

# TAIS Newsletter

Our 55th year

Tucson Area Iris Society—established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



**'Mesmerizer'**

**(Byers 1990)**

- space-age rebloomer

Marcusen Sculpture Garden,  
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2019

## Acting President's Message

Canceled: the AIS centennial convention, our flower show, and our garden tours. Next year. Meanwhile, Sue has done an outstanding job of putting together a virtual flower show for us. I'm looking forward to seeing everybody's photos. Isolation is working well for me - my garden has never been more weed free. I also have more time to enjoy it. Now I'm getting daily surprises, and duds, from my iris seedlings. Have a great spring.

- Kevin Kartchner

*"They are like over-the-top Victorian Ladies' bonnets, available in shades to match even the wildest ensemble. And as with hats, you must have one in every color. It is the kaleidoscopic color range of iris, in fact, that catches the eye first."*

*- Ingrid Abramovitch, via Schreiner's 2020 catalog*

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**Dues are due!**

## Upcoming Events

**NOTE: Please check websites to be sure that events have not been cancelled.**

~~**April 4: Masters Gardeners' Home Garden Tour, featuring the iris and butterfly gardens of our own Diane Tweedy! Click [here](#) for more info. [cancelled]**~~

~~**April 11 - "Open Houses" at iris gardens of four TAIS members, 9-noon. [cancelled]**~~

**TAIS Annual Iris Show: Because the library is closed, we will hold a different type of show via a Photo Gallery on our website, [www.tucsoniris.org](http://www.tucsoniris.org). See p. 5 of this newsletter.**

**May 14 meeting: TBG, 1 PM. Adam, the horticulturalist at the Tucson Botanical Gardens, will speak about tending the iris there and other things. Bring a friend! Pending health guidelines.**

### Birthday Wishes to:

**Jim Wilcoxon**

**Carol Peterson**

**Dorrell-Jo MacWhinnie**

**Kathy Chilton**



E. Roosevelt, 'Wayman's 1939 catalog via HIPS website

# March Meeting Minutes



14 March [amended 30 March] - Steve Buckley of Jones Photo entertained and educated 17 TAIS members and a guest with tips for photographing flowers. His slides of gorgeous blooms were a treat.

The Master Gardeners Tour is ~~up in the air at this point~~ [cancelled] because of the Corona virus pandemic. We chose to ~~proceed with~~ [cancel] our Open House of the gardens of Kevin, Gary, Susan, and Diane on April 11. ~~Joyce requested a card table (or similar) at each one for the refreshments she will set up.~~ Our Show is scheduled for Saturday April 25, provided that the library is open at that point [changed to photos] Bonnie, Jim, Kevin, and Kathy volunteered to set up from 4-5 PM on April 24th. On Saturday, Kevin, Susan, and Sue will work from 8 AM until noon. Susan, Jim, and Sue will take the noon to 3 PM shift. Kevin, Bonnie, and Kathy signed up for take down at 3 PM.

Sue motioned that three members be approved to each order \$350-worth of rhizomes (to include shipping) from their grower of choice for our Sale, and that she order \$400-worth of recent rhizomes to present to volunteers. The latter will be considered Club Irises, meaning that their increases will come back to us for future Sales. Gary seconded the motion. Susan, Kevin, and Sue volunteered to take this on. [Postponed for now. We'll re-evaluate whether the Sale can occur and proceed accordingly].

Today's door prizes of recent Van Liere introductions were won by Taffy ('Midnight Cry'), Sam ('Zion's Horn'), and Sue ('Fragrant Offering,' which she asked Susan to grow for her).

Eight people stayed for the Board Meeting which ran from 2:22 to 2:32 PM. Sue had 25 copies of our Iris Culture booklets in her bag, which she gave to Susan to present to new members. Susan has a few copies of our "Growing Iris in Containers" pamphlets. Tony recommended Action Print and Copy at Prince and First for great prices. Martin will investigate embroidered shirts for the group. He mentioned that he has used Renegade before. Bonnie requested that we submit topics for desired presentations to her, as advertisements must be placed about two months in advance. Susan has had no membership requests for a few weeks. She asked that a note about dues appear in the next newsletter. Gary reported that we discontinued holding Iris Shows at malls because of costs and insurance. Martin suggested that we invite friends to the Show because it is an excellent way to get them interested in iris.

