



# TAIS Newsletter

Our 54th year

Tucson Area Iris Society—established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



**'Midnight Toccata'**  
(Kerr 2010)  
Chandler, AZ

Photo by Sue Clark, 2017

## Editor's Message

Thank you to outgoing TAIS President Kevin Kartchner for his three years of leadership. During the second year of his reign, we began an annual photo contest (which he organizes), and continued many other traditions: awarding Iris Bucks to volunteers and prize-winners, a Show in April, Auction and Ice Cream Social in August, Sale in September, potluck in November, and hosting a hybridizer every year or two. Now Kevin should have more time for growing irises, taking pictures of them to win the photo contest, and pursuing his other interests!

- Sue Clark

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*"Kind hearts are the gardens, Kind thoughts are the roots, Kind words are the flowers, Kind deeds are the fruits, Take care of your garden And keep out the weeds, Fill it with sunshine, Kind words, and Kind deeds." - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*

## Upcoming Events

**Happy Holidays to you! Enjoy your time with family and friends!**

**Next meeting: Saturday, January 11, 1 PM - TBA**

**February 8 meeting: 1 PM - TBA**

## Birthday Wishes to:

<b>Madeleine Glaser</b>	<b>Susanne Hughes</b>
<b>Phil Doonan</b>	<b>Ann Cotton</b>
<b>Cathy Pane-Scire</b>	<b>Terry Southard</b>



# November Meeting Minutes



Nineteen people including two guests enjoyed a delicious potluck during our November meeting.

Susan reported on the cooperative planting venture between our club and the Tucson Botanical Garden last month. Five of our members and the Garden's horticulturalist planted and divided over 80 irises. And the expanded beds are looking great! Thank you to all who participated, whether by donating rhizomes and/or by planting. Be sure to stop by in early April to see the irises blooming at TBG!

Kevin mentioned that he had seen Angela recently on a PBS news segment about master gardeners. She is the longest-serving master gardener in Tucson. He ribbed her about her statement that roses are her favorite flower...

Melania and Sue received Iris Bucks for their winning

entries in last month's photo contest - they tied for second place in two categories.

Three Van Liere irises were given as door prizes: Cecilia won 'Band of Brothers' (2015), Diane won 'My Sorority Sisters' (2013), and Susan won 'Denver Pioneer' (2017). We will give away more irises as door prizes at our future meetings.

Martin is updating our organization's information on the Arizona Corporation Commission's website, as we are registered with them as a nonprofit agency.

Former member Sally Vega rejoined at this meeting.

We still need a president. Our next meeting will be in January.

- Sue Clark, secretary



**Happy Holidays  
to you!**



**We're on the web!**

**[Tucsoniris.org](http://Tucsoniris.org)**

## My Iris Toolkit - by Sue Clark

I find myself reaching for certain tools and materials time after time when planting and caring for my irises. This month, I will feature my go-to items. What's in your toolkit?



**Bleach** - I soak all new rhizomes in a 10% bleach solution (1/4 c bleach and 2 c water) for 5-10 minutes to kill bacteria and pests, and then rinse thoroughly.



**Potting soil** - since our iris-growing panel discussion in May, I make a custom blend of Kellogg's potting mix and Kellogg's Palm, Cactus & Citrus mix (50-50). Angela recommends Kellogg's soils.

Article continues on p. 5.

# TAIS November Meeting



**Photos by  
Dave Smith**





**My Iris Toolkit - favorite tools and essentials, continued from p. 2**



Self-watering pots - Melania recommended these to me and I have been happy with them. The brand is Misco. I have bought them at Walmart and from Wayfair.com.



Moisture meter - poke the probe all the way into your pots to see if they need water. Kristee recommended this tool to me.

Fertilizers - starting on 1 Feb, I alternate weekly doses of **Super Bloom** (12-55-6) with **Ferti-lome Blooming & Rooting** (9-59-8). In the fall, I apply one dose of [Schreiner's 6-10-10 Controlled-Release Iris Food](#).



Other nutrients - Darol Jurn recommends an application of Great Big Plants in the fall and my friend Retta Marconi-Dooley recommends a dose of worm castings.



Hand trowel - a good trowel should be an extension of your hand and fit into it comfortably. I love the cushioned handle. Mine is not available anymore, but find a [similar one](#) at Amazon.



Sprinkling can - I got my lovely copper can at an antique shop, but any sprinkling can will work if it has a thin spout to control where the water goes.



Scissors - These are my favorite type of scissors. I use this pair to trim brown leaves from my irises. They are from Lee Lee Market in Chandler and may be available at other Asian markets. About \$4.



Plant markers - I use plant markers to ensure that I always know the names of my irises. Otherwise, they become NOIDs (no ID (= no identification))! I get my [Garden-Mate](#) ones from Amazon. If the plant dies, Dave cleans the name off with steel wool and I reuse the marker.



with bleach

Comet cleanser - if I find a rhizome with some rot on it, I use my scissors cut off the entire affected portion and then I cover the cut with Comet. This can often be done in place, and may save a rhizome that would otherwise succumb to rot.



