

# TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 57th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



**'Almond Berry'**

(M. Sutton, 2013)

Marcusen Sculpture Garden,  
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2021

## President's Message

It's showtime! Bring one, bring all, we need your flowers. Due to my 100% transplanting and cooler location I only expect to have a handful of stalks for the show and similar for the tour. Regardless, enjoy your Arizona Spring. We'll see you and your flowers this Saturday, April 2nd, at Harlow Gardens.

- Kevin Kartchner

"Oh Flowers! They speak of Spring: The waking leaves, and singing of the birds, The music and the songs that never yet were set to words; The growing green, the lengthening days, the ever deep'ning blue, The feeling that the world is good, and every friend is true. I would that these I send you, with my greeting wish, may bring to you the hope and happiness that is the gift of Spring."

- excerpt from Forget-Me-Not, The Hayes Lithographic Company, 1910

## Inside this issue:

- Minutes from the March meeting 2
- Water Harvesting Notes from the presentation 2-3
- Photos from the March meeting 4
- Treasurer's Report 5
- More Iris Cousins - article and photos 5
- What to do in the Iris Garden during April 6
- Iris Limerick, Did You Know? 6
- Tips, Bit of Botany and Iris History 6



## Upcoming Events

**April 2: TAIS Iris Show - Harlow's Gardens, 9 AM-noon**

**April 3: TAIS tours of members' iris gardens, 9 AM till noon, RSVP [here](#) for addresses of gardens**

**April 9: Master Gardeners Home Garden Tour (& Diane's!), 9AM-3PM, info [here](#)**

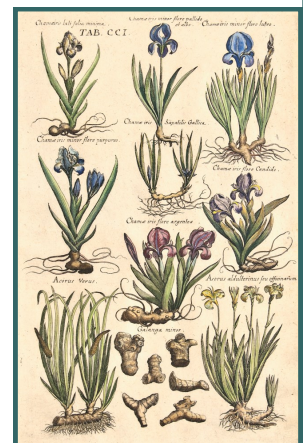
**April 9: Rose Society Show, Trinity Presbyterian Church, University at 4th Ave., 1-4 PM**

**April 11-16: [American Iris Society Convention](#) in Las Cruces**

**April 22-23: Region 15 Spring Trek, San Diego, info [here](#)**

### Birthday Wishes to:

**Jim Wilcoxon      Nancy Rummel**  
**Dorrell-Jo MacWhinnie**  
**Kathy Chilton      Joe Fernandes**



Source: Michael Valentini, 1719 - Iris chamairis, I. acaulis, I. galanga

# March Meeting Minutes



12 March - The libraries are still not allowing meetings, so 19 of us met at Kevin's house, with four more tuning in via Zoom.

**Business meeting** - Mary Ann and Susan will chair the Sale. Kevin distributed Iris Bucks to the winners of last year's photo contest. Diane passed out posters for our April 2 iris show. She has placed them on Facebook at the Tucson Backyard Gardeners page (50,000 followers) and on the pages of other gardening groups (50,000 more followers), Fingers crossed that we will have flowers to show that day! Kathy, Terry, and Kevin will retrieve our items from storage at TBG at 3 PM on Apr 1 and will be joined by Linda around 4 PM at Harlow's to set up. On the day of the Show, Susan, Sandy, and Cindy will arrive at 8 AM to begin setting up, and be joined by Terry and Diane from 9 till noon. Terry and Kevin will handle the take down and return items

to storage. Our open-to-members garden tours will be on April 3, and will feature the gardens of Susan, Kevin and Terry. RSVP to [taisnewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:taisnewsletter@yahoo.com) for addresses.

We discussed what kinds of literature to have available at our table in Diane Tweedy's iris garden on April 9 and how many copies. Perhaps 100 each of two? Or will people just take both since there are two? Cindy will work from 10-1 and Kathleen from 1-3. Kevin will set up and take down.

Door prizes of potted irises were won by Sally, Margot, Sandy, Taffy, and Jessamyn.

**Presentation, etc.** - Margot Garcia on Water Harvesting. See notes at right and on p. 3. Then we looked at Kevin's system for capturing rainwater, his greenhouse full of orchids, and his iris beds.

