

TAIS Newsletter

Our 56th year

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Blue Magic' Dutch Iris
(Aker, 1959)

Chandler, AZ

Photo by Sue Clark, 2021

President's Message

It was so good to see you, you, and all of you. Two live TAIS events in one month. It's hard to believe this was our first flower show in two years. It was small, but gotta start someplace. I can't remember when we last did garden tours but I really enjoyed this one. There were lots of flowers and masked, smiling TAIS people. Enjoy your spring and ready yourself for summer. See you on May's Zoom meeting.

- Kevin Kartchner

"May and June. Soft syllables, gentle names for the two best months in the garden year: cool, misty mornings gently burned away with a warming spring sun, followed by breezy afternoons and chilly nights. The discussion of philosophy is over; it's time for work to begin." - Peter Loewer

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Upcoming Events

Next meeting: May 8, 1 PM via Zoom: Louisiana iris. We will watch part of an AIS Webinar about them and then discuss

We do not meet in June or July. Newsletters will continue

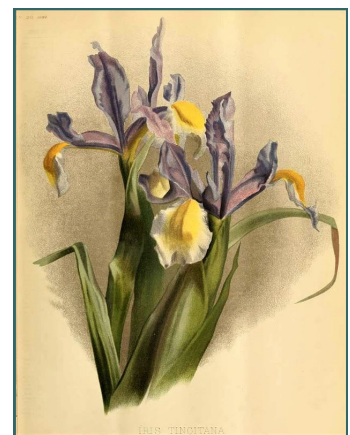
August 14 Auction & meeting: 1 PM, Members only, Tucson Botanical Gardens

September 18: TAIS Rhizome Sale, 9 AM to noon, Harlow Gardens nursery. We will set up the afternoon before

Birthday Wishes to:

Kevin Kartchner Wendy O'Rourke
Cheryl Modaff Margie Valenzuela

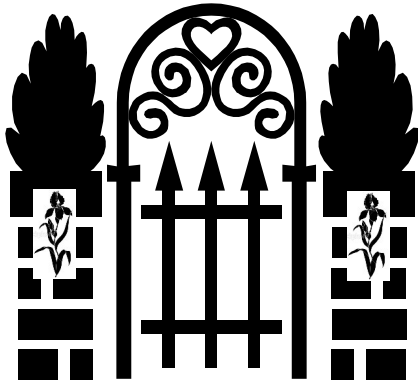
Our heartfelt condolences to Kristee West on the recent passing of her husband



Tangerian irises

The Garden 36: 294, 28 Sep. 1889; African Irises, via the Iris Wiki

Reports from Show & Tours



We ♥ Irises

17 April 2021 - Our annual iris show was held at Harlow Gardens nursery. Kevin, Kathy, and Dan set up the tables and vases on Friday afternoon. Susan, Kevin, and Terry brought irises to display.

About 50 people admired the flowers, including 16 TAIS members. Everyone seemed happy to be able to be out and about after a year of sheltering-in-place.

Kevin's 'Scoonchie' won the fan favorite vote, Terry's Japanese iris 'Blue Embers' tied with Susan's 'Bam A Lam' for second, and Susan's 'Kathy Chilton' and 'Scarlett Sun' came in third. Terry's Ikebana arrangement of Japanese irises drew lots of attention.

The take-down committee was Bonnie, Joyce, and Kevin.

Thank you to Joyce, Cathy, Susan, and Kevin who sent me notes and photos from the show. See their pictures on the next page. - Sue Clark, secretary

24 April 2021 - Susan, Kevin, and Terry graciously opened their gardens to TAIS members for the morning, as did the iris garden at the Tucson Botanical Gardens. Most of the irises had finished blooming at some of the locations, but there was still plenty to see, glean ideas from, and appreciate. Ten members took advantage of this opportunity, which was postponed from last year due to the pandemic. Susan's irises flourish in pots and in two horse troughs in her backyard. Kevin's seedlings bloomed early and several were still blooming for the tour. It seems like his efforts at hybridizing have been successful. In Terry's garden, 'Blue Embers' Japanese iris put on a show amidst a rainbow of roses. Joyce provided water and snacks for the visitors. Thank you to all! See photos on the following page. - SC

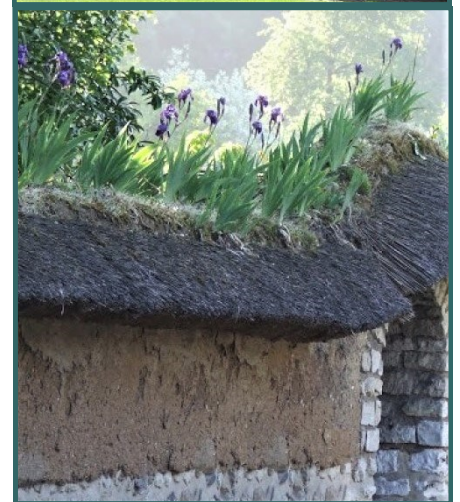
**Next year, perhaps
earlier garden
tours, with the
Show the next week**



