

# TAIS Newsletter

Our 55th year

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



## A Spuria Iris

Kary Iris Gardens,  
Scottsdale, Arizona

photo by Sue Clark, 2020

## President's Message

Welcome board members for 2021. At our October Zoom meeting, we approved another round of TAIS volunteers to keep us going through 2021. Even though we are still adjusting to a mostly virtual TAIS, we are already working on speakers for next year and other programs. Thanks everybody for your service past and future. Our photo contest was fun as always with a few tiebreaker votes. My surviving iris are finally growing again for next year's photos.

We also voted to have our traditional pot luck for November. Of course this will be a socially-distanced, mask-wearing, outdoor event. Bonnie is making her outdoors available to us. Details below. See you there.

Please send healing thoughts to Diane Tweedy.

- Kevin Kartchner

*"If it is true that one of the greatest pleasures of gardening lies in looking forward, then the planning of next year's beds and borders must be one of the most agreeable occupations in the gardener's calendar. This should make October and November particularly pleasant months, for then we may begin to clear our borders, to cut down those sodden and untidy stalks, to dig up and increase our plants, and to move them to other positions where they will show up to greater effect. People who are not gardeners always say that the bare beds of winter are uninteresting; gardeners know better, and take even a certain pleasure in the neatness of the newly dug, bare, brown earth." - Vita Sackville-West*

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## Upcoming Events

**Next meeting: Saturday, November 14 at noon - Outdoor Potluck in Bonnie's yard at 5940 E. Avenida Arriba. She is making a turkey. Bring your mask and some food to share. Everyone can dish out their portions with a separate spoon to be safe. RSVP to [taisnewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:taisnewsletter@yahoo.com) if you did not already do so during the October Zoom meeting.**

**No meeting in December.**

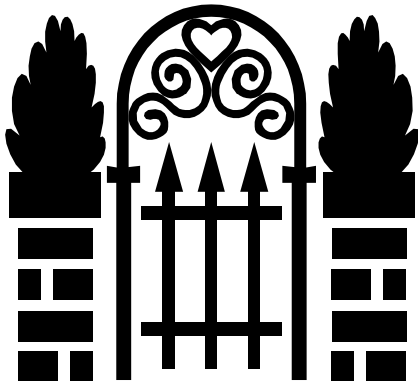
### Birthday Wishes to:

**Angela Powers      Taffy Holvenstot**  
**Susan Schaefer      Ron Kelsen**



*Happy Thanksgiving*

# October Meeting Minutes



We ♥ Irises

10 October 2020 - Thirteen members tuned in for a Zoom meeting featuring pictures from our 3rd annual Photo Contest. Run-off voting decided winners in instances in which several photos were tied. See all of the winning photos on p. 3.

Kristee thanked everyone who helped with her iris dig last month. She reported that she has planted some irises in her new raised bed at the park. Just not ready to quit yet...

Our annual potluck will be held in Bonnie's yard on November 14 at noon. Please bring food to share and your mask to wear. Drinks, plates, napkins, and utensils will be provided.

Officers and Board Members will remain the same for the coming year, except that Joyce will take over the birthday cards from Diane. Mary Ann motioned to accept all & Margaret seconded. Thank you for serving!

The Board Meeting ran from 1:44 to 2:00 PM.

Kevin proposed The New TAIS Normal: a series of hybrid offerings, depending on when the vaccine against the virus is available and dispensed. He'd like to see a hybridizer or two present via Zoom, an outdoor Iris Show in April (TBG? Harlow's?), and hopefully by September we'll be able to hold our regular Rhizome Sale. Joyce suggested a Bring-a-Friend-to-a-Meeting Day, as well as a segment about how Mary Ann created a bog garden using a shallow stock tank last year and successfully grew Louisiana irises in it. Sue offered a PowerPoint program she's been creating called The Iris in Fine Art. Kevin reminded us about the AIS Convention in nearby Las Cruces on April 12-17, 2021. They are not accepting reservations yet because of the pandemic, but he is thinking of going over anyway, since the six gardens may still be available for

viewing. Several members said that they would like to go, too. And we hope to have our members touring some of each other's gardens in April. - Sue Clark, secretary



Most of the Zoom meeting attendees.  
Photo by Dave Smith



## Names of irises featured in the winning photos on p. 3:

**Flower category:** ❶. 'Orange Crush Cocktail' (Van Liere 2019), ❷. 'Midnight Kitty' (Edwards 2010), ❸. 'Mixed Signals' (Keppel 2015).

