May 2023

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965 | Our 58th year | An Affiliate of the American Iris Society

'Bess Cheever'

(Foster, 2002)

Marcusen Sculpture Garden, Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2022

Inside this issue:

President's Message

We did it! It was a lot of work for everybody, but we had a great show. We had a good selection of cut flower entries from tall bearded to Japanese, and a couple of English Boxes. The flower arrangements were amazing, so much talent. Special thanks to our show coordinator Terry Swartz who also was in charge of the simultaneous rose show. We learned a lot about iris judging, had good public attendance, and quickly sold out of our potted iris. Take a deserved break from your show efforts and enjoy your gardens.

- Kevin Kartchner

"Among the changing months, May stands confest
The sweetest, and in fairest colours dressed!
Soft as the breeze that fans the smiling field;
Sweet as the breath that opening roses yield." – James Thomson (1700–48)

Upcoming Events

<u>Next meeting</u>: May 13, 1:00 PM at the Tucson Botanical Gardens. Tips and trends from Ken Drozd of the National Weather Service

No meetings in June or July

<u>August 12</u>: 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

Birthday Wishes to:

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

Notes from the Iris Show

22 April - Terry masterfully organized our first AIS-judged iris show in 15 years! We shared the spacious basement room of the Trinity Presbyterian Church with the show of the Rose Society of Tucson, which Terry also chaired. Attendees were blessed with double the amount of flowers to view due to the combined nature of this year's shows

Kevin, Maureen, and Bonnie unloaded and filled vases with water on Thursday. On the day of the show, Sally and Cathy were all over the place in their roles as clerks and unofficial gophers. Pat sold potted iris plants for $10. Dave snapped photos throughout the day. Cathy, Sally, Pat, and Martin worked with the judges while Sue tallied. Susan manned the breakfast table and Bonnie organized lunch for the judges and workers. Martin, Ron, and Joyce helped with clean up. Publicity was by Diane and Sally, with help from many TAIS members. And Terry juggled all with apparent ease. He and Diane had flowers in both shows.

TAIS Blue & Rosette Winners:

Horticulture Division:

Terry: 'Saru Odori' - Blue Ribbon & Best Japanese Iris

Kevin - 'In the Loop' - Blue Ribbon, Best Tall Bearded and Best of Show

Kevin - 'Scoonchee' - Blue Ribbon

Kevin - 'Mango Queen' - Blue Ribbon

Kevin - 'Mesmerizer' - Blue Ribbon

Kevin - 'Coral Point' - Blue Ribbon

Kevin - 'Black Hills Gold' - Blue Ribbon

Kevin - 'Chocolate Halo' - Blue Ribbon

Susan - 'Coup de Soleil' - Blue Ribbon (it's the orange one on p. 3 and 4)

BEST OF SHOW = TB 'IN THE LOOP'

We're on the web: Tucsoniris.org

Kevin - English Box: 'Scoonchee' - Blue Ribbon and Best of Section

Susan - IB Iris: 'Dashing Deb' - Blue Ribbon and Best of Section

Kevin - Seedling: '47-10' - Blue Ribbon

Artistic Design Arrangements:

Terry - Moribana Arrangement - Blue Ribbon

Diane - Traditional Mass Arrangement - Best of Class and Blue Ribbon

Sue - Line - Blue Ribbon

Many Red, White, and Honorable Mention Ribbons were also awarded.

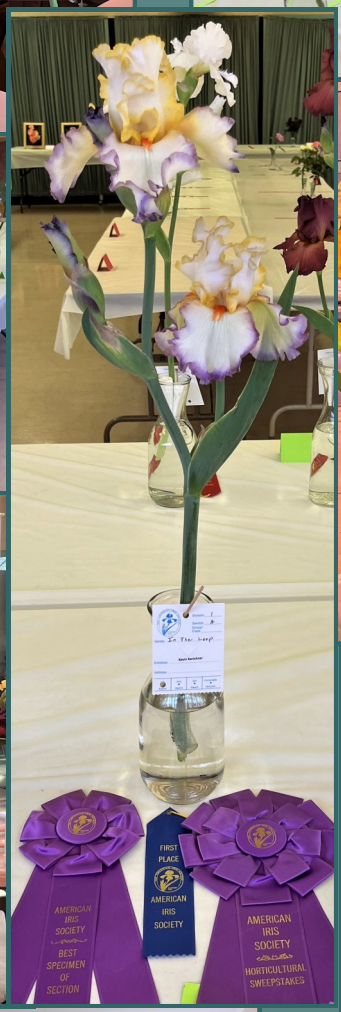
Thank you to all who entered irises and worked to make this year's show a success!

