

TAIS Newsletter

Our 54th year

Tucson Area Iris Society—established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Crooked Little Smile'

(Van Liere 2008)

Hummingbird Iris Garden,
Prescott

Photo by Sue Clark, 2018

President's Message

How ironic. During our last meeting we saw photos of Bob Van Liere's iris in bloom with Denver snow on them. Mine are not blooming yet but they were covered in Tucson snow last week.

It's only a month and a half until show time. It's also time to play "Name that iris show". Like last year, bring your best TAIS iris show theme names to our next meeting and we'll award Iris Bucks to the favorite. Bloom on.

- Kevin Kartchner

*"A light exists in Spring Not present in the year
at any other period When March is scarcely here."*

- Emily Dickinson

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Upcoming Events

March 9 meeting: Sue Clark presenting a visual tour of Longwood Gardens at 1 PM. Murphy-Wilmot Library, 530 N Wilmot Road, small room.

TAIS Iris Show: April 13 at 9 AM, Murphy-Wilmot Library. Set up on April 12 (time TBA).

Tucson Master Gardeners Plant Sale: April 6, 8 AM - 11 AM, 4210 N. Campbell Ave.

Tucson Master Gardeners Tour: April 13, 9 AM-3 PM, tickets and info [here](#).

Region 15 Fall Meeting: October 12, 2019 in San Marino, California. Guest speaker will be Tom Johnson of Mid-America Gardens. Hosted by the Inland Region Iris Society.

Birthday Wishes to:

Kristee West

Steven Ginter

Paul Bessey

Martin Juarez

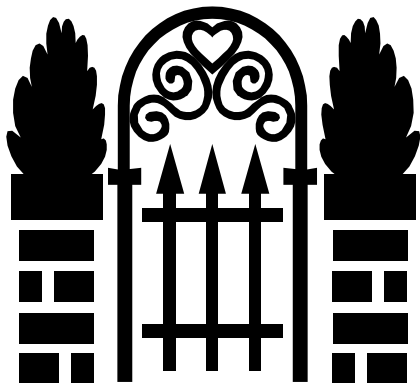
Ron Salvemini

Celia Keener



from clipartpanda.com

February Meeting Minutes



We ♥ Irises

TAIS Board Meeting – 9 Feb 2019

Began at 2:45 PM - 12 members present

Iris Show – April 13 – Kevin will chair this. Library, large room. Set up on Friday.

Rhizome Sale – September – Kristee will chair this. Helpers so far = Martin, Sam, Susan, and Sue. Date TBA.

Region 15 Auction – August 17 at TBG [per Melania] – Sue will chair this with help from Lenore. Kristee said that she would do the actual auctioning if we want her to. Rhizomes come from Region 15 and we auction them off to our members as a fund raiser. Last year, Kristee supplemented these with \$300 of new release rhizomes from Rick Tasco as Club Irises. Other Tasco rhizomes were auctioned off, and others were for the TBG beds.

Tucson Botanical Gardens Liaison Report, Kathy Windischman – she will give them some of our business cards and find out how many times they expect Kristee to give iris talks annually in exchange for us holding some meetings there. They have not responded to her last few messages. She will try a different contact person – Adam. Melania said that she will check on this. Do we need a new contract with them? How many times can we meet there annually?

Kathy and Bonnie said that there are several empty spaces in our iris beds at TBG. We decided to save 12-

15 rhizomes from our sale for these openings. Or members may donate. TBG had requested some rebloomers so that they might flower during the Feast of the Dearly Departed that they hold. Sue suggested 'Immortality' to fit with that theme. Kathy and Bonnie said that TBG had requested ones in orange and black for a Halloween iris bed.