- Sue Clark, secretary

## Tips for Photographing Flowers

Some tips from Steve Buckley of Jones Photo, based on my notes of his talk.

- Be steady! A tripod adapter is available for cellphones.
- Consider cutting a flower and centering it in the flower patch. Focus on the featured flower.

We have switched to a show of photos of members' irises!



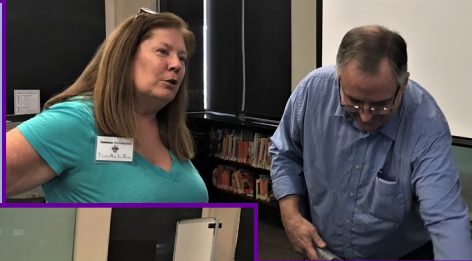
We're on the web!

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

- Remember that the closer you focus in on a flower, the narrower the depth of field, thus only a thin plane of focus will be available.
- The diffuse light of an overcast day is best for capturing colors. Avoid including the sky since it will be white - aim low.
- You can make a diffuser with a circle of white bed sheet or white rip-stop nylon attached to a circle of heavy wire about 2' wide. Hold this between the light source (the sun) and the subject - really close to the subject for maximum diffusion.
- Using a flash can make the background darker and less prominent. He called this "key shifting."
- Concentrate on the center of the flower. You can crop later.
- A piece of mat board held behind a flower blocks out busy backgrounds. Ask for the center cuts of framing mats at art stores. Try various colors.
- Or consider using an out-of-focus photo as background. He showed ones of Mt. Rainier and a sunset.
- A spritz of water adds drama to flowers and leaves.
- Use glycerin if you want a single drop of liquid on the subject that will mirror its surroundings.
- Crop picture on computer if you can't get close enough (and if your image has high enough resolution).
- Ways to steady camera (in decreasing order of effectiveness): tripod, monopod (can double as a walking stick), a stable surface to lean on, hold camera close to body with hand under lens and use the view finder rather than the live view.
- Look for unusual images to capture.
- For 35 mm cameras:
  - Extension tubes come in three lengths and fit between the lens and the camera's body. They change the optics of the lens allowing it to focus much closer.
  - Close-up filters attach to the end of the lens for a similar effect.
  - A reversal ring (\$15) lets you to mount the lens backwards, allowing you to get in very close to subject.
- Most importantly, have fun! - SC



# TAIS March Meeting



**Photos by  
Dave Smith**





## Treasurer's Report for March - submitted by Martin Juarez

Beginning Balance					\$6,243.58	
Date	Pd	MOP	Deposits	Expenses		
14-Mar	X	#1844		\$13.92		Knill - hospitality
14-Mar		#1845		\$35.50		Windischman - supplies
14-Mar		#1846		\$48.72		Clark - supplies, copies, AIS (Schaeffer)
14-Mar		#1847		\$75.00		Buckley - speaker
19-Mar	X		\$10.00			Dues - cash (Court)
19-Mar	X		\$20.00			Dues - Fernanes #5017, Holvenstot #15
Sub-Totals			\$30.00	\$173.14		
Ending Balance					\$6,100.44	3/19/20 17:02
Check #1841 (\$7.48) still pending from February						

### Iris Form, Part III: Space Age Iris

Just as many iris lovers abhorred the Flattie form, so did they detest the next new thing: Space Age Irises. These sport extensions to their beards in the form of horns, spoons, flounces, or pom-poms.

In the late 1940's, hybridizer Lloyd Austin happened upon some iris seedlings with quirky appendages at the tips of their beards while visiting Sydney Mitchell's gardens in California. These in no way appealed to Mitchell's sensibilities (he referred to them as "monstrosities"), so he offered all of the strangely-flowered seedlings to Austin, who crossed and recrossed them before introducing the first space age iris, 'Unicorn,' in 1954. (Schreinners Iris Blog entry of 27 Nov 2013). Austin offered ten new space-agers in the 1961 catalog of his Rainbow Hybridizing Gardens located in Placerville, California. Before becoming absorbed in breeding space-agers, Austin specialized in crossing *Oncocyclus* and *Regelia* irises. He was also influential in developing reblooming irises, including 'December Royalty' (1951) (per the Iris Wiki).