- Sue Clark, secretary

Some tips picked up along the way

- Staging of the bloom is crucial
- Avoid fingerprints on stems and leaves (or cover with powder)
- Turn flower so that a fall faces the viewer and is parallel to edge of the table
- Remove all insects (even ladybugs!)
- Carefully remove all wilting flowers
- S-shaped stems with some flowers on each side look the most balanced and pleasing
- Every entry receives a ribbon
- Misnamed entries are disqualified - SC

TAIS Show 2023: "Iris Enchantment" - photos by Dave Smith



TAIS Show 2023: "Iris Enchantment" - photos by Dave Smith

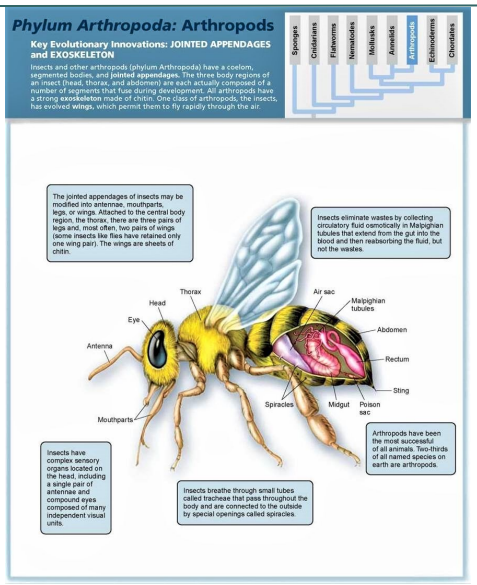
Treasurer's Report for April - submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

Beginning checkbook balance (1 Apr 2023) 6078.95

APR INCOME		YEAR TO DATE
Dues	45.00	711.00
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	45.00	711.00

APR 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 (30 Apr 2023) 6123.95
Petty Cash +8.70
Net Worth 6132.65
YTD Change +7500



Source: Schoolbag.info

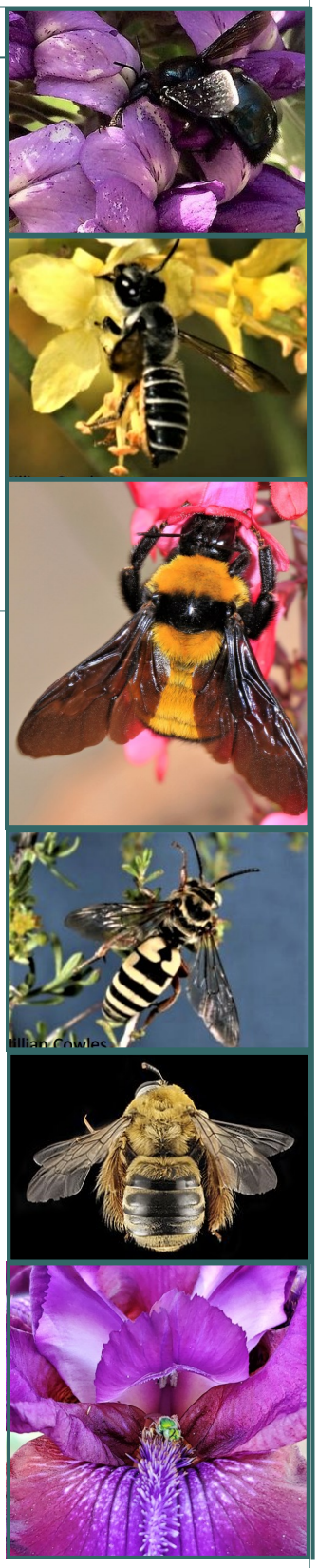
Pollinator of the Month, Part II: Native Bees

The Sonoran Desert is home to over 600 species of native bees. Compare this to the estimated 1,300 bee species throughout Arizona, and 5,000 in the United States, and you'll see that our desert is quite diverse in bees. Unlike some bees, most of these are solitary rather than honey-making bees that live in hives. Native bees have evolved alongside desert plants, so they excel at pollinating them. These herbivorous bees diversified from carnivorous wasps about 100 million years ago, in the middle of the Cretaceous period, the same time interval as angiosperms or flowering plants. Native bees are integral to this year's Super-bloom and countless others through the millennia.

All bees are classified in the Order Hymenoptera. Their bodies contain three sections (head, thorax, and abdomen), their two sets of wings are held together by hooks, and their proboscis mouth and hairy bodies move specific floral products back to their nests: pollen, nectar, and floral oils. Their life cycle occurs in four stages (egg, larva, pupa, and adult).

