



# TAIS Newsletter

Our 54th year

Tucson Area Iris Society—established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



## 'Pirates' Den'

a plicata

(Valenzuela 2007)

Marcusen Sculpture Garden, Prescott

Photo by Sue Clark, 2019

## President's Message

Fields of iris blooming in June? That's what my wife and I saw backpacking in Arizona's White Mountains last week. They were Rocky Mountain Iris (*Iris missouriensis*) in meadows surrounded by spruce trees. After an overnight low of 26 degrees, we returned to 105 in Tucson. What a contrast. Keep on growing. - Kevin Kartchner



*"The linden, in the fervors of July, hums with a louder concert. When the wind sweeps the broad forest in its summer prime, as when some master-hand exulting sweeps the keys of some great organ, ye give forth the music of the woodland depths, a hymn of gladness and of thanks."*

- William Cullen Bryant, *Among the Trees*

## Upcoming Events

**Next meeting: August 17 at 1 PM. Tucson Botanical Garden - Region 15 Auction for members and an Ice Cream Social.**

**Newsletters will continue through the summer.**

**HIPS Online Rhizome Sale: open to public July 22-24. Info [here](#) & on p. 5.**

**PAIS Rhizome Sale: July 27 in Prescott. 10 AM - 3 PM. Info [here](#) & on p. 6.**

**TAIS Rhizome Sale: September 21 at Harlow's Gardens. Consider trading your extra rhizomes for Iris Bucks so you can buy different rhizomes!**

**Region 15 Fall Meeting: Oct 12, 2019, San Marino.**

**Speaker = Thomas Johnson.**

## Birthday Wishes to:

**Pam Court**

**Nancy McKean**

**Gary Carruthers**



Source: Pinterest

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## New Member Wendy O'Rourke's Irises in Colorado



Top row: 'Elizabeth Poldark' (Nichol 1987), blooms midseason, vigorous grower.

Middle row: 'Wabash' (Williamson 1936), blooms midseason, Dykes Medal winner in 1940. Wendy's is originally from her great-grandmother's garden. Purple NOID from same place, sweet smell, grows without a care.

Bottom row: 'Perfect Couple' (Ghio 1983), early and rebloom; 'Codicil' (Innerst 1984), mid- to late bloom.

### Treasurer's Report for June - submitted by Martin Juarez, Treasurer

Beginning Balance				\$4,463.65
	Pd	MOP	Deposits	Expenses
1-Jun				
30-Jun				
Sub-Totals			\$0.00	\$0.00
Ending Balance				\$4,463.65



c. John Well



c. Tatyana Dudka



From Top: 'Double Time,' and 'Lingering Love' (photos from the Iris Wiki), 'Dark Storm' (photo by Dan Hahn), and 'Autumn Explosion' (photo by Kristee West).

### Plicata Irises

Our iris color pattern of the month is plicata, meaning that the blossoms have stipples, dots, or stitched edges. “Captivating and eye-popping, plicatas have bands of darker colors, often purple or browns, over-laying a ground color such as white, yellow, or cream,” says Kelly Norris in [A Guide to Bearded Irises](#). These bands are the result of a concentration of anthocyanins, purple-based pigments found in the vacuoles of cells. The elaborate patterns may serve to attract pollinators to the flowers.

Last month, we featured an iris named after one of our members, and this month, we are featuring one hybridized by a member. ‘Pirates’ Den’ (Margie Valenzuela 2007) is pictured on p. 1. This ruffled beauty blooms very early to early.

Our club’s president, Kevin, loves plicatas and has several that do well in his garden. ‘Double Time’ (Hager 1984) has delicate violet stitching outlining its falls. It blooms in midseason and reblooms. [‘Lingering Love’](#) (Meek 1986) flowers in mid- to late-season. (See pictures of these two at right). ‘Vibrato’ (Painter 2014) is another favorite. Kathy from our club was out of town when her ‘Dark Storm’ ([Tasco](#) 2017) flowered, but said that her husband kindly took pictures and sent them to her. This midseason bloomer has a light sweet fragrance. Kristee does well with ‘Autumn Explosion’ ([Tasco](#) 2013), which flowers in early midseason, reblooms, and smells sweet. (Pictures of latter two at right).

