

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 57th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Your Highness'
(Valenzuela, 2006)

Marcusen Sculpture Garden,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2021

President's Message

Wow. What a busy, spring-filled April we've had: our show, the Master Gardeners' and TAIS garden tours, the AIS National Convention, and more. Our show was early and a bit smaller than we prefer so we're planning on a big one next year. The Master Gardeners sold over 1,200 tickets to people that were able to enjoy Diane Tweedy's iris garden. It was a treat to attend several presentations by notable hybridizers at the national convention. Start thinking about next year's convention in Dallas to be similarly educated. I'm almost ready for the gardening break that the Tucson summer gives us. Then you can stay indoors, look at iris websites, and get ready for our auction and sale.

- Kevin Kartchner

"They say motherhood is like gardening: It takes patience, care, practice, and it's usually at least a little messy. Every plant is different and a gardener's challenge is to help each one get what they need to flourish in their season. It's not always easy, but the results are beautiful. Today we celebrate the women who have helped us blossom!" - Missouri Star Quilt Company, via email

Inside this issue:

- Recap from the Show and Tours, Show photos 2
- Photos from the TAIS Iris Show 3
- Treasurer's Report 4
- Iris Cousins, Part IV - article and photos 4
- TAIS Gardens, Part I: Kevin's 5
- What to do in the Iris Garden during May 6
- Iris Limerick, Did You Know? 6
- Tips, Bit of Botany and Iris History 6



Upcoming Events

Next meeting: May 14, 1 PM at Tucson Botanical Gardens & on Zoom - Deborah North on Pollinator Gardens

No meetings in June or July

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

Birthday Wishes to:

Kevin Kartchner	Wendy O'Rourke
Cheryl Modaff	Margie Valenzuela
Rand Craft	Tim Krone



Michael Valentini - Viridarium Reformatum, seu Regnum Vegetabile Krauter Buch, 1719 - Iris bulbosa latifolia

Iris Show and Tours Recap



2 and 3 April - During a month full of events featuring flowers, choosing a day for our iris show was difficult. Of the Saturdays that were open, one was early for iris bloom time and the other was late. We chose the early one, and thankfully there were some stalks in bloom. Kevin and Terry each brought six stems, and Susan brought three to our show at Harlow's Gardens nursery. The event was well-attended and many of the guests reported that they had seen it advertised on Facebook. Thank you, Diane, for that publicity. Guests voted for their favorite three varieties. The winners were: 1. 'Night Moves,' one of Terry's stalks which had seven open flowers! 2. a sport of the arilbred 'Kiosk,' and 3. a tie between 'Hemstitched' and 'Midnight Cry.' Thank you to Kevin, Terry, Kathy, and Linda for setting up, and Susan, Sandy, Joyce, and Cindy for joining them during the show.

And thank you to Kevin, Susan, Joyce, Terry, and the Tucson Botanical Garden for opening their gardens for our members on the following day.

Diane Tweedy's iris and butterfly garden was featured during the Master Gardeners' Home Garden Tours on April 9, which sold out at 1,200 tickets! Kevin, Cindy, and Kathy manned our table in Diane's garden and gave out an informational sheet about growing irises in Tucson. Guests could sign up to win one of three gift memberships, which were kindly provided by our member Shirley Andrews. Kevin gave a gift membership to Diane's neighbor Chris Dickens, who made sure that the iris garden was part of the tour after Diane's death in 2020. Thank you to everyone who helped during these events.

I hope that you all had many iris blooms this season!