**Board meeting** - Two of us went over the order amounts

and vendors for the Auction, Diane Tweedy irises, and the Sale. Kevin stated that the highest bidder at the Auction will get first pick of the Diane irises. - SC, secretary

## Water Harvesting notes

Margot Garcia has a PhD in Watershed Management. She reviewed the usual rainfall pattern in Tucson. Winter rains are typically slow and gentle over several days. They come from the Pacific and generally cover the whole area. Sediment builds up in rivers. Summer monsoons are short, intense, and localized. River bottoms are scoured. Our driest months are May and June with rainfall between 0 and 0.1". July and August are the wettest, with 2" per month. She showed a map of rainfall amounts from Jan-Aug 2021, with 29" on Mt Lemmon and 6" in the drier parts of town.

Rainwater is not only free, but it's better for plants because it has less dissolved salts than Tucson water. It is pH neutral, as well. Studies have shown that that rainwater picks up some nitrogen and oxides from pollution in the air.

**Active rainwater harvesting** - collected water is directed into cisterns, which may be above ground (requires a foundation) or below.

**Passive rainwater harvesting** - water is captured in specially-dug basins or swales (shallow channels).

*Continued on following page...*

**PLEASE BRING  
EVEN JUST ONE  
STEM OF BLOOMS  
TO THE SHOW!**



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

## Water Harvesting, continued...

### Capturing rainwater from impervious surfaces

- Water runs off roof and is captured in a swale which directs it into a garden
- Gutters and downspouts have rocks at their discharge points (or a plastic hose that unrolls as it is filled) and the slowed-down water is directed into swales or basins with berms
- If you have a strip of land between the sidewalk and curb, build a berm along the inside of the curb to capture the rain water so it doesn't run over the curb and into the street
- Cut the curb (after getting a permit to do so), which will channel some of the water into a depression in your yard. Use rocks to stabilize soil along the edge.

The [Watershed Management Group](#) has a dream to have all of the Tucson rivers running again within 50 years. They offer many videos on their website, including one on how to [Build Your Own Basin \(BYOB\)](#) in about 2 hours. It is easiest to dig soil after a light rain. Precipitation falling from a roof can be slowed down by placing rocks where the runoff hits the ground. Excavate a basin adjacent to the rocks to collect the rainwater. Dig down 6-7" and pile the soil into a berm along the edges of the excavated area to create a basin about 12" deep. This takes about 20 minutes for two people to do. Plant within the basin (percolate water through planting holes to speed up the digging) and then cover the area with mulch. Some people prefer a mulch of shredded organic material and others a mulch of rocks.

**Capturing rainwater** - size the basin to the size of the plant(s). Build a berm along the edges to hold water in. Use rocks along slope to prevent erosion (if needed). Check to see if water can run from one basin into another - this can be accomplished using a running hose. Pop-ups can be used to move water to where it is needed rather than digging swales. They are connected to a cistern by a pipe, and can also be used for overflow.

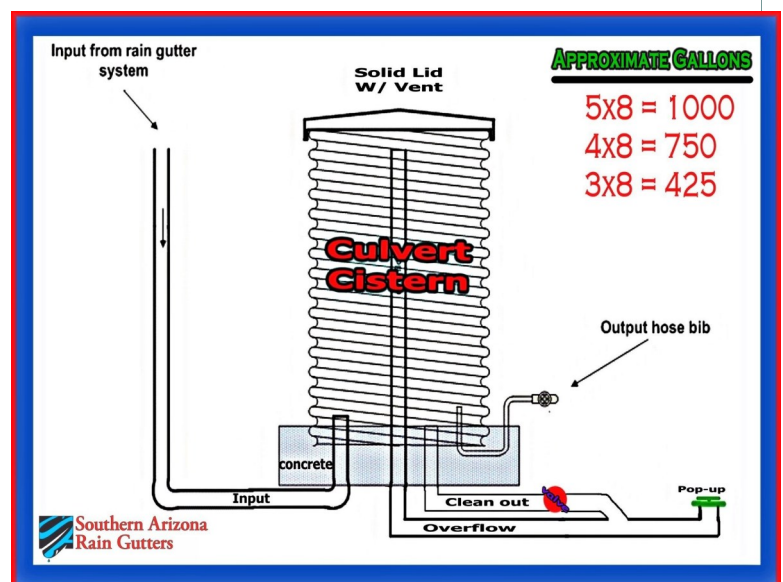
**Incentives to harvest rainwater** - it's free, it's better for plants, it means using local water

resources to live more sustainably, and it conserves groundwater. In 1967, Tucson used 100% groundwater. During the 1970's, Tucsonans began giving up grass lawns as water issues gained publicity.

