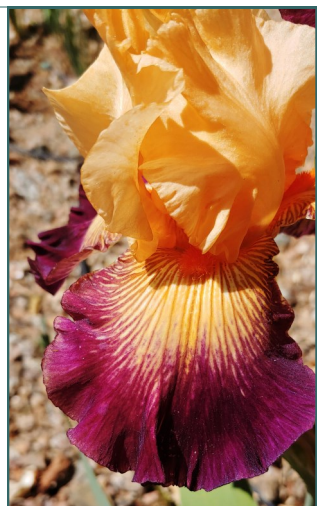


TAIS Newsletter

Our 56th year

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Doctor Who'
(G. Sutton 2009)

Marcusen Sculpture Garden,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2021

President's Message

Another in-person milestone for TAIS: our first auction in two years! This year's rhizomes are being supplied by Thomas Johnson. I was very impressed with the quality and quantity of blooms that I experienced this spring from Thomas' iris that I obtained last year. So come to the auction and get your favorite Johnson iris.

- Kevin Kartchner

"The brilliant poppy flaunts her head Amidst the ripening grain,
And adds her voice to swell the song That August's here again."

- Helen Maria Winslow

Upcoming Events

August 14 Auction & meeting: 1 PM, Tucson Botanical Gardens, indoors. Unvaccinated persons please wear masks, per TBG policy. Auction is for TAIS members only and the rhizomes will be from Mid-America. TBG now closes at 3:30

September 18: TAIS Rhizome Sale, 9 AM to noon, Harlow Gardens nursery. We will set up at 2:30 the afternoon before. Final setup 8-9 AM on September 18th. Members-only discount hour 8-9 AM on September 18th. Presentation at 11 AM: Growing irises in containers. Volunteer opportunities are available: please contact Joyce at joycelvan60@gmail.com

October meeting: Annual Photo Contest

November: Potluck & Installation of new officers

Birthday Wishes to:

Kathleen Marron

Miriam Diamond

Pat Olsen

Juliet Westbrook

Diane Pavlovich

Rose Clark



Iris germanica

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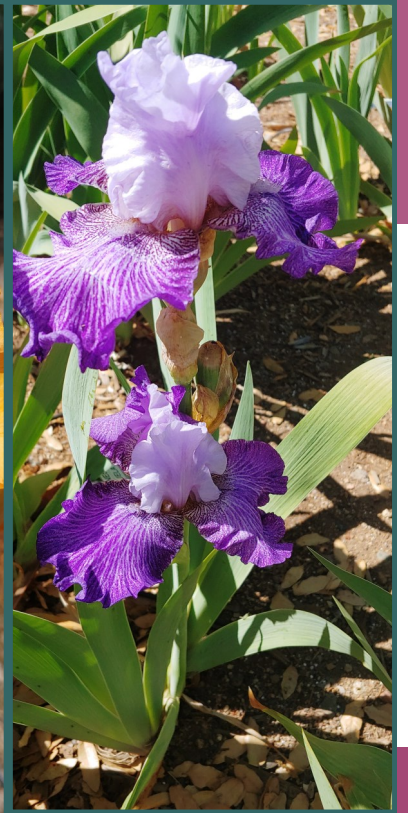
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Irises in Prescott, May 2021 - photos by Sue Clark



**Marcusen
Sculpture
Garden and...**

**Haas Memorial
Chapel Garden**

Treasurer's Report for July - submitted by Martin Juarez

Beginning Balance					\$5,000.64	X
Date	Paid	MOP	Deposits	Expenses		
07/20/21	X	Auto		\$72.00		Re-order Checks
07/21/21	X		\$10.00			Pavlovich #2589
Totals			\$10.00	\$72.00	-\$62.00	
Ending Balance					\$4,938.64	07/22/21 10:17 AM

Species Irises, Part VIII: *Iris versicolor* & its hybrids

Iris versicolor is a wild iris native to central and eastern Canada and the northeastern portion of the United States, as well as the neighboring Appalachian highlands. Its nickname is the common blue flag, and the species name translates as “variously-colored.” This iris is widespread, growing along streams and shores, and in meadows, marshes, and swamps.

The thick, creeping rhizomes create dense clumps which bloom between May and July. Flowers range from shades of blue to those of violet and the falls have a yellow signal. Albino clumps are not uncommon. *I. versicolor* blooms are beardless and are similar in looks to Dutch irises.

