

TAIS Newsletter

Our 56th year

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Stairway to Heaven'
(Lauer 1992)

Marcusen Sculpture Garden,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2021

President's Message

It was fun to share seeds, plants, bulbs, rhizomes, and of course lots of food and great company at our annual potluck. Thanks again to Bonnie for hosting.

So you have spider lily bulbs from the potluck, now what? Spider lilies (*Lycoris radiata*) are also known to our family as "Grandma Jackson's flowers" because they bloom every year around her birthday in early September. I've been cultivating them for 30 years as they came with our house growing under an ash tree. They do well in the ground but about twice as well when potted. The top of the bulbs should be...

(continued on p. 4)

"I wonder if the snow loves the trees and fields, that it kisses them so gently? And then it covers them up snug, you know, with a white quilt; and perhaps it says, 'Go to sleep, darlings, till the summer comes again.'" – Louis Carroll, Through the Looking Glass, and What Alice Found There



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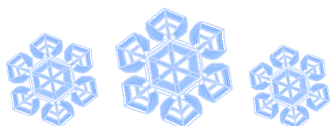
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Upcoming Events

No meeting in December

**Next meeting: Saturday, January 8, 1 PM,
TBG - a panel discussion on growing irises
in the ground as opposed to in containers**

February meeting: TBA

Birthday Wishes to:

Madeleine Glaser

Becky Clark

Cathy Pane-Scire

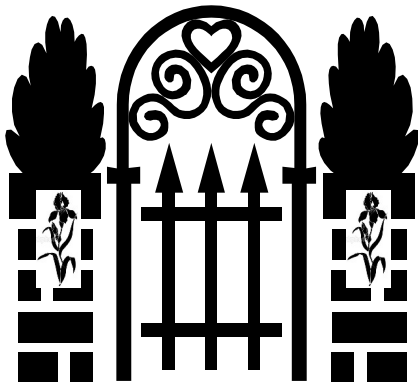
Suzanne Hughes

Jonathan Dunnigan



Source: Original book source: Prof. Dr. Otto Wilhelm Thome, Flora von Baden-Baden, O. Schönböck, Schönböck, Gera, Germany. Permission granted to use under GFDL by Kurt Stueber.

Report from the Potluck



We ♥ Irises

13 November - Seventeen TAIS members enjoyed a lovely potluck on Bonnie's patio. Since it was almost 90°, we kept to the shady spots in the yard and patio. The food was delicious and everyone enjoyed being able to visit with one another.

Several people brought seeds and plants to share. Kevin passed out seeds for red poppies and milkweed as well as bulbs for red spider lilies. Cathy brought and shared Kathy's Karnival rhizomes, as it is one of her most abundant growers. Joyce gave out some mallow plants. Sue passed around seeds for African daisies. Sorry if I missed any donators.

I think that almost everyone won a door prize, which included the following plants: Joyce brought potted irises, Bonnie donated potted irises and poinsettias, and Kathy donated chive plants.

- Sue Clark, secretary



25+ Gift Ideas for Iris-Lovers

Family & friends sometimes ask what they can get you, so here are some ideas. All selections feature irises. Click on links to view items.

1. Aluminum wallet to protect your credit cards - [Van Gogh](#) (Amazon)
2. Hard case for eyeglasses - [Van Gogh](#) (Amazon)
3. Jigsaw puzzles - [Van Gogh](#), [Monet irises](#), or [Monet's garden](#) (Amazon)
4. Key chains - [silver](#) or [Van Gogh](#) (Amazon)
5. [Pewter ornament or keychain](#) (Amazon)
6. Coin purse - [Van Gogh](#) (Amazon)
7. Playing cards - [Van Gogh](#) (Amazon)
8. Note cards - [Van Gogh](#) (Amazon)
9. [Memo set with pen and note paper](#) (Amazon)
10. Keepsake box of glass and velvet - [Van Gogh](#) (Amazon)
11. [Stained glass sun catcher](#) (Amazon)
12. [T-shirt](#) (Amazon)
13. [Decorative scarf](#) - (Amazon)
14. [Another scarf](#) - (Schreiners)
15. Throw - [Van Gogh](#) (Amazon)
16. [Tote bag](#) - (Schreiners)
17. [Sheer vest](#) (various sizes) - (Schreiners)
18. Tunic - [Van Gogh](#) (Signals)
19. Layered tunic - [Van Gogh](#) (Signals)
20. Gloves - [Van Gogh](#) (Signals)
21. Umbrella - [Van Gogh](#) (Signals)
22. Wrap - [Van Gogh](#) (Signals)
23. Coat - [Van Gogh](#) (Signals)
24. [Stained glass accent lamp](#) - (Signals)
25. Fan-shaped accent lamp - [Van Gogh](#) (Signals)
26. [Stained glass panel](#) to hang - (Acorn)
27. [Satin robe](#) - Van Gogh or Monet's garden (Acorn)
28. Art prints - Search by the artist (try Van Gogh, Monet, Marion Rose) or by "iris":

- [Greatbigcanvas.com](#)
- [art-prints-on-demand.com](#)
- [allposters.com](#) - SC



Items 1. and 11.

