

TAIS Newsletter

Our 55th year

Tucson Area Iris Society—established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



Acting President's Message

A few days before, you're anticipating which ones will be in bloom. The night before, you cut your stalks. You hope some will open up, and others you hope won't be past their prime. Early morning of the big day, you cut a few final stalks and fit everything into your car as delicately as possible. You feel every bump on the road and wonder which flowers were injured. At last you're at the library orienting your surviving flowers in the bottles with those sometimes-frustrating foam wedges. Hurry and add water and name tags before the clock says time's up. It's a real TAIS flower show! Did you miss all the show preparations this year or were photos easier? For all the effort, I prefer the real show's three-dimensional iris flowers in all their glory. Though the voting is over, you can still enjoy our virtual show on our website, as the early 100+ degree temperatures have arrived to roast the remaining real flowers. Thanks again to Sue Clark and Tim Valenzuela for putting together our virtual show. - Kevin Kartchner

Seedling

of Kevin Kartchner,
Tucson, Arizona

Photo by Kevin Kartchner, 2020

"No, my friend, darkness is not everywhere, for here and there I find faces illuminated from within; paper lanterns among the dark trees."

- Carole Borges

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Upcoming Events

Next meeting: May 14 - TBG, 1 PM. Adam, the horticulturalist at the Tucson Botanical Gardens, will speak about tending the iris there and other things. Bring a friend! Canceled by TBG due to the pandemic. They are closed indefinitely.

We do not meet in June or July, and hopefully we will be able to see one another at our Auction on August 8 at TBG.

Birthday Wishes to:

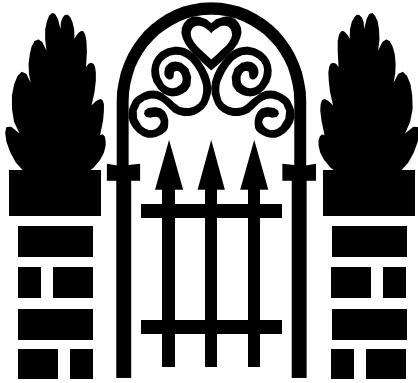
**Kevin Kartchner
Margie Valenzuela
Cheryl Modaff**



Photo by Rose Clark



Miscellaneous Notes



We ♥ Irises

Virtual Iris Show - Thank you to TAIS members who submitted photos and/or voted in our Virtual Show. **124 pictures!** While it was not quite the same as seeing everyone's flowers in person, it was still fun to see what our members are growing. I saw varieties that I would love to add to my garden. Hopefully, they will thrive and many will be offered at our rhizome sale in September!

Eighteen individuals contributed to the show this year. See photos of approximately 1/3 of the entries on the following pages. The rest will be featured in the June and July newsletters. Thank you to our webmaster Tim Valenzuela for handling all submissions and postings. - SC

And the winners of the fan favorites are:

1. 'Orange Crush Cocktail' - Melania and Sue
2. Tie - 'Blue Coyote' - Margie, 'Great Commander' - Tony, and 'Midnight Kitty' - Dave and Sue
3. Tie - 'Blutique' - Judith, 'Mixed Signals' - Melania, and 'That's All Folks' - Kevin

Deformed Flowers - I had five deformed iris flowers this year. The first was missing a standard. It had an extra-wide filament holding up the anther on that side (top photo).

Another plant also had troubles with the standards and more. On this one, the second flower had two shriveled standards and one tiny one (middle photo). The fourth bud barely opened and its petals were shriveled.

On one of my space age irises, a flower was missing a standard and style arm and had an extra-wide filament and double anther in the gap where they should have been. Another flower on the same stem was missing a standard and a fall, and had a two flounces coming from an extra-wide beard on one of the falls (bottom photo).

None of the foliage on these particular plants was pineappled. I wonder if *flowers* can pineapple? We did have four nights during which the water in our fountain froze. I recently read that aphids can deform flowers, but I picture that damage being different than what I saw - perhaps slight damage like distorted edges or spots. Did anyone else notice deformed flowers this year or know what causes them? Or is this not unusual? - SC



Newsletters will
continue through
the summer.



We're on the web!

