

TAIS Newsletter

Our 55th year

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



**'Popped Corn' spuria
(Jenkins, 1993)**

Kary Iris Gardens,
Scottsdale, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2020

President's Message

Our potluck was wonderful. We traded plants, seeds, stories, and had a Thanksgiving-worthy meal on the patio. Special thanks to our hostess Bonnie for her home and tasty turkey. We really missed all those not in attendance.

I'm thankful for all of you that make TAIS a special group. Some things to look forward to: we will have speakers, programs, and a show for 2021.

Quoting our Region 15 editor: "Stay Positive, Test Negative and always be happy."

- Kevin Kartchner

"For in the nature of things, if we rightly consider, every green tree is far more glorious than if it were made of gold and silver." - Martin Luther



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Upcoming Events

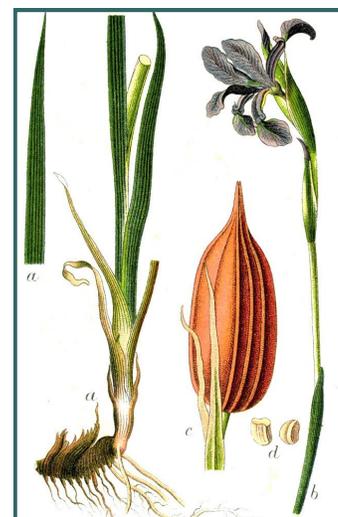
Next meeting: January 9, 2021, 1 PM.
"The Iris in Fine Art" Zoom presentation by Sue Clark. Van Gogh, Monet, O'Keeffe, and many others!

February 13: meeting at 1 PM. TBA.

March 13: meeting at 1 PM. TBA.

Birthday Wishes to:

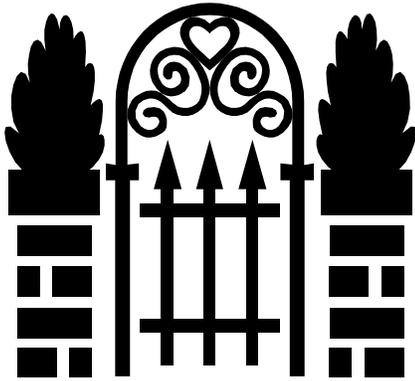
Madeleine Glaser Suzanne Hughes
Cathy Pane-Scire ♥ to Diane & Shirley



Spuria Iris

by Johann Georg Sturm (Painter: Jacob Sturm) - Figure from Deutschlands Flora in Abbildungen at <http://www.biolib.de>, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=736700>

November Meeting Minutes



We ♥ Irises

14 November 2020 - Nine members feasted at our annual potluck, held this year in Bonnie's backyard. Her roasted turkey was the centerpiece of the meal and it was complemented by delicious sides and desserts. Cathy stopped in for a few minutes to say hi. Everyone wore masks and maintained a safe distance from one another while chatting and eating.

There were a few business items to address. A recent email newsletter from AIS stated that clubs meeting on Zoom and other electronic platforms must adjust their bylaws to reflect that. We added in language expressing that our meetings could be held *in person or via electronic means*. Bonnie approved the motion and Sam seconded it. Another vote was taken to decide whether we should collect dues for the coming year since we likely will not be meeting in person for a while. We decided that we will still collect dues, especially since they are so low.

Martin donated rhizomes

for door prizes and these were won by Sam, Kathy, Sue, Joyce, Taffy, Kevin, Norma, and Dave. Some people brought extra plants, bulbs, rhizomes, and seeds to share.

- Sue Clark, secretary

Use Pumice *or* Perlite?

by Joyce Knill

I consulted with a fellow Master Gardener who teaches classes, and confirmed there is not a preference between pumice or perlite. But, here's the deal. All potting soils are different - some are very light and only need a small amount (10%) of perlite or pumice. Other potting soils can be very, very heavy and you might need to add up to 40% of perlite or pumice to lighten them up. We do not recommend any potting soil with moisture control. Perlite has a tendency to 'float' to the surface, so this would be something to keep in mind. Pumice is a little bit heavier and larger, so it may also work well in pots. I hope this helps. Either will work. Vermiculite is out of favor, so it is only recommended for seed starting.

HAPPY
HOLIDAYS!



We're on the web:

Tucsoniris.org

Spuria Irises

- see article on p. 4



From top: 'Red War Clouds,' 'Lemon Shortcake,' 'Adriatic Memories,' and 'Line Dancing' - all from Aitken's Salmon Creek website.

TAIS November Potluck & Meeting



**Photos by
Dave Smith**



Treasurer's Report for November

Previous balance: \$5596.90 on 26 Oct 2020



Spuria Irises. Top row from left: 'Highline Amethyst' (McCown 1976), 'Missouri Rivers' (Niswonger 1990, Nies Medal), and 'Mrs. Tait' (Farr 1912, "good landscape plant"). Bottom row from left: 'Spiced Tea' (Niswonger 1984, "very popular") and 'Lines Form Here' (Hedgecock 2018) - all from [Comanche Acres website](#) (who sells 2 spuria species)



Species Irises, Part IV: Spuria Irises (& their hybrids)

The twenty or so species of beardless irises that constitute the group or *series* known as **spuriae irises** originated in the Mediterranean region and spread across the continent into Russia, Afghanistan, and China. It seems that one of the species, *Iris spuria*, lent its name to the whole group. Linnaeus believed that spurias were hybrids and not species, hence the name, as "spurious" means false. They range in size from dwarf to over 5' tall and thus are one of the tallest irises. Spurias are ideal for drier areas since much of their native range has dry summers.

