

# TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 57th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Copper Frills'

(Whiting, 1940)

Marcusen Sculpture Garden,  
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2022

## President's Message

Ah, Fall: the iris are growing again and I'm no longer worried about rot. Sorry to sound like a broken record, but my 'Zurich' is still blooming after three months. All that from three small rhizomes planted a year ago.

Fall is also our popular potluck. In addition to great food and company, we share plant stuff. I'll be bringing poppy seeds from last Spring's 10,000 poppy patch in my front yard.

Long-time TAIS member Greta Dunnigan recently passed away. We will miss her and her many contributions. Follow [this link](#) to view Greta's obituary and share memories of her. Condolences to her son Jon who is a member of our club. - Kevin Kartchner

*"In slack wind of November The fog forms and shifts. All the world comes out again When the fog lifts." - Christina Georgina Rossetti (1830-1894)*

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## Upcoming Events

**November 5: Workshop on "How to Create and Judge Artistic Design" to be held in Scottsdale by Sun Country Iris Society. Details on p. 9 and 10.**

**Next meeting: Saturday, November 12 at noon - Outdoor Potluck in Bonnie's yard at 5940 E. Avenida Arriba. Bonnie will provide plates, cups, napkins, and utensils, as well as a roasted turkey. Please bring a favorite food to share. Bring plants or seeds to trade or share if you wish. If you did not sign up at the meeting or to Sue already, RSVP to [taisnewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:taisnewsletter@yahoo.com) by 11/7 so that Bonnie knows how many tables and chairs are necessary.**

**No meeting in December. Dues are due in January: \$15/household.**

### Birthday Wishes to:

<b>Angela Powers</b>	<b>Taffy Holvenstot</b>
<b>Susan Schaefer</b>	<b>Ron Kelsen</b>
<b>George Vanovich</b>	<b>Laura Brian</b>
<b>Andrew DeMato</b>	<b>Candace Shelton</b>



# October Meeting Minutes



8 Oct 2022 - Fourteen members and a guest attended today's gathering, our first meeting at the Murphy-Wilmot Library since before the pandemic.

**Sale** - Profit from our annual fundraiser was almost \$2000, with total sales of nearly \$4000. Success was partly due to various sources contributing approximately 500 rhizomes in addition to the 200 received from Mid-America Gardens for \$1100. Rhizomes remaining from the sale will be given as door prizes.

**Potluck** - Our next meeting will be a Potluck at Bonnie's home. See details on p. 1. Several individuals signed up with their contributions at the meeting. Sue will send directions via email to everyone who will be attending. Parking is limited, so please consider carpooling or parking at the bottom of the hill near her home and walking. Members typically share seeds, cuttings, and plants during this event, so bring your excess. Bonnie shared orchid cuttings at today's meeting.

**Iris show** - Thanks to Terry's lead, TAIS will have its first judged iris show in about ten years. To help get things on the right track, he attended an informative workshop by Ardi Kary in Scottsdale, called "How to Put on an Iris Show." A specific format for the schedule is necessary and entries must be placed within their proper categories, such as tall bearded, beardless, etc. Information will be available on our website prior to the show, which will be held at the Murphy-Wilmot Library. Six judges will determine the winners of each category. Prizes will include trophies, ribbons, and TAIS Iris Bucks. Although NOIDs are not eligible for entry, they may be shown to the judges to see if they can identify them. Kevin mentioned that he has had some success using Google Lens to tentatively identify unknown irises.

All blue underlined words in the newsletter are hyperlinks - click on them for more info



We're on the web:  
[Tucsoniris.org](http://Tucsoniris.org)

**Dues** - TAIS dues were raised from \$10/year or \$15/household to simply \$15/household/calendar year due in January. Voting was by a show of hands. Kevin had researched dues at other clubs in Region 15 of AIS: San Diego - \$10/household, Prescott - \$12/household, San Fernando Valley - \$15, Sun Country Iris Society - \$25/individual or \$30/household.

**Officers & Board Members** - Several positions were filled today - see p. 8 for a list of names. Thank you to the outgoing officers and members of the board: Bonnie, Martin, Susan, and Joyce, who was serving in two positions. They have all served for several years and we appreciate their efforts.

**Birthday cards** - Following some conversation, Terry made a motion to discontinue sending birthday cards to members, thus saving money. Voting was unanimous and the motion passed. Birthdays will continue to be collected via the membership application and mentioned in the newsletter.

**Photo Contest** - The rest of the meeting featured the winning photographs from our recent contest. See them on p. 5-7. Winners will receive Iris Bucks for their efforts.

