

TAIS Newsletter

Our 56th year

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



IB 'Eleanor Roosevelt'
(Sass-McDade 1933)

Chandler, Arizona

photo by Sue Clark, 2020

President's Message

Spuria, spuria, and more spuria. Having two spuria iris growers and hybridizers (Jim Hedgecock and Darol Jurn) speak to us this spring should inspire you to try some if you are not growing them already. I am impressed with some of Jim's introductions that he showed us. I grow a handful of spuria that typically bloom after the TBs, but seem much less prone to the dreaded summer TB rhizome rot. Time to add a few more. See you on the Zoom meeting.

- Kevin Kartchner

“This morning I wished for April But it was still March - cranky and bitter, Ice on the sidewalk, snow in the shadows. The wind said, Go inside and get yourself a hat. But when I turned, there among the dead brown leaves I saw a purple rocket, no bigger than a baby’s thumb, Just arrived from the center of the Earth, bearing a message: Soon.” - James Stevenson, “Crocus”



Tom Back WordPress

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Upcoming Events

Next meeting: March 13 at 1 PM via Zoom. Darol Jurn - Spurias

TAIS Iris Show: April 17 at Harlow's Gardens Nursery, 5620 E. Pima Street (tentative, pending health guidelines)

TAIS Open-to-Members Garden Tours: April 24

AIIS Convention: postponed to April 11-16, 2022 because of the Pandemic

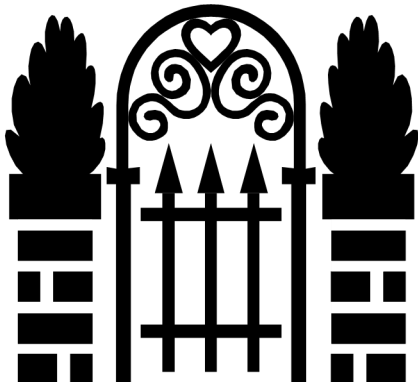
Birthday Wishes to:

Kristee West Martin Juarez
Joyce Knill Cindy Long
♥ to Shirley and to Ardi Kary



from clipartpanda.com

February Meeting Minutes



We ♥ Irises

13 Feb 2021 - 18 members and guests Zoomed in to hear Jim Hedgecock of Comanche Acres Iris Gardens discuss spuria irises.

Business Meeting: an immediate increase in dues to \$25/year was instituted for anyone wishing to receive a paper newsletter in the mail as opposed to an emailed one. Kathy moved, Taffy seconded. Martin's request was approved for 4-day passes to TBG for the two women at Renegade Classics who worked with him to set up the TAIS logo for embroidery. Sue moved, Susan seconded. Sue will spend \$500 on Club Irises and Auction irises, and Susan, Kevin, and Sue will each order \$350 of irises for our sale. Sue moved and Joyce seconded.

Our show is tentatively set for April 17 at Harlow's. No one volunteered their carport or backyard as a back-up in case we or Harlow's decides it is unsafe because of the virus. On April 24,

TAIS members can tour Kevin's and Susan's gardens. Kevin will contact Sam to see if his garden is a possibility.

Board Meeting: Joyce is transitioning to birthday cards she's made using some of Sue's iris photos. Susan reported that we have fifteen new members, all from the website. Joyce randomly drew winners for potted NOIDs from Kristee's dig. She will deliver these to Bonnie, Kathleen, and Taffy. Sue will present her "Irises in Fine Art" to the Inland Region Iris Society on March 2 via Zoom.

- Sue Clark, secretary

Spuria Irises - Notes from Jim Hedgecock's talk

Jim Hedgecock's [Comanche Acres Iris Gardens](#) is near Gower, Missouri. He grows over 2000 named tall beardeds and more than 200 varieties of spurias on eight acres, and has introduced over 600 irises. Jim presented

Spurias tend to be long-lived and trouble-free



We're on the web:
Tucsoniris.org

photos of several of his spurias. He also sells spurias from Charlie Jenkins, Larry Johnson, and Ben Hager. 'Line Dancing' has been the most popular spuria for the last five years. Jim showed some ruffled spurias and reported that these are valued for hybridizing, as people are drawn to the new and novel. He offers at least two miniature spurias - 'No Mas Dinero' and 'Small Endeavor.' Although there is no AIS category for these yet, Jim is working on that. He emphasized that these would not be a separate awards group, but would be judged on their own merits (i.e., size).

Some of Jim's advancements in spurias include the first black one, 'Black Stetson;' the first plicata, a seedling; first color breaking, also a seedling; and higher bud counts.

Native to Eurasia from Spain to China, 16 species of spurias have been used to create modern hybrids. Jim urged others to join in on breeding spurias, which have only been through five generations as opposed to 100-150 generations in TB breeding.

