, and the Border Bearded 'Chickasaw Sue' (1982), a good grower and Award-of-Merit winner,

Some copper irises that I found especially appealing include 'Terre De Feu' (Cayeux 1997), whose vivid copper is perfectly complemented by a violet "heart" on its falls. It is an early-to-midseason bloomer, so may do well for us here. It is available from [Blue J Iris](#) for \$5, and if anyone orders from them next year, I would like to add one of these to your order! 'Starburst' (Tompkins 1967) is a bright copper self that bears its huge ruffled blooms on well-branched stems. 'Witching' (Blyth 1991) enchants with sky blue standards and coppery falls. This very early to early bloomer and good grower is available from [Blue J Iris](#) for \$5. Keith Keppel's striking 'Rustler' (1987) has dark reddish-copper standards and darker reddish-copper falls rimmed in gold to match its beard. Next month - more metallics! - SC



From top: *Iris fulva* by [peganum](#) on Wikipedia, 'Copper Lustre,' and 'Bronze Bell,' both from the Iris Wiki.

TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2019

Kevin Kartchner – President

Bonnie Else - Vice President

Sue Clark – Secretary

Martin Juarez – Treasurer

Susan Schaefer - Membership Chairperson

Melania Kutz - Programs & Publicity

**Madeleine Glaser - Asst. Program
Chairperson & 2nd Signatory on Account**

Angela Powers - Hospitality & Door Prizes

Diane Tweedy - Birthday Cards & Hospitality

Tony Kutz - Photographer

Sue Clark - Newsletter Editor & Publisher

What to do in the Iris Garden for December:

Keep area free of leaves, weeds and pests.

This is a good time to create or update the map of your iris beds or containers, just in case labels fade or go missing.

No need to fertilize again till February! You could buy some Scott's **Super Bloom** or Ferti-lome **Blooming & Rooting** to get ready.



Tip Exchange

“Begin by selecting a sunny site with good air circulation [and afternoon shade in summer]...If good drainage is not natural to the site, plan to make a raised bed.”

“Single rhizomes can be planted as close as 18” apart, but within two years, they will be very crowded. Most experienced iris hobbyists recommend at least 4 sq. ft. (2 ft. by 2 ft.) per rhizome, which will allow three to four years of growth before substantial clumps will form and the irises will be ready for division and replanting.”

- William Shearer, The Gardener's Iris Book, p. 39

Iris Limerick:

There once was a little gray mouse
Who lived in a snug iris house.
He took a wee nap,
Snacked on a cheese scrap,
And felt safe in his wee purple house.

- Sue Clark



Did You Know?

If you are searching for a specific iris, check out the [TBFinder](#). It will match the name of a variety with its availability at these fifteen iris farms: Blue J Iris, C and T Iris Patch, Iris4U Iris Garden, Iris Sisters Farm, Iriswarehouse, Keith Keppel Iris, Mid-America Garden, Napa Country Iris Garden, Rocky Top Gardens, Schreiner's Iris Gardens, Scott's Iris Gardens, Stout Gardens, Sutton's Iris Gardens, The Shady Spot Iris Garden, and Wild Iris Rows. You can even vote to add specific farms to the service. - SC

“Flowers are those little colorful beacons of the sun from which we get sunshine when dark, somber skies blanket our thoughts.” - Dodinsky, www.dodinsky.com

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

We continue with the story of Bertrand Farr this month. In 1905, Farr imported every possible iris cultivar from Barr & Sons in England and from several French nurseries, as American nurseries mostly offered older varieties by Lémon and Salter. When hybridizer Sydney Mitchell of California realized that Farr's iris collection dwarfed his own, he wrote, “There is no doubt that the gathering together of this collection and its most attractive listing were primarily responsible for the interest in tall bearded irises that developed in America in the first quarter of the present [last] century.” Visitors flocked to Farr's gardens in Wyomissing from all over the United States.

Farr's 'Juniata' (1909), named for the Pennsylvania river which snakes its way through Amish country there, was used in the breeding of many varieties. It is over 4' tall and was planted *en masse* on many estates at the time. 'Juniata' is clear blue-violet with a bright orange beard and is fragrant. When crossed by other hybridizers with the tetraploid *Iris mesopotamica* [see the [April 2018](#) issue of this newsletter for an article on ploidy], resulting varieties included 'Conquistador' (1923), which was used extensively in breeding, and its child, 'San Francisco,' which in 1927 won the first American Dykes Medal.

Besides irises, Farr imported peonies and other plants from Europe. He and his wife joined the newly-created American Peony Society, which was organized to develop an “accurate descriptive checklist” of all peony cultivars, the nomenclature of which was a muddled confusion. The Society worked with Cornell University to assemble a collection of every known variety of peony. Bertrand Farr contributed almost 1,000 of the 3,500 plants for the project. He was chosen to describe and identify most of the collection, and when he finished the task in 1912, he was regarded as the world's authority on peonies for the rest of his life.

In 1910, Farr's introduction 'Rose Unique' met with instant fame. This iris was the closest thing to pink at that time. 'Rose Unique' is an Intermediate Bearded iris and is still available. More on Farr next month! - SC

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