- Sue Clark, secretary

Mid-April is typically
the peak bloom of
TBs in our area



We're on the web:
Tucsoniris.org

Show Photos by Joyce Knill



At right: Guests voting and admiring the flowers, an Ikebana arrangement by Terry, and one of Kevin's seedlings

TAIS Iris Show - photos by Kevin Kartchner



Names of irises, below, from left:
 'Spring Elegance,' sport of
 'Kiosk,' 'Noble Warrior'
 Above, center: 'Midnight Cry'



Center: The Viewers' Choices: 'Hemstitched,' Sport of 'Kiosk,' 'Night Moves,' and 'Midnight Cry.'
 Right photo: close-up of 'Hemstitched'

Treasurer's Report for November - submitted by Martin Juarez

Beginning Balance					\$6,054.92	
Date	Pd	MOP	Deposits	Expenses		
04/13/22	X	#1930		\$50.00		Garcia/WMG - March speaker
04/14/22	X		\$73.00			DUES *
Totals			\$73.00	\$50.00	\$23.00	Updated:
Ending Balance					\$6,077.92	4/28/2022 10:51
* Else \$10/#610, Glaser \$10/#6262, Wilcoxon \$10/#7400, Windischman \$10/#1102, Paine-Scire \$13/#442, Pappas \$20/#154						
Expense receipts/invoices can be mailed to "P.O. Box 27773, Tucson, AZ, 85726" for reimbursement. Documents must be accompanied with reason/purpose for expense.						

Iris Cousins, Part IV: *Iris domestica*

This month, we'll look at another Irid, a cousin of Iris. Irids can add color and interest to our gardens while extending the iris bloom season. *Iris domestica* is also known as the Blackberry Lily because its shiny black seeds resemble that fruit and as the Leopard lily since its flowers are orange with dark spots. Previously known as *Belamcanda chinensis*, this species was renamed *Iris domestica* as a result of molecular DNA sequencing.

Blackberry lilies are native to grasslands, meadows, scrublands, and mountainous regions in eastern Asia. These attractive plants were sold in Europe by the early 18th century, and then distributed in the United States and the Caribbean countries during the 19th century. There is a record of Thomas Jefferson growing them at Monticello.

I. domestica is hardy from Zones 5-10a and is not considered to be invasive. It is easily propagated by seeds or division and the flowers provide both nectar and pollen to insects and birds. It has been used medicinally. The plants grow in clumps from shallow rhizomes, with stems from 2-3.3' tall. Leaves grow in fans like other irises, and there are typically from three to five stems per clump. The 2" flowers are star-shaped with six petals, and are usually orange or yellow. Each flower lasts one day, but a clump can bloom for weeks during the summer. The flowers twist as they close and dry. See the top photo at right. Blackberry lilies are especially attractive when grown in mass plantings. They are easy to care for. Like irises, they prefer a sunny spot with well-draining soil. They will tolerate some shade and prefer a bit more moisture than tall bearded. Yellow varieties prefer more shade and water. The North Carolina Extension Gardener site reports that *I. domestica* is drought tolerant once established and that they work well in a xeriscape garden. Seeds are available on Etsy: try [here](#) and [here](#).

This next plant is not an iris cousin, but I noticed its cheery blooms as I was researching the Blackberry Lilies. *Geissorhiza radians* would be a highlight in a special spot in the garden. It sports small, bright flowers that are red in the center and blue-violet on the petals. See photo at right. They are native to South Africa where they are called "wynkelkie." A common name is Wine Cup. They grow from corms and flower in the winter. [Telos Rare Bulbs](#) carries several species of *Geissorhiza* ranging in color from white to yellow to red to purple. Some of them remind me of crocuses.

Why not try something new in your garden? - SC

Sources: [Iris domestica - Wikipedia](#), [gardeningknowhow.com](#), [North Carolina Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox](#), [Geissorhiza radians – Telos Rare Bulbs](#), [Pacific Bulb Society](#)



From top: *Iris domestica* growing in Pittsburgh (Source: by [I, Brighter-orange](#)), a darker variety of *I. domestica* (by [Fan Wen](#)), the blackberry-looking seeds with pods (by [Francisco Boratto](#)), *Geissorhiza radians* (Telos Rare Bulbs website)



A Peek at Gardens of TAIS Members, Part I: Kevin's



Photos by
Kevin and
Joyce



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 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 post-bloom interval.**

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



Tip Exchange

More about neem oil - Although neem oil is less toxic to humans than most insecticides, caution must be observed. Wear a mask, gloves, and eye protection when spraying it, and be sure not to inhale the mist.

