

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 57th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Blue Rhythm'
(Whiting, 1945)

Marcusen Sculpture Garden,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2022

President's Message

Statistics. The numbers don't tell me everything I would like to know, but I think I learned a lot this year. With our house move last year came moving about 1,000 iris rhizomes. They had to be relocated at the worst (according to common desert wisdom) time of the year - June and July. I expected a lot of loss due to rot, as well as poor bloom due to transplant setbacks. Results: Only 3% of the rhizomes rotted but most thrived. The mid-summer transplants grew much better than the September planting from TAIS' rhizome sale. The bloom season was the best in my 20+ years of iris growing, as 64% of my 260 TB varieties bloomed compared to last year's 41% bloom. But of my potted iris that did so well last year, only 22% bloomed this year. Only counting my TBs in the ground, 88% bloomed! And I can confirm that spurias do not like being moved, as none of my 70 transplants bloomed (nice fans though). What changed? So many variables. I put in a variety of soil amendments and fertilizers. None seemed to be significantly better than another. My best guesses: new soil, transplanting mid-summer, and switching from my old sprinkler watering to all drip irrigation. Guess where my poorer-performing potted plants are going? Yes: into the ground in July. I'm hoping I'm guessing correctly. These are just my results and observations. Your mileage will vary as we all have different microclimates and cultivation techniques. Try something different. - Kevin Kartchner

"A SWARM OF BEES IN MAY IS WORTH A LOAD OF HAY. A SWARM OF BEES IN JUNE IS WORTH A SILVER SPOON. A SWARM OF BEES IN JULY IS NOT WORTH A FLY." - ENGLISH SAYING

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Upcoming Events

We do not meet in June or July. Newsletters will continue through the summer, though. You are invited to submit photos of irises to feature in the summer issues: taisnewsletter@yahoo.com

Next meeting: August 6 at 1 PM, TAIS Auction at Tucson Botanical Gardens. Members may bid in person on rhizomes from Mid-America Gardens

Rhizome Sale: September 17 at Harlow's Gardens

Birthday Wishes to:

Olive Mondello Christy Lewalski
Paul Guengerrich Rebecca Hill



May Meeting Minutes



14 May 2022 - 15 members gathered at the Tucson Botanical Gardens to learn about Pollinator Gardens. Three more joined via Zoom. See articles on p. 4 and 5.

Business meeting: Kevin awarded iris bucks to Terry, Susan (absent), and himself for the top three People's Choice Awards in last month's iris show. One of Terry's winners was a sport of the arilbred 'Kiosk.' A *sport* is a mutation and Terry said that these are typically caused by a gamma ray. (We had some fun with that!).

We each received a strand of beads to hang in our gardens as a memento of Diane Tweedy from her neighbor Chris Dickens, who used many of Diane's own beads for the project. Bonnie drew three winning entries for TAIS memberships from the Master Gardeners' tour of Diane's iris garden: M F Kane, Kathleen O'Connor, and Charlene Atkinson.

Board Meeting: Seven individuals stayed for this portion. Irises have been ordered for the Auction, Sale, and the Diane Tweedy Memorial irises. Kevin proposed that whomever spends the most at the auction gets first choice of the latter, and on down the spending list. Kristee will do a presentation at the Sale. We discussed options of placing a coupon on our website for

a free iris at the Sale. Bob suggested having a group of rhizomes that would be free with purchase. ("People love free!"). Joyce mentioned that we need to streamline the check-out procedure, as there is so much going on - buying, joining, etc. Diane re: publicity for Sale - begin in late August, ramp up a week before the Sale. She and Sally will investigate other sources for publicity, including The Tucson Weekly. Joyce suggested trying newspapers in Marana and Green Valley. Libraries are now open for meetings, but the Wilmot one is closed for remodeling through July. Terry priced containers for our Show vases. Sue motioned and Diane seconded to purchase 18 of these. Terry will gradually wash and transfer the vases from our storage at TBG to these containers and then to Kevin's garage instead of to a storage unit. Terry will pursue a judged iris show on April 22, 2023, with a possible theme connected to Earth Day. Potted irises were won by Cathy, Sue, Kathy, Sally, Deborah, Diane, Mary Ann, and Terry. Thank you to Joyce for tending these and for the yummy cake and snacks! Sue Clark, secretary

Hover flies are
very important
pollinators here



We're on the web:
Tucsoniris.org

Some Notes on Hybridizing Iris

Kevin brought a bouquet of irises from his garden and demonstrated how to remove an anther and brush pollen on the stigmatic lip in order to hybridize them. He mentioned that when one pulls the stigmatic lips open that they must feel sticky in order for the flour-like pollen to attach. The flower tends to die soon after it is pollinated, which Jim stated is opposite of many fertilized flowers.

