

# TAIS Newsletter

Our 55th year

Tucson Area Iris Society — established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



## Acting President's Message

It feels like spring and my iris are finally starting to look like they are enjoying life. I'm still hoping for an above-average bloom with all of our regular rains. I'm also looking forward to seeing if my seedlings produce anything interesting. How does your garden grow?

Gardeners, especially blast furnace growers, are very interesting people with many talents. If you need help with your plants, especially roses, then talk to our own Angela Powers at the demonstration garden. Please see this [video](#).

Our March 14th meeting will be about flower photography. I'm excited to improve my photos and we will see your iris photos at our photo contest in October.

- Kevin Kartchner

### 'Out of the Blues'

(Van Liere, 2009)

Tucson Botanical Gardens

Photo by Sue Clark, 2017

"Despite March's windy reputation, winter isn't really blown away; it is washed away. It flows down all the hills, goes swirling down the valleys and spills out to sea. Like so many of this earth's elements, winter itself is soluble in water....It is a wet world, winter's harsh grip beginning to relax....An outcropping ledge on the hillside sheds its beard of icicles and becomes a seep spring that drips into a shallow pool that feeds a growing runlet."

~ "Washing Winter Away," The New York Times, 17 March 1964

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## Upcoming Events

**Next meeting: March 14th - 1 PM - Steve Buckley of Jones Photo speaking on flower photography. Bring your camera(s)! Murphy-Wilmot Library.**

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

**April 11 - "Open Houses" at iris gardens of three TAIS members (details TBA).**

**TAIS Annual Iris Show: April 25 - 9AM to 3 PM. Set up April 24 from 4 to 5 PM and April 25 at 8 AM. Murphy-Wilmot Library. Large room. See posters on p. 7-8.**

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

### Birthday Wishes to:

**Kristee West**

**Martin Juarez**

**Paul Bessey**

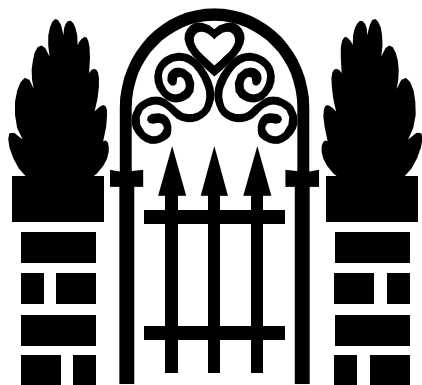
**Steven Ginter**

**Celia Keener**



from clipartpanda.com

# February Meeting Minutes



We ♥ Irises

8 Feb 2020 - Twenty people including two new members learned all about aril and arilbred irises from Howard Dash's presentation today. See more about this on p. 4. Howard raffled several certificates for his newer rhizomes with a token payment required for shipment.

Potted iris door prizes were won by Mary Ann ('Cosmic Adventure'), Nancy ('Jungle Mist'), and Bonnie ('Dark Energy'). Susan and I have been tending these beauties since September.

Mary Ann volunteered to chair our Sale. I presented her with notes from our last sale. Bonnie will speak to Debbie at Harlow's to reserve a day for the Sale. Susan, Bonnie, and Kathy are going to help Diane, whose gardens will be featured on the Master Gardeners (MG) Tour on April 4. Kevin volunteered to chair the Show if no one else wants to.

Last month, Joyce suggested that some members

open their gardens during bloom season so that other members can see their irises. Susan, Kevin, and Gary have volunteered to do this. Joyce offered to provide refreshments at each of the gardens. April 11 was chosen to fit between the MG tour, the MG sale, and our Show.

Shirley Andrews renewed her membership for three years and donated \$20 toward new members. We chose to use this to help fund the newsletters for new members without computers.

Eight individuals stayed for the Board Meeting. Susan reported that we have 60 members, not all of whom have renewed. She has been giving information on iris culture to new members. Martin will follow up on his idea of TAIS shirts. Several people expressed interest. The club would fund the set-up fees, Kevin said. Then everyone would pay for their own shirt.

Remember to  
fertilize!



We're on the web!

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

Joyce suggested that we designate a meeting as Bring-a-Friend Day and hold a special raffle for the guests, and a special raffle for whomever brought a guest. She mentioned that a lovely iris painting (which is being donated) could be a possible prize for those members. We decided that our May meeting would be ideal for this. Bonnie reported that we might set up a table at an Open House at TBG. And she mentioned that Melania gave her a list of potential speakers. Reminder to bring the PA system to the Sale in the future.