**HAPPY
HOLIDAYS!**



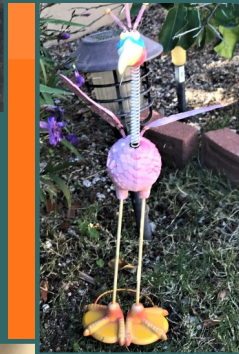
We're on the web:

[Tucsoniris.org](#)

TAIS November Potluck



**Photos by
Dave Smith
(and one by Sue)**



Treasurer's Report for November - submitted by Martin Juarez

Previous Balance: \$6468.54

No activity this month

Current Balance: \$6468.54



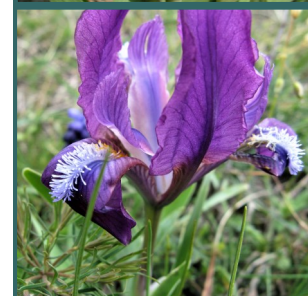
Photo by Kevin Kartchner, 2021

President's Message, continued from p. 1

... about 1" below the soil surface. Their 1' to 2' grass-like leaves appear only after the flowers are gone, last through winter, and die off in spring. It may take a year or two to get them to bloom but their delicate strange shape is worth it.

Most of my hundreds of summer-transplanted iris rhizomes are growing well now. Crossing my fingers for a showy Spring. Have some great holidays and we'll get back together again in January.

- Kevin Kartchner



Species Irises, Part IX: *Iris aphylla*

This month, we'll look at a species of iris that is important in the ancestry of many iris hybrids. *Iris aphylla* (*a-FIL-uh*) is a small bearded iris native to Eurasia from Bohemia (present-day Czech Republic) to the Caucasus (Russia, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan). Some other names for it are *Iris hungarica*, leafless iris, and stool iris. This plant was named by Linnaeus in 1753 in his book, Species Plantarum. It is very hardy, but is endangered in the wild throughout much of its range. Somewhat unusual for irises, *I. aphylla* loses its leaves during the winter. Certain other central European irises share this deciduous habit.

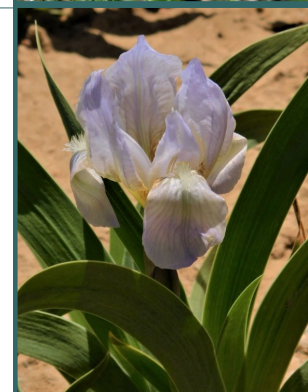
Qualities that make *I. aphylla* desirable as a parent include its branching habit, smaller flowers, and tetraploid (48) chromosome count. It has been crossed with many types and species of irises and was involved in improving branching and chromosome count in Miniature Tall Bearded (MTB) irises. When crossed with *Iris pumila*, those seedlings might then be bred into the Standard Dwarf Bearded (SDB) to improve their branching habits.

Aphylla has from one to five flowers borne on a stem that branches low, often near the base and usually before the halfway point. Stems range from about 8" to 15" tall. The fragrant flowers occur in shades of purple from light to dark, as well as blue-violet and red-violet. There is even a chartreuse-tan one. Blossoms are about 3 1/4" high and wide. Spathes are typically purple and foliage purple-based. (See photo at right). This plant varies in size and appearance in the wild.

I. aphylla grows well as a garden plant. Dykes noted that it increases rapidly and must be divided every three years as soon as the flowers fade, or at least provided with fresh soil. The plant does best in sunny and well-drained locations. It is quite drought-tolerant, as are most bearded irises.

You can purchase any of eleven types of *I. aphylla* [here](#) - try it in some crosses this coming bloom season! One of the offerings is 'Ostry White,' which I mentioned last month in the article about the celestar pattern. - SC

Sources: AIS Iris Wiki, [Forth Valley Iris](#) website, [PlantShark](#) website, Wikipedia article on [Iris aphylla](#), [Iris Colorado](#) online catalog, and [The Gardener's Guide to Growing Irises](#), by Geoff Stebbings, 1997, Timber Press: Portland, Oregon



From top: *Iris aphylla* (photo by Radomil on Wikimedia Commons), *I. aphylla* in Hungary (photo by Grin, Wikimedia Commons), 'Thisbe' (Dykes 1923), and *I. aphylla* (both from AIS Iris Wiki)

TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2022

Kevin Kartchner - President

Bonnie Else - Vice President

Sue Clark – Secretary, Signatory on Account

Martin Juarez – Treasurer, Asst. Secretary

Diane and Sally - Programs & Publicity

Joyce and Sandy - Hospitality/Door Prizes

Joyce Knill - Birthday cards

Susan Schaefer - Membership Chairperson

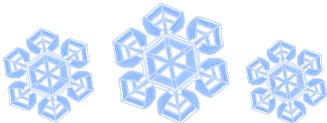
Dave Smith - Photographer

Sue Clark - Newsletter Editor & Publisher

What to do in the Iris Garden for December:

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.