I. versicolor is poisonous if ingested, and its leaves and rhizomes have been known to cause digestive distress to humans and animals. Calves have died from eating it. Magical properties have been attributed to *I. versicolor*. People have carried its rhizomes to attract financial gain, and there are records of rhizomes being stored in the drawers of cash registers to increase business.

This iris has been adopted as the symbol of several locales. It is the state flower of Tennessee, the provincial flower of Quebec, and the official flower of Kappa Pi, the International Honorary Art Fraternity.

In the garden, *I. versicolor* will thrive in humus-rich soil. It can reach 30” in height, typically with three to five flowers borne on a stem which rises above the leaves. Each section of its approximately 2”-long pods bears two rows of seeds, each seed about 1/3” wide and coated in cork to make it float. The delicate-looking blossoms attract butterflies and hummingbirds, according to the New Moon Nurseries website.

I. versicolor has been crossed with a related, similar-looking species, *I. virginica*, the Southern blue flag, native to the eastern coastal areas south to Florida. These crosses are referred to as robusta. Hybrids are available from Ensata Gardens and New Moon Nurseries websites - see links below. As they are hardy in Zones 2-7, they are most likely not for those of us in the desert, unfortunately. However, they would make a lovely addition to the gardens of our friends in the eastern USA. - SC

Sources: AIS Wiki article on [Iris versicolor](#), [Wikipedia article](#) on the same, [Ensata Gardens](#) website, and [New Moon Nurseries](#) website.



From top: *Iris versicolor* at the National Arboretum (photo by [Cliff](#) from Arlington, Virginia, USA on Wikipedia), and four examples of the robusta type: ‘Wooly Bully,’ ‘John Wood,’ ‘For Jay,’ and ‘Dark Aura’ (all from the Ensata Gardens website)

How You Can Help Pollinators

Pollinators are facing many challenges and we all can do little things to help them. And these little things do add up! The following tips are from my notes from a recent webinar by David Mizejewski of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF).

Plant flowers for pollinators. Native plants are best. (See this [list](#) from NWF for suggestions). Pollinators get food and nectar from flowering plants, as well as deliver pollen to other blossoms. 30-60% of all bees are pollen specialists and can *only* visit native plants. Flowering plants, insects, and other pollinators have co-evolved to depend closely upon one another, starting during the Mesozoic era. Consider tubular flowers and the long slender beaks of hummingbirds. While the hummingbird drinks, the flower's anthers deposit pollen on the bird's neck and chest area, which it then delivers to the next plant.

Strive for a selection of plants that bloom over three or four seasons. And the more variety you have, the less likely that a pest can wipe out the whole garden!

Plant host plants for caterpillars. Different species of caterpillars are immune to the protective toxins of specific plants, so are typically able to eat the leaves of only that one type of plant, known as their host plant. Milkweeds serve as host plants to monarchs; and dill, desert marigold, asters, and sunflowers to other types of butterfly larva. For more choices for Arizona, see this [list](#) provided by the Maricopa County Community Colleges.

Most bees *do not* live in hives, make honey, or have queens. More than ninety percent of North American bees are solitary bees. They lay their eggs in small tunnels they make in the ground or in holes in plant stems. **To protect these bees, be sure not to disturb them, as well as leaving some dead wood and plant stems for them. A [bug hotel](#) is another useful addition to the pollinator garden.**

Plant native trees that bloom, which are a double treat for hummingbirds since they provide both nectar and places for nests.

Hummingbird feeders compliment the nectar-bearing plants in your garden by providing supplemental food. And these lovely, feisty birds eat mosquitos, too!

Offer water for pollinators, such as in birdbaths and fountains. A water- and rock-filled saucer provides footholds in case bees fall in. Butterflies are attracted to these watering holes, too.

A saucer of mud would be appreciated by native bees and some birds for nest-building purposes.

A mud puddle is a congregating place for butterflies, who enjoy "puddling." They drink the muddy water, which provides them with certain nutrients from the soil.

Avoid pesticides and herbicides. They most often kill indiscriminately. Someone at a local nursery can suggest natural alternatives, such as Bt.

Give bats a break! Two species of bats feed on nectar and range into Arizona from Mexico. They pollinate saguaros, avocados, agaves, and bananas.

If you think of bees as pests, work on changing that misconception. They are the most important pollinators!

Practice the Golden Rule towards pollinators. If you let them be, they will let you be! (99% of the time, anyway).