## Schedule for rest of year:

**March 14:** Photographing flowers - Library

**April 25:** Iris Show - Library

**May 16:** Adam Ferrell-Wortman, Horticulturist - TBG, Bring-a-Friend Day!

**June and July:** no meetings

**August 8:** Rhizome Auction - TBG.

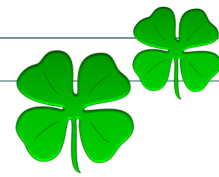
**September 19:** Rhizome Sale - Harlow's

**October 10:** 3rd Annual Photo Contest - Library

**November 14:** Potluck and installation of new Officers - TBG

Board meeting: 2:45 to 3:10 PM.

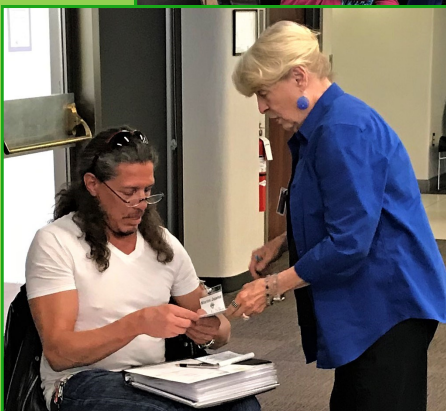
- Sue Clark, Secretary



# TAIS February Meeting



Photos by  
Dave Smith



The *Aril Society International* is a group of iris enthusiasts from around the world that are devoted to promoting the aril and arilbred irises. We are a cooperating society with the American Iris Society.

Each year the judges of the American Iris Society select the best irises in each class. Those arilbreds receive an actual medal based on the percentage of their aril ancestry.

*Arils*, or *arilbreds*, are wild bearded iris species found in semi-arid to desert climates from Central Asia to the Middle East. Aril irises get their name from the creamy white collar (or "aril") on their seeds. Despite their desert heritage some arils are successfully grown in places like Germany and Michigan. The term "aril" also applies to hybrids between any aril species.

*Arilbreds*, or *arilbred irises*, are the result of breeding arils with the more commonly grown bearded irises from Europe. The arilbreds are diverse in color and form and size, and therefore are a fun and exciting choice for your garden. Arilbreds will grow well wherever traditional bearded irises grow.

The Aril Society operates independently of the American Iris Society and is considered a cooperating society. Each group has its own membership dues. The big membership benefits for ASI are our annual seed sale & plant sale.

Some members host *open gardens* open to the public. And other members have *commercial nurseries* selling our favorite irises.

<http://www.arilsociety.org>

**Iris Enchantment**

AIS National Convention  
Las Cruces, NM  
April 12-17, 2021

## Arils and Arilbreds - the basics

Aril irises, like most irises, hail from the Middle East and Mediterranean regions. Arils have evolved in areas with no summer moisture, so they are notoriously difficult to grow in moderate climates. They go completely dormant during the summer, with no leaves to be seen. Arils bloom two to three weeks before tall bearded irises, and have been crossed with bearded irises to develop types which can be grown in climates other than extreme deserts. These crosses are called arilbreds.

The two groups of aril irises are Oncocyclus and Regelia. They are considered sections (groups of species with similar traits) of the genus *Iris*. Oncocyclus hail from Turkey, the Caucasus, Iran, and Israel. Stems generally bear a single bloom, rounded in shape. One example is *Iris atrofusca* (below). Regelia are from the Altai Mountains (Russia-China-Mongolia border) and the mountains of Iran and Afghanistan. Their stems generally bear two flowers, which are somewhat elongated in shape. An example is *I. hoogiana*. (Photo below).

There are nine possibilities when crossing these two types with themselves, with each other, and with bearded irises. According to Howie Dash, what is important to the iris gardener is that the *less the aril content*, the easier the variety will be to grow. So look for arilbreds labeled OB-, OGB-, or RB-. The O refers to Oncocyclus, the G and the R to Regelia, the B to Bearded, and the minus sign indicates that the plant contains less than half aril content. And to make things just a bit more complicated, since 1990 the amount of aril content is based on the number of chromosomes rather than on proportion of parentage. - SC



From left: iris seed with prominent aril (light area); *Iris atrofusca*, an Oncocyclus; *I. hoogiana*, a Regelia. (Sources for all: Iris Wiki and Wikipedia)

## Howard Dash Visits our Club

Howard Dash graciously accepted Bonnie's invitation to speak at our club, and he drove over from Las Cruces to do so for our February meeting. His topic - "Arils and Arilbred Iris" affords us a way to begin the bloom season of our iris beds two to three weeks earlier by incorporating some of these irises.