Treasurer's Report, Martin Juarez – Our webmaster has been paid. Sue motioned and Kathy seconded that Martin be the Assistant Secretary. He will go to the bank to remove all signatories from our account, except for himself, Sue, and Madeleine, as decided by vote at the January meeting. He will need a copy of these minutes. Martin reminded all officers to sign up as members of AIS, for which they will be reimbursed the \$15 dues. These memberships are required for our nonprofit status. Kristee requested that the club get a PO Box at the UPS store so that we have a permanent address to receive banking information, which is currently going to her house, even though she is no longer the Treasurer. She does not wish to receive this mail anymore. She suggests the UPS Store because they will call you if you get mail. Martin suggested that each new Treasurer can decide if he wants the mail to come to his home address, or to go to a PO Box near his home. He will research the cost of PO Boxes at the two places before the next meeting. Tony brought up that we need to have

a yearly audit. He suggested using Marshall Coin, who has done it before. The Bylaws will be consulted for the procedure. If there is none listed, Martin motioned for there to be an audit each October, before the new Treasurer takes office. Sue seconded. Bonnie and Kathy volunteered to be on the audit team. [NOTE: a quick check of the Bylaws, which were supplied by Melania, shows that they require an annual audit by a committee of three or more members and the Treasurer to be completed between October 31 and November 30]. Kevin mentioned that when Roger Osgood was the Treasurer that the books were audited at the end of each meeting. Bonnie wonders if the Treasurer's position might be better as a two-year term.

Secretary's report, Sue Clark – Sue motioned that TAIS spend \$300 (which includes shipping) to purchase recent introductions from Bob Van Liere, who offered us all a discount on his own recent introductions. These will be for the Auction in August and will be used as Club irises. And she motioned also to spend about \$200 on additional rhizomes from Bob for the Sale in September, provided that he will dig them that late. If not, from someone else. Susan seconded.

Membership Report, Susan Schaefer – we got one new member today, who found us via our website. A fairly new member, Lenore, attended today – she joined at our sale. Susan is updating our membership list and will get it to the officers soon.

Publicity Report, Melania Kutz – Responses good so far. March meeting – naming contest for the Show.

Hospitality Report, Angela Powers – all OK. Angela had an idea – to give all new members our iris culture booklet to welcome them. The birthday cake for the next quarter will be at the April Show.

Photographer's report, Tony Kutz – Tony asked if everyone was satisfied with his pictures. There was general agreement. Sue mentioned that she likes the idea of the birthday honorees getting their picture taken with the cake. Some close-up pictures are good mixed in with the group shots,

Door prizes of recent iris introductions, which have been tended by Madeleine since our Sale in September, were won by Ardi Kary and Jenine Cook who were visiting from the Sun Country Iris Society along with a few other members, and by Kathy Windischman. Sue and Madeleine are tending three more irises that we will use as door prizes for the March meeting. Today's meeting closed at 3:30 PM.

- Sue Clark, secretary

Start thinking of a
name for our show -
Naming contest at
March meeting!



We're on the web!

Tucsoniris.org

Bob Van Liere Visits our Club

Bob Van Liere of Iris4U Gardens spoke at our February meeting. His family-owned iris farm covers 2.5 acres in Denver and recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. Bob's mother's ancestors operated a nursery in Holland, and Bob himself grew up in Holland, Michigan, so he has flowers in his blood. And he used to live on Iris Street!

Bob began his presentation with slides of his 2019 introductions, which will be available when his website reopens in April. He is offering an impressive line-up this year! Some that caught my eye include 'Orange Crush Cocktail,' a glowing orange beauty and 'Darkside of the Moon,' intriguing with white standards and black falls with white veining around its yellow-orange beard. Bob is focusing his breeding efforts on extending haft markings across the falls, instead of them being only near the top of the beard. Some of his other goals are irises with a modern form and good branching that will grow well in all zones. He strives for irises that flower for two to three weeks, with at least five sets of buds per stem. Most of these buds actually contain two to three buds per socket, except the second one, which is always single.

Iris4U Gardens is open for visitation from about Mother's Day through its peak bloom at the end of May, and on through the end of bloom in June. One variety, his 'Stars and Stripes Forever' (2009), flowers until the Fourth of July there! Bob mentioned that his best sellers are 'Crooked Little Smile' (Van Liere 2008) (see photo on p. 1) and 'Dusky Challenger' (Schreiner 1986). He mentioned that his 'Global Crossing' (2011) (photo below) is a good grower, as is his 'Lickety Split' (2016). For those of you who love highly fragrant irises, Bob also has something for you - the siblings 'Fill Up My Senses' and 'Scent from Heaven' (both 2017) produce a sweet scent.

