

TAIS Newsletter

Our 56th year

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



NOID

Marcusen Sculpture Garden,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2021


President's Message

I really enjoyed the sale. I added a few rhizome replacements to my struggling collection and was able to see so many of you again.

Unfortunately we're back to virtual for the photo contest because the libraries are closed to groups. We have some great contest photos already on the TAIS web site. I hope that you shared some of yours with us. When you vote for your favorites [by October 1], be sure to click on the photos to view the full size, since they are displayed in an auto-cropped view and not as the photographer intended.

The calendar says fall is here and I can feel the cooler temperatures telling my iris to start growing again. Hope you get some rebloom.

- Kevin Kartchner

*"October's the month when the smallest breeze
Gives us a shower of autumn leaves. Bonfires
and pumpkins, Leaves sailing down - October is
red And golden and brown." - from Can Teach Songs* 

Inside this issue:

Reports from the Rhizome Sale & from Susan's talk 2

Photos from the Sale 3-4

Growing Irises in Containers handout (Susan & Joyce) 5-6

Treasurer's Report, Mini Tall & Border Beardeds - article and photos 7

What to do in the Iris Garden for October 8

Iris Diamonte, Did You Know? 8

Tips, Bit of Botany and Iris History 8



Upcoming Events

**Next meeting: October 9 on Zoom, 1 PM.
Photo Contest winners, elections**

November 13: Potluck & Installation of new officers on Bonnie's patio

No meeting in December

Birthday Wishes to:

Jeff Atkinson

Tony & Melania Kutz

Pam McConnaughy

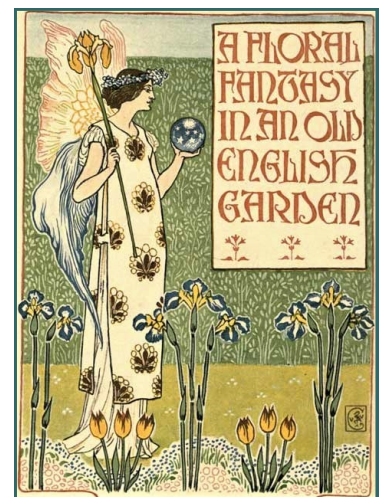
Lucille Skerston

Linda Briggs

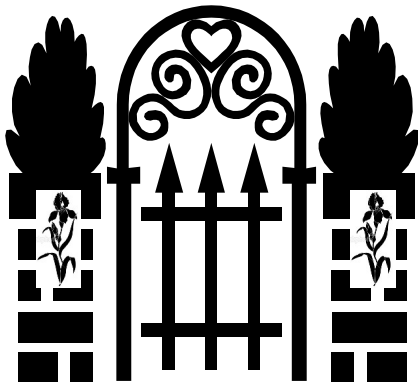
Sally Vega

Wanda Bentley

Maryann Albano



Report from the Sale



We ♥ Irises

18 Sept 2021 - We had another excellent TAIS Rhizome Sale! Many members volunteered to help Joyce and Susan. We set up on Friday afternoon and offered a Members-only Discount Hour from 8 to 9 AM on Saturday. Rhizomes were purchased from Lauer's Flowers and Blue J Iris this year, and we ordered one extra batch due to the surge in gardening during the pandemic. Joyce prepared cards with photos, height, bloom season, and other details for each of the 100+ varieties offered. Cathy, Madeleine, Susan, and Kevin brought in some of their rhizomes to trade for Iris Bucks and got some new varieties for their gardens. Kristee stopped by to say hello.

Twenty-four people listened as Susan presented an excellent talk on growing irises in containers. She was ably assisted by Joyce, who was a masterful combination of Vanna White and Master Gardener.

Susan demonstrated how to divide and plant rhizomes. She and Joyce had prepared a detailed handout for everyone at the talk (see p. 5). They gave away four rhizomes that Susan potted during the presentation. A two-for-one sale after the class generated lots of excitement. The few irises that remained at noon will be tended by Susan and be given out as door prizes at upcoming meetings.

- Sue Clark, secretary

Additional Notes from Susan and Joyce's presentation

Susan grows almost of her irises in Talavera pots on plant stands. She divides the plants every 2-3 years, breaking off all of the increases (baby rhizomes with leaf fans). She keeps the biggest one and donates the rest to our Sale or gives them away to friends.

**Needed -
program
chairperson(s)!**



**We're on the web:
Tucsoniris.org**

Susan often leaves the leafless "mother rhizome" attached to its two adjacent increases, as this Y-shaped arrangement stabilizes the plant in the soil and may put up two flower stalks in the spring. She recommends planting two rhizomes in a pot if they are small. Trim the leaves to about 6" and the roots to about 4". Both the leaves and roots will die off and be replaced by new ones after planting.