Howie owns Picacho Mountain Iris, where he hybridizes and introduces his own varieties. Most of his introductions are tall bearded. He introduced his first arilbred, 'Chihuahua Night,' in 2019. Some of Howie's goals for the arilbreds include prominent veining and large signals. And he is always on the lookout for crosses that look new and different.

He mentioned that it takes 6 to 7 years from making the cross to selling a new variety. In year 2, the seedlings usually bloom for the first time; in year 3, he selects about 10% of the best ones to continue with and composts the remaining 90%; in years 4-6, rhizomes increase until there are enough to introduce. He likes to have approximately 35-50+ rhizomes before offering them, and said that the larger iris nurseries generally need at least 100 rhizomes to offer them for sale.

Howie showed slides of many lovely irises and recommended the following arilbreds, stating that the climate in Las Cruces is similar to Tucson's:

- '[Zizah](#)' - Rich, OGB+ (but easy to grow), early
- '[Sand Dancer](#),' '[Noble Warrior](#),' - Rick Tasco, OGB
- '[Kalifa's Robe](#)' - Hager - has prominent signal (dark spot on falls), OGB, early MS (midseason)
- '[Refiner's Fire](#)' - McGrath - easy, OGB
- '[Genetic Artist](#)' - RB - grow w/ TB's (good drainage)
- '[Cup Runneth Over](#)' - McAllister, OGB-, MS
- '[Desert Snow](#)' - P. Black, grows like a weed!, OGB-, ice-white, dark blue signal [charming!]
- '[Heart of Hearts](#)' - P. Black, OGB-, MS to late
- '[Egyptian Queen](#),' '[Sri Lanka](#)' - T. Johnson, OGB-
- '[Chain Reaction](#)' - Rick Tasco, OGB-, E-L & RE
- '[Hakuna Matata](#),' '[Omar's Gold](#)' - grow well, OGB-
- '[Childsong](#)' - Jensen - easy, RB-, MS, sweet smell

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

Beginning Balance				\$6,682.03	
	Pd	MOP	Deposits	Expenses	
8-Feb	X	#1839		\$30.00	Else - AIS membership
8-Feb		#1840		\$26.48	Clark - copies
8-Feb		#1841		\$7.48	Albano - hospitality
8-Feb		#1842		\$34.49	Knill - hospitality
14-Feb		#1843		\$500.00	Valenzuela - webiste
20-Feb	X		\$20.00		DUES (CASH)
20-Feb	X		\$140.00		DUES *
<b>Sub-Totals</b>			\$160.00	\$598.45	
Ending Balance				\$6,243.58	2/20/20 16:44
* DUES - Cash (Olsen, Hook); Chilton #563; Albano #265; Andrews #1043; Wilcoxon #7332; Vega #3065; Allen #1396; Oshea #407; Foltz #565; Skerston #1119.					



### Iris Form, Part II - Flatties

Irises with the flattie form resemble Japanese irises. The AIS Iris Wiki has a fairly complete [list](#) of them, with three arilbreds, five border bearded, two dwarf bearded, 36 Siberians, and 54 tall bearded. The earliest one that I discovered is 'Clematis' (Bliss 1917), which is more of a part-time flattie - if it opens in warm weather, it's flat; if it opens in cold weather, it has a traditional tall bearded iris shape! This variety is vigorous, has lots of buds, and is available from [Blue J Iris](#). 'Clematis' blooms in midseason, and is free-flowering and fragrant. Bertrand Farr's 'Japanesque' (1922) was met with mixed reviews upon its debut - most iris lovers hated it and other gardeners loved it! 'Japanesque' blooms in midseason and presents multiple flowers at once. 'Rhythm' (Ballard 1950) with its non-overlapping petals offers a different look - more like a daylily with iris coloring. The Rainbow Hybridizing Catalog from 1963 promoted it as distinctive in arrangements and issued a challenge for hybridizers to extend its form to other colors. (Source: [Iris Wiki](#)). Some other flatties that appealed to me include the following. 'Fiasco' (Blyth 2016) blooms in early midseason and has a slight sweet scent. It occasionally has a broken color pattern on the petals. 'Why Be Normal' (Johnson 2014) blooms in mid-to-late season and has a slight fragrance. (See photos of these five flatties at right)

For something brand-new, Schreiners presents '[Scaredy Cat](#)' (2020). This royal purple and white beauty offers fragrance, robustness, and floriferousness on three stems. Yellow and mahogany touches complete the package. It truly resembles a Japanese iris! (See photo at bottom right).

