

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 58th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Babbling Brook'

(Keppel, 1965)

Dykes Medal winner

Marcusen Sculpture Garden,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2023

President's Message

So it's 111°, or more outside. How's the heat for you? The last couple of weeks I've watched a lot of iris fans get burned. It always makes me nervous to see so much dying but they mostly recover and thrive for me. Time to plan indoors. We have our auction in August and our big sale in September. How many pots or garden spots will be filled with new rhizomes? Get ready. While iris rhizomes are amazingly tough, the sooner they hit the dirt the sooner they start growing. Stay cool, plan, prepare, and plant. - Kevin Kartchner

“A rustle of corn-leaves; a tinkle of bells on the hills; a twinkle of sheep in the lowlands; a bevy of bees where the clover is heavy; A butterfly blundering by — And that is July!” ...

- James Newton Matthews, *July in the West (Day and Night)*

Inside this issue:

A Special Invitation from SCIS	2
A Peek into the Garden of Cathy Pane-Scire - photos	3
Treasurer's Report	4
Hummingbird Moths - article and photos	4
What to do in the Iris Garden during July	5
Iris Limerick, Did You Know?	5
Tips, Bit of Botany and Iris History	5



Upcoming Events

No meeting this month

Next meeting: August 12, 1 PM - TAIS Auction at Dove of Peace Church, 665 W Roller Coaster Road (River and Oracle area). Please park in back. Members may bid in person on rhizomes from Mid-America

September 16: TAIS Rhizome Sale, 9 AM to noon or whenever we run out of rhizomes, Harlow Gardens nursery. We will set up at 2:30 the afternoon before. Final setup 8-9 AM on September 16th. Members-only hour 8-9 AM on September 16th. Open to the public at 9 AM

Birthday Wishes to:

Gary Carruthers Pam Court Evelyn Jacobs

Randy Bixby Julie Pacquing Nancy McKean

Candice Hill Crouch Jessamyn Stinchfield



Source: Curtis's Bot Mag, 1886, by Matilda Smith

Iris kashmiriana

A Special Invitation from SCIS



18 May 2023 - Mary Soens Platner of the Sun Country Iris Society in Phoenix sent Terry the following message, invitation, and photos:

“From all reports, it sounds like Tucson's iris show was a great success! Now that the dust has settled, Sun Country Iris Society extends an invitation to your members to join us next fall for a presentation by David Toth, a noted iris hybridizer. David specializes in broken colors and very "unusual" beards. David does not have a website yet, but his iris "catalog" is on Facebook at [David Toth Irises](#). His commercial iris garden is [Indian Creek](#) in Nebraska.

David Toth's 2-hour presentation will be on SUNDAY, Oct. 22, at 2:00 PM so folks have adequate time to travel here. Location: the Valley Garden Center, 1809 N. 15th Ave., which is 1 block N of McDowell, just N of the

202/I-10. Of course, it's free!

Enlarge the photos to better see the beards.

A little story to share: While I was visiting one of the gardens at the 2022 National Convention in Las Cruces, I was very surprised to see what was left of a very tattered iris. Almost of the falls and standards had been severely pecked on by birds. But what startled me a bit was the beard, which was fully intact and sticking straight out. David prides himself on growing "strong" beards!" - Mary Soens Platner



**HYBRIDIZER
TALK - OCT 22
IN PHOENIX**



**We're on the web:
Tucsoniris.org**





A Peek into the Garden of Cathy Pane-Scire

Row 1: 'Coffee Trader,' 'About Town,'
'Alabaster Unicorn'

Row 2: 'Payback Time,' 'Oregon
Firestorm,' 'Wintry Sky'

Row 3: 'Strawberry Frosting,'
'Swivel Hips'

Treasurer's Report for June - submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

