

TAIS Newsletter

Our 55th year

Tucson Area Iris Society—established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



A spuria iris

Kary Iris Garden,
Scottsdale, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2020

Acting President's Message

It's 100 degrees in the shade. But our iris don't live in the shade. I used an infrared temperature "gun" to collect some interesting data. I was surprised at how hot the iris environment is: 130 degree leaves and 140 degree ground. As expected shade and mulch lower temperatures. Our club members are doing a lot of growing experiments as you can read in the May newsletter. Record your results so we can share our successes (and failures) next year.

June 2, 2020, 2pm Temperature data* (degrees F), Kevin's iris patch:

100 Air temperature

Iris leaf temperature
130 Full sun
110 30% shade cloth

Ground temperature
140 Iris in full sun

Mulch (Coarse bark) temperature
under 30% shade cloth
130 Top of mulch
90 Ground under mulch

* Note: Not scientifically significant data: cheapo temperature gun, object reflectivity affects measurements, small sample size, and many other variables, but instructive.

- Kevin Kartchner

"That beautiful season...Summer...Filled was the air with a dreamy and magical light; And the landscape lay as if new created in all the freshness of childhood." - Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

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Upcoming Events

Next meeting: August 8, 1 PM. Instead of our Auction, we will meet via Zoom. Topic TBA.

PAIS Rhizome Sale: July 20-25, 2020. Online this year - <https://paisirisstore.com/>.

TAIS Rhizome Sale: September 19 at Harlow's Gardens, 9 AM. Pending health guidelines.

Birthday Wishes to:

Pam Court

Nancy McKean

Gary Carruthers

Randy Bixby



Pierre Bulliard 1780-1791. L'Iris Germanique



TAIS Virtual Iris Show 2020, Irises from NOID 2 to Z



NOID 2, NOID 3, NOID 4 is actually 'Alabaster Unicorn,' NOID 5



NOID 6, 'October Sky,' 'One Wild Child,' 'Orange Crush Cocktail' (1st place)



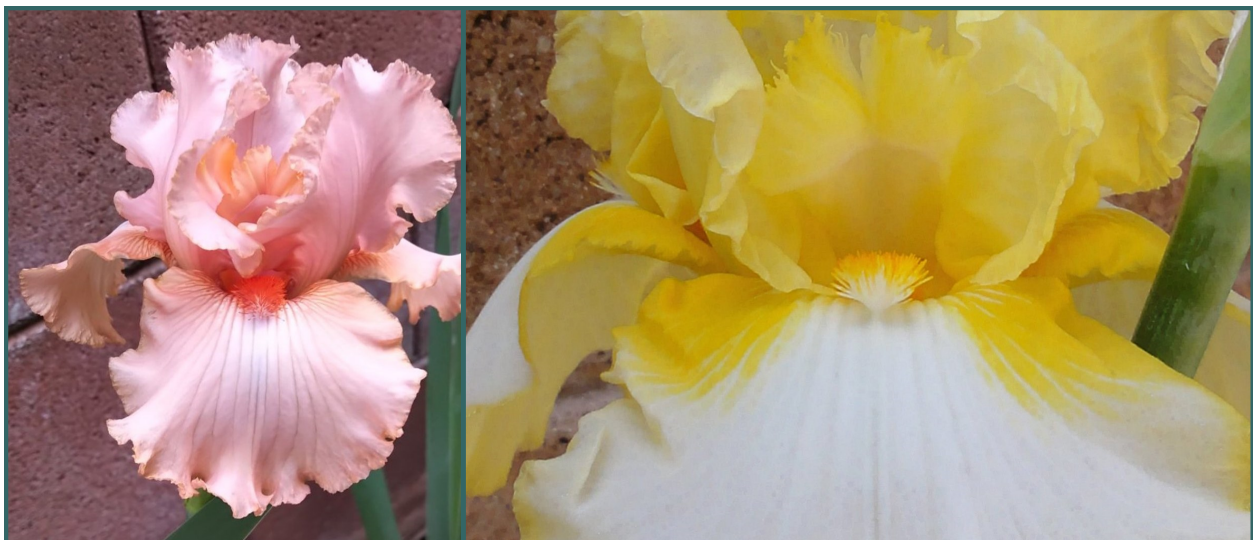
'Orange Crush Cocktail' (1st place), 'Other Side of Heaven,' 'Polite Applause,' 'Purr Form Mints'