Rubbing alcohol - this is essential for cleaning tools that have touched rotted parts of rhizomes. It is also great at stopping itch - if I accidentally brush against a lantana or have a mosquito bite, a splash of it on the affected part works wonders. - SC

## TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2020

[Your name here...] - President

Bonnie Else - Vice President

Sue Clark – Secretary, Signatory on Account

Martin Juarez – Treasurer, Asst. Secretary

Bonnie & Kathy - Programs & Publicity

Joyce & Mary Ann - Hospitality/Door Prizes

Diane Tweedy - Birthday cards (temporary)

Dave Smith - Photographer

Susan Schaefer - Membership Chairperson

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. These are available at Ace Hardware, Mesquite Valley Growers, Amazon and other places.



## Tip Exchange

“Keep in mind that a California breeder’s early to mid-season flowering variety might be totally different from a New Jersey breeder’s: in California an early-flowering variety might bloom in late March whereas in New Jersey not until early May. Not only would the window of flowering times differ, but the inherent biases of each breeder can, too. There’s no good way to standardize **phenology** (the study of the sequence of flowering), but an early-mid-late system at least attempts to provide gardeners with some framework for how TBs bred elsewhere might perform in their own garden.”

- Kelly Norris, in [A Guide to Bearded Irises](#), p. 298

## Iris Limerick:

There once was an iris in snow  
Who thought, “When, oh when, can I grow?!”  
“I know just the thing,  
I’ll grow in the spring!”  
And it softly chuckled, “Ho, ho!”  
- Sue Clark



Source: AIS Iris Wiki

‘Dolly Madison’

## Did You Know?

Table irises, now known as miniature tall bearded irises, were created by the Williamsons. E. B. did not like them and referred to them as “runts,” but his daughter Mary found their diminutive and perfect proportions enchanting. Ethel Peckham, a director of the American Iris Society, agreed and urged Mary to introduce some of them, which she did in the 1930’s and 1940’s. Alice White, another advocate of table irises, succeeded in the early 1950’s in creating an official class for these varieties using Mary Williamson’s exact and restrictive standards. Miniature tall bearded irises range from 16 to 27 1/2” tall, look lovely in arrangements (hence the name “table irises”), and grow in a clump said to resemble a “cloud of butterflies.” - Sources: [Classic Irises](#) by C. E. Mann, and the AIS Iris Wiki.

WHERE FLOWERS BLOOM SO  
DOES HOPE. · LADY BIRD JOHNSON 

## A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

We take up our tale of E. B. Williamson and his irises with two famous varieties that he hybridized using his ‘Lent A. Williamson’ (and his ubiquitous mixed pollen). In his 1927 catalog, he related how one of these irises was named: one day, he was walking through his iris garden with two friends, one of whom remarked that Seedling #252 was reminiscent of Bertrand Farr’s ‘Quaker Lady’ (1900) and could, like that one, be named for a Quakeress. This friend also suggested that the Quakeress be Dolley Madison (although President James Madison’s wife Dolley had been expelled by her congregation when she married him). This seedling became ‘Dolly Madison,’ in an instance in which perhaps “two wrongs make a right” in that Dolley’s name was spelled incorrectly and she was no longer a Quaker. ‘Dolly Madison’ (1927) is likely to be found more than once in the pedigrees of most of the tall bearded irises in our gardens today. It carries 7-11 large flowers per well-branched stalk and had been a favorite in Williamson’s garden since it first bloomed in 1923. It is an early bloomer and its flowers are more intensely-colored than ‘Quaker Lady.’ (See photo above). Introduced at \$25 per rhizome in 1927, it was selling for \$1.50 in 1932 in Cooley’s catalog. Note the difference in price after the beginning of the Great Depression. The Cooley’s catalog description stated that ‘Dolly Madison’ was reliable everywhere.

Our second featured iris is ‘Dorothy Dietz’ (1929). Although Mr. Mahan stated in his book that it was a cross between ‘Wyoming’ and ‘Lent A. Williamson,’ E. B. Williamson’s original catalog description of this variety (found on the Iris Wiki) states that the parents were “ ‘Wyoming’ and ?, probably ‘Lent A. Williamson.’ ” ‘Wyoming’ quickly disappeared from the iris trade, but lives on through ‘Dorothy Dietz’ and especially through her progeny ‘Wabash’ (Mary Williamson 1936), winner of the 1940 Dykes Medal. (Photo below). Although often credited to E. B., Mary wrote in a history of Longfield Iris Farm that she had bred ‘Wabash.’

The Williamsons planted many thousands of seedlings on leased lots and fields around Bluffton - for example, 70,000 in 1932! Approximately 100 were selected for further evaluation each year and the rest destroyed. No wonder they generated so many important rises, even with their unscientific use of mixed pollen! E. B. Williamson died in 1933. His daughters and wife continued to run Longfield Iris Farm until 1958.

The lovely ‘Wabash’ still reigns at or near the top of favorite varieties in the annual poll of the Historic Iris Preservation Society. Three cheers for the Williamsons! - SC  
Sources: [Classic Irises and the Men and Women Who Created Them](#) by Clarence E. Mahan and the AIS Iris Wiki, which contains text from Williamson’s and Cooley’s catalogs.