Continue feeding with fish emulsion every other week. You could buy some Scott's [Super Bloom](#) (12-55-6), [Miracle-Gro Bloom Booster](#) (10-52-10) or [Ferti-lome Blooming & Rooting](#) (9-58-8) to get ready for feeding from January to June. These are available at Ace Hardware, Harlow's, Mesquite Valley Growers, Amazon, and other places.



Tip Exchange

You can make your own weed killer using vinegar and dish soap. Add 1 oz of liquid dish soap to one gallon of white vinegar. Pour some into a spray bottle and carefully spray any weeds. The dish soap serves to partially break down the cuticle of the plant, and then the acetic acid in the vinegar helps to dry up the plant. As you might guess, this potion will harm most plants, which is why you apply it carefully and when it is not windy. A second application might be required, and a bit of the solution poured onto the plant to attack the root if needed. You'll soon gain a sense of which weeds this concoction works on and which it doesn't.

- Source of info: [Birds and Blooms](#) website

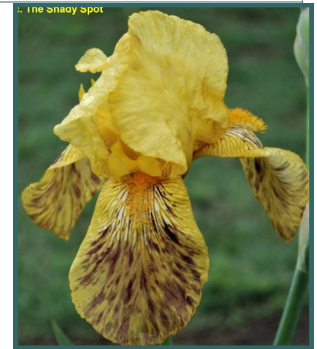
December Haiku:

Silv'ry ornament
Suspended in a velvet sky:
December moon

- Sue Clark

Did You Know?

A garden of all white flowers and silvery or variegated foliage is called a [white garden](#) or a [moon garden](#), since it really shines under the light of the moon. Often the flowers release their fragrance into the night air and the garden feels exotic and mysterious. Light-colored rocks and chairs enhance the moon garden. Vita Sackville-West installed a lovely white garden at [Sissinghurst Castle](#) in Kent. "She understood that when colour was restricted, the focus of the gardener had to be on creating interest and drama with different shapes, textures and form." Her plants were set against the structure of yew and box hedging. Consider planting white irises, Datura, snapdragons, foxglove, blue fescue ornamental grass, and dusty miller, to name a few. - Source: Garden Design email of 4 Nov 2021 and UK National Trust Website



'W. R. Dykes'

Source: AIS Iris Wiki

"A DAY IS ETERNITY'S SEED, AND WE ARE ITS GARDENERS." - ERIKA HARRIS



A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

William Rickatson Dykes was considered the world's leading authority on irises. He was also interested in lilies, amaryllis, and tulips, and knew nearly as much about these plants as about irises. He loved finding new irises and growing them until they seeded and then he grew them again. If he did not collect the original seeds on his own, he received them by corresponding with others. Dykes retained and dispersed information easily - it is now believed that he had [Asperger's Syndrome](#). In 1913, he collected irises in Austria and along the Dalmatian coast, and in 1914, he published his third book, [Handbook of Garden Irises](#).

When he became the Secretary of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) in 1920, Dykes moved from Godalming to Surrey to be closer to London. He kept some seedlings from his garden and arranged for all of the other plants to be moved to a nursery in Kent. After marrying Katherine Kaye in 1924, they established a garden at Button Green near Guilford in Surrey. Dykes planted 30,000 tulips there and spent every spare minute in the garden. During his tenure at the RHS "...he placed his great knowledge of plants unreservedly at the service of the Fellows of the Society and other lovers of gardening who were genuinely seeking information. All the details of the Society's great shows at Chelsea, at Holland Park, and at Vincent Square were his personal care; during the last six months he devoted infinite pains to the plans and drawings for a new hall of the Society."

In 1924, W. R. Dykes published [The Handbook of Garden Irises](#) and received the Veitch Memorial Medal for [The Genus Iris](#). He accepted the Victoria Medal of honor in November 1925. Dykes died on Dec 1, 1925 of injuries sustained in an automobile accident. The first Dykes medal was awarded in 1927 in his honor. The winner was 'San Francisco' (Mohr 1927).

Katherine Dykes introduced the first true yellow TB iris, 'W. R. Dykes' (1926) and a white iris, 'Gundrun' in 1930, which won the Dykes medal. She died in a train crash that year. Before her death, she painted 54 color plates for Dykes' [Notes on Tulip Species](#) (1930). A collection of Dykes' articles called [Dykes on Irises](#) was published that same year. - SC

Sources: "Prologue to 1920," by Bob Pries in *The Early Years - Supplement 1 of 4 to IRISES*, AIS Bulletin, 2020; and Wikipedia article on William Rickatson Dykes