

April 2023

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 58th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



President's Message

Showtime! At long last your year(s) of hard work will be contributing to our first judged iris show in many years. I'm hoping for nice "average" weather for the next three weeks after this weeks' light freeze (hopefully the last one till fall!). Read and reread this newsletter for show preparation information. [Find more details in the [show schedule instruction booklet](#)]. Get your favorite stalk-transportation method tuned up and ready to go. Then we'll see you and your iris bright and early on April 22nd.

- Kevin Kartchner

'Eastertime'
(Schreiner, 1980)

Marcusen Sculpture Garden,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2022

"There is no glory in star or blossom till looked upon by a loving eye; There is no fragrance in April breezes till breathed with joy as they wander by." - William C. Bryant

Inside this issue:

Minutes & Show Notes from the March meeting	2-3
Photos from the March meeting	4
Treasurer's Report	5
Pollinators: Hover flies - article and photos	5
Preparing Irises for the Show	6-7
What to do in the Iris Garden for April, Tips	8
Iris Limerick, Did You Know? Bit of Botany and Iris History	8
Iris Show Poster	9

Upcoming Events

April 22: TAI\$ Iris Show, Trinity Presbyterian Church, 400 E. University Blvd. Bring and set-up your irises from 6-9:30 AM. RSVP required to [Terry](#) by April 19 if bringing any flower arrangement(s). Free viewing for public and members: 1-4 PM. Roses from the Rose Society of Tucson will also be on display

April 29: TAI\$ garden tours. RSVP to [Sue](#) for addresses & map

TAI\$ Rhizome Sale: September 16 at Harlow's

Birthday Wishes to:

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



Photo by Rose Clark

March Meeting Minutes



March 11 - We did not hold a formal club meeting, but instead learned about judging for an iris show. Diane Pavlovich (show clerk) and Terry Swartz (show chairman) presented a PowerPoint which was courtesy of the Mesilla Valley Iris Society outlining the guidelines for a judged iris show. Terry pointed out that the Tucson Rose Society will also be presenting their best roses during our iris show, so it will be a fun and educational experience to be shared with family and friends.

Twenty-three people were in attendance, but only three members have ever entered a judged iris show.

On April 22, the show will be held at Trinity Presbyterian Church, 400 E. University Blvd., with iris entries to be set up from 6:00 AM – 9:30 AM. The show will be closed during the judging from 10:00 to 1:00. The public (and club members) are welcome to attend to this free event from 1:00 to 4:00. All iris may be picked up at 4:00, but not before.

A small amount of research may need to be performed prior

to the show, as all entries must have the name of the iris as well as the Division, Section and Group numbers. If an iris was introduced prior to 1994, it must be entered in Section E: Historic Iris. Terry Swartz distributed our 'Iris Intrigue' show guide to all attendees. We were reminded each entry could receive 100 points, but deductions would be taken for any issues noted under "No-No's" (see p. 5).

Terry demonstrated an English Box and advised the club that it is important that the falls do not touch the box. The box will hold six single iris which should all be the same type - Spuria, TB, etc. Judges will be considering color and pattern. All boxes, which are supplied, must have a printed named theme as well as the name of each iris.

There is also a section for container-grown iris. We were advised to consider the iris and not overwhelm the display with an over-powering container.

If you are entering an arrangement, please contact Terry Swartz by April 19 so he

may plan space considerations. [Send a message to [Sue](#) and she will forward it to Terry].

A number of members have 'No ID' [Noid] irises and Terry encouraged us to bring them and place them on the table 'For Display Only'. In addition to sharing your beautiful iris, judges or fellow members may be able to ID them for you.

The meeting concluded with a drawing for three potted iris. Other landscape plants and seed packets were available to anyone interested. - Joyce Knill, substitute secretary

Structure of an AIS Show

Division I: Open Horticulture

Sections

- A: Tall bearded
- B: Aril and Arilbred
- C: Median and Dwarf
- D: Beardless
- E: Historic (pre-1994)
- F: Miscellaneous
- G: Collections - 3 stalks
 - Group 1: same type (TB, spuria, etc.), same variety ('Mesmerizer,' for example)
 - Group 2: Same type, three different varieties
- H: English Box
- I: Container-grown iris

Division II: Seedlings

Same Sections as Division I

Division III: Artistic Design

Section A

- Class 1: "Spring Awakening"
- Class 2: "Floral Fascination"
- Class 3: "Iris Conspiracy"
- Class 4: "Mystical Lines"
- Class 5: "Iris Entanglement"

(See Show Schedule for description of each Class) - SC, from our Show Schedule



More about the Show



March 11 - Terry Swartz and Diane Pavlovich presented a power point program from Mesilla Valley Iris Society of tips on how to exhibit irises at a show. Several members chimed in with their experiences and tips on exhibiting. Terry gave a presentation about how to place a bloom stalk in the vase and use wedging. He also discussed tips on creating an English Box and completing the entry tags.