Other breeders developed more space age irises. 'Sky Hooks' (Osbourne 1979) blooms in midseason. With soft yellow ruffled petals and gold beards finishing as violet horns, it won an Award of Merit and is in the ancestry of more than one space ager. Three of its descendants won Dykes Medals for Monty Byers in a seven-year interval: 'Thornbird' in 1997, 'Conjunction' in 1998, and 'Mesmerizer' in 2002. 'Thornbird' (1988) sports violet horns *or* spoons and is described in a 1989 catalog as "Most strange, with a kind of predatory presence..." (Iris Wiki). It is an excellent grower and increaser, often producing [two stems](#) per rhizome. 73 photos of it on [garden.org](#) and 50 on the [Iris Wiki](#) attest to its popularity! 'Conjunction' (1988) has fuzzy horns and 'Mesmerizer' (1990) is white with large ruffled flounces. All three flower in midseason with 'Conjunction' extending into the late season as well.

'Believe in Magic' (Jedlicka 2008) would certainly catch the eye in any garden with its bright dark pink and peach ruffled petals. It flowers in midseason and is a grandchild of 'Thornbird.' Leonard and Kathryn Jedlicka of [Blue J Iris](#) ratched space age irises up a notch with their pom-pom irises, sporting excessively ruffled and curled flounces that resemble miniature carnations! Their border bearded pom-pom '[Big Bang Theory](#)' (2009) is a clear yellow self with bright orange beards.

Next month, we'll look at more space age irises. - SC, who wishes for a 'Thornbird'



From Top: 'Unicorn' (WOI blog, 3 Mar 2012), 'Sky Hooks' (Iris Wiki), 'Thornbird' (Blue J Iris website), 'Conjunction' (Iris Wiki), 'Believe in Magic' & 'Big Bang Theory' (Blue J Iris website)

## A Different Type of Iris Show This Year!

Well, it seems that everything is different these days, and our show is no exception! Because the library where we were to hold it is closed until further notice, we will host a “virtual” iris show via a Photo Gallery on our website, [www.tucsoniris.org](http://www.tucsoniris.org).

### GUIDELINES

- Each member may submit up to **ten photos**. You may use these same photos again in our October photo contest if you wish.
- Please include for each picture: **your name and the name of the variety**. If you do not know the name, label it as a NOID, meaning no ID (no identification).
- Submit photos by emailing them in groups of 1-4 to [submissions@tucsoniris.org](mailto:submissions@tucsoniris.org). Our webmaster Tim Valenzuela was kind enough to set up this special email address for the event.
- Photos may be of any of your irises that have bloomed from January 2020 though the original show date of April 25. This provides a much longer interval than just whatever is blooming at our usual show time!
- Photos may be of irises growing in the garden - no need to pick them for this kind of show! It is fine if they have been picked, though.
- Each photo should focus on one variety and not be a general picture of your iris garden. It is ok if other varieties are visible - just have the chosen one in the center of the photo.
- Please submit only one photo of any particular variety.
- You must have grown the irises in your photo submissions.
- Although this is not a photo contest, please submit only clear pictures. See the tips on p. 2. A piece of posterboard can be used to block out a busy or unattractive background.
- Deadline for submissions will be **April 25 at midnight**.



### VOTING

So that things seem a bit normal, we will still hold a popular vote. Thank you to Sam for suggesting this!

- Anyone may vote - members and nonmembers!
- Please send the names of your **three favorite varieties** to [taisnewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:taisnewsletter@yahoo.com). The ranking or order does not matter. The only criterion is that you find them to be lovely.
- Please place only one vote for three varieties. No stuffing the imaginary ballot box!
- Winners will be announced on the website and in the newsletter.
- Votes will be accepted from **April 26 to April 30**.

## TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2020

Kevin Kartchner - Acting 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 April

As your irises bloom, verify the flower against the name to be sure it is correct. (Try using the [Iris Wiki](#) for this). Redo labels if incorrect or faded. Re-map the bed.

Carefully remove spent flowers for maximum visual impact. Trim flower stalks at their base after they finish blooming, using scissors to help protect the rhizome from injury.


Continue applying a fertilizer high in phosphate for six to eight weeks after bloom time to boost the plant while it sets its future increases and buds.



## Tip Exchange

[We are the Gardeners](#) (Joanna Gaines, 2019) is another recent book about gardening with children. It's a chronical about how Joanna and her children started their garden and the lessons they learned along the way, including "bunnies eat everything!" The family persevered and now enjoys a lovely and productive garden filled with food and flowers. "Readers will learn a great deal about gardens, from seeds to pollinators to soil dwellers." - School Library Journal Online. "Packed with useful information in an easy-to-understand format, this will help children, and their adults, who wish to venture into the world of growing some of their own food and flowers." - Booklist. Five star rating. - SC

## Iris Limerick

I wish irises came in green,  
A bright Grinchy-green, I mean.  
Like that of a leprechaun,  
Or perhaps a dimetrodon   
(An ancient reptile as green as a bean)!  
- Sue Clark



Source: Iris Wiki

'Sikh' (Baker 1926)

## Did You Know?

There are many irises at the Boyce-Thompson Arboretum near Superior, Arizona, including a newly-revitalized patch of arilbreds along the main trail. 'Esther the Queen' is one variety in that section. A large swath of irises borders part of the demonstration garden. Most of these are tall bearded, but there is a big clump of spuria irises (labelled Alphaspur) mixed in, along with some morea irises, daffodils, and jonquils. A royal purple iris with white beards was blooming when I visited in mid-January and early March of this year. It looks like a historic variety. A clump of *Iris pseudacorus* thrives in a fountain in the legume garden. - SC

"Who would have thought it possible that a tiny flower could preoccupy a person so completely that there simply wasn't room for any other thought..." - Sophie Scholl

## A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Back to England this month for a look into the life of George Percival Baker, a man who climbed mountains and collected irises. G. P., as he was called, met iris enthusiast George Yeld (see [March 2019](#) issue of this newsletter for more on Yeld) while hiking, and the next year helped rescue Yeld when he fell into a crevasse during a climb in the western Alps. Baker was a member of the first expeditions to summit two mountains in the Alps. He and his brother owned a textile manufacturing and retail firm in London, GP and J Baker, which is well-respected and still in business.

Baker's interest in iris was sparked by Yeld in 1880 soon after they met. Yeld stopped by to visit Baker one day and they went to the nearby nursery of Robert Parker, one of the first establishments to publish an iris catalog. They both bought irises and G. P. was hooked, never to be without them again. Although fond of tall bearded, his passion was with species irises. He collected iris plants and/or seeds wherever he wandered and climbed. Friends and family gathered them for him, as well. Baker was invited by Dr. George E. Post to climb Mount Olympus in 1903. Post was a doctor and botanist in Beirut. The two men collected many plants during this expedition.

G. P. culled irises and other plants throughout Greece, the mid-East, and parts of Asia. He has a tulip named after him, a poppy, and two irises - one bulbous and one rhizomatous. Baker began hybridizing irises around the end of World War I, focusing his efforts on crossing arils with non-arils. He registered few of his creations, mostly giving them away to visitors to his garden in Kent and to members of the British Iris Society. Four of his varieties helped improve garden irises of the time. One of these, 'Maid of Kent,' is considered Baker's finest iris and it was awarded a Silver Medal by the British Iris Society in 1934. The name of this white iris with violet feathering is based on a historical figure, Joan the "Fair Maid of Kent," who later married Edward the Black Prince to become the first Princess of Wales. No doubt this boosted popularity of Baker's iris. What's in a name, indeed! His "Iris for the Alpine Garden" remains the top article on that topic to date! Baker purchased the 47 watercolors by F. H. Round which appeared in Dykes' book and donated them to the British Iris Society. Well played, G. P.! - SC  
Source: [Classic Irises and the Men and Women Who Created Them](#) by Clarence E. Mahan