'Remember the Vee,' 'Revere,' 'Rustic Charm,' 'Scoonchee'



'Scoonchee,' 'Seal a Deal,' 'Secret Delight'



Seedling 1, Seedling 2



Seedling 3, Seedling 4, Seedling 5 [no Seedling 6]



Seedling 7, Seedling 8, 'Sharp Dressed Man,' 'Sisters of Loretto'



'Sky's the Limit,' 'Smithsonian Bound,' 'Speed Limit,' 'Spicy Serving'



'Spiral Galaxy,' 'Spring Elegance,' 'Sunblaze,' 'Talking Turkey'



'That's All Folks' (tied for 3rd), 'Vanity Girl,' 'Vanity Girl,' 'Vixen' (is actually 'MiLady Grace')



Walking Iris, 'White Hot,' 'Zion's Horn'

Treasurer's Report for June - submitted by Martin Juarez

Beginning Balance				\$6,087.34	
Date	Pd	MOP	Deposits	Expenses	
4-Jun	X	#1849		\$24.24	Clark - copies, P.O., stamps
Sub-Totals			\$0.00	\$24.24	
Ending Balance				\$6,063.10	6/28/20 12:20

NOTE: Anyone requesting reimbursement for any expense is asked to please submit an original receipt/invoice for auditing purposes (as motioned and passed by the group) in a timely manner. Also, please do not mix/combine personal expenses and group expenses on/in the same transaction/receipt.

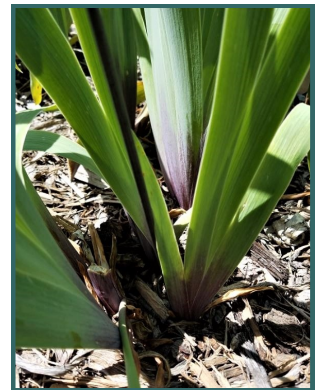
Iris Foliage, Part II: Purple-based

Have you ever noticed that some irises have purple at the bases of their leaves, especially when they start ramping up in January? The color is from anthocyanin, which also occasionally also tints stalks and sometimes spathes. It is the same pigment in many iris flowers. According to an article on the Iris Wiki, efforts at breeding irises which have completely purple foliage have been less than successful. They might be stunning, though! 'Elsa Sass' (Sass 1939) has some of the darkest purple-based foliage per the HIPS journal, so might be a good starting point for that particular hybridizing goal.

Purple-based foliage appears in many iris species and varieties, but seems to be much more common in tall bearded. The Iris Wiki maintains a [list](#) of those irises displaying this trait, and welcomes additions to it. Also posted is a [link](#) to an article which appeared in the Spring 1992 issue of ROOTS, the journal of the Historic Iris Preservation Society (HIPS). This article summarizes other lists of irises with purple-based foliage (pbf). Author Phil Edinger mentions that some varieties, he calls them "ephemeral purples," start out purple and fade to green before bloom time, but that he considers the time just before bloom and into summer as the best time to see most pbf. Edinger states that the reason we care about pbf is that sometimes it can help us distinguish between two historic varieties. For instance, 'Wabash' and 'Bright Hour' are often confused because their flowers are quite similar. The Dykes-winning 'Wabash' can be identified by its purple-based foliage. 'Bright Hour' has green foliage. HIPS asks individuals to [submit](#) a record of which of their historic (30-year old+) irises have pbf at *bloom time*.

'Honky Tonk Blues' (Schreiner 1988) is a Dykes-medal-winner with a rich flush of purple at base of its leaves. I noticed that the Schreiners website does not mention its purple-based foliage, but that garden.org and the Iris Wiki do (the latter in a comment). Understandably, *flowers* are the usual focus of iris descriptions.