Tucson Water offers a [rebate](#) of up to \$2000 per household for qualifying rainwater-harvesting expenses. The process begins with a three-hour workshop. A loan program is offered for low-income families.

**Other points** - storm water is a valuable resource, rather a problem. Sand-lined washes are better for holding onto this water than are concrete-lined channels. This type of rainwater harvesting reduces flooding and erosion by holding the water onsite. Several landfills were placed along local rivers and these are gradually being excavated and their contents moved to other landfills. Greywater from washing machines can be used in the landscape. There is a permitting process, [rebates](#), and a class for this. Kevin mentioned the [Underwood Garden](#) by the College of Architecture at the University of Arizona, which harvests condensate from HVAC, roof and drinking fountain runoff, and has a 11,600-gallon cistern underground. Margot reported that 20% of our water usage is by toilets. They use composting toilets at the Watershed Management Group to eliminate this use in their building.

The moral is that we can have nice shady yards by using rainwater harvesting. Thank you to Sally for booking this program for us! - SC, from my notes



Schematic of a system similar to Kevin's. (Source: [Southern Arizona Rain Gutters](#) - a good source for cisterns, etc. 520-299-7246)



# TAIS March Meeting - photos by Dave Smith



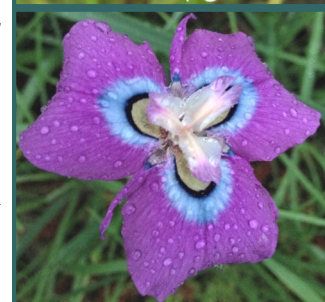
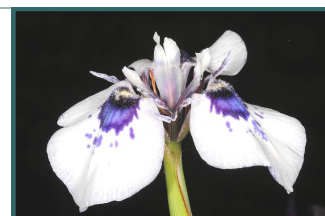


## Treasurer's Report for March - submitted by Martin Juarez

Beginning Balance					\$6,033.24
Date	Pd	MOP	Deposits	Expenses	
03/29/22		#1929		\$23.32	Clark-newsletters, AIS
03/30/22	X		\$45.00		DUES *
Totals			\$45.00	\$23.32	\$21.68
Ending Balance					\$6,054.92
* Albano \$10/#346, Briggs (Jacobs) \$10/#1265, Valenzuela \$25/#150					Updated.
Expense receipts/invoices can be mailed to "P. O. Box 27773, Tucson, AZ, 85728" for reimbursement.					Thursday, March 31, 2022
Documents must be accompanied with reason/purpose for expense					



At left:  
More  
*Moraea*  
from  
Growing  
Cool  
Plants



From top: *Moraea aristata* (from [Royal Botanic Gardens](#)) and various colors of *Moraea villosa* (from Growing Cool Plants blogspot)

## More Irids - Iris Cousins, Part III

Iris cousins are in the Iris family, but not in the genus *Iris*. Besides adding color, they can extend our bloom season. This month, we'll feature two of these which are closely related to the *Moraea polystachya* featured in our [February 2021](#) newsletter. There are nearly 200 species of *Moraea* iris. Michael Mace hybridizes and photographs many species of *Moraeas* and highlights them in his blog, [Growing Cool Plants](#).

*Moraea aristata* is native to South Africa. Although it once was quite common in the Capetown area, the only remaining natural population grows on the grounds of the Observatory there. *M. aristata* is also known as the peacock flower, butterfly iris, or *Blouooguintjie* (blue-eyed *uintjie* in Afrikaans). This species grows well in garden settings. It likes full sun and a sandy or clay soil. *M. aristata* grows from corms and it flowers in winter with relatively large white blossoms with blue iridescent spots. See photo at top right.

*M. villosa*, the peacock moraea, hails from the same area and is facing similar loss of habitat due to urban sprawl. It can reach 40" and its relatively large flowers carry a light sweet fragrance and last for several days. The iridescent spots are thought to attract monkey beetles to pollinate it. Like other *Moraea*, it grows well from seeds, and they all take 2-4 years to flower. This species prefers a sunny, well-drained spot and very little fertilizer. There are several varieties and subspecies of this plant and many different colors from white to purple to yellow to chocolate. See photos at right.