Beginning checkbook balance (1 June 2023) 5949.21

JUNE INCOME	THIS MO.	YEAR TO DATE
Dues-----	0.00-----	756.00
Plant Sales-----	0.00-----	0.00
Show--(plant sales) -	0.00-----	425.16
Auction-----	0.00-----	0.00
Donation-----	0.00-----	0.00
Other-----	0.00-----	0.00
TOTAL-----	0.00-----	1181.16

JUNE EXPENSES	THIS MO.	YEAR TO DATE
Program-----	0.00-----	0.00
Plant (etc) purchases-----	0.00-----	959.73
Show--(misc)-----	0.00-----	362.90
Food, (etc)-----	0.00-----	384.87
Admin-----	0.00-----	642.70
TOTAL-----	0.00-----	2350.20

Ending checkbook balance (26 JUNE 2023) 5949.21
 Petty Cash-----+8.70
Net Worth----- 5957.91
 MonthlyChange-----0.00

1 JAN 2023 checkbook balance 7023.95
 27 JUNE 2023 5949.21
YTD CHANGE --1074..74



Above - snowberry clearwing on lantana (by David Volin) from [Birds & Blooms](#) article



Pollinators, Part IV: Hummingbird Moths

Hummingbird moths are the insect world's version of hummingbirds! They go by several other names - sphinx moths (because the caterpillars pose like the Great Sphinx in Egypt), bee hawk-moths, and clearwing moths. They are about 1-2.5" long, so are smaller than most hummingbirds, but appear quite similar upon first glance. Their wings make a humming sound and they favor many of the same blooms as the birds they so closely resemble. They can hover, too. This type of moth has a long straw-like proboscis, which it uncurls when sipping nectar from flowers. The proboscis is 14" long in one species of sphinx moth! The hummingbird moth's rather stout body is covered with hair-like scales and like the bumblebee, it shivers to warm up. Besides their diminutive size and lack of feathers and a beak, they differ from hummingbirds in the number of legs (six versus two) and the presence of antennae. Some species have a tail similar to a hummingbird's.

There are several species of hummingbird moths in North America including hummingbird clearwings, snowberry clearwings, slender clearwings, and white-lined sphinx moths. Sphinx moths are typically active at dusk or dark, while the others tend to feed during the daylight hours. Snowberry clearwings are the type we are most likely to see in Arizona.

Attract these fuzzy moths to your garden by growing some of their favorite nectar sources - **lantana, honeysuckle, bee balm (monarda), phlox, columbines, nasturtiums, four-o'clocks**, as well as ***Peniocereus (Queen-of-the-night cactus) blossoms***. They will also need some favorite host plants on which to lay their eggs, so that when the eggs hatch, the caterpillars can feast on the leaves: **honeysuckle, dogbane, grape vines, hawthorn, cherry and plum trees**. Those of you who have grown tomatoes are most likely familiar with the tomato hornworm. Well, those big green hornworms are caterpillars of sphinx moths! Consider growing a few sacrificial **tomato** plants for them. They also love **Datura**. If you notice leaves disappearing at an alarming rate, look for black droppings and check underneath the leaves for the culprits. When we learned that they turned into hummer moths, my mom, sister, and I felt bad about the number of tomato hornworms we dispatched back in the day. Tobacco hornworms turn into another type of sphinx moth, and in fact, all hummingbird moth caterpillars sport a horn. When they are ready to metamorphose, the caterpillars drop to the ground, borrow into the soil, and form a pupa. The adult moths emerge in two-three weeks or after winter has passed.

Consider attracting these enchanting and friendly pollinators to your own garden. - SC

Sources: [12 Interesting Hummingbird Moth Facts - Birds & Blooms](#); Have You Seen A Hummingbird Moth? Here Are 10 Facts That Will Amaze - includes a video (farmersalmanac.com); [Hemaris - Wikipedia](#); [Sphingidae - Wikipedia](#); [How to Identify Hummingbird Moths \(thespruce.com\)](#); [Hummingbird Moth \(usda.gov\)](#); [Hawk Moths or Sphinx Moths \(usda.gov\)](#); Birds & Blooms June/July 2023 issue: "Humming Along" article, p. 34-37