Schreiners offers 66 varieties of plicata irises on their [website](#), including their Dykes-Medal-winning [‘Stepping Out’](#) (1964), which forms striking clumps of large bright purple and white flowers. Their [‘Always and Forever’](#) (2016) has tan-speckled standards and purple-speckled falls! Another Dykes winner, [‘Jesse’s Song’](#) (Williamson 1983), is ruffled, medium purple, and sturdy. This beauty is on Kelly Norris’ list of favorite tall bearded, as is the plicata ‘Conjuration’ (Byers 1989). Rick [Tasco](#) won the Dykes Medal with ‘Splashacata’ (1997) in 2005. Its solid lavender standards contrast well with its red-violet speckled falls. His plicata [‘Mariposa Autumn’](#) (1999) is a reliable rebloomer.

Next month’s pattern will be luminata. - SC

## Growing Iris in the Desert, Part 2

### Fertilizing

**KK:** uses whatever type of granular fertilizer is on sale. He fertilizes monthly beginning in September and during the growing season [January through May]. He takes into account some adages from the Orchid Society about fertilizing: alternate fertilizers, as they have different micronutrients, and “Weakly weekly,” meaning use a dilute fertilizer each week when you water. He said he does not care if the fertilizer is higher in nitrogen than recommended [which is below 10 to help avoid rot issues].

**DT:** adds Triple Super Phosphate when planting in October and applies it once again in late January or early February. One month before bloom season [mid-February], she begins spraying her irises with Super Bloom every two weeks, until a month after blooms fade away.

**SS:** adds a layer of Schreiner’s iris fertilizer to the pots when planting (about mid-way down). Waters with Super Bloom weekly beginning on February 1 with excellent results. Occasionally uses Miracle-Gro instead.

**MK:** recently switched to a granular form of Ferti-lome that comes in a cardboard can and is very pleased with it. Had been using Super Bloom.



### The Right Spot for the Right Plant

**KK:** has tried growing one favorite variety three times and then gave up. He moved ‘Schoonchee,’ a notoriously-vigorous grower, from a spot where it did not thrive to a spot a few feet away where it has gone crazy!



### Planting

**TK** (Tony Kutz): How are newly planted rhizomes to stand up if their roots have been cut off?

**KK:** Bob Van Liere said that irises do best if replanted soon after digging so that their roots are still fresh.

**SC:** Darol Jurn told me that he cuts off all dried roots, as the rhizome needs to be in close contact with the soil to form new roots.

**SS:** the rhizomes like the sun on them (not too deep).

### First-year bloom

**KK:** not all bloom the first year. He had a 75-80% bloom rate for his new ones this year.

**SC:** read somewhere to expect about a 30% bloom rate for first year.

**SW:** planted 36 rhizomes last fall and 20 bloomed. [56%].

### Sun versus Shade

**MK:** moves pots into shade for summer. Also uses shade cloth.

**KK:** recently installed shade cloth for hot season and will remove it in September.

### Rot

**KK:** the bacteria which causes the rot is active at 82° and higher. He has scraped rot out to the point where the rhizome is firm and healthy-looking, and applied a dilute (20%) bleach solution to the cut part. All while the rhizome is in-situ, if possible. He mentioned reading that an agricultural antibiotic can be used after rot removal.

**SC:** cuts rotten portion away with garden scissors and applies Comet cleanser, which has bleach in it, to the cut. Can do in situ. Best to let the cleanser-covered cut dry out before replanting if possible. Sterilize scissors with rubbing alcohol or bleach. Best to water in evening when it is [hopefully] cooler.

### Pests - grubs, aphids

**MK:** recently found a grub killer at Home Depot for about \$7.99. It is applied in spring and fall to disrupt the life cycle.

**DT:** has used nematodes for grubs. Can keep in fridge.

**SS:** plants onions and garlic near her irises to ward off aphids, as suggested by Kristee.

**DT:** sweeps aphids off by gently pinching leaf between thumb and fingers and gently pulling hand upwards.

### Grooming

**KK:** carefully trim stalks off at bottom when blooms fade, before it gets hot out.

**DT:** cleans up her beds in October. She trims off the brown leaves that were scorched by the summer sun and heat.

**SC:** trimming leaves in a fan shape every year is not recommended anymore. Kelly Norris in his Guide to Bearded Irises book recommends trimming leaves by at least half before *planting* an iris so that it does not have to support its leaves AND grow new roots at the same time. - SC

**TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2019****Kevin Kartchner – President****Bonnie Else - Vice President****Sue Clark – Secretary****Martin Juarez – Treasurer & Asst. Secretary****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 July:

Keep area free of leaves, weeds and pests.