Occasionally a late freeze damages the stems. And sometimes it hails. Canada Geese have been visiting the last two years, eating some weeds and leaving some fertilizer in their wake. Last year, they ate his green manure cover crop, a field of nitrogen fixers and other plants, including vetch, beets, and radishes, that get plowed into the soil, adding nutrients and structure.

Bob talked about his hybridizing, as well. After a seed pod forms, he ties a pink ribbon on the stem as a signal that these are not to be deadheaded. He collects the seeds in Dixie cups after they ripen around the first of August. In October, these are planted in 4" pots, which he waters six times a day for about a month to wash off the seeds' growth inhibitors. In about mid-February, the seeds germinate in Bob's heated shed. He plants the seedlings in the field by May 1, and they usually flower the following spring. They are carefully tagged during each step on this process. Bob mentioned that of the 4000 seedlings from crosses he made in 2016, he will select five to ten of them to introduce to the market next year. He recommends having approximately 75 increases before introducing a new iris. He currently has about 10,000 seedlings growing!

Beginning in early July, irises are dug in groups of 90 to 100, washed and trimmed, lined up on a table, and then separated into orders for mailing or pick up. Bob does not trim off the roots, as he has experimented and found that rhizomes with fairly fresh roots start growing right away and get established faster than those whose roots have withered or been trimmed off. In late August, he replants the remaining irises in 18"-wide rows.

Iris4U has expanded to Germany, where Bob's daughter grows irises in a greenhouse and sells the plants at flower markets in Europe, as well as via the internet. - SC



Some Van Liere irises: from left - 2019 introductions 'Orange Crush Cocktail' and 'Darkside of the Moon,' (photos from Bob Van Liere, used with permission) along with 'Global Crossing' (2011) (Hummingbird Iris Garden in Prescott, photo by Sue Clark)

TAIS February Meeting



Photos by
Tony Kutz



Treasurer's Report for February - submitted by Martin Juarez, Treasurer

TAIS Treasurer's Report					
Beginning Balance					\$6,691.49
	Pd	MOP	Deposits	Expenses	
2-Feb	X	#1817		\$500.00	Valenzuela-Website
9-Feb	X	#1818		\$27.45	Clark-copies, postage, AIS
9-Feb		#1819		\$351.00	Van Liere-speaker/travel
9-Feb	X	#1820		\$48.23	Tweedy-supplies/food
14-Feb	X	#1821		\$65.49	Juarez-supplies, AIS
14-Feb	X		\$20.00		DUES
Sub-Totals			\$20.00	\$992.17	
Ending Balance					\$5,719.32

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Iris Color Patterns: Emma Cook

Iris breeder Paul Cook named a new and exciting iris after his wife Emma in 1957 and introduced it to the world in 1959. This 'Emma Cook' iris was distinctive, and it went on to sire many children and to be the first in the color pattern now called Emma Cook, meaning "an amoena pattern with white standards and narrow anthocyanin pigmentation bordered falls," according to this [glossary](#). Anthocyanins are water-soluble pigments that appear red, blue, or purple, depending on their pH. These pigments are found in vacuoles of plant cells (per Wikipedia). The amoena pattern means that the iris has white standards and colored falls. Paul Cook is also the originator of this pattern, when he crossed a tetraploid *Iris reichenbachii* with a tall bearded 'Shining Waters' to create 'Progenitor' (1951), an intermediate bearded iris, and then had the great gift of seeing what it could produce. 'Progenitor' with its white standards and violet falls was the first bicolor, yet another iris color pattern created by Paul Cook. (from "The Untapped Potential of *Iris reichenbachii*," by Tom Waters, World of Irises blogspot post of [1 Aug 2016](#)). Crossing irises with *I. reichenbachii*, which has twice the number of chromosomes as diploid irises, opens up possibilities for larger, more fragrant, and more colorful flowers on bigger and more vigorous plants that contain additional potential for variation. (See article on Ploidy in the [April 2018](#) issue of this newsletter). And it crosses easily with tall bearded, since most of them have been tetraploids since 1925.