After a seed pod forms, leave it on the plant until it dries and opens. Collect the seeds, which look like dark corn kernels. Soak TB seeds for 2-3 days in water to remove the growth inhibitor, changing the water daily.

There are at least two ways to accomplish the cold stratification that the seeds need before they will germinate. Let them dry after their soak and then place them in a Ziploc bag in the fridge for a month. If you live somewhere that gets below freezing on many winter's nights, you may skip the fridge and let the seeds chill on top of soil in a pot outdoors.

Plant seeds in January or February. If they were chilled outdoors, begin watering them at this time. Kevin showed a pot of seedlings that he had planted in January of this year and they were about 6" tall already.

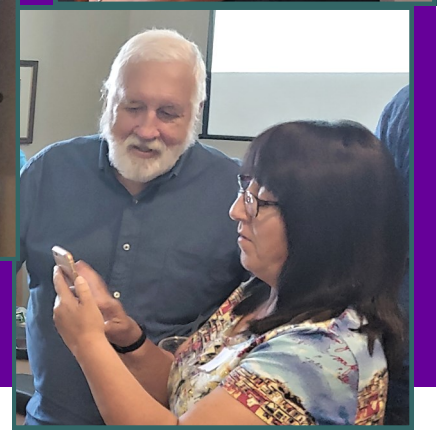
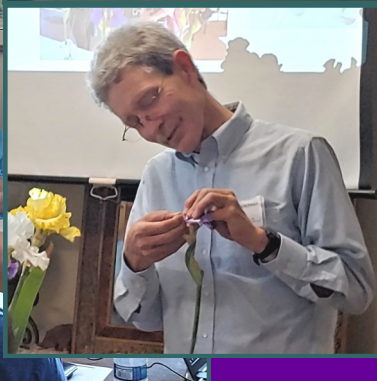
Pods may appear on irises that you did not cross. These are referred to as "bee crosses." Follow the steps above if you want to see the bee's handiwork, or remove the pod if you do not intend to grow the seeds. This will stop the plant from pouring its resources into the developing seeds. - SC



May Meeting

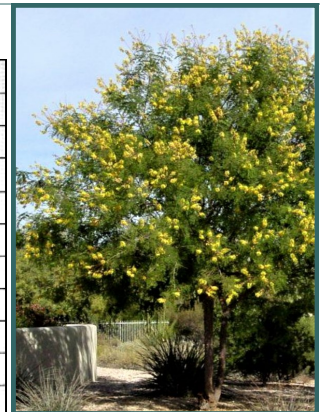


**Photos by
Dave Smith**



Treasurer's Report for May - submitted by Martin Juarez

Beginning Balance					\$6,077.92
Date	Pd	MOP	Deposits	Expenses	
05/06/22	X	#1931		\$1,100.00	Schaefer / Mid-America (Sep. sale) *
05/19/22	X		\$10.00		DUES - Pacquing #198
05/19/22	X	Auto		\$5.00	Debit card replacement fee
05/24/22	X	Debit		\$254.22	Container Store (Swartz) - storage containers
Totals			\$10.00	\$1,359.22	\$1,349.22
Ending Balance					\$4,728.70
Year-to-date: LOSS					-\$1,574.84
* Invoice pending					



From top: Cascolote, Pakistani mulberry, wolfberry, flat-top buckwheat, and Thurber's cotton (all photos from Deb's presentation)

Good Companion Plants for Irises

This month's speaker, Deborah North, presented us with a two-in-one talk about pollinators (see following page) and companion plants for irises. Characteristics of plants that play nicely with irises are that they: prefer light shade to full sun as opposed to full shade, thrive in soils with little nitrogen and high phosphorous, thrive in low humidity, prefer dry soil but will tolerate more moisture in summer, and that they do best in well-draining soil - typically a light, loamy soil. Deb reported that perennials are best, but that certain annuals work well. Here are her suggestions. The names in **bold** are what she grows with her irises.

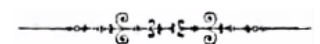
Trees (the over-story) - velvet mesquite - *Prosopis velutina*, acacia, palo verde, pomegranate, deciduous fruit trees, ironwood - *Olneya tesota*, cascalote - *Caesalpinia cacalaco* (see photo), desert willow, Texas mountain laurel, chaste tree - *Vitex agnus-castus*, desert hackberry - *Celtis pallida*, **Pakistani mulberry** (she loves this - 10' high, fresh fruit for people! See photo).