Leaves make food for the plant, so do not trim them off unless they are dead. No need to cut them into the fan shapes of old, unless they look really bad and need tidying.

Provide afternoon relief with shade cloth or by moving potted irises into the shade.

Continue to feed and water reblooming irises.



## Tip Exchange

See how to divide and plant irises in this article from [Better Homes & Gardens](#).

Watch our own Angela Powers in her [television debut](#) as she talks about roses in the Demonstration Garden. (Link courtesy of Wendy O'Rourke).

When you plant your rhizomes, think of how a duck floats in the water so that you won't plant them too deep. Keep the upper part above the soil surface. - Sheila, [The Gardens of Petersonville](#) blog, post of 27 Apr 2010.

## Iris Haiku:

Midsummer moonbeams  
Bathe my sleeping irises.  
New life buds within.

- Sue Clark



HIPS website, S. Boot

'B. Y. Morrison'

## Did You Know?

Since its creation in 1988, the Historic Iris Preservation Society (HIPS) has been on a mission: *"The Society was created to help preserve our iris heritage by locating at-risk irises and bringing them together with irisarians who want to grow and perpetuate them. Of equal importance is the establishment of an extensive collection of reference material relating to early iris history. HIPS is the common thread that binds together irisarians everywhere."* Their [website](#) is full of iris care tips, an AIS color chart from 1939, photos, NOID ID, reference material, and information about their upcoming online rhizome [sale](#). They will post photos of all available irises on July 18. Members can buy on July 20 and the sale will be open to the public from July 22-24. Annual [membership](#) dues are \$13. Besides early admission to the sale, members receive two issues of the HIPS journal, ROOTS, each year. If you are interested in the history of irises and in growing historic varieties, consider joining HIPS. - SC

*"I garden because I cannot help myself - but it's the best kind of compulsion."* - Margaret Roach

## A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Back to the USA this month for a look at Grace Sturtevant, the first [known] female plant hybridizer. "Rare is the modern tall bearded, border bearded or intermediate bearded iris in our garden today that does not have a genetic heritage from cultivars bred by Grace Sturtevant." Grace published her first catalog of irises in 1917 when she was 52 years old, and introduced over 200 varieties over the next 30 years. Many of these were the most widely-grown irises in the United States, Canada, and Europe. Her nursery, Glen Road Iris Gardens, was near Boston.

Grace's father, Dr. E. Lewis Sturtevant, influenced her botanical fascination. He and his brothers wrote, researched, and encouraged a more scientific approach to crops and cows. He bred a type of corn which produced four times as many bushels per acre as other varieties.

Ms. Sturtevant loved growing plants from seed. She collected seeds from her irises in 1908, and their blooms launched her interest in hybridizing the plants. She ordered the best varieties she could find from Bertrand Farr, and is noted as the first American to establish goals when breeding irises. In her case, these goals involved studying genetics and color. She developed the first yellow hybrid, 'Shekinah,' by pollinating a light violet cross of 'Aurea' and a "pallida" with its own pollen. 'Afterglow,' 'Queen Catarina,' and 'B. Y. Morrison' are some of her more famous creations. In 1922, the newly-founded American Iris Society published a list of the top 100 irises in the USA, and 15 of these were bred by Grace Sturtevant.

After seeing Grace's irises, family friend B. Y. Morrison wrote to the editor of *The Garden Magazine* in 1919, who then contacted the assistant director of the New York Botanical Garden who set up a meeting between John Wister and Frank Presby. The latter two, along with H. A. Gleason, drew up some objectives for an iris society. Seventy people showed up at the organizational meeting! Wister became the first president, Presby the treasurer, and Grace's brother Robert the secretary. Grace served on several committees, and won the Society's Gold Medal in 1933. Her irises and meticulous records are a credit to her scientific mind and method. Thank you, Grace! - SC

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



# SUMMER IRIS SALE

**SATURDAY, JULY 27**

**10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

**Stoneridge Community Center**

**1300 Stoneridge Drive**



**Information: <http://www.prescottirissociety.org>**