For potting soil, Susan and Joyce like Miracle-Gro and Fox Farm, as such high-quality mixes do not require amendments, except perhaps coir (coconut fiber). Susan mentioned that she buys small bags of soil so that she can carry them. Press soil firmly around the iris. She prefers her rhizomes to be exposed on the tops. Always water the soil, not the plant, and allow it to dry out a bit between waterings. Her drip system is set to water for 15 minutes every M, W, and F.

If planting in the ground, use a spade to loosen soil to a depth of 2'. Replace about half of the natural soil with a planting mix (sometimes called "garden soil"). Stir well.

Susan plants a couple of onions or garlic in each pot, which helps keep aphids away from the irises.

If the soil around the roots is too wet, the roots will rot, and that rot will proceed right up to the rhizome. - SC

(continued on p. 6)

Photos from the Sale



Photos by
Dave Smith



More Photos from the Sale



Growing Irises in Containers by Susan Schaefer & Joyce Knill

Advantages of growing iris in a container:

- Can be placed on balcony, patio, etc. at eye level
- Weeds and pests are easily managed
- Accessible to those with limited flexibility
- It's easy to control water schedule



The Four Basics of iris container gardening:

The container - should be at least 12" deep x 12" wide.

Various types:

- plastic - not porous, roots may become too hot
- bamboo - durable, insulated, \$\$\$\$
- concrete - too heavy to move
- fiberglass or Styrofoam - lightweight, may be painted, \$\$
- Talavera or glazed ceramic - beautiful, heavy, but holds water well, \$\$\$
- Mexican clay - breathes well, but will crumble with age, water often, \$
- Italian or Vietnamese clay - breathes, durable, holds water well
- Wine barrels - wood may not be durable with age, but holds water well
- Stock tank - roomy, easy to control water and fertilizer

Soil and nutrients - soil must be a potting mix* - NOT a planting mix.
(Planting mixes are to be incorporated into native soil).

Cover hole at bottom of pot with screen, coffee filter, or shade cloth.

Fill pot ½ full with potting soil - can mix with coir (coconut husks) for consistent moisture.

Add 6-10-10 dry fertilizer - low in Nitrogen, but fortified with bone meal, such as Schreiner's Natural-Based Iris Food (1 T. in a pot), Mac's Magic Mix (520-298-2822).

Add rest of soil to within 3" of top of pot.

The iris - healthy iris rhizomes are firm!

Plant iris rhizomes when daytime temps are below 95 degrees.

Dried roots - leave them on or trim them - either is fine.

Our bare rhizomes are safe to plant, but for those from other sources, you may soak them in solution of ¼ c bleach and 2 c water for 10 minutes, and rinse well. Avoid bleach contact with skin.

*Susan's soil of choice is Miracle-Gro Potting Mix in the yellow bag (*not* the Moisture Control type)

Rhizomes may be kick-started by soaking bottoms in shallow water for 24 to 48 hours – not required.

Early, Midseason, Late Season, reblooming, various heights - Attend our local club meetings to learn about Bearded Iris, Louisiana Iris, Beardless Iris, Siberian Iris, Japanese Iris, Spuria Iris!

Water - Water soil only 2-3 times a week until new leaves appear. Soil should dry out between watering.

Drip systems work perfectly!

Use a Moisture Meter – water soil when meter reads ‘dry’.

Never allow pot to stand in saucer of water, as it will pick up salts.

Elevate your pot.

In Tucson, **morning sun and dappled afternoon shade** is best. If shade is not possible, use shade cloth suspended over iris.

When dividing iris, replace half the soil with fresh potting mix.

Fertilizing - From June through December, feed every 2 weeks with fish emulsion for the leaves.

From January to June, use water-soluble fertilizer such as Hawaiian Bud & Bloom (5-50-17), Scotts Super Bloom (12-55-6), Miracle-Gro Bloom Booster (10-52-10) or Ferti-lome Blooming & Rooting (9-58-8). The middle number should be 50 or higher. Follow instructions on container.

Use **plant labels**, so you know which iris were successful in your garden.

Additional Notes from Susan and Joyce’s presentation, continued...

Susan applies fish emulsion on alternate Sundays from June through December, since she waters on M-W-F

Her drippers can be turned off as needed after a rain.

She trims her leaves into a fan shape in early August to tidy them.

Cut spent flower stalks close to the rhizome.

When using a moisture meter, stick the probe all the way in so that it is down by the roots.

If soil needs better drainage, add pumice.