To determine if a plant will tolerate neem oil, spray one leaf and check it the next day. Avoid applying it to stressed plants.

Carefully spray the entire affected plant during the evening after bees have finished their work for the day, since it will harm bees.

Neem oil must be reapplied every 7-14 days because it degrades quickly. Do not use it near a pond or body of water, as it will harm fish and aquatic mammals. - SC

Source - Old Farmer's Almanac, email of 17 Apr 2022

Iris Limerick:

There once was a ladybug named Dot
Whose back had only one spot.

She gobbled an aphid

In a way so un-placid

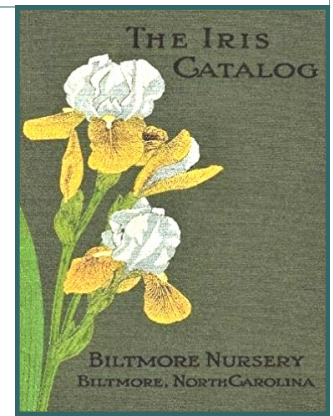
That the other aphids took off at a trot!

- Sue Clark



Did You Know?

Neem oil, an organic pesticide valued by gardeners, is extracted from the seeds of the neem tree. This evergreen tree grows in India, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar, where it has been used as an insecticide for hundreds of years, as well as used in traditional medicine. Neem oil suffocates bugs, especially their larvae and immature adults. It can also kill insect eggs. Some oil is absorbed by plants, and so works systemically. - Source: Old Farmer's Almanac article



*"The butterfly is a flying flower,
the flower is a tethered butterfly."*

- Ecouchard Lebrun



A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr. continues our story of irises. His father, Frederick Law Olmstead, Sr., is considered the father of landscape architecture. He co-designed New York City's Central Park with Calvert Vaux in 1853, as well as designed a ring of 12 parks and lakes around Boston called the Emerald Necklace. In 1895, both Olmsteads began to design the grounds of Biltmore, the estate of the Vanderbilt family in Asheville, North Carolina. They doubtless installed irises as part of the landscape, as the Biltmore Nursery published its own [iris catalog](#) in 1911. It included 106 varieties, both bearded and beardless, even Japanese iris.

The younger Olmstead became the head of Harvard's Graduate School of Landscape Architecture in 1913. His students included John Wister, who co-owned the Iris Nursery Movillia Gardens and Robert Sturtevant, whose sister Grace was the premier iris breeder in the country. This same year, W. R. Dykes published his landmark book, *The Genus Iris*, which was the most significant work on irises until [The World of Irises](#) came out in 1978, and [The Iris](#) in 1989. The former was edited by Bea Warburton, and the latter written by Brian Mathew.

In 1915, Olmstead headed a committee of nurserymen and growers to standardize plant names. They published this statement in 1917: "One of the most serious difficulties the American Joint Committee has had to encounter is the duplication of names caused by the re-use of established names for new introductions, or, in some cases, the remaining old varieties; in fact, these mischievous practices have caused a large part of the chaos in common names of plants which now exists in American horticulture. The duplications doubtless occur more as a result of ignorance than deliberate intent to deceive. The genus *Iris* is a conspicuous example of this bad practice."

John Wister and Robert Sturtevant rose to the occasion and began creating lists of irises as a way to start sorting out the naming issues. Their efforts were disrupted while they served in World War I. More next month... - SC

Sources: "Prologue to 1920," by Bob Pries in *The Early Years - Supplement 1 of 4 to IRISES*, AIS Bulletin, 2020, Wikipedia articles on [Olmstead](#), the [Emerald Necklace](#), and the [Biltmore Estate](#)