Spurias grow from woody rhizomes (see illustration at bottom of p. 1) into large clumps that need dividing only about once in ten years. A clump can grow to a diameter of 5-6' in just six years. Plant on at least 3'-centers so they can fill in, since they will sulk a bit after being divided and moved. They are valuable in the back of a border and look good with companion plants such as lilies, roses, and other perennials. Their leaves resemble those of cattails. Spurias bloom about a week or two after the tall bearded, and may not flower their first year. They like full sun, but would probably appreciate afternoon shade in the summers around here. Spurias do better in a clay-rich soil than a sandy one. Mix in some organics such as alfalfa meal and aged manure. They require excellent drainage. Feed with a balanced fertilizer in fall and spring. Most people withhold water in summer, the dormant season for spurias. Their foliage may die back. Begin watering when temperatures cool down in the fall. (See p. 5).

Sir Michael Foster crossed *I. monnieri* (a type of spuria) with another spuria species in 1890 to create 'MonSpur,' which Eric Nies of California used to create many important spuria hybrids beginning in the 1940's. Marion Walker continued his efforts. Eleanor McCown of Holtville, California bred over 40 spurias and won their highest award, the Eric Nies Metal, for her 'Betty Cooper' in 1993. (Photo at right). Hybrids have wider standards and falls than the species, as well as some ruffling on occasion, and their coloring has extended beyond the purple of the wild version to everything from white to brown (see photos). Carl Milliken and Ben Hagar have also contributed to modern spuria hybrids. Terry Aitken of Salmon Creek Garden in Washington continues the work and offers several beautiful spurias on his [website](#) (see photos at right and on p. 2). [Comanche Acres Iris Garden](#) offered 33 varieties of spurias this year and mentions that they make wonderful cut flowers. Much of the hybridizing and growing efforts occur in the American West, Texas, and Missouri, along with eastern Australia. Spurias have also been reported to grow well in Minnesota and in northern Europe.

Ardi Kary of Kary Iris Gardens in Scottsdale grows and sells several varieties of spuria hybrids. These were in full bloom when I visited in late April. See some spuria tips from Ardi on the following page. Give these "irises for drier places" a try! I am trying two. - SC

Sources: [Spuria Iris Society website](#); [The Gardener's Iris Book](#) by William Shear, 1998, Taunton Press: Newtown, Connecticut; [The Gardener's Guide to Growing Irises](#) by Geoff Stebbings, 1997, Timber Press: Portland, Oregon; and Wikipedia article.

From top: *Iris spuria* (by Franz Xaver on Wikimedia), 'As the Tern Turns,' 'Royal Coat,' 'Cast of Walnut,' (from [Aitken website](#)), and 'Betty Cooper' from AIS Iris Wiki.



Tips for Growing Spuria Irises

from Ardi Kary of Kary Iris Gardens

After digging, keep spuria rhizomes wrapped in a damp paper towel in a plastic bag until you are ready to plant them.

Keep the bag in refrigerator to keep it from getting moldy. Do not put it in the freezer.

Add water to holes before planting rhizomes.

Plant a little deeper than Tall Bearded - 1-2".

Spurias can be allowed to go dormant in hot months by withholding water. Or you can water them regularly if they are mixed in with other plants. So either *water* or *don't water* spurias in the summer - but not both.

Cut foliage all the way down in August before new growth begins.

There is a culture article on the [Spuria Society](#) web page that was partially written by Floyd Wickenkamp that has lots of good information. Some of the information I don't agree with, such as manure. I think we have to be careful when we use manure because it can be hot.

The Sun Country Iris Society [SCIS - in Phoenix] culture sheet says "When danger of frost is part, begin feeding at 2 to 3 week intervals and continue through bloom. Use all purpose water soluble plant food high in phosphorus at the manufacturer's recommended amount." It also says "Spurias can take more nitrogen than Tall Bearded."

Also from the SCIS [spuria culture](#) page - Plant in September and October. Trim off dried roots before planting. Water regularly from fall through spring.

Better Photos from Your Cell Phone

Ten tips to go beyond pointing and shooting:

1. **Try the Rule of Thirds:** In the camera's Settings (the gear in the upper left corner), switch on Grid or Gridlines. Use these lines, which are superimposed on your screen, to compose the photo according to the Rule of Thirds. By aligning your subject at intersections or along the lines, the photo is automatically more interesting because the subject is off-center.

2. **Reflections:** These alter lighting and perspective. Puddles aren't so common here in the desert, but you might see a drop of water on an iris petal! Or place a drop of glycerin on one of the petals, as Steve Buckley taught us during his presentation last March.