In summer, relocate pots to under a tree or consider suspending shade cloth over them.

- SC, from my notes

Treasurer's Report for September - submitted by Martin Juarez

Beginning Balance					\$5,498.64	
Date	Paid	MOP	Deposits (Credits)	Expenses (Debits)		
09/16/21	X	Debit		\$1,200.00		Juarez – Money FOR 9/18 Sale
09/16/21	X	Debit		\$18.58		Juarez – Invoices for 9/18 Sale
09/18/21		#1921		\$58.10		Knill – Ice, snacks, prints
09/18/21	X	#1922		\$350.00		Schaefer – Lauer's Iris'
09/18/21	X	#1923		\$703.00		Clark – BlueJ Iris'
09/22/21	X		\$1,200.00			Money FROM 9/18 sale
09/22/21	X		\$18.58			Unused invoices
09/22/21	X		\$1,508.00			9/18 Sale Cash
09/22/21	X		\$563.00			9/18 Sale Checks
Totals			\$3,289.58	\$2,329.68	\$959.90	
Ending Balance				\$6,458.54		09/25/21 01:45 PM
Check order mistake jumped from #1860 to #1921 (#s 1861-1920 "destroyed")						
9/18 Sale: Rhizomes \$2271.00 <\$383.00 Iris bucks> (no value) = \$1888.00 *, Membership dues \$183.00**						
* Sale \$2271.00 <\$1050.00 Mid-America / Blue J iris's> <\$350.00 Lauer iris's> <\$383.00 Iris bucks> = Ending balance: \$488.00.						
** DUES (16 new singles, 1 new joint, 1 single renewal): Cash: Barry-Harris, Bost, Clark, Craft, Dunnigan, Ganem, Gregoire, Guengerich, Krone, Lim, Rummel, Vanovich; Checks: Court #1913, Hill #4186, Hill-Crouch #544, Lampkin/Liasko #1137/\$13, Radecki #6231, Summers #1279.						



Above: for a touch of that elusive red, add 'Cranapple' (BB) to your garden. (photo from AIS Wiki)



From top: 'Maslon,' 'Peebee and Jay,' 'Tic Tac Toe' (all MTB); 'Brown Lasso' (which also won the Dykes Medal), and 'Grapenut' (both BB) (all photos from AIS Iris Wiki)

Median Irises, Part II: Miniature TB & Border Beardeds

Last month, we learned that the Medians became a separate class of irises in the 1950's and that the majority of them are crosses between *Iris pumila* and tall bearded (TB) irises. We looked at two of the four groups that make up the Medians: Standard Dwarf Beardeds (8-16") and Intermediate Beardeds (16-27.5"). Now it's time for the remaining two types to shine.

Miniature Tall Beardeds (MTB) range in height from 16 to 27.5". With blooms starting three-to-four weeks before TB and overlapping with them, MTB flowers are dainty and delicate. They often blossom again 10 days after initial bloom, and many flower again in the fall. MTB form mounds of color, as they have many stalks, and create bright spots in the garden without being overwhelming. Clumps are often equated with a "cloud of butterflies." Blooms are featured on branched, pencil-thin stalks which are great in floral arrangements, hence their nickname of "table irises." The MTB group was named by Ethel Parkham, who developed the original AIS checklists in 1929 and 1930. She and Mary Williamson were instrumental in breeding MTB. They started out by selecting "runts" from among TB. Alice White from California revived the MTB breeding in the 1940's, after it had been overshadowed by the craze for TB. There are both diploid and tetraploid MTB, and the diploids bloom slightly later than the tetraploids. The highest award for MTB is the Williamson-White Medal. Some examples are '[Bumblebee Delight](#)' (Norrick 1985), '[Maslon](#)' (Spoon 2002), '[Peebee and Jay](#)' (Schmeider 2013), and '[Tic Tac Toe](#)' (Johnson 2017).

Border Beardeds (BB) also range in height from 16 to 27.5". Their 5" flowers open at the same time as TB, and are good for the front of beds. With their perfect proportions, they look just like smaller versions of TB. The highest honor for BB is the Knowlton Medal, as Harold Knowlton was a key breeder. He also served as president of AIS, reorganized the awards system, and instituted the first judge's handbook. Some examples of BB include '[Brown Lasso](#)' (Buckles by Niswonger 1972), '[Cranapple](#)' (Aitken 2001), '[Baboon Bottom](#)' (Kasperek 2002), '[Orange Pop](#)' (Lauer 2004), '[My Cher of Happiness](#)' (Black 2013), and '[Grapenut](#)' (M. Sutton 2021).