In regards to planting and culture, Jim referred to spurias as "king of the landscape irises" because of how vigorous and long-lived they are. Plant 2" deep and on 3' centers. Fertilize in early spring and late fall. He sells a [fertilizer](#) (6-24-24) for spurias and TBs on his website. Spurias are heavy feeders and you probably cannot over-fertilize them, even with manure. Other formulations that will work well are 5-10-10 and 6-12-12.

Continued on following page...

TAIS February Meeting Photo

Diane Tweedy



TWEEDY, Diane

A career elementary school art educator and avid gardener, passed away on January 2, 2021 at the age of 87. Diane is survived by her children, Bob (Katie) and Ann; three grandchildren, Maggie, Susie and Ben and by her brother, Ed Krejci of South Carolina. She is predeceased by her former husband, John H. Tweedy and her brother, Bill Krejci. Diane was born on June 4, 1933 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin to Edwin and Stella Krejci. She grew up on a Wisconsin dairy farm where she developed a love for music, art, and a work ethic that took her to a 30-year career as an art teacher in the Tucson Unified School District, most of which was spent at Peter Howell Elementary School. Following her teaching retirement, Diane's artistic ways spilled over into gardening, specifically irises, roses, and butterfly plants. She could be seen nurturing her iris garden that boasted over 60 blooming flowers each year for all to enjoy. She was a member of the Tucson Area Iris Society (TAIS) and, in 2014, earned the title of Pima County Master Gardener. In her final days, Diane was blessed to have eight Monarch caterpillars in her certified North American Butterfly Garden (NABA). Her face would light up with the news of her garden visitors! When we see a Monarch butterfly, we will think of her fondly. Master Teacher and Master Gardener. In lieu of flowers, please donate to Diane's love of gardening to either the Tucson Area Iris Society or the Pima County Master Gardeners Cooperative Extension, in her name. Arrangements by NEPTUNE SOCIETY.

Spuria Irises, continued...

Spurias form thick clumps with leaves ranging from 1' to 6' in height. In the eastern US and the Midwest, they tend to reach 36-45" on average with a bud count of about 4. In the western US, spurias tend to grow taller and may produce more than one stalk with 5-6 buds each. Clumps are firmly rooted, and therefore difficult to remove. Rhizomes are very hard. Jim advised using rose clippers to separate them.

Spuria irises grow from Florida to Canada and across the US. They will rot if they are over-watered, as they are dry-ground iris. Their only pest or disease is mustard seed fungus. Look for small yellow spheres at base of over-watered plants. Destroy the affected plant and remove the surrounding soil. Jim adds 1 T of [Terrachlor](#) fungicide to the planting hole as a preventative measure.

Spurias are shipped and planted in the fall. Do not move them at any other time or they will most likely die. Remove finished bloom stalks for best growth.

They make magnificent cut flowers in which every flower on the stalk blooms and is the same size, unlike tall beardeds which tend to get smaller as one goes down the stalk. 'Line Dancing' (Charlie Jenkins by Jim Hedgecock 2007) has six buds per stalk in Missouri. '[Shenandoah Skies](#)' (Hedgecock 2020) has five buds per stalk and has been known to produce four stalks per rhizome in Missouri. Stems can even be cut while in tight bud, a fact that several California florists have realized.

Jim reported that it takes about seven years to go from seed to introducing a spuria, with 3-4 of those to observe traits such as bud count, color stability, etc. He has several thousand seedlings and mentioned that spuria seeds have been known to sprout 17 years after planting! He said that he might pare 100 seedlings down to 20 to save and watch, and may end up not introducing any of those. Spurias set seed easily, and many people allow bees to do the crosses for them. Jim plants his spuria seeds in the ground, as opposed to in cans like he does for tall beardeds.

Jim offers a newsletter on iris culture 12-16 times per year. Sign up [here](#). - SC



Spurias from Comanche Acres: 'Black Stetson' (2018), its full sibling 'One Hundredth Anniversary' (2020), and 'Line Dancing' (2007). Used with permission.