The Growing Cool Plants blogspot has many tips for cultivation. *Moraeas* can grow in beds or in containers in a 50-50 mix of peat and rinsed coarse sand. The author waters his thoroughly once a week during the growing season in San Jose, California, and provides afternoon shade in summer. Watch for the leaves to yellow, then he suggests no water during the summer dormancy (June till October), or the corms may rot. Leaves of seedlings may stay green their first summer, so *should* receive water. Like all irises, they do not like to be crowded.

Where to buy: [Annie's](#) (potted), [Exotic Plant Seeds](#), [Plant World Seeds](#) (5 types of *Moraeas*). Give some a try! - SC

## 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 April:

As your irises bloom, verify the flower against the name to be sure it is correct. (Consider using the AIS [Iris Wiki](#) for this). Redo labels if incorrect or faded. Re-map the bed.

Carefully remove spent blooms for maximum visual impact. Trim flower stalks at their base after they finish blooming, using scissors to help protect the rhizome from injury.

Continue applying a fertilizer high in phosphate, such as Super Bloom, for six to eight weeks after bloom time to boost the plant while it sets its future increases and buds. The middle number should be 50 or higher.



## Tip Exchange

### Some of the positive effects of gardening:

Many communities have ongoing beautification projects that welcome new volunteers and new ideas. Try a community garden or botanical garden.

If you grow excess produce, a local food bank or soup kitchen can make good use of it.

An elderly neighbor would probably love an hour or two of help in the yard now and then.

Deliver an occasional bouquet of flowers from your garden to help brighten someone's day.

Source: Old Farmer's Almanac email newsletter of Jan 2, 2022

## Iris Limerick:

I love the little irises called *Moraea*.  
They spark in me a sense of euphoria.  
From November through April  
They give me a thrill,  
Those small, bright-eyed irises called *Moraea*.  
- Sue Clark



'W. J. Fryer' (1917)

## Did You Know?

Bearded irises grow 49 states, excluding Hawaii. They are found in Zones 3-9 and range in height from about 6" to 48". We have 28 species of native irises in the United States, including Louisianas and Pacific Coast natives. The irises that sell the most globally are Dutch irises, far exceeding sales of tall bearded. This is mostly due to their use in the florist trade. Sources: Birds & Blooms magazine Feb/Mar 2022 and "Prologue to 1920," by Bob Pries in The Early Years - Supplement 1 of 4 to IRISES, AIS Bulletin, 2020

*"Every spring is the only spring - a perpetual astonishment."* - Ellis Peters



## A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

In 1910, two important events occurred in the iris world: W. R. Dykes published his first book, *Irises*, and Dutch irises were developed by the Van Tubergen nursery in Haarlem in The Netherlands. The Van Tubergens crossed two varieties of *Iris xiphium* from Spain and Portugal with *I. tingitana* from the north of Africa to produce the Dutch irises, whose name indicates their place of development. This new type rapidly replaced both English and Spanish irises in the floral trade. It flowered weeks before them, was more vigorous, and made excellent cut flowers. Although there are only about 50 varieties available, they are the most economically-important iris in the world! A descendent of the Van Tubergens named Thomas Hoog attributed the scientific name *Iris x Hollandica* to them. From its inception in 1920 and up until 1950, the American Iris Society was responsible for registering new varieties of Dutch iris. After 1950, registration of bulbous irises, including the Dutch iris, was taken over by the Dutch Royal General Bulbgrower's Association. More in our [May 2021](#) newsletter.

An excellent plantsman in Mantorville, Minnesota did much to popularize irises beginning with his first catalog in 1912. Willis Elmer Fryer tested over 500 named varieties of irises, and selected those which fared well in his climate to hybridize into hardy new varieties. In 1921, John Wister wrote that Willis Fryer had introduced more irises during the previous three years than any other American. Fryer bred not only tall bearded, dwarf bearded, and Siberian irises, but also gladiolus, phlox, peonies, delphinium, daylilies, and other hardy flowering plants. One of his TBs, 'Magnificent' (1920) received an Honorable Mention award at the Minneapolis Iris Show in 1920. Other much-admired varieties were named after his wife, 'Mrs. W. E. Fryer' (aka 'Mrs. Fryer'), his daughter 'Kathryn Fryer,' and his son 'W. J. Fryer,' all three from 1917. Photo above.

Sources: Wikipedia article on [Iris x hollandica](#), AIS Iris Wiki - [article](#) about Fryer, Archive.org ([1922 Fryer catalog](#)), and "Prologue to 1920," by Bob Pries in The Early Years - Supplement 1 of 4 to IRISES, AIS Bulletin, 2020