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

More on Rooftop Irises

Last month, we learned that irises grow on thatched roofs in Japan and China. Now we'll add France to that list. In parts of the Normandy region, locals plant succulents and irises on thatch roofs to both anchor it and to provide a beautiful highlight to their homes (first picture, below, on the ridgeline of the roof). Sometimes yards are surrounded by walls with thatch and irises on top, as in the second photo. They grow irises in their gardens, too. - SC



Source for information and for photos: [French Irises on Rooftops](#) by Sharon Santoni, *My French Country Home*.

Pictures from our Iris Show on April 17



Photos by
Joyce Knill, Cathy
Pane-Scire, Susan
Schaefer, & Kevin
Kartchner



Names of Irises in the Show

- see numbered photos on previous page

1. 'Blue Embers' Japanese iris - tied for second place - Terry
2. 'Kathy Chilton' - tied for third place - Susan
3. a historic NOID* - Kevin
4. 'Scarlet Sun' - tied for third place - Susan
5. 'Scoonchee' - first place - Kevin
6. 'Bam A Lam' - tied for second - Susan
7. 'Gypsy Kisses' - Kevin
8. not sure of name - shown as 'Frosty Spirit' - Susan
9. 'Higher Ground' - Susan
10. 'Blinded by the Light' - Susan
11. 'Blue Embers' in an Ikebana arrangement by Terry
- 12-18. Kevin's seedlings

* NOID means no ID or no identification

Photos from the TAIS Garden Tours



Photos by Joyce and Kevin - more next month



Treasurer's Report for April - submitted by Martin Juarez

Beginning Balance					\$5,189.54
Date	Paid	MOP	Deposits	Expenses	
04/23/21			\$155.00		DUES *
04/23/21		#1857		\$353.23	Clark – BlueJris & copies
Totals			\$155.00	\$353.23	-\$198.23
Ending Balance					\$4,991.31
04/23/21 02:42 PM					
* Juarez/Kelsen \$20/#1436, Pappas \$10/#146, Ellis \$10/#1010; Gordon-Lewalski \$10/#1217, Powers \$10/#2060, Vega \$10/#3101; Andrews \$10/#1123, Valenzuela (hard copy newsletter) \$35/#7103; Andrews (4 membership gifts) \$40/#1124.					

Dutch Iris: *Iris x hollandica*

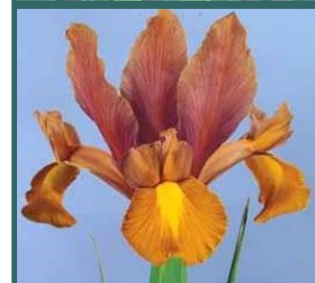
Dutch irises are easy to grow, do not seem prone to rot, and have elegant flowers. Beardless irises that grow from bulbs, they are a hybrid between two species. In 1564, a Belgian horticulturalist named Clusius discovered two types of irises while traveling through Spain: blue *Iris xiphium* and yellow *I. lusitanica* (now considered varieties of the same species). Both kinds were soon growing in his friends' gardens in Belgium. Fast forward to the late 19th century and we find some of the large bulb-growing nurseries in Holland taking an interest in crossing the Spanish *I. xiphium* (var. *praecox*), Portuguese *I. xiphium* (var. *lusitanica*), and the Tangerian iris, *I. tingitana*, from North Africa. See illustration of the latter on p. 1. The resulting irises had larger flowers which bloomed earlier than their parents. Thus was the origin of the Dutch iris. Some popular varieties included 'Wedgewood' (de Graaff) and 'Imperator' (Van Tubergen). 'Wedgewood' was light blue with yellow signals and 'Imperator' was dark blue. Dutch irises were prized mainly as cut flowers and part of the reason for their popularity was that they could easily be forced in greenhouses to supply the florist trade.

'Yellow Queen' and 'White Excelsior' were valued for the additional hues they added to the line. Other colors were developed in the late 1930's, but were put on hold by World War II. In 1946, commercial nurseries mostly in the Pacific Northwest began importing them. A wide variety of improvements in color and flower size were soon realized, including lemon yellow, gold, orange, mauve, bronze, and bicolors. All have a bright yellow signal.

Plant Dutch irises in well-drained soil in a sunny spot where they will receive adequate moisture. Dig holes 4" deep and put the bulbs in with their pointed end up. Since we live in an area where temperatures do not dip below zero, we can leave the bulbs in the ground year-round. Cut off spent bloom stalks. Foliage will die back after bloom time and reappear in the fall. Each stem produces one flower, so Dutch irises look best in clumps. They also do well in containers. Expect them to reach 18-24" tall. Mine flower in late March and early April. Each blossom lasts about two days.