Treasurer's Report for February - submitted by Martin Juarez

Beginning Balance					\$5,096.87
Date	Pd	MOP	Deposits	Expenses	
02/04/21	X		\$10.00		DUES - Knill #4869
02/21/21		#1855		\$38.51	Knill - Cards, stationary, stamps
02/21/21		#1856		\$75.00	Hedgecock - Speaker
02/21/21	X	Debit		\$22.82	Juarez - Envelopes
02/22/21	X		\$113.00		DUES *
Totals			\$123.00	\$136.33	\$13.33
Ending Balance					\$5,083.54
* Briggs (Crawford) \$10/#1192 Briggs (Long) \$10/#1194 Holvenstat \$10/#36 Olsen \$10/#7497 Skerston \$10/#1201 Wilcoxon \$10/#7351 Schaeffer \$10/#3629 Clark \$13/#1549 Eise \$20/#2902					

Intermediate Bearded Irises (IB)

What do you do if you are an artist and there are no irises available to paint in the gap between the bloom time of the standard dwarf bearded and the tall bearded? Well, you breed a *new type* to bloom during that gap by forcing some tall bearded and some *Oncocyclus* irises to flower early in your greenhouse, and then dabbing their pollen on the standard dwarf bearded when they blossom. So was it that William John Caparne created the Intermediate Bearded (IB) irises in about 1898 in England. These are not only intermediate in bloom time between the two types, but also intermediate in stature. Ranging in height from 16-27½ inches, they present their flowers on elegantly-branched stalks. While some may look best in clumps, others are best highlighted as specimen plants. Caparne's iris catalogs of 1900 through at least 1922 featured many IBs, including 30 in 1903 alone.

Another flurry of creation of intermediates occurred in Nebraska in the first half of the 20th century. The Sass brothers crossed dwarf irises from Europe with tall bearded. One of their intermediates is the ever-popular '[Eleanor Roosevelt](#)' (Sass-McDade 1933), notable as a rebloomer. In fact, the Sasses bred some of the first reliable reblooming irises. The top medal awarded to an IB is the Hans and Jacob Sass Medal. Kelly Norris recommends '[Eleanor Roosevelt](#)' as a cultivar that everyone should grow (see photo on p. 1). He mentions that it has a grape-soda smell. '[Dazzling](#)' (Black 2008) from his list also caught my eye.

IBs make excellent cut flowers. And their size allows them to stand tall in the garden in wind and storm and makes them perfect for many suburban plots. They tend to be vigorous growers, so plan on sharing them with friends and during our annual Rhizome Sale. Plant in sun with some afternoon shade in our hot climate. IBs are less susceptible to rot than TBs, so might be just what I need.

Our fellow TAIS member Kristee grows '[Concertina](#),' a pink space-age IB with striking blue-violet beards and horns. My friend Jane has luck with 'Many Mahalos' reblooming in Gilbert, AZ. It is also on Norris' to-grow list. See both of these irises in the photos at right. For something brand new and different, see the photo of 'Cool Morning Mist' (Tasco 2021). Some places that sell IBs include [Blue J Iris](#), [Winterberry Irises](#), [Stout Gardens](#), and [Nola's Iris Gardens](#). Consider giving IBs a try! - SC

Sources: [A Genius Undeclared - The life, works, and times of William John Caparne](#) by Robin A. Fenner, 1994; [A Guide to Bearded Irises](#) by Kelly D. Norris, 2012; [AIS Iris Wiki: IB Intermediate Bearded Irises](#)



From top: IBs 'Many Mahalos,' 'Concertina,' 'Line Drive' (all from AIS Iris Wiki), 'Pink Collage' (Winterberryirises.com), and 'Cool Morning Mist' (AIS Iris Wiki)

Growing Irises – by Kristee West

Whether your bare root rhizomes look clean or not, I recommend that you soak them for 5 minutes in 10% bleach [1 part bleach and 9 parts water], then for 30 minutes in water. This will ensure that the rhizomes are both well-hydrated and ready to grow, and should kill any bugs or diseases that may be in the soil where they were grown.

Plant when fall temperatures are below 90 degrees. September – November works well. (Six weeks before the first expected frost will give the rhizomes time to put down new roots before the ‘cold’ weather sets in).

Location – Sun (at least 6 hours a day will give you the most reliable bloom).

Well drained soil is also necessary. Use a moisture meter to be sure the water is sufficient depth for the roots. Raised beds or large pots also work well for growing irises. Frequency of winter watering may be less than weekly depending on soil conditions.

Ideally, amend the soil with equal parts of compost.

Coffee grounds or soil acidifier may help.

Add a low nitrogen (6-12-12, 10-10-10) fertilizer and triple super phosphate (0-45-0, 0-52-0) to the hole before planting. Plant varieties at least 18-24” apart to prevent overcrowding and minimize the necessity to divide the clumps.

Use the space between clumps for annuals.

Spring schedule – When you see new leaf growth from the center of the leaf fans (but certainly no later than Valentine’s Day):

- Remove any brown outside leaves from the fans and remove any topsoil that has covered the rhizomes.

- Add up to 2” of acidic mulch. Pecan shells work well.
- Treat for aphids and thrips.
- Fertilize with a high phosphorus fertilizer (Super Bloom Booster, BR-61, Triple Super Phosphate, etc.).
- Resume weekly watering.