Show schedules and entry tags were distributed at the meeting to those who wanted them. (Show schedules are also available on our website.) We will have schedules and entry tags available at the show for anyone who needs them. Entries need to be made on Saturday, April 22 from 6:00 to 9:30 AM. Currently we have six AIS judges who will be coming from outside Tucson to judge.

You must know the name of your iris to enter in the judged classes of the show. However, if you have NOIDs that you want to bring, we will have a display-only area for those. Please enter your named varieties first.

The show will be held at the

Trinity Presbyterian Church, 400 E. University Blvd. (on the southeast corner of University & 4th Ave). You can drop off your irises from the street curb in front of the church (this is the closest spot to the entry prep area). Then move your car to the back of the church to park. There is a parking area on the east side and just south of the church. There is no fee for parking on Saturday there.

Also, there are two ways to get down to the basement hall – by stairs or by elevator. We will have signs up to show you where to go.

People who are entering arrangements are encouraged to go down to the hall to find their location on the table for their exhibit. You can use the adjacent kitchen area to work on making your arrangement if you need to. That way you won't have to walk very far with it to place on the table. Remember that you need to make an advanced reservation for arrangements with Terry Swartz, so a spot can be reserved for you.

For more information about how to exhibit irises at shows, please check out [this article](#) by Sheldon Butt. He prepared a very detailed article for the AIS Bulletin in April 1995, explaining how he goes about cutting and preparing iris for exhibition, his thoughts on refrigeration, whether to use preservatives in the water, and many other tips.

Please click on the link above to find this article which was reprinted by the Historical Iris Preservation Society.

To help offset the cost of the show, we will be selling small

pots of iris. Hopefully some will be in bloom by the show.

If you have any extra rhizomes that you potted up in 1-gallon or 3.5-gallon plastic pots that you have decided you do not want, please consider donating them to the society to sell. You need to bring them by 1 PM to the show. The sale will be from 1-4 PM.

The irises do not necessarily have to be named, but it would be nice if they are. If you don't know the name of the iris, please at least put down the color of the bloom either on the pot or a tag on the plant.

If you have any questions about the show or would like to volunteer to help sell the potted iris and answer questions from the public, please contact [Terry Swartz](#), the show chairman.

We hope to see everyone at the show and we especially hope to see your irises.

- Diane Pavlovich, show clerk



Artistic Design Scoring - from AIS Judges Handbook, 8.0

Conformance to Schedule (10 points)

Design (35 points broken up as follows)

- Balance (5 points)
- Proportion (5 points)
- Scale (5 points)
- Rhythm (5 points)
- Dominance (5 points)
- Contrast (5 points)
- Unity (5 points)

Color Use (20 points)

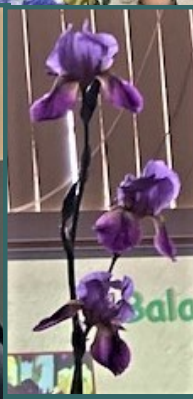
Creative Expression (20 points)

Distinctiveness (15 points)

March Meeting



Photos by
Joyce Knill



Treasurer's Report for March - submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

Beginning checkbook balance (1 Mar 2023) 7088.50

FEB INCOME YEAR TO DATE

Dues-----	30.00-----	666.00
Plant Sales-----	0.00-----	0.00
Show-----	0.00-----	0.00
Auction-----	0.00-----	0.00
Donation-----	0.00-----	0.00
Other-----	0.00-----	0.00
TOTAL-----	30.00-----	666.00

FEB EXPENSES YEAR TO DATE

Program-----	0.00-----	0.00
Plant (etc) purchases-----	0.00-----	959.73
Show-----	0.00-----	104.00
Feed, (etc)-----	0.00-----	13.87
Admin-----	0.00-----	642.70
TOTAL-----	0.00-----	1720.30

Ending checkbook balance (31 Mar 2023) 6078.95

Petty Cash-----+8.70

Net Worth-----6057.65

YTD Change-----+30.00



Eristalis arbustorum, European drone fly, eating pollen in Marienville, PA (cirrusimage.com). Between the orange area and where the wing attaches to the body, the tan lollipop-shaped structure is the reduced second pair of wings used for balance.



Pollinator of the Month, Part I - Hover flies (syrphid flies)

You've likely seen hover flies, but may have thought that they were wasps or bees. Their common name comes from their habit of hovering around flowers. Another name for them is syrphid flies. Hover flies (also spelled hoverflies) are important pollinators and garden friends - all-around beneficial insects. In fact, they are believed to be the second-most important group of pollinators after wild bees. There are about 6,000 species spread across 200 genera around the world. The larvae of many of these species eat aphids, thrips, scale insects, leaf hoppers, and caterpillars. These types are often used as biological controls over pests, and are economically important. A single larva can eat 400 aphids! Larvae of other hover fly species eat decaying plant or animal matter. Adults feed on pollen and nectar, pollinating plants while they are doing it.