3. **Sharpen focus:** The camera automatically focuses on objects in the foreground. Tap the screen in the spot where you want the focus to be. A square or circle appears indicating that focus is sharpened at that depth.

4. **Go for Abstract:** Capturing an object or just part of an object from close up or from a different perspective will garner a second look from viewers.

5. **Use negative space:** Solid-colored or nearly-solid-colored backgrounds help your subject to stand out. The empty or "negative" space around the flower or person makes the subject appear more dramatic.

6. **Clean the camera lens:** For clean, clear shots.

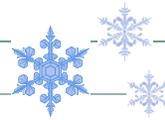
7. **It's all in the details:** Take some close-up shots in addition to wide-angle shots. Look for texture.

8. **To flash or not to:** Using the camera's flash to brighten the dark usually leads to unnatural, overexposed colors. Try using it in a well-lit situation to soften shadows in the foreground.

9. **Shoot for Symmetry:** Our eyes are naturally drawn to proportion and balance, so imagine the shot divided into two halves either vertically or horizontally.

10. **Plan to Edit:** Use the photo editing tools on your phone or computer to improve color, contrast, or to crop the photo so it is just how you want it! - SC

Source: [How to Take Better Photos with Your Phone](#), March 2020



TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2021

Kevin Kartchner - 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

Joyce Knill - Birthday cards

Susan Schaefer - Membership Chairperson

Dave Smith - Photographer

Sue Clark - Newsletter Editor & Publisher

What to do in the Iris Garden for December:

Keep area free of leaves, weeds and pests.

If you didn't do it last month, create or update the map of your iris beds or containers, just in case labels fade or go missing. Replace faded labels.

No need to fertilize again till February! You could buy some Scott's **Super Bloom** (12-55-6) or Ferti-lome **Blooming & Rooting** (9-58-8) to get ready. These are available at Ace Hardware, Harlow's, Mesquite Valley Growers, Amazon, and other places.



Tip Exchange

To share established spurias, dig rhizomes from the edge of the clump, rather than dividing it.

Since spurias make nectar which attracts ants, be sure to "de-ant" their flowers before bringing them indoors.

During the first year, keep spurias well-watered but not sopping wet. They are drought-tolerant once established. "They love the heat!"

If center of clump dies, remove dead parts and fill with mulch to encourage new growth. - SC

Source: Jody Nolin, AIS webinar on Beardless Irises, 11 Nov 2020. The quote is by Andi Rivarola, same.

Iris Limerick:

There once was a tiny wee elf
Who definitely did not live on a shelf.
During the time of the virus
His home was an iris,
And that pleased his tiny wee self.

- Sue Clark



Iris spuria

Wm Curtis Publisher, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

Did You Know?

The various species of spurias evolved in vastly different environments, from high in the mountains to wet meadows. *I. orientalis* is a natural resident of salt marshes, as is *I. halophila*. As a whole, spurias are recommended for drier spots, so may be just the ticket for us! Be careful not to let their roots dry out before planting. - SC. Sources: [The Gardener's Guide to Growing Irises](#) by Geoff Stebbings and [The Gardener's Iris Book](#) by William Shear

"ONE KIND WORD CAN WARM THREE WINTER MONTHS." - JAPANESE PROVERB



A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Carolus [Carl] Linnaeus - continued from last month...

Let's take a closer look at the background of someone who developed such an intense interest in biology, taxonomy, and the natural world that he chose to attempt to organize them. Carl Linnaeus was born in 1707 in Rashult, Sweden, the oldest of six children. His father Nils taught him Latin at a young age. Nils was an amateur botanist, a Lutheran minister, and a curate, before succeeding his father-in-law as the rector of a nearby village.

Carl had a life-long love of flowers. Even as a young child, he could be calmed by being given a flower. Nils spent much of his day working in his garden, and he taught Carl the names of flowers. Nils also gave the young Carl a patch of ground on which to have his own garden.

Nils had studied at the University of Lund, and upon admission had to adopt a permanent surname, the first in his family to do so. Before this, the family followed the Scandinavian patronymic naming system. Nils' father was Ingemar, so Nils became Nils **Ingemarsson**. Carl would have been Carl **Nilsson**. Being a fan of plants, Nils chose the surname Linnaeus after the huge linden tree on his family's homestead. They spelled it Linnæus, with the Latin ligature æ.

Besides Latin, Nils taught the young Carl religion and geography, and then hired him a tutor. Carl remembered that this tutor "was better calculated to extinguish a child's talents than develop them." When of school age, Carl rarely studied, preferring to roam the countryside for plants. When he was 15, one of his teachers noticed his interest in botany and "gave him the run of his garden." This teacher introduced Carl to Johan Rothman, the state doctor in the area, as well as a teacher and botanist. This doctor fanned the flames of botanical interest in Carl and got him interested in medicine. During the next two years, Carl Linnaeus read books on botany "day and night." Rothman taught him a system of classifying plants, how plants reproduce, and eventually recommended that Carl attend Uppsala University - which takes us to where we began last month. - SC

Source: Wikipedia article on Carolus Linnaeus