**Macro category:** ❶. tie - Japanese NOID\* and 'Scoonchee' (DeSantis 1996), ❷. tie - NOID\* and 'Valley of Dreams' (Blyth 2013)

**Misc. category:** ❶. Spurias with roses at Kary Iris Gardens in Scottsdale, ❷. Dutch Irises\*, ❸. 'Mesmerizer' (Byers 1991) with 'Scoonchee' (DeSantis 1996).

\*these were in a Botanical Garden in North Carolina

Thank you to all of  
our volunteers!



We're on the web!

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



# 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual TAIS Photo Contest

Five individuals submitted 64 pictures in three categories this year: Single flower or stem (40 entries), Macro (14 entries), and Garden view or miscellaneous (10 entries). Winners were selected by popular vote via email. All prizes are 2020 introductions by Mid-America Gardens. **And the winners are:**



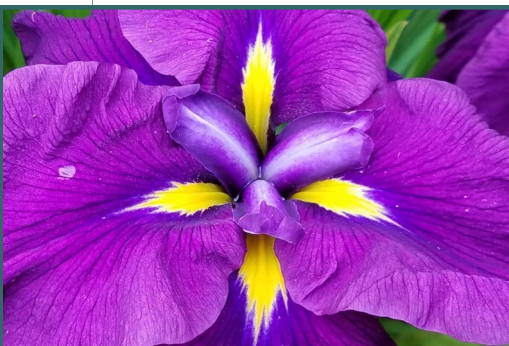
1st place Single flower or stem - Sue



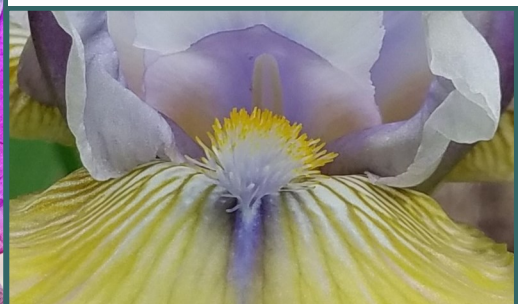
2nd place Single flower or stem - Sue



3rd place Single flower or stem - Melania



1st place tie Macro - Kevin and Sue



2nd place tie Macro - Kevin and Tony

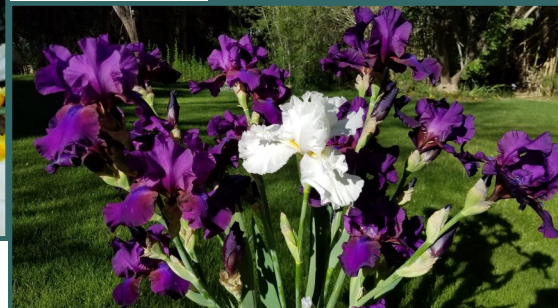
*See names of all irises on p. 2.*



1st place Garden or Misc. - Sue



2nd place Garden or Misc. - Kevin



3rd place Garden or Misc. - Kevin



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

Beginning Balance					\$5,586.90
Date	Pd	MOP	Deposits	Expenses	
26-Oct			\$10.00		DUES - Pappas #138
<b>Sub-Totals</b>			\$10.00	\$0.00	
Ending Balance					\$5,596.90
					10/26/20 14:07

**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.

### Species Iris, Part III: Rocky Mountain Iris

The Rocky Mountain iris is native to North America. It is also known as the Missouri flag or western blue flag, and by several species names: *Iris missouriensis*, *I. montana*, *I. missouriensis* var. *arizonica*, *I. longipetala* var. *montana*, and others. In the western United States, it grows in alpine meadows and all the way down to sea level. It needs a moist habitat, at least until flowering time, which is May through September, so it is mainly found in marshes and wet meadows, as well as along the edges of streams and ponds. It prefers full sun but will tolerate a bit of shade. Besides growing in the western states, *I. missouriensis* is found in the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Minnesota. It is not found in Missouri though, as it is named after the river rather than the state.

These plants grow to a height of 12-24" and their slender stems bear from one to four flowers in various shades of blue and purple with blazes of yellow. Falls are typically white with dark purple veins. The large flowers are beardless and the plant grows from rhizomes. The tough, sword-shaped leaves are grayish-green and form dense clumps. In California, it is considered a weed in many places where it fills pasture land. Cows cannot eat it since it is poisonous. Native Americans used this plant to make medicines. Hummingbirds are fond of its nectar.

Captain Meriwether Lewis collected some Rocky Mountain iris in Montana on July 5 or 6, 1806 while his party was temporarily separated from that of Captain William Clark in order to determine if the Marias River was the headwaters of the Missouri River or not. (It is not). The iris and the rest of Lewis' original plant collection reside at the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia.