According to an [article](#) by Clive Russell in 2003, flatties do not always open flat, with blooms that open early being flat, and later ones, not. They seem to exhibit their flat form best in full sun, he noted. And unless the flowers can open quickly, the edges dry out and look papery. Because of their position on the stems, the flatties are not always able to open all the way without running into the stem. Hopefully these issues have been mostly resolved in the interim and we can continue to enjoy this fun and interesting form! Next month: Space Age Irises - SC



From left: 'Frosty Moonscape,' 'Impersonator,' and 'Flopsy' (all from Blue J Iris website)

From top: 'Clematis' (Blue J Iris website), 'Japanesque' (HIPS website), 'Rhythm,' 'Fiasco,' 'Why Be Normal,' and 'Scaredy Cat' (from Schreiners 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)

Dave Smith - Photographer

Susan Schaefer - Membership Chairperson

Sue Clark - Newsletter Editor & Publisher

## Iris Limerick:

I wish irises came in green.  
It's my favorite color, you see.  
The color of shamrocks  
And green eggs and ham-hocks.  
'Tis a wondrous color, is green!

- Sue Clark



Source: Iris Wiki

'Damozel' (Morrison, 1922)

## Did You Know?

The AIS Convention will be in Las Cruces from April 12-17 2021, only four hours away! On Thursday, tours will be of Blue J Iris Gardens (4000+ varieties!!!) and Calhoun Flower Farm. On Friday, tours will encompass a garden at New Mexico University and one at the Farm & Ranch Museum. On Saturday, tours will feature the Wilson Garden and the Ayers Garden, two private gardens. - SC via Howie Dash

**"IF YOU LOOK THE RIGHT WAY, YOU CAN SEE  
THAT THE WHOLE WORLD IS A GARDEN."**   
- FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT

## What to do in the Iris Garden for March:

Keep area free of leaves, weeds and pests.

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

Apply 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. Continue for six weeks after bloom season. This is when plants set future increases.



## Tip Exchange

A new book for ideas and strategies for gardening with children (and grandchildren):

[The Little Gardener](#) by Julie A. Cerny, 2020. "...extends a beautiful invitation to go outside and grow something together. It's written with both Big Gardeners and Little Gardeners in mind, sharing just the right amount of details to equip both for success without overwhelming those who are new to gardening." Some ecology, horticulture, and seasonal activities are mixed in, and the whole process is presented as an adventure. - SC

## A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

B. Y. Morrison was instrumental in creating the American Iris Society, as it was his letter to the editor of *The Garden Magazine* in 1919 that sparked John Wister and Frank Presby to establish AIS. Benjamin Yoe Morrison, known as B. Y., had loved irises since childhood. In 1914, he published an article in *The Garden Magazine* titled "Using German Iris for Garden Effect." This and his other articles about irises through the years did much to publicize bearded irises in America. B. Y. was entranced by the iris hybrids in Grace Sturtevant's garden, as they were larger and more colorful than any he had seen. These appealed to his artist's soul and he began "daubing iris pollen" immediately. Morrison, a Renaissance man, could sing, play the piano well, write an opera, give voice lessons, and draw. But it was his MS in Landscape Architecture from Harvard that earned him a traveling fellowship which took him to Japan, Korea, and China for a year. A collection of his masterful pen and ink drawings from this journey are housed at the Hunt Institute of Botanical Documentation at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. Following this, he relocated to the Washington, D. C. area as assistant to Dr. David Fairchild in the brand new Office of Plant Exploration and Introduction, a plant-lover's dream-come-true! Morrison moved hundreds of iris seedlings and cultivars to his new home in Takoma Park, Maryland, where he continued hybridizing. Eventually over 70 of his creations were introduced - mostly tall bearded, but some dwarf and intermediate varieties. (See photo above). Realistic about the changing nature of iris preferences, he wrote in 1925, "...Remember that this is a period of transition, that the iris in America is still on an upward path; that possibly none of the varieties of the day will last always, but that they are important for their contribution to the evolution of the iris of the future; remember also that the first requirements of a 'good' iris are vigor, floriferousness, and durability and that without these no matter how wonderful the other qualities, it is not a garden candidate." Morrison went on to design the National Arboretum, organize the USDA herbarium, and develop large-flowered cold-hardy azaleas. Well done, B.Y.! - SC

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



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# IRIS SHOW

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TUCSON AREA IRIS SOCIETY  
APRIL 25, 2020  
9 AM TO 3 PM  
MURPHY-WILMOT LIBRARY  
530 N WILMOT, TUCSON



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