Making a beautiful garden for pollinators **also means a beautiful garden for you** to enjoy and to learn more about Nature and how it functions.

At least one in every three bites of food we eat depends on input from pollinators, who make it possible for plants to produce things such as fruit, vegetables, nuts, and seeds. Even coffee beans! - SC



New TAIS Treasurer Needed

Martin has served for several years as our treasurer, and will not be able to attend our meetings after this month due to a change in his work schedule. If you wish to become our next treasurer, please contact taisnewsletter@yahoo.com for information. Thank you, Martin, for your service!

And thank you to our other volunteers, present & past!

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 August:

Keep area free of leaves, weeds and pests.

No need to trim leaves into fan shapes unless you demand that they look tidy through the summer or are replanting the rhizome. Dead leaves can help by shading the rhizomes.

Provide afternoon relief with shade cloth or by keeping potted irises in the shade.

Continue to feed and water reblooming irises.

Redo any faded names on plant markers. Now!



Tip Exchange

Studies show that gardening is great for your overall well-being. Here's how. It:

- Decreases your risk of dementia and Alzheimer's disease
- Enhances your mood and outlook
- Causes you to get regular healthy aerobic exercise and burn calories
- Boosts your heart's health, lowers your blood pressure, and helps you avoid stroke
- Relieves stress and boosts your self-esteem
- Improves your hand strength and dexterity
- **And** being outdoors increases your level of Vitamin D, so is good for your bone health!

Source: Old Farmer's Almanac, email of 2 July 2021

Iris Limerick:

My iris plants are struggling,
It looks like there was a mugger-ling.

Some leaves are dead
(Not the whole bed!?)

Perhaps they need a hugger-ling!

- Sue Clark



'Amas' (Foster 1885)

Source: AIS Iris Wiki

Did You Know?

To earn full points from a judge, an iris plant in the garden must have a minimum of seven buds. These are to be arranged pleasingly along a branched stalk. No more than two flowers are to be in bloom at a time, and the clump must bloom for at least two weeks. The rhizome should produce between 3 and 5 increases per year, and leaves should be clean and crisp with no spots or floppiness. - SC

- "Tall Bearded Iris - Today and Tomorrow" - Judge's training, AIS webinar, 9 June 2021

"The hum of bees is the voice of the garden." - Elizabeth Lawrence

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Sir Michael Foster is one of the giants of the iris world. A professor of human physiology at Cambridge, he was foremost in that field, as well. He wrote a textbook on human physiology which was used to train doctors during the next several generations. And throw in some time to serve as a member of Parliament, and you have a true Renaissance man!

Sir Michael brought his scientific background with him when he began growing and investigating irises. He may have been one of the first experimental taxonomists - he observed traits and designed experiments to test his hypotheses. For example, he believed that four "species" of irises - *squalens*, *sambucina*, *lurisa*, and *plicata* - might actually be hybrids of *Iris variegata* and *I. pallida* because they shared traits with them. So he made crosses of the latter two and ended up with plants that were identical to the four "species," which were later verified to be hybrids.

Sir Michael published his first work on irises in 1881 in the *Gardeners' Chronicles*. In 1886, he proposed a new manner of naming hybrid irises. He suggested that part of each of the species' names be used as a portion of the resulting hybrid's name. For instance, a cross between *I. paradoxa* and *I. sambucina* would be called PARSAMB. Actually, all seedlings from that cross would bear that group name, not just a single cultivar. Many of his group names were later grandfathered into the AIS checklists. The international naming code prohibits the naming of cultivars by mashing-up species names. The latter may change thorough time, especially if a different name is found in older published reports. Many of Sir Michael's group names are still in use.

Foster lectured on irises to the Royal Horticultural Society in 1889. He stressed that most of the so-called *I. germanica* were actually hybrids of *I. variegata* and *I. pallida*, that most irises *do not* like damp conditions as was believed, and that 'Amas' was a true *germanica* from Asia Minor. He experimented with hybridizing spuria irises, and did much growing and sorting out of bulbous iris species, culminating in [The Bulbous Irises](#) in 1892.

The highest award given to an iris by the British Iris Society is the Foster Memorial Plaque, named after Sir Michael. Read more about this important irisanian in our [Nov 2017 newsletter](#). - SC

Sources: "Prologue to 1920," by Bob Pries in The Early Years - Supplement 1 of 4 to IRISES, AIS Bulletin, 2020