- Cathy Pane-Scire, substitute secretary for the day



Rhizomes which have bloomed will not ever bloom again. They may create increases, but most gardeners throw them away to reduce risk of rot. They are not eligible as donations to our sale since they cannot bloom. - SC



# Photos from the October Meeting



Photos by  
Joyce Knill





## Treasurer's Report for October

Ending balance from September:  
\$7151.95

Right: two images of irises along ridgeline of thatched cottage in Normandy (see thatch at lower left in first photo).

Source: Sharon Santori, My French Country Home [blog post of 21 May 2013](#)



## Species Irises, Part XIII: Crested Irises - *Iris tectorum*, *I. milesii*

Unlike many types of irises, the nine species of crested irises evolved in woodlands, and thus prefer conditions that are semi-shaded and moist. Crested irises are also referred to as Evansias, and they are classified in the section Lophiris within the genus *Iris*. They have ridges of tissue in place of beards on their falls, and are native to China and parts of North America. Flowers tend to be open and flattish. Two species, *Iris tectorum* and *I. milesii*, perform well as garden plants. Some other species of crested irises do well in containers. All prefer acidic, humus-rich soil. Crested irises are evergreen. They do not have a dormant interval and must not be allowed to dry out.

*I. tectorum*, known as the Japanese roof iris or wall iris, hails from China, but was first discovered in Japan. It grows as far west as India in areas inhabited by humans. Theories as to why it was grown on rooftops in Japan and China include the following: 1. During times of war or famine, land had to be used for food crops by decree, so women who needed iris rhizomes for cosmetics (hair dye, facial powder) and medicine (corn plasters) grew irises on their thatched roofs instead of illegally in the ground; 2. The plants helped bind the thatch; 3. The irises averted evil spirits and disease; or 4. They were simply a beautiful decoration. The plants are compact and bear 6" blue, purple, or white decorative flowers with fringed crests. Leaves grow to about 15" tall. They prefer full sun or half-shade, regular division, and are easy to grow from seed. *I. tectorum* grows well around ponds and fountains and in drier rock gardens, as well, since they are drought-tolerant once established. They increase well and lend themselves to mass plantings and naturalizing. *I. tectorum* grows as a wildflower in New Hampshire, albeit a non-native one. The plants are hardy in Zones 4-9. [Source for [plants](#) or [seeds](#)]. I also found photos of irises growing atop thatched roofs and walls in Normandy, France, but there was no mention of the species. The reference stated that they helped to bind the thatch.

Another hardy crested iris, *I. milesii*, bears its 3" mauve flowers on thin branched stems that rise up above its clumps of leaves. This plant grows from a thick green rhizome and sets many seeds. It is at home in sun or semi-shade, but it will not grow in hot, dry locations. *I. milesii* is native to the Himalayas and is also known as the Red Flower iris and Waterbird iris (the latter in Australia). Its yellow-green leaves grow to 24" and the stems to 36". It flowers from April through July even though individual blossoms are short-lived. Sir Michael Foster was the first to describe this iris, which is named after British plantsman Frank Miles who introduced it into cultivation after growing seeds collected in the wild by his cousin. More crested iris species next month. - SC

Sources: [The Gardener's Guide to Growing Irises](#) by Goeff Stebbings, 1997; Wikipedia article, "[Iris tectorum](#);" [SIGNA](#) (Species Iris Group of North America) article on *I. tectorum*; [NC Extension Gardener Plant Toolbox](#); My French Country Home [blog post of 21 May 2013](#); and [Online Flower Garden](#) and [SIGNA](#) articles on *I. milesii*

From top: *Iris tectorum*: in Japan (by Qwert1234 on Wikimedia) - note the feathery crests, 'Alba' variety (by Lindley Ashline), variegata cruenta variety (gardeningexpress.co.uk), and *I. milesii* ([Online Flower Garden](#))



## 5th-annual TAIS Photo Contest

Eight individuals submitted 72 pictures in three categories this year: Single flower or stem (43 entries), Macro (13 entries), and Miscellaneous (16 entries). Winners were selected by popular vote via email and the winning photos were featured during our October meeting. All prizes are Iris Bucks. Thank you to Taffy Holvenstot for compiling the votes!