*I. missouriensis* grows around Flagstaff and in Tucson's Tohono Chul Park. Adam mentioned that he wants to cultivate it at the Tucson Botanical Garden. Seeds are available from [Nature's Seed](#), who recommends growing them in sandy soil beside a water feature, and from [SeedvilleUSA](#). If you have a fountain or a wet area in your garden, consider giving these hardy plants a try! - SC 🐦

Sources: [Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center](#), [Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks](#), [Burke Herbarium Images](#), Wikipedia article.

Photos: top - SeedvilleUSA, others - Burke Herbarium



## More on Organic Fertilizers and Materials

**Epsom Salts:** Add magnesium to the soil, which plants need to produce chlorophyll for photosynthesis. They help boost the color of leaves and flowers, as well as improving growth of roots, stems, flowers, and fruit. Epsom salts help plants absorb phosphorus. They may be applied as a side dressing, or mixed with water and applied as either a soil drench or a foliar spray. Results are quick! Rose-lovers adore them for promoting blooms. Apply spring and fall and water in well. Available at grocery stores (buy unscented), nurseries, and [Amazon](#).

**Alfalfa Meal:** (2.5-0.5-2.5) Provides trace elements and natural plant hormones which accelerate growth and increase blooms. It also contains potash and amino acids. Alfalfa meal improves the soil by adding carbon and nitrogen. This is another favorite of rose-lovers, and it's useful for all flowering plants and vegetables, too. Apply monthly. It can be used as a compost starter. Available at nurseries or [Amazon](#).

**Great Big Plants:** This organic, all-natural compost extract and plant food contains humic acid, beneficial microbes, kelp, and essential micronutrients. It helps plants absorb nutrients from other fertilizers, including nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium. It also helps improve the soil structure and the plant's root growth. Dilute with water. Dose irises in the fall. I use it weekly on my indoor plants. Available at [Amazon](#). It comes in two other formulations: for roses and for tomatoes.

**Wood Chip mulch:** Besides moderating temperatures and enhancing water retention and penetration, mulch improves soil structure, enhances gas transfer, and prevents erosion and compaction of soil. It provides nutrients to plants and suppresses weeds. On an ecological level, it enhances beneficial organisms, increases biodiversity, suppresses pathogens and pests, as well as neutralizes pollutants. And from the aspect of the gardener, wood chip mulch looks good, doesn't cost much, and is easy to apply. It decomposes slowly, thereby slowly releases nutrients to the soil, which increases plant productivity. These same points apply to pecan mulch. You may be able to get free wood chips from a local arborist or tree trimmer, keeping these materials in nature and out of the landfill. Read more about arborist wood mulch [here](#). - SC

## Why Did My Plant Die?

by Geoffrey B. Charlesworth

You walked too close. You trod on it.  
 You dropped a piece of sod on it.  
 You hoed it down. You weeded it.  
 You planted it the wrong way up.  
 You grew it in a yogurt cup  
 But you forgot to make a hole;  
 The soggy compost took its toll.  
 September storm. November drought.  
 It heaved in March, the roots popped out.  
 You watered it with herbicide.  
 You scattered bonemeal far and wide.  
 Attracting local omnivores,  
 Who ate your plant and stayed for more.  
 You left it baking in the sun  
 While you departed at a run  
 To find a spade, perhaps a trowel,  
 Meanwhile the plant threw in the towel.  
 You planted it with crown too high;  
 The soil washed off, that explains why.  
 Too high pH. It hated lime.  
 Alas it needs a gentler clime.  
 You left the root ball wrapped in plastic.  
 You broke the roots. They're not elastic.  
 You walked too close. You trod on it.  
 You dropped a piece of sod on it.  
 You splashed the plant with mower oil.  
 You should do something to your soil.  
 Too rich. Too poor. Such wretched tilth.  
 Your soil is clay. Your soil is filth.  
 Your plant was eaten by a slug.  
 The growing point contained a bug.  
 These aphids are controlled by ants,  
 Who milk the juice, it kills the plants.  
 In early spring your garden's mud.  
 You walked around! That's not much good.  
 With heat and light you hurried it.  
 You worried it. You buried it.  
 The poor plant missed the mountain air:  
 No heat, no summer muggs up there.  
 You overfed it 10-10-10.  
 Forgot to water it again.  
 You hit it sharply with the hose.  
 You used a can without a rose.  
 Perhaps you sprinkled from above.  
 You should have talked to it with love.  
 The nursery mailed it without roots.  
 You killed it with those gardening boots.  
 You walked too close. You trod on it.  
 You dropped a piece of sod on it.