Hover fly larvae are green or brown and often have a stripe running longitudinally from mouth to the tail-end. One type, the rat-tailed maggot of the drone fly, is used as bait in ice-fishing. With a breathing tube on its rear, it lives in stagnant water. Hover fly pupae are shaped like tear drops and may be attached to twigs or leaves. They change from green to brown as they develop. Adults have one pair of wings, with the other pair being reduced to balancing agents (see photo above). Wings are spread when the bug is resting. Bodies are often striped black and yellow, and may be hairy or smooth. They do not sting.

Hover flies have been around since the Eocene epoch (56 to 34 million years ago) and have been found trapped in Baltic amber as well as fossilized in the Florissant Formation in central Colorado.

One common type, the American hoverfly *Eupeodes americanus*, is found throughout North America. It appears to have the face of a fly with large compound eyes and short antennae, and the body of a bee with its black and yellow stripes.

Attract hover flies to your garden with these companion plants: *Alyssum*, parsley, yarrow, tansy, garden candytuft (*Iberis umbellata*), statice, coriander, sunflowers, zinnias, dill, lavender, carrots, and buckwheat. They also like dandelions! Hover flies prefer flowers which are more open because of their unspecialized mouth parts. They even have their own [YouTube video!](#) - SC

Sources: [Hoverflies - Why are they important?](#), Wikipedia articles on [Hover Flies](#) and on [Eupeodes americanus](#)

From top: Adult hover fly, larva (in center of leaf), pupa (all from [Hoverflies](#) article), American hoverfly on zinnia (by Calibas - own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, Wikimedia), and garden candytuft flowers ([Etsy](#))

Ready, Set – Showtime! For Irises, that is!



Do's:

- Choose a stalk with at least one bloom
- Present the stalk well – see Tips and Tricks, below
- Opt for a candelabra stalk for tall bearded varieties – flowers held well away from stalk, with branches on each side of stalk
- Select a stalk with a gentle “S-curve” if possible for TB, IB, and BB varieties
- Aim for flowers on the upper 2/3's of stalk (the 2/3's rule)
- Show many varieties, including older and newer ones – only one stalk per variety, though

No No's:

- Water spots – water the soil only
- Petals touching stalks – use a piece of Styrofoam plate cut into a rectangle with a V notch at each end. Put in place five days before the show to help adjust the positioning. Slide it down daily to widen the gap.
- Flowers touching each other – see use of Styrofoam plate above
- Bugs, dirt, or debris – carefully remove with a moist Q-tip
- Tears and blemishes – tiny tears ok
- Missing flower parts
- Dead or past their prime blooms – remove these carefully and unobtrusively
- Fingerprints on the stalks – handle stalk by very bottom – can brush on talcum powder lightly to hide fingerprints
- Poor presentation – presentation is just as important as a beautiful and perfect blossom

Tricks and Tips!

- Flowers which have opened naturally in the garden are best.
- Consider bringing your irises in loose bud to the show the night before so that they will open overnight and be in excellent condition.
- An almost-open bud can be slowed down by pinning a paper towel around it before transporting it to the show the night before. Remove towel upon arrival.
- Slow a bud down in the refrigerator.
- Hasten a bud with watering, especially if the weather has been dry.

Tricks and Tips, continued:

- Hasten a bud with warmth and bright light, perhaps on top of a water heater, with a nearby lamp.
- Cut early if high winds are forecast. Or rain. Always cut early or late in day (most water, etc. in stalk).
- Cut stalk at its base in the garden and trim it under water at the show, if necessary.

Transport irises with utmost care:

- Use a bucket with pieces of PVC pipe or rolled newspapers to hold the stems upright. Be sure to add water.
- Use PVC pipe and PVC glue to create a carrying contraption - a grid with uprights for the stems and water.
- Use a deep bucket, basket, or crate with vases or wine bottles. Be sure these are cleaned with some bleach.

At the Show:

- You must use a vase that has been provided. Fill out and attach a label. Fold label to hide personal info.
- Cut stem if need be so that flowers are on upper 2/3's of stalk.
- If stalk is too short, a piece of stalk may be used beneath it to raise it up. Be sure water reaches upper stalk.
- Wedge stalks discretely with bits of foam.
- Center the main stalk so that it is directly over the vase.
- Turn the stalk so that any damaged (torn, broken, or creased) petals are in the back.
- Tidying - remove up to 1/4" of damaged foliage, following natural contour of leaf.
 - remove spent terminal blossoms and brown sheaths at base of flowers, if necessary. Trim them neatly.
 - if there are two blooms per socket, trim one away. Same if there is a bud touching the flower.
- Be sure that the best side of the flower stalk is facing forward and that blossoms are not blocked by a leaf. Carefully attach the label to the vase to indicate the front of the stalk.
- Collections – the stalks should have similar branching, curves, and number of blooms. They need not be the same cultivar, but must be the same type (tall bearded, spuria, etc.). They will be judged on balance, proportion, and color combination.