Shrubs (the mid-story) - fairy duster (any variety), globemallow - *Sphaeralcea ambigua*, desert honeysuckle - *Anisacanthus thurberi*, wolfberry - *Lyceum* spp., flat-top buckwheat - *Eriogonum fasciculatum* v. *polifolium* (the latter two are some of her favorites. See photos), **'Quito Baquito' pomegranate** (4' tall and one of the Father Kino species), **Thurber's cotton** - *Gossypium thurberi* (See photo. Leaves turn maroon in the fall), **Red yucca** - *Hesperaloe parviflora* (2' tall), Chichiquelite (2' tall nightshade) - *Solanum melanocerasum*

Perennial flowering plants (part of the understory) - chocolate flower - *Berlandiera lyrata*, Royal sage - *Salvia regia*, Friendship sage - *Salvia 'Amistad'*, Pitcher sage - *Salvia spathacea*, society garlic, onions, garlic, bulbine - *Bulbine frutescens*, other sages (*Salvia*): Cleveland sage, Gregg's sage, Hummingbird sage, Mexican bush sage, Forsythia sage, Hot Lips sage

Annual flowering plant (part of the understory) - chia - *Salvia hispanica* (plant chia seeds from the grocery store! [or [Etsy](#)]) - SC, from my notes and Deborah's pdf

Next month - Deborah's list of resources and references, created just for TAIS



Attracting Pollinators

Our speaker this month was Deborah North, a Master Gardener and native Tucsonan. She mentioned that the Master Gardeners offer one or two free Zoom talks each week, as well as free group tours of their gardens (via reservation). See their [website](#).

Pollinators matter because they are the basis of life. No pollination, no food crops!

Some important pollinators include honeybees (which came from Europe originally), bumble bees, native bees, butterflies, moths, wasps, beetles, flies, birds, and bats.

Three types of native bees are the top pollinators for irises: mining bees, yellow-faced or masked bees, and carpenter bees. The first two are solitary (non-hive) bees, while carpenter bees may be solitary or communal. Carpenter bees - big, shiny, black, and sparsely-haired - do *not* deserve their reputation of destroying wood, although they will nest in the trunks of dead trees and the old stems of agave, yucca, and sotol. In fact, none of the native bees make hives - they nest in holes on the ground or in holes in wood.

So how does one invite pollinators to the garden? Grow a variety of native plants! Pollinators may be attracted by visual cues, scent, food, and by flower shapes. Hummingbirds tend to prefer long tubular flowers while butterflies tend to prefer ones with shorter tubes. 1. Think in **horizontal layers**: Over-story (trees), mid-story (shrubs), and understory (flowering plants, groundcovers, and succulents). Thumbelina zinnia not only has a long blooming season, but it will re-seed. 2. **Plant flowers in groups or drifts** - think in square yards. Bees tend to visit one type of flower per foraging trip. 3. Most pollinators specialize so **grow a diversity of flowers** to attract different pollinators - different species, different colors, different heights (1'-5' in height = the bee zone), blooms available from March into November. See [UofA website](#) for a list of what blooms when locally and their requirements (Document AZ1100). Hosting a monoculture is not healthy. Places in the garden where surfaces transition tend to be bug zones. (This is good). 4. **Provide nesting habitat for native bees**. Because most of them nest in soil, they need areas of bare dirt. In full sun, without gravel or mulch. Just dirt. And some mud. Bees of the Sonoran Desert require very little water, but they do enjoy some mist. They can also

nest in riprap walls. 5. **Avoid pesticides**, especially neonicotinoids, and avoid buying plants treated with these. Native plants rarely suffer fatal damage from insect pressure. For cultivated non-natives, you must decide on your tolerance level for insects. For example artichoke plants tend to suffer aphid attacks twice a year. The aphids produce honeydew, which attracts ants, which attract ladybugs, which eat aphids. Here are some alternatives to using chemical pesticides: remove by hand, remove with sharp shots of water (which breaks off the mouth parts of aphids and other true bugs), spray with neem oil (an organic pesticide) or a soapy spray, which kills by removing the waxy cuticle on the insect's exoskeleton.

- SC, from my notes and Deborah's pdf



Top: hoverfly, hummingbird

Row 2: bat, "human bee-ing"

Row 3: Adrena bee, yellow-faced bees

Row 4: carpenter bee

(all from Deborah's talk)

TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2022

Kevin Kartchner - President

Bonnie Else - Vice President

Sue Clark – Secretary, Signatory on Account

Martin Juarez – Treasurer, Asst. Secretary

Diane Pavlovich & Sally Vega - Programs & Publicity

Joyce Knill & Sandy Ellis - 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 during June:

Move potted irises into shade for the summer if you have not already done so.