Paul Cook was born in Indiana in 1891. He worked as a rural mailman so that his afternoons could be spent in the garden. Paul began hybridizing plants as a teen, and soon turned to irises. After serving in World War I, he collected every species of iris that he could find and focused his considerable intellect on mixing their chromosomes.

The elegant Emma Cook pattern is one of my favorites, probably since I love blue and white together. And since several of them are award-winners, I am thinking that others like them, too! Dykes-winner 'Queen's Circle' (Kerr 2000) looks pristine and perfectly-shaped (see photo at right); 'Gypsy Lord' (Keppel 2005), also a Dykes-winner, is labeled as an Emma Cook in some sources, although its blue band is much wider than the others shown here; 'Brilliant Idea' (Keppel 2008), touted as an easy grower; its sibling 'Revision' (Keppel 2010) with its better branching, sharper pattern, and slightly less outrageous beard, starts blooming early so might do well for us in the desert; and 'Art Faire' (Schreiner 1993), which has a purple edge rather than blue, but maintains the same elegance. I could give them all spots of honor in my garden. - SC

From Top: 'Revision,' 'Brilliant Idea' (AIS Iris Wiki), 'Emma Cook' (Garden.org), 'Queen's Circle' (AIS Iris Wiki), and 'Art Faire' (Crafton Hills website).

TAIS iris grower's interview #14

Susan Schaefer lives on the east side of Tucson. Her mother grew irises and Susan has loved them since she was a kid. She was a member of TAIS about 25 years ago for five years. During this time, she grew about 200 irises in beds. Her circumstances changed when she married a man from Colorado, at which point she began living there for six months and then in Tucson for six months, etc. Susan gradually moved her irises to Colorado. Even ones that had bloomed in Tucson in April then bloomed in Colorado that same June! Susan loves irises so much that her home is filled with many lovely paintings of them, some done by friends and others found in local shops.

Susan has lived in her current home for 17 years, and began growing irises seriously again about five years ago. She started over with all new ones, and rejoined our club about three years ago. Most of her irises are growing in pots in her backyard, along with some in two horse troughs, and there is a bed of irises in her front yard. She bought her troughs last year from OK Feed & Supply on Fort Lowell at Dodge. Susan doesn't use any particular potting mix, just something in manageably-sized bags. She puts a thin layer of soil in a pot, covers it with a thin layer of [Schreiner's Controlled Release Iris Food](#) (6-10-10) (ships free!), and then fills the pot with more soil when planting. She follows the same procedure when repotting irises following division.

Susan's fertilizer of choice is Super Bloom, which she applies *weekly* from early February until the last bloom fades, and then monthly. Since she used to use Miracle-Gro, she applies that now and then instead of the Super Bloom, just to use it up. Susan reports success with this method – she said that each potted iris has three to six increases a year, and she ends up dividing each year! And every variety flowers! I am going to copy her methods and see if I do better with my irises. The irises in the bed in her front yard do not bloom as well or grow as well as those in pots or troughs. Susan thinks that part of the trouble is that roots from a nearby mesquite tree invade the bed and use up the resources. She divided these iris and replanted them after removing as many of the roots as possible.

While she used to mix in rabbit pellets [alfalfa] as an amendment when planting, Susan now has troubles with bunnies eating her irises, so the pellets are out and the pots are up on metal stands. Her only other pest is a bird who digs around her rhizomes. (My guess is a curve-billed thrasher, as some are always digging about in my gardens). Netting at the base has helped keep this bird away from the plants.

Watering is accomplished via a drip system on an automatic timer. Each plant has its own adjustable flow emitter, which can be turned off if need be, such as after a rainstorm. Ring-shaped tubing devices with four holes water each pot, and these can also be turned off. Drip lines enter the horse troughs from underneath. Plants receive water for 15 minutes three times a week.

Her favorites? - the tall bearded, with orange ones being a particular favorite. Although she used to have many historic varieties, she does not currently have any.