If you are interested in learning more about Median irises, please visit the [Median Iris Society's website](#). Consider giving some of these little beauties a try! - SC

Sources: AIS webinar on Median Irises by Debbie Strauss on 3 Aug 2021 (my notes), AIS wiki pages on [MTB](#) and [BB](#).

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 October:

Divide and plant iris rhizomes this month, best done when temps stay below 100°. This will allow them time to establish roots before it gets cold.

Be sure that the plants get enough water, since they will be growing and increasing until next bloom time. Soil should be damp, but not moist. Do not water from overhead if it is above 85° though, or the rhizomes may rot. **Give the soil a dose of fertilizer.**

Keep area free of weeds, leaves, and pests.



Tip Exchange

Add 1 T Schreiner's Iris Garden's fertilizer to the hole when planting rhizomes in the ground or in pots. Its 6-10-10 is specially formulated for irises. Scratch in a top dressing of this food annually. Order it [here](#). Shipping is free. - SC

In the Chat portion of the AIS webinar of 1 Sept 2021, Kathleen Sayce suggested that if the roots of a purchased rhizome are white, plant it right away. If the roots are brown or nonexistent, she said that the rhizome may not root as it might have been disturbed too early in its growing cycle. - SC, from my notes

Iris Diamonte:

sale
organized, frenzied
buying, teaching, learning
rhizomes, knowledge, fertilizer, soil
planting, waiting, growing
beautiful, fulfilling
irises
- Sue Clark

Did You Know?

Petrichor is the earthy smell following a rain.

Phenology is the study of natural cycles, such as blooming, fruiting, and egg laying.

Plants provide most of the Earth's molecular oxygen and are the basis of most of its ecosystems. There are approximately 320,000 plant species and about 260,000 to 290,000 of them produce seeds. And several of those species are irises. - SC

Source of information: Wikipedia

"As long as autumn lasts, I shall not have hands, canvas and colors enough to paint the beautiful things I see." – Vincent Van Gogh

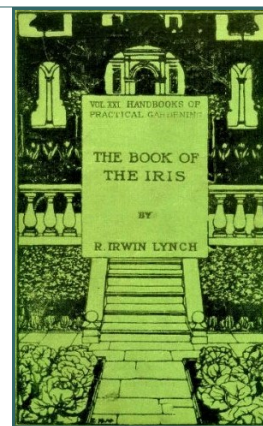
A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Irises became more and more popular as the 20th century dawned. William John Caparne, who we've talked about previously, was instrumental in this. His drive to paint more irises led him to develop a new type that bloomed in the gap between the dwarf and tall bearded irises. Sir Michael Foster was aware that Caparne was an excellent artist, and commissioned him to paint portraits of every known iris. Several of these paintings survive and are housed in the archives of the Royal Horticultural Society in London. Caparne was awarded the Foster Memorial Plaque by the British Iris Society for his contributions. See more in our [December 2017](#) newsletter.

Another influential irisarian was Arthur John Bliss, who began breeding the flowers in 1902. He had become intrigued by genetics after reading Gregor Mendel's work, which although written in 1866, only resurfaced in 1900. Bliss was in contact with W. R. Dykes and John Wister, and was influential in creating iris societies in England, France, and the United States. He used a scientific approach in his breeding efforts with specific goals in mind and he kept meticulous notes. His 'Dominion' (1917), offered at an exorbitant price to generate interest, is still popular. Read more on Bliss in the [August & September 2019](#) editions of this newsletter.

R. Irwin Lynch of the Botanic Garden in Cambridge added to the public's knowledge of irises in 1904 with The Book of the Iris. (View or download a copy [here](#)). Lynch dedicated his book to Sir Michael Foster, whom he credits with collecting, hybridizing, introducing, and popularizing irises. It covers both the culture of irises and identifying them. Lynch mentioned that he drew upon the works of J. G. Baker including his Handbook of the Irideae and his articles in *The Gardeners' Chronicle*, as well as Sir Michael's original descriptions and publications. There is an excellent glossary of botanical terms at the end of the book. Chapter III, written by the Reverend Henry Ewbank, explains how he grew the temperamental dryland *Oncocyclus* irises successfully in England. Ewbank claimed that *Oncocyclus* "distance everything else that I have seen in the way of giving delight." Thank you to these men and all of the iris pioneers! - SC

Sources: "Prologue to 1920," by Bob Pries in *The Early Years - Supplement 1 of 4 to IRISES, AIS Bulletin*, 2020; and *The Book of the Iris*, downloaded from www.usarchive.org, accessed on 1 Sept 2021 (see link above).



Source of image: amazon.com