Carpenter bees, the largest of our native bees, nest in the dead stalks of agave, soltol, and yucca, or in poplar or sycamore trees. They often slice open the bottom of flowers to drink nectar. **Leaf cutter, resin,** and **mason bees** are related to one another and make up 10% of our native bee population. Female leafcutter bees carry semi-elliptical slices of leaves back to their nests in abandoned beetle tunnels to help maintain a constant humidity and to protect their brood cells. **Cactus bees** pollinate various cacti, including cholla, prickly pear, and saguaro. They breed along with other solitary bees in aggregate nesting sites. **Sonoran bumblebees** are social bees with a queen, but they nest underground in mouse nests or in abandoned sheds. Thistle flowers are a favorite food. **Cuckoo bees**, being parasitic, lay their eggs in the nests of other bees and then abandon them. Their bodies are not hairy, so they move less pollen than other bees. **Long-horned bees** are typically robust and hairy. Their antennae are as long as their bodies. They nest underground. Sunflowers, asters, and mallows are the preferred food of several species of long-horns. **Digger bees** include **squash bees (also known as squash and gourd bees)** which pollinate various members of the cucumber family, as well as **Centris bees** which harvest floral oils from palo verde blossoms. **Sweat bees** are the smallest of our native bees, but are often the most showy with their bright metallic colors. Besides pollinating many types of flowers, they are attracted to humans' salty sweat. Next month - more on bees! - SC

Sources: "The A Bee Cs of Arizona Bees" by the Desert Museum, "Arizona Bee Identification Guide" by UA Extension Service (this one would be worth downloading and saving), Wikipedia articles: Bee Lifecycles, *Megachilidae*, and Squash Bee



From top: Carpenter bee (Desert Museum blog), leaf-cutter bee (UA Bee Guide) Sonoran bumble-bee (by Judy Gallagher), cuckoo bee (UA Bee Guide), squash and gourd bee (Wikimedia), sweat bee (Sue Clark, 2020)

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 May:

Trim all spent flower stalks at their base. Using scissors for trimming helps protect the rhizome from injury. Removal of stems helps prevent disease and pest issues in rhizomes.

Fertilize with **Super Bloom**, **Ferti-Lome Blooming and Rooting,** or similar 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 post-bloom interval.**

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

Tip Exchange

At the Purdue Plant Doctor website, you can find help with plant or plant pest problems. The site was created by an entomologist and a plant pathologist. Select from photos to help identify many plants and there is even a section on beneficial insects and other arthropods. - SC

Keep mulch away from the crowns of iris plants so as not to encourage rot. Since mulch seems to have the power to move around, check the plants periodically and push the mulch 2-3" away from the crowns. - SC

Iris Limerick:

There was a young man from Balriggan
Who grew irises, and boy were they big'uns!
And at the show
Well, wouldn't you know,
He won all every prize in Balriggan.
- Sue Clark

Original book source: Prof. Dr. Otto Wilhelm Thomé *Flora von Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz* 1885, Gera, Germany. Wikimedia.

Iris germanica

Did You Know?

In the Fall 2020 issue of ROOTS, the journal of the Historic Iris Preservation Society, I read that a number of the many irises with no names (noids) are the result of some hybridizers selling their seedlings. In the 1954 catalog page they show, the breeder listed the parents of each cross, and the seedlings ranged from $1-3 each. Seeds from parents not listed were 5¢-10¢. "Enjoy your lovely noids for what they are - things of beauty that give us pleasure." - SC

"What potent blood hath modest May."
– Ralph W. Emerson

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Our story continues with trying to add features of the newly-discovered wild irises from Cyprus, Turkey, and northern India to the garden-variety irises of the late 19th century. The wild irises were taller, more robust, and had bigger flowers. This made them quite enticing, but their growing requirements were not-so-suited to the climate of England and other European environs. However, iris fanciers were (and are) a persistent bunch, and kept trying to cross them to get what they wanted.

The garden irises available from bee-pod growers like Lémon and Parker were all diploids, with two sets of 12 chromosomes. Knowledge of genetics was still in the future. The new breed of iris growers did not want simply the crosses that bees chose to make, but wanted to pick and choose which flowers to cross to get the traits they wanted. And what they wanted were bigger flowers and taller stems on plants that would thrive in their climate. The wild irises were tetraploids, having *four sets* of 12 chromosomes. While no one knew this yet, what *was* apparent was that the new irises did not cross well with the garden irises. In reality, this was because of the difference in chromosome counts. If pods did form, they typically had few seeds. Offspring might be triploid (with 36 chromosomes) and only marginally fertile. But now and then, something does not work correctly and a happy accident occurs - something like a diploid ovule failing to divide and ending up with 24 chromosomes instead of 12. This ovule can now easily mate with a 24-chromosome pollen grain and form a tetraploid iris. Finally, the new traits of larger and taller flowers and greater heft were combined with the colors and patterns of the diploids! Generations later, hybridizers achieved such successes as tangerine beards, true-pink flowers, and glaciatas, to name a few. The holy grail of a true-red iris has not yet been achieved, but the work continues.

Read more about diploids, tetraploids, and ploidy in our newsletter from April 2018. Next month, we'll trace the contributions of *Iris cypriana* to the tall bearded line. - SC

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