Tucsoniris.org

If you know what may have caused these flowers to have the irregularities shown in the photos, please contact me at taisnewsletter@yahoo.com. Thank you. - SC

TAIS Virtual Iris Show 2020, Irises from A to G



'A Grape Fit,' 'Aachen,' 'Abby and Me,' 'Addicted to Love'



African Iris, 'Alabaster Unicorn,' 'Alabaster Unicorn,' 'And Away We Go'



'Are You Crazy,' 'Aviator Wings,' 'Ayes Alert,' 'Belise' (SPU) [a Spuria iris]



'Blinded by the Light,' 'Blue Coyote' (tied for 2nd place), 'Blurred Vision'



'Blutique' (tied for 3rd place), 'Braggin Rights,' 'Breckenridge Wonderland'



'Breve,' 'Butterfly Affair,' 'Cajun Sunrise' (LA) [a Louisiana iris]



'Calizona Gold,' 'Chihuahuan Desert,' 'Chihuahuan Desert,' 'Class Reunion'



'Cloud Reflection,' 'Clouds Go By,' 'Congratulations,' 'Cookie Combo'



'Coup de Soliel,' 'Dark Energy,' 'Dazzling Gold,' 'Diamond Broker'



'Dressed in Black,' 'Eleanor Roosevelt,' 'Epicenter,' 'Expose'



'Frills and Chills,' 'Fruited Plain,' 'Full Moon Rising,' 'FX Schreiner' bud



'Good Morning Beautiful,' 'Great Commander' (tied for 2nd place), 'Great Falls,' 'Gypsy Kisses'

Treasurer's Report for April - submitted by Martin Juarez

Beginning Balance					\$6,094.68	
Date	Pd	MOP	Deposits	Expenses		
28-Apr			\$10.00			Dues - Swartz #1148
28-Apr		#1848		\$37.34		Albano - sale supplies
Sub-Totals			\$10.00	\$37.34		
Ending Balance					\$6,067.34	4/28/20 10:19
Check #1841 (\$7.48) still pending from February						

Iris Form, Part III: Space Age Iris, continued

As I was researching last month's article, I came across a 1961 catalog on eBay: **Lloyd Austin's World Famous Iris Color Guidebook for Year 'Round Iris Bloom in the Garden of Your Dreams**. Who could pass that up? Its contents let us experience the "Dawn of the Space Age in Iris" in Mr. Austin's own words (which are just too charming for me to paraphrase). "For several years now my special seedbeds containing many thousands of descendants of my horned race have been yielding up unbelievable treasures - seedlings so far advanced in floral embellishments that they surely belong to the Age of Space."

Mr. Austin provided an overview of the history of his space-agers, which he began breeding in 1944. By 1954, he was ready to introduce the first horned one, 'Unicorn.' In the 1961 catalog, Mr. Austin offered 'Unicorn' as a bonus for all orders received within 15 days. He described it like this: "World's first horned Iris. Much in demand for excitement-causing plantings and for breeding..." Over the years, he introduced thirteen other horned irises in an assortment of colors, including 'Horned Lace' (1960) in soft yellow and 'Pink Unicorn' (1960).

In 1960, the first spooned type came along: 'Spoon Premier' - "An imaginative, almost magical development of my world-famous Horned Iris. Here the ends of the three horns have mystically enlarged and subtly transformed into broad decorative spoons adding a charming embellishment no Iris ever had before." And "Now the year 1961 marks the first public introduction of the new Flounced Race. These marvelous Flounced and Spooned varieties represent the AGE OF SPACE..." Three flounced varieties were introduced that year.

Growing these space agers even *sounds* exciting - "...under favorable growing conditions the most unexpected things can happen - a variety normally only horned may suddenly throw stunning big spoons; and some of the spooned varieties may occasionally astonish you with full-fledged, gorgeous flounces."

In the catalog, Mr. Austin encouraged the reader to try his hand at hybridizing iris - "You'll live longer - and better - if you have an absorbing & profitable hobby that repeatedly, year after year, gives you something interesting and exciting to look forward to. I challenge anyone to suggest a hobby that will accomplish this as surely & effectively as does Iris hybridizing." He included a Hybridizers' Column in each catalog and sold Germination Stimulant, a Manual, Supplement to the Manual, and a Kit with two custom-designed tweezers, all for \$9. His iris descriptions are filled with details of which varieties are best for breeding.

To bookend this study, here are some modern space-agers for comparison. 'Power Lines' (Probst 2013) sparks with vertical horns above blue and plum falls. It won an Honorable Mention in 2015. Two 2020 introductions from Stout Gardens at Dancing Tree caught my eye: 'Duck Tails' and 'Spynet.' The first is by Tom Burseen and the latter one by Hugh Stout. And both Kevin and Terry of our club entered 'Alabaster Unicorn' in our Virtual Show, whose name harkens back to Lloyd Austin's original 'Unicorn' - the type specimen for Space Age Iris!