When bloom season begins, water twice weekly. Enjoy!

Summer Suggestions: When temperatures are above 90 degrees, water in the evening to help prevent rot. Afternoon shade or acidic mulch is recommended to keep the soil cooler.

Divide irises after 3 – 5 years when the plants have run out of room or fertilizer or when you want to share them with your iris-loving friends.

Common problems: planting in poorly draining soil/clay/caliche, soil too alkaline, soil too hot, over watering, planting too deep, planting too close to other plants, not fertilizing when planting, failure to fertilize when the new growth starts in the spring, failure to keep plants clean, and failure to water regularly.

My Favorite Companion Plants: onions, garlic, daylilies, petunias, snapdragons, geraniums.

Note: Kristee West is our immediate past-president. She lives and gardens in Green Valley, south of Tucson. Below are photos of some of her tall bearded irises: [‘New Found Glory’](#) and [‘Dress for Success.’](#)



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 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

“An iris lover gardening on a tiny urban lot with one patch of sun probably can’t grow dozens of blowsy tall bearded, which tend to pounce impolitely on anything in their vicinity...Fortunately for that iris lover, and anyone with limited gardening space, median irises make perfect choices for that sunny spot. Here at the crossroads of bearded iris genetics grow the IBs. Essentially, they’re perfect...pleasing proportions, often light ruffling, and rounded form, they’re perfect for any gardener on a “tall bearded-lite” diet.”

- Kelly Norris in [A Guide to Bearded Irises](#)

Iris Haiku:

Springtime stirs the soul.

Ancient, primeval, urgent;
New life surges forth.

- Sue Clark

Did You Know?

“The IBs are the rising star on the bearded iris stage - the proverbial species of the future - because they look so fine and grow so well. We may yearn for estate gardens, but the fact is that most gardeners tend parcels smaller than an acre in size...Fenced in or not, we manage to make beautiful gardens, so long as all the plants we choose to grow and tend in our landscapes, irises included, fit the context.” - Kelly Norris in [A Guide to Bearded Irises](#)



Iris susiana

Wm Curtis Publisher, Bot. Mag., Plate 91, Vol. 3, 1790

“May the blossoms of springtime give you a sense of hope and great joy, now and in all the days to come.”



- Schreiner's Gardens email, 21 Apr 2019

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

We’ve looked at some of the ways that brought irises to the gardening public’s attention, including botanical magazines and stunning folio books such as Redouté’s [Les Liliacées](#). Another, albeit less beautiful, method was plant catalogs. The earliest of these were simply lists of plants with minimal annotations. As humans are highly visual creatures, you can imagine that these were *not* the inspiration for iris fever compared to something like the visual feast of, say, a modern-day Schreiner’s iris catalog. Nevertheless, these early lists persisted, and by 1848 they offered at least 80 different irises. One that tended to appear in most of them is *Iris susiana* (see drawing above). This plant, belonging to the *Oncocyclus* section of irises, has been in cultivation since about 7000 BC. Native to Persia, it was named after Susa, capital of the ancient Elam civilization. Also known as the Mourning Iris due to its gray coloring, it is now found throughout Lebanon, Syria, and Turkey and is threatened by over-picking. Its flowers are nearly 5” across. *I. susiana* was described and published by Carolus Linnaeus in 1753 in his [Species Plantarum](#). According to Bob Pries in the AIS centennial supplement, the USDA cut off importation of *I. susiana* in 1930. The AIS Wiki claims that it may have disappeared in nature.

Several early catalogs tempted American gardeners, one of which I mentioned in the article about John Bertram and his Kingsessing Botanic Garden in the [Oct 2020](#) issue of this newsletter. Although his Garden was established in 1727, its first catalog did not appear until 1807, following one by Thorburn Nursery in 1802. Prince Nursery (Linnaean Botanic Garden) published its first catalog in 1812. Their 1830 edition offered 30 Spanish irises and 20 English irises, both bulbous types. In 1837, they added about 50 species irises and 19 bearded. 1854 saw 18 named tall bearded and 1860 saw 100. Hovey Nursery, created in 1834, began listing Japanese irises in 1873. They had grown these from imported seeds. Their iris specialties were mixed collections of English, Spanish, and Japanese varieties. Three other catalogs round out these pioneering editions: Dreer Nursery in Philadelphia (1838), Ellwanger & Barry in NY (1840), and Peter Henderson Nursery in NY (1848). - SC

Sources: “Prologue to 1920,” by Bob Pries in *The Early Years - Supplement 1 of 4 to IRISES*, AIS Bulletin, 2020; Wikipedia article on [Iris susiana](#), and AIS wiki article on [Oncocyclus](#).