Geoffrey B. Charlesworth is the author of [The Opinionated Gardener](#), [Random Offshoots from an Alpine Garden](#) and [A Gardener Obsessed](#)



**NEW OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2021**

Kevin Kartchner - President

Bonnie Else - Vice President

Sue Clark – Secretary, Signatory on Account

Martin Juarez – Treasurer, Asst. Secretary

Bonnie &amp; Kathy - Programs &amp; Publicity

Joyce &amp; Mary Ann - Hospitality/Door Prizes

Joyce Knill - Birthday cards

Susan Schaefer - Membership Chairperson

Dave Smith - Photographer

Sue Clark - Newsletter Editor &amp; Publisher

**What to do in the Iris Garden for November:**

Divide crowded clumps. See how [here](#) and [here](#).

Finish planting rhizomes early this month so that they can commence growing before it gets cold.

Make a label for each new iris. Try [these ones](#). Write with #2 pencil, china marker, [paint marker](#), or use a [label maker](#). Draw a map of the beds and include all of the iris names.

Move potted irises to sunny spots for the cool season.

Feed with a fairly-balanced fertilizer. The first number should be 10 or less to reduce risk of rot. [Schreiners iris fertilizer](#) ships free. Or try [this one](#) from Comanche Acres Iris Garden. Be sure to scratch fertilizer into the soil and then water it in.

**Tip Exchange**

The [Schreiner's website](#) advises that irises be planted six weeks or more before the first hard frost. And that rhizomes should not be planted too deeply. [1-2" is good - SC].

The same website recommends cleaning away old leaves from around the rhizomes to help avoid fungal diseases.

Trim iris fans to about 6" when planting rhizomes (and *only* then). This gives the plant a chance to produce new roots without supporting much foliage. - SC

**Iris Haiku:**

Grateful as always  
For family, friends, and flowers.  
Thanksgiving draws nigh.  
- Sue Clark

**Did You Know?**

*Iris missouriensis* roots [or perhaps the rhizomes?] were used by Plateau Indians as a remedy for toothache. Navajos boiled up a decoction of the plant to use as an emetic to induce vomiting. Zunis believed that chewing the roots and applying them as a poultice would increase a baby's strength. - SC

Source of information: Wikipedia



*Iris missouriensis*  
with other plants

**"In the garden of your days, cultivate festivity, play, and celebrations."** - Mary Anne Radmacher, [Live Boldy](#)

**A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History**

Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778) appeared in the article about *I. germanicus* in the September issue of this newsletter, but deserves his own column for his major contribution to science. Before becoming the "Father of Modern Taxonomy" and the "Prince of Botanists" the Swedish Linnaeus was a botanist, zoologist, and physician. While out and about doing field work, Linnaeus became acquainted with many respected scientists and doctors. One of these, Johan Frederik Gronovius, was so impressed with Linnaeus' original manuscript about a new method of classifying plants that he offered to help pay for publishing it. A Scottish doctor, Isaac Lawson, covered the rest of the costs, and in 1735, *Systema Naturae*, the book that introduced Linnaean taxonomy, was published. Linnaeus expanded his concepts in *Imperium Naturae*. In his system, three kingdoms (Animal, Vegetable, and Mineral) were divided into classes, orders, genera, and species. His greatest innovation was the formalized use of binomial nomenclature, in which each organism is uniquely identified by a genus and species name, such as *Homo sapiens* for humans. Before this, animals were classified by their method of movement. According to Wikipedia, "The Linnaean system has proven robust and it remains the only extant working classification system at present that enjoys scientific acceptance."

While teaching botany and medicine at Uppsala University in the 1740's, Linnaeus was tasked with collecting plants and animals in the field. He continued collecting these and minerals through the 1750's & 1760's, which led to several books. He also managed the University's Botanical Garden.

Linnaeus himself named about 7,700 species of flowering plants. He organized them based on their sexual parts, a system that he considered "convenient but artificial," and that many others considered scandalous! Iris, for instance, have three stamens (♂) and one pistil (♀) so were placed in the group Triandria monogynia. Eighteen species of irises were described in his 1753 *Species Plantarum*. (Now there are 300+)! Linnaeus revised his manuscripts several times. *Systema Naturae* grew from 11 over-sized pages in 1735 to 2,400 pages in the 12th edition of 1766-1768. Busy, busy, busy! - SC

Sources: "Prologue to 1920," by Bob Pries in *The Early Years* - Supplement 1 of 4 to IRISES, AIS Bulletin, 2020; and Wikipedia articles on Carolus Linnaeus, *Systema Naturae*, and Linnaean taxonomy.