When asked if she still buys irises, Susan replied with a laugh, "Oh, all the time! It's terrible – it's a weakness!"

If something is not performing well, Susan moves it to another spot. She has given some irises away.

Susan's irises are not combined with other plants (except for onions and garlic to ward off aphids), although she used to have white daisies growing amongst them at her other house. - SC

Her best advice? **Talk to them and tell them how beautiful they are. And fertilize!**

Editor's Message - In the spirit of sharing, learning, and building community, I interview members of our group about their iris gardens. These interviews are featured in the newsletter. 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 (or chat before a meeting), I will take notes, and then write an article. - SC



Some of Susan's irises:

Left: 'Coral Point' (G. Sutton, 2000).

Below: 'Well Endowed' (Ghio 1978) blooming on Feb 16, 2019.



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 March:

From January through April, iris plants put up 90% of their growth, so they need more water during this active growth period.

Continue applying a fertilizer high in phosphate, such as **Super Bloom** (12-55-6) or **Ferti-Lome Blooming and Rooting** (9-59-8) every one to two weeks according to directions on package.



Tip Exchange

New Online Source for Irises: **Crafton Hills Iris Farm** in Redlands, California was established in 2013. This family-owned business has recently begun offering their irises for sale online at [Crafton Hills Iris Farm](#). They offer several collections at discounted rates, as well as an option to purchase a pre-labeled Kincade garden marker for each iris at \$2. Their irises range from Award-Winners to Space-Agers to Historics.



Iris Limerick:

We're waiting for our irises to bloom,
And it can never happen too soon.
It's time to fertilize
And time to fantasize
About blooms, blooms, blooms!

- Sue Clark



Source: Superstition Gardens via AIS Wiki

'Sir Michael' (Yeld 1925)

Did You Know?

[Although] "other iris breeders gave us new colors and patterns, George Yeld gave us quality. He set the standard. British iris hybridizers have been breeding well-branched, vigorous irises ever since Yeld showed the way. So characteristic is this of English-bred irises that it might be called the "Yeld tradition.""

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

"Springtime is the land awakening. The March winds are the morning yawn." - Lewis Grizzard

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

This month, we travel back to England where George Yeld set a new standard for irises. He was born in 1845 and taught at St. Peter's School in York for 52 years, where he directed a production of Shakespeare each year. In his spare time, George climbed mountains, gardened, and hybridized plants, including the first hybrid daylily in 1893. His love of irises began in 1877 when 'Pallida Dalmatica' first bloomed in his garden. This cultivar with lavender-blue flowers was tall and elegant with a vigorous growth habit. George was so excited about it that he rushed to his nearest nursery and bought all different kinds of irises. Their blooms, paired at the top of poorly-branched stems, turned out to be a huge disappointment. Yeld now turned his hand to hybridizing irises "with better branching and increased vigor." Although several of his many seedlings won distinguished awards, they did not meet his ideal. George scheduled a visit to Sir Michael Foster [whose story is featured in the Nov 2017 issue of this newsletter] for advice on breeding irises. Sir Michael then sent him rhizomes from *Iris cypriana*, *Iris trojana*, and 'Amas,' all tetraploids from the Middle East. When these bloomed, George knew that he had the missing ingredients for his own breeding program. His 'Lord of June' (1911), a child of 'Amas,' captivated with its large flowers, which often bloomed with three or more on a stem at a time. 'Lord of June' quickly filled gardens and exhibits in Europe and the United States. Its bloom-laden stems more than made up for its lack of substance. In fact, it took top marks at iris exhibitions for over two decades and had the gardening public begging for more Yeld irises. George's other important cultivars include 'Asia' (1920), slightly ruffled lavender and violet with chamois overtones, and 'Sir Michael' (1925), clear lavender and deep purple. The latter, George's masterpiece from four decades of iris breeding, was vigorous and quickly became one of the most popular garden irises of the 1920's and 1930's in Great Britain and the USA. George Yeld became the first president of the British Iris Society in 1922-24, and was awarded the Foster Memorial Plaque in 1927 for his outstanding contributions to the genus *Iris*. - SC

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