The irises you bring do not have to be perfect. Part of our mission is to entice and educate the public about irises. And to have fun!!! You must have grown the irises that you show, though. (And that is a big part of the fun)! You do not have to grow the irises that you use in the artistic arrangements.

Sources: Two PowerPoints: "Grooming," by Scarlett Ayres of the Mesilla Valley Iris Society, New Mexico, and "Stalking for the Best of Show," by AIS. Modified and summarized by Sue Clark for TAIS, 2018, with additions by Joyce Knill in 2023

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 during April:

As your irises bloom, verify the flower against the name to be sure it is correct. (Consider using wiki.irises.org for this). Redo labels if they are 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

Check out fragrantiris.com where Randy Smith is collecting, growing, and selling truly fragrant irises. - HIPS Journal, Fall 2022

If fuzzy white mold appears on the surface of houseplant soil, carefully scrape or wipe it off and dispose of it in an outdoor trash bin. Sprinkle cinnamon over the soil surface. This often prevents mold from re-growing. Avoid overwatering, poor drainage, dense soils, and crowded conditions, which may lead to mold.
- Birds & Blooms [email of 28 Jan 2023](mailto:email_of_28_Jan_2023)

Iris Limerick:

There was a young man named Moses
And oh, how he loved to grow roses!
His wife loved irises,
His daughter papyruses,
And such was the garden of Moses.
- Sue Clark



Iris kashmiriana, Curtis' BotMag, 1880 - Melinda Smith

Did You Know?

HIPS member Dave Oktavec recommends [Espoma Flower-Tone](#) fertilizer. This organic 3-4-5 formula contains micro-organisms to help improve the soil. The dry mixture can be sprinkled around existing plants monthly or added to soil in the ground or in containers when adding new plants. Dave uses a special mix of ingredients in his iris garden. Amounts are something like this: 8" of good topsoil, 3" of sharp sand, 2-3" of compost, a small amount of lime, and a heaping cup of Flower-Tone. Mix well and mulch with pea gravel. For additional drainage, Dave digs a trench around the bed and fills it with pea gravel. - *Roots*, The HIPS Journal, Fall 2022. p. 27

"It is true, as they say, that the blossoms of spring are all the more precious because they bloom so briefly."

- Murasaki Shikibu, [The Tale of Genji](#)

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

This month, we'll look at the next steps in the development of the tall bearded iris. Plantsmen such as Lémon and Verdier were raising and selling irises that they grew from seeds from pods that were the result of bees doing the typical work of bees - pollinating plants. The hand of the grower played no part whatsoever in which irises were crossed with one another; this was purely at the whim of the bees.

Advances in travel and a thirst for exotic plants fueled both plant collectors and wealthy adventurous types to explore further afield than before. Wild irises were discovered in parts of the Balkans, India, and in the Asian portions of the Ottoman Empire. They were taller with more branches and larger flowers than the irises typically grown in gardens of the time. Lack of any restrictions on collecting and transporting plants resulted in many samples of these newly-discovered irises being relocated to various gardens, both botanic and private, in England and Europe.

The growth pattern of the Eurasian irises was different than garden irises, as they were dormant in the summer and grew during winter and early spring, not exactly conducive to cultivation in England and other cold-winter, moist-summer areas. Their flowers were in shades of blue and purple.

Although the field of genetics was some decades in the future, there had developed a group of scientifically-minded gardeners who were determined to make specific crosses and not leave those choices up to bees. They wanted the challenge of attempting to bring some of these new traits into the garden irises. Bigger plants and bigger flowers with branched stems - who wouldn't want that in their garden?! They just needed to cross the garden irises - with their wider color palate and interesting patterns - with these new, wild irises, and then they would really have something special.

Next month, we will continue the story of how five species - *Iris cypriana*, *I. kashmiriana* (illustration above), *I. trojana*, *I. mesopotamica*, and *I. aphylla* - were crossed with the known irises of the time, leading to tall bearded irises being referred to as "manufactured miracles." - SC

Sources: "The Tall Bearded Iris, a Manufactured Marvel," by Phil Edinger in *The Early Years* - Supplement 1 of 4 to IRISES, AIS Bulletin



2023 Tucson Area Iris Society Show

**Saturday, April 22 at Trinity Presbyterian Church
400 E. University Blvd.**

Free and open to the public 1-4 p.m.

Potted iris plants for sale

Entrance on the eastside of the church