Iris purpleobracteata is a species iris from Turkey with purple bracts [spathes]. Its well-branched stems have flowers of straw yellow, ice blue, or tan, per the website of the Species Iris Group of North America, SIGNA. Likely a diploid, it resembles a miniature tall bearded iris. Kelly Norris believes that it could improve that class. I observed that 'Eleanor Roosevelt' also has purple bracts. - SC



Photos from top: purple-based foliage, 'Wabash,' 'Bright Hour,' 'Honky Tonk Blues' (Iris Wiki), and *Iris purpleobracteata* (SIGNA website).

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)

Susan Schaefer - Membership Chairperson

Dave Smith - 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, which is harmful at this point of their growth cycle.

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

Continue to feed and water reblooming irises.



Tip Exchange

“**Sun Scald** - After the blooming season, when irises go into dormancy and the dead leaves are removed, sun scald often does a lot of damage to the exposed rhizomes. This may cause rot. The damage can be easily corrected by covering the rhizomes with mulching material or soil.” Source: <https://www.louisianairis.com/louisiana.native.iris.htm> - SC

Some reasons that irises might not bloom:

1. **too shaded** - relocate to a sunny spot in the fall

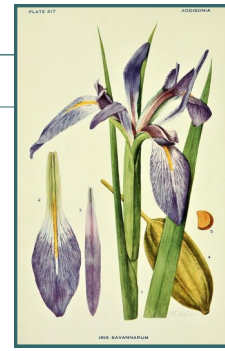
2. **too crowded** - divide them in the fall

3. **too deep** - in the fall, raise rhizome so top is uncovered or covered with a thin layer of soil (1” max). Source: [WikiHow](https://www.wikihow.com/Divide-Iris-Rhizomes) - SC

Iris Haiku

An iris lit the day
Just as fireworks lit the night;
Both such a delight.

- Sue Clark



Source: NY Botanical Garden, Wikipedia

I. savannarum

Did You Know?

Irises can form hybrid swarms. Landscapes may be altered by natural events such as hurricanes, forest fires, or earthquakes or by man-made events such as channelizing and rerouting rivers or conversion of land to agricultural or residential use. When two or more species are brought into closer contact by events such as these, they may be pollinated by wind or insects. Irises hybridized in this manner may be sterile or fertile, but they **won't breed true**. John K. Small, who was featured in last month's newsletter, lost much of his credibility as a botanist by naming nearly one hundred irises he found in Louisiana as *species*, when they were later proven to be the result of hybrid swarms. - Clarence E. Mahan, [Classic Irises and the Men and Women Who Created Them](#)

“The flowers are nature's jewels, with whose wealth she decks her summer beauty.” - George Croly

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

We have heard and read countless times that irises are named after Iris, the Greek goddess of the rainbow because they come in every color of the rainbow. Mr. Mahan cautions us against this commonly-held belief, because irises really *did not* come in all of the colors of the rainbow until the twentieth century - they were mostly purple, [pale] yellow, white, or some mix of these colors. Certainly not enough colors to make a rainbow...

So why did the Greeks name our favorite flower “iris?” It is something that I would never have suspected. Perhaps even Sherlock Holmes would not have suspected it. Mr. Mahan reports that if one digs up a rhizome at night and slices it open, there will be an iridescent glow. [Does he mean bioluminescence? I will check this out when I have something to divide, since I don't want to cut up any of my rhizomes, even in the name of science...]. And the word iridescence comes from the root word iris, meaning rainbow.

Well, the Greeks and Romans were quite interested in iris rhizomes, which they dried and used to make orris root for its lovely violet-like scent. “It was a commodity in great demand in Rome. During the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, personal hygiene was often lacking and there was ample reason to use orris root to perfume linens” [their clothes]. The property of iridescence gave the rhizomes even more appeal - they must be *magical*. In order to preserve the magic, a specific ritual must be used when digging them. Pliny the Elder described this ritual in his *Naturalis Historia*: The iris digger had to start preparing three months early by dripping honey water over himself to purify his body. When this was complete and he was ready to dig, he had to make three circles in the soil beside the iris using his sword. After pulling out the iris, the collector held it up to the heavens in gratitude. Thankfully we don't have to go through an elaborate ritual to dig up our rhizomes nowadays!

Although Pliny was keen on the use of the iris as medicine, he disapproved of its use as a perfume because he considered that to be frivolous. Obviously, the personal-hygiene-lacking masses disagreed with him. - SC
To be continued...

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