**'Mesmerizer' by Diane Pavlovich**



**Flower category**



**'Lemon Pledge' by Sue Clark**



***Iris pseudacorus* by Sue Clark**





*5th-annual TAIS Photo Contest, continued*



**NOID**  
by Kevin Kartchner



**'Dracula's Kiss'**  
by Sue Clark



**'Backdraft'**  
by Sue Clark

**Macro category**



# 5th-annual TAIS Photo Contest, continued



(tie)  
**Darol Jurn's  
 Garden in  
 Sedona  
 by Sue Clark  
 (left)**



(tie) Tucson  
**Botanical  
 Garden  
 by Cindy Long  
 (bottom left)**



## Miscellaneous & Garden category



**Wheelchair Ramp Camouflage  
 by Wendy O'Rourke (below)**





## TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2023

Kevin Kartchner - President

David Sliffe - Vice President

Sue Clark – Secretary, Signatory on Account

Jim Wilcoxon – Treasurer, Asst. Secretary

Diane Pavlovich & Sally Vega - Programs & Publicity

Cindy Long, Linda Briggs, Kathleen Marron, and Evelyn Jacobs - Hospitality

Bonnie Else and Susan Schaefer - Door Prizes

Taffy Holvenstot - Membership

Dave Smith - Photographer

Sue Clark - Newsletter

## What to do in the Iris Garden for November:

Make a label for each new iris. Try these [metal plant markers](#). Write on them with a #2 pencil, china marker, [paint marker](#), or use a [label maker](#) (see Tip, below).

Move potted irises to sunny spots for the cool season. Consider watering with fish emulsion every other week until early January. Mix as on package.

Feed with a fairly-balanced fertilizer. The first number should be 10 or less to reduce risk of rot. [Schreiners iris fertilizer](#) ships free. Or try [this one](#) from Comanche Acres Iris Garden. When planting, put I T into the hole. For established irises, scratch fertilizer into the soil and then water it in.



## Tip Exchange

Be careful not to lose the names of your irises, since identifying NOIDs is next to impossible. Incorrectly-identified irises and NOIDs are not eligible to win anything at an iris show. TAIS does not pay Iris Bucks for NOIDs at our sale, although we do sell them for a slightly-reduced price. Sharpie marker's allegedly permanent ink *will disappear completely* in our intense sun! I have had excellent results with a [Dymo LabelManager 160](#) using [Dymo Durable Labels](#). Consider making a map of the bed or your pots so that you have a backup of the names. - SC

## Holiday Limerick:

Once at Thanksgiving time,  
There was a day extraordinarily fine.  
The people and beasts  
Had a special feast  
While irises slept and did not mind.  
- Sue Clark

## Did You Know?

In his 1951 Rainbow Offerings iris catalog, Lloyd Austin announced a poetry contest. The first-place winner would receive \$10 in irises, while the second-place one would receive \$5-worth. He wrote, "To help us all to occasionally get away from the material realities of life, let us give thought to the poetic expression of spiritual beauty of an Iris, or of many Iris. Surely the Iris, the Rainbow Flower, is as deserving as any flower of delightful verse to convey to others the ramblings of our imagination as we view the many inexplicable blendings of color." - Source: [HIPS website](#) - SC

**"Notice that Autumn is more the season of the soul than of Nature." – Friedrich Nietzsche**



## A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

This month, we'll take a closer look at John Caspar Wister, the first president of the newly-formed American Iris Society. Wister was born in 1887 into a prominent Philadelphia family. The youngest of five children, he learned about plants from the groundskeeper of the family's 10-acre farm in Germantown. John had built up a collection of 40 chrysanthemums by the time he was 14. He graduated from Harvard in 1909 and then studied landscape architecture at both Harvard and the New Jersey Agricultural College. Wister visited several of the famous gardens of Europe while serving in France during World War I and sent plants home to friends.

In 1930, John Wister became the first director of the 240-acre Scott Arboretum at Swarthmore College in Philadelphia, 40 acres of which he personally landscaped. He worked there for over 50 years, and focused on a practical, low-maintenance garden. Another focus was research on hybridizing common plants and flowers.

Concurrently, Wister was director of the nearby Tyler Arboretum, where his goal was to create both natural and cultivated areas. To this day, Wister's collections of rhododendrons, ornamental cherry trees, flowering crabapples, magnolias, and lilacs are treasured there. An associate remarked that Wister was unique in that he did not prefer one type of plant over all others. He authored [The Iris](#) (1927), [Four Seasons in Your Garden](#), [Lilac Culture](#), [Bulbs for American Gardens](#), and edited several horticultural journals.

John Wister married for the first time at age 73. His wife had been his assistant at both arboretums. When he was 93, he admitted that all flowers were his favorites, especially "whatever was blooming, and that changes from day to day." He died in 1982 at the age of 95, after a long and successful life as "the dean of American horticulturalists." Colleagues remember him as gentle, enthusiastic, generous, and in possession of a wicked sense of humor. After the Harvard Club of New York City sent him three copies of a bill for two hours of squash, he tore up two of them, then finally replied after receiving the third one that being over 90, he did not have to play squash anymore OR go to New York City! - SC

Sources: "Dr. John Caspar Wister," by Andy Gwiazda in The Early Years - Supplement I of 4 to IRISES, AIS Bulletin, 2020