Water the soil instead of the iris plants or they are likely to rot. It is best to water in the evening during hot weather.

Fertilize spring-blooming irises for six weeks after last bloom. This is when they set bloom.

Reblooming irises need water and fertilizer through summer to encourage bloom in fall.

Keep area free of leaves, weeds and pests.



Tip Exchange

7 Weeding Tips - from Better Home & Gardens e-mail 5/12/22

1. Know how the particular weed spreads - seeds, runners, etc. Learn types [here](#). Learn IDs [here](#).
2. Remove weeds before they set seeds. [This tip is #1 for me! Also, carefully disposing of them rather than letting plants or seeds ever touch the ground. - SC].
3. Be extra careful with herbicides. Don't spray in wind or near precious plants [Or get herbicides on yourself].
4. You will likely have more success by using a hoe, hori-hori, or dandelion weeder than by using a weed-whacker [It will spread seeds around. See #2].
5. Protect your hands by wearing gloves.
6. Be aware that landscaping fabrics will break down and even encourage weeds when soil accumulates on top of them.
7. Small weeds are easier to remove than large weeds. - SC

Iris Limerick:

Iris season was super stupendous;
With blooms ultra tremendous.
Was winter extra cold?
That's important, we're told,
For irises to be so momentous.
- Sue Clark



'Margery' (Dean 1922)

Source: AIS Iris Wiki

Did You Know?

Thriller + Filler + Spiller = fabulous container garden! Choose the Thriller first. It's the focal point - bigger, taller, flashier. It goes in the middle. Try canna lilies, tall grasses, salvia, lavender, or a tomato plant. Fillers are middle-sized and typically mounding. Dusty miller, coleus, and herbs are examples. Spillers are planted along the edge of the container to soften it and flow over the sides. Sweet potato vines and alyssum are Spillers. - SC

Source: [How to create a Thriller, Filler and Spiller - Luis' Nursery | Visalia, California \(luisnursery.com\)](#)

"It was Jung, and the world smelled of roses."



– Maud Hart Lovelace

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

This month we venture to Moneta, California to The Dean Iris Gardens, founded by Jennett Dean in 1909. Born Jennett Weaver in Wisconsin, she began growing irises at her home and brought these with her to California when she moved there. She married nurseryman John Dean in Los Angeles County. Jennett's hobby blossomed into a career and she put out a national catalog in 1914, "The Dean Iris Gardens Price List." In it, she grouped the *Iris germanicas* (tall bearded irises) by the color scheme developed by Peter Barr in the mid-1860's: amoena, neglecta, plicata, etc. Although Barr had proposed that these were all different species, they were later proven to be hybrids. The terms are still used to describe color patterns. Dean's Iris Gardens published catalogs until 1924.

Jennett was one of the largest iris growers in America and especially on the West Coast. She cultivated many types of irises that others were not growing at the time, including spuria, Evansia (*Iris japonica* or crested iris), Pacific Coast Natives, dwarf, as well as oncocyclus and regeliocyclus. She was the first American irisarian to import irises from France by Millet and Denis. Eric Nies of spuria fame bought his first spurias from Jennett. An excellent speaker as well as grower, Jennett lectured to gardening and horticulture groups around the country. She was also one of the earliest hybridizers in the West.

As Jennett and John aged and the garden became too much for them to manage, they sold it to Carl S. Milliken and his nephew Ralph Winchester. They moved the operation to Pasadena and put out a catalog in 1925, "Southern California Iris Gardens, Formerly Dean Iris Gardens." Winchester left the nursery in the early 1930's and Milliken carried on as Milliken Iris Gardens until 1940. Jennett introduced many new hybrids through Milliken until she retired and moved to Los Angeles.

Some of Jennett Dean's introductions include '[Margery](#),' a tall bearded with a grapey scent from 1922 (photo above), the spuria '[Golden Nugget](#)' (1938), and the intermediate bearded 'Persian Princess' (1933). - SC

Sources: "Prologue to 1920," by Bob Pries in The Early Years - Supplement 1 of 4 to IRISES, AIS Bulletin, 2020; [Jennett Weaver Dean obituary](#) on FindAGrave.com; and [Jennett Dean](#) hybridizer article and [Eric Nies](#) article on the AIS Iris Wiki