Dutch iris bulbs are usually sold bagged, either as an assortment or a single variety. Find them at nurseries, [Etsy.com](https://www.etsy.com), or at the big box stores. They make excellent cut flowers. Trader Joe's often carries bunches of Dutch iris in bud. Dave recently decided that these are his favorite irises, so I will be planting more of these reliable and carefree irises in the fall. Best of all - no rot! - SC

Sources: [The Dutch Iris: a History of Color](#), Wikipedia article on [Iris x hollandica](#), [UniProt](#), and cultural instructions from four packages of Dutch irises.



From top: *Iris xiphium* (AIS Wiki), 'Red Ember' (Brecks.com), 'Cream Beauty,' 'Tiger's Eye' (usually sold as 'Eye of the Tiger'), and 'Bronze Beauty' (AIS Wiki)

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 May:

Trim all spent flower stalks at their base. Using scissors for trimming helps to protect the rhizome from injury.

Fertilize with **Super Bloom** or **Ferti-Lome Blooming and Rooting** for six weeks following last flower. **According to Sunset's Western Garden Book, irises form increases and buds for next year's flowers during this six-week postbloom interval.**

Keep rebloomers watered and fed through the summer for the best chance of bloom in the fall.



Tip Exchange

Consider installing shade cloth from around Memorial Day to mid-September to protect TBs from sun-damage which can lead to soft rot issues. Try 85% cloth. This can be supported by a PVC pipe structure. [80% and 95% shade fabrics available here. - SC]

Spuria irises make excellent cut flowers.
- this tip & the one above from Darol Jurn

Flowering times (Chandler) - Moraea iris: Oct to late April, Dutch iris: late March to early April, TB: early to mid-April, Spuria iris: mid to late April, Louisiana iris: April to early May. - SC

Iris Limerick:

The iris season has passed
We know that it cannot last.
We wish it could
And say it should.
Now it's all a dream, alas.

- Sue Clark

Did You Know?

"Plant flowering bulbs, biennial and perennial flowers [like irises], and vegetables that bear crops below ground during the dark, or waning, of the Moon ... from the day after it is full to the day before it is new again. Plant annual flowers and vegetables that bear crops above ground during the light, or waxing of the Moon ... from the day the Moon is new to the day it is full." - Old Farmers' Almanac



Iris wilsonii

M.S. del. J.N. Eitch lith. - Curtis's Botanical Magazine, London., vol. 136 [1 ser. 4, vol. 6], Tab. 8340-11

"Live in each season as it passes: breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit." – Henry David Thoreau

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Last month we saw that by the 1850's, 100 or so varieties of irises were offered for sale in catalogs, including some named cultivars. During the 1860's, no one was thinking much about irises in Europe due to the Franco-Prussian War, or in the United States because of the Civil War and its aftermath.

As Queen Victoria expanded the British Empire during her reign (1837-1901), new plants were collected from around the world. The one extant journal, *Revue Horticole* (1829), could not keep pace, so new journals sprang up to record the novel plants: *The Gardeners' Chronicles* in 1844, *Gartenflora* in 1852, *The Garden Illustrated* in 1872, and *Gartenwelt* (Gardener's World) in 1896. Beginning in 1880, articles about irises were featured on a regular basis, and these provided nurseries and gardeners with evermore information about the genus.

William Robinson wrote for *The Gardeners' Chronicles* and then started his own journal, *The Garden*, in 1871. A strong proponent of cottage gardens and mixed herbaceous borders which featured hardy perennials, Robinson was a friend and mentor of Gertrude Jekyll. He wrote *The Wild Garden* and *The English Flower Garden*. Many of his ideas remain popular today, including mixed borders of perennials, shrubs, and climbers; the use of groundcover plants between taller plants; alpine rock gardens; and water gardens. Robinson represented the prestigious horticultural firm of Veitch at the 1867 Paris Exhibition.

Veitch Nurseries was founded by John Veitch before 1808 near Exeter, Devon, England. Between 1859 and 1897, they employed twenty-two individuals, including three family members, to collect plants from all over the world. Veitch was famous for exotic plants, especially orchids. The firm introduced 1281 plants before World War I, including 232 orchids. This family-owned nursery, which also had a branch in Chelsea, was sold in 1969 and is now part of St Bridget Nurseries.

One of the best-known introductions of the firm is a hardy yellow Siberian iris, *I. wilsonii* (Wright 1907), which was collected by Ernest Wilson in the high grasslands of western China. This iris is still available and is one of two yellow Siberian species. See illustration above. - SC

Sources: "Prologue to 1920." by Bob Pries in *The Early Years* - Supplement 1 of 4 to *IRISES*, AIS Bulletin, 2020; Wikipedia articles on [John Veitch](#), [Veitch Nurseries](#), and [Iris wilsonii](#).