Iris foliage will enter the spotlight next month. - SC



From top: 'Horned Lace,' 'Pink Unicorn,' 'Power Lines' (Iris Wiki), 'Duck Tails,' and 'Spynet' (Stout Gardens 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

Susan Schaefer - Membership Chairperson

Bonnie & Kathy - Programs & Publicity

Joyce & Mary Ann - Hospitality/Door Prizes

Diane Tweedy - Birthday cards (temporary)

Dave Smith - Photographer

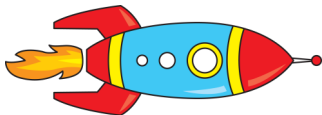
Sue Clark - Newsletter Editor & Publisher

What to do in the Iris Garden for May:

Trim any remaining flower stalks at their base. Using scissors for trimming helps to protect the rhizome from injury.

Fertilize with **Super Bloom** or **Ferti-Lome Blooming and Rooting** for six weeks following the last flower. **According to Sunset's Western Garden Book, irises form their increases and buds for next year's flowers during this six-week postbloom interval.**

Keep rebloomers watered and fed through the summer for the best chance of bloom in the fall.



Tip Exchange

“Avoid that spotty appearance, and achieve that professional look in YOUR garden in a hurry, by ordering 3 of a kind and planting them in groups.”

“Remember, it is the NEW and the UNUSUAL that attract attention in your garden.”

For best results, deeply water and fertilize reblooming irises every 10-14 days during dry spells in spring, summer, and early fall.

- Lloyd Austin in his 1961 catalog

Iris Limerick:

Once irises entered the Space Age
They instantly became all the rage!
With spoons, flounces, and horns,
And such names as 'Unicorn,'
They might never be upstaged.

- Sue Clark



Source: Wikipedia

Iris hexagona

Did You Know?

Lloyd Austin's Rainbow Hybridizing Gardens catalog was famous for its games and sweepstakes. Besides several categories of discounted irises, the Secret Variety game described in the 1961 catalog offered a discount to everyone who could find the 22 hidden iris descriptions that contained a word which ended in a capital letter (qualifying any of these for a 2-for-1 discount), the 5 Super Secret hidden varieties (3-for-1 discount), and 8 Announced Super Secret Varieties (3-for-1 discount). Individuals could write "SV" or "SSV" beside these irises on their order form, which qualified them for the discount. There was also a sweepstakes, for which the grand prize winner in 1960 was Joseph H. Fairbanks of 6926 Calle Ileo in Tucson, whose \$17 order was tripled! - SC

“The flower has no weekday self, dressed as it always is in Sunday clothes.” - Malcolm de Chazal

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

We have now considered all of the individuals who were featured in Clarence Mahan's book. The last three chapters are about various types of irises. A story that peaked my interest concerns some of our native irises, their use, and range.

Irises were important ingredients in Native American medicines, and as such were carried wherever these peoples ventured. An account by William Bartram from his 1791 book, Travels, provides an eye-witness glimpse of a Creek Indian village in what is now Macon County, Alabama: “...They fast seven or eight days during which they eat or drink nothing but a meagre gruel, made of a little corn-flour and water; taking at the same time by the way of medicine or physic, a strong decoction of the roots of the *Iris versicolor*, which is a powerful cathartic [purgative]: they hold this root in high estimation, every town cultivates a little plantation of it, having a large artificial pond, just without the town, planted and almost overgrown with it, where they usually dig clay for pottery, and mortar and plaster for their buildings, and I observed where they had lately been digging up this root.” This William Bartram was the son of John Bartram, the first botanist in America. Irisarian Michael Gideon points out that at the time of Bartram's writings, all tall irises in North America were known as *Iris versicolor* or *I. virginica*, often interchangeably. Gideon believes that the irises that the Creeks were tending were actually Hexagonae irises, such as Louisiana and Florida species and varieties. These generally have spidery-looking flowers and produce seed pods with six sharp angles.

Evidence supports the claim that Native Americans cultivated and traded Hexagonae irises. Gideon believes that these activities date to the Archaic Period of 8000 to 1000 BCE. Trade extended the irises' range from their sources in Florida and Louisiana into Texas, the Carolinas, and then up the Mississippi and Ohio River valleys. Apparently the previous belief was that they had been spread by migrating ducks. - SC

Source: Classic Irises and the Men and Women Who Created Them by Clarence E. Mahan