From top: Hummingbird clearwing (by Roger Hatley), slender clearwing (by Didier Descouens), white-lined sphinx moth with proboscis extended (by Karlie Carlson), a tobacco hornworm eating my sister's tomato plant in PA (SC, 2016) (tomato hornworms have a dark horn rather than a red one), and a pupa from a spurge hawk-moth (photos 1 & 2 from [Birds & Blooms](#) article, 3 from [Wikimedia](#), 4 is my own), 5 from [Wikimedia](#))

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 July:

During hot weather, it is best to water irises in the evening. Be mindful to water the soil rather than the iris plants or they are likely to rot.

Leaves make food for the plant, so do not trim them off unless they are dead. No need to cut them into the fan shapes of old, which is detrimental at this point in their growth cycle.

Provide afternoon relief with shade cloth or by sheltering potted irises in the shade.

Continue to feed and water reblooming irises.



Tip Exchange



Part of our quest to **work smarter, not harder** at our house: elevated cans = less lifting of full cans of water, and cobbles under the roof's drip line = less mud-splash on the walls of the house. - SC

Iris Limerick:

I make quilts and attempt to raise irises,
I've heard both are caused by 'viruses.'
The quilts I do well,
The irises pell-mell.
Oh, how I wish to grow irises.

- Sue Clark

Did You Know?

"In botany, **variety** is a rank (like [species](#) or [subspecies](#)) or a [taxon](#) in that rank. Like a subspecies, a variety gets a three-part name (a trinomial); such a variety name will include the name of the species and the variety epithet. The term "variety" is often shortened to "var." An example is [Abies lasiocarpa var. arizonica](#) (Corkbark fir). A variety is different in some way, and continues to be different, from the rest of the species but is not different enough for it to be classified as a new species or as a sub-species." Source: [Simple English Wikipedia](#), the free encyclopedia



'Kashmir White'

"If the first of July be rainy weather, It will rain, more or less, for four weeks together." - John Ray, English Proverbs

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

After tracing the influence of *Iris cypriana* on the modern tall bearded iris last month, this month we'll examine another wild iris' contributions to the gene pool. A Dr. Aitchison sent plants of this iris from Kashmir to Kew Gardens in 1875, which were named *Iris kashmiriana* by Baker in 1877. (See illustration at bottom right corner of p. 1). To this day, no one has figured out how and why irises were growing in northern India, since there was not a "continuum of bearded irises extending from Europe to the Indian subcontinent." Another puzzle is that they weren't growing in wilderness areas, possibly indicating that they had been brought from elsewhere, perhaps by travelers along the Silk Road or by the British Raj empire. And to make things even more confusing, the *I. kashmiriana* plants sent to Kew were quite similar in looks and growth habits to the large bearded irises from other regions such as western Asia and the Mediterranean. Perhaps they were actually hybrids - natural or otherwise.

Sir Michael Foster grew three forms of *I. kashmiriana* - a violet one collected in Kashmir, a white one from Persia (modern-day Iran), and a white one from Turkey. Two white-flowered offspring were introduced after his death and were shared with friends before that. These descended from one or both of the white forms mentioned above and were exceptionally large and tall. 'Kashmir White' (Foster 1912) grows 4' tall and its nearly pure-white flowers have yellow haft marks (photo above). Both it and the other one, 3'-tall 'Miss Wilmot' (Foster 1910), yield a portion of white-flowered offspring when they are crossed with blue-flowered irises. If the original specimens had been merely albino forms of *I. kashmiriana*, none of their offspring would be white. In subsequent years, researchers discovered that the gene for "dominant white" is found only in certain dwarf European species. This suggests that at least the white-flowered forms of *I. kashmiriana* are of hybrid origins and not actually a separate species - the genes of the dwarf species got in there somehow! 'Kashmir White' "is responsible for 99.9% of all tall bearded dominant white irises" since its introduction, for which we thank it! - SC

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