

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 58th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Copper Frills'

(Mrs C. Whiting, 1940)

Marcusen Sculpture Garden
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2023

President's Message

Finally! It took longer than I expected or wanted, but Fall has arrived. After our burning drier summer, my rhizomes from the auction, sale, and division are all putting on new growth. Although I'm still experiencing some rot, that should all disappear with the cooler temperatures and I can then return to more frequent watering with less rot worries.

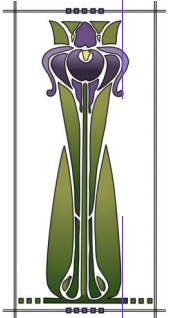
Our annual calendar is winding down with our potluck in November. It's a great time to socialize, eat too much of the always great food, and exchange seeds and plants. See you there.

I don't usually promote products, but as I've said before, I fertilize my iris with whatever is on sale (with a good phosphorus content). This is my current favorite - though not on sale, it is only \$0.63 per pound for 13-13-13 fertilizer: <https://www.lowes.com/pd/Sta-Green/5013295007>.

- Kevin Kartchner

Thanks for time to be together, turkey, talk, and tangy weather
H for harvest stored away, home, and hearth, and holiday
A for autumn's frosty art, and abundance in the heart
N for neighbors, and November, nice things, new things to remember
K for kitchen, kettles' croon, kith and kin expected soon
S for sizzles, sights, and sounds, and something special that abounds
 That spells **THANKS** for joy in living And a jolly good Thanksgiving.

- Aileen Fisher, *All in a Word*



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Upcoming Events

November 11: Potluck at Bonnie's house, noon. RSVP to tainsnewsletter@yahoo.com for address. Please bring a favorite food item to share. If you wish, bring extra seeds and plants to exchange

No meeting in December. Happy Holidays!

Save the Date: Fall Iris Conference in Prescott, October 12, 2024

Birthday Wishes to:

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



October Meeting Minutes



14 Oct 2023 - 15 members gathered at the Columbus-Eckstrom Library to view winning photos from this year's photo contest. See them on p. 6-8. Thank you to Kathleen Marron who tallied the votes this year. And to Cindy, who ran the meeting in her newly-elected capacity as Vice President. She reminded everyone about the potluck at Bonnie's on Nov 11 at noon. Please bring a favorite food to share with the group. We netted over \$4000 at our recent Rhizome Sale. Door prizes of 'Kiosk' iris were won by Terry (who declined since he had donated them), Jim, Sandy, and new member Leeann.

Terry asked if anyone else has had issues with rhizomes rotting or drying up, and a lively discussion and suggestions followed. Kristee advises watering in the evenings only. She runs her dripline into the bottom of her pots, since irises prefer "wet feet and damp knees." Soil around *newly-planted* rhizomes needs to be watered so that new roots can develop. Several people recommend moving pots into shade or using shade cloth for summer. Raised beds or rows were

suggested for drainage. Susan and Kristee plant rhizomes with their tops exposed, noting that some soil will cover them with time. Kristee brushes the dirt off the rhizomes on Valentine's Day when she fertilizes. A few people noted that irises which they thought were dead have sent up some new growth lately, to their delight. I recall Martin noting this in previous years.

We watched part of the latest AIS YouTube video, which is about *Oncocyclus* iris in Israel and surrounding areas. Thank you to Sam, who cued up the sound for the video on his phone. Since these are aril irises, each seed has an aril, which is a hook-like projection. Ants grab the seeds by the arils and move them about. A scientist positioned himself in front of one of the flowers for 24 hours to discover that male solitary bees spend the night inside the blooms because, it turns out, the flowers warm up quickly in the morning sun and the bees inside therefore warm up quickly and can get about their work early.

- Sue Clark, secretary

**OUR NEXT
IRIS SHOW
WILL BE
APRIL 20, 2024**



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

Notes from Iris Dig at TBG

7 Oct 2023 - Nine TAIS members helped Adam Ferrell-Wortman, TBG horticulturist, relocate the irises to their new location near the butterfly enclosure. Tucson Botanical Gardens graciously gave us many increases. Afterwards, Kevin potted 70 iris plants to sell at our show. Joyce set aside 21 to use as door prizes for upcoming meetings and she potted some NoldIDs to sell at our Show. We met Tony, of Tony's Magic Mix fertilizer, which is a favorite of Adam's.

Adam has purchased many irises with musical names over the years, and we arranged these in a flow of the 1950's through modern-day. He pointed out that the names encourage interaction between people and irises even when bloom season is over. Sam has compared flowers against nametags for the past few years to ensure that they match. These "confirmed" irises were moved after the musical ones, and then the empty areas were filled with irises without verified names (which are now all NoldIDs to my very great dismay).

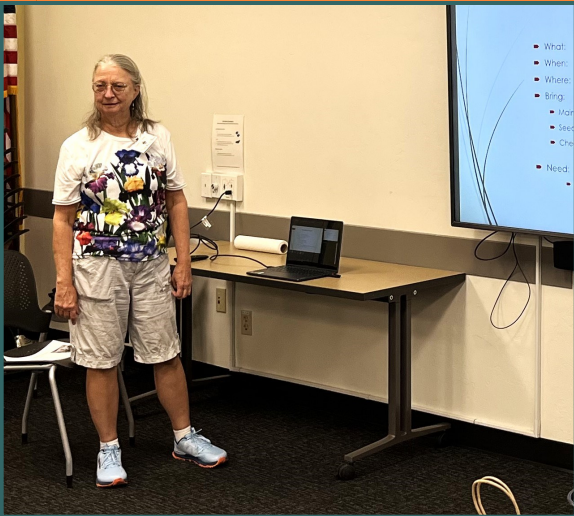
Thank you to the Dig team - Joyce and her husband Bob, Kevin, Cindy, Linda, Jim, Sam, Dave, and me. - SC



Iris Dig at TBG - photos by D. Smith (& a few by S. Clark)



October Meeting - photos by Dave Smith





Treasurer's Report for October - submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

Beginning checkbook balance (1 Oct 2023) 5912.33

SEP INCOME	THIS MO.	YEAR TO DATE
Dues-----	15.00-----	816.00
Plant Sales-----	65.00-----	6284.86
Show (plant sales) -----	0.00-----	425.16
Auction-----	0.00-----	0.00
Donation-----	70.00-----	70.00
Other-----	0.00-----	0.00
TOTAL-----	150.00-----	7596.02

OCT EXPENSES	THIS MO.	YEAR TO DATE
Program-----	0.00-----	0.00
Plant (etc) purchases-----	0.00-----	1559.73
Show--(misc)-----	0.00-----	362.90
Food, (etc)-----	13.81-----	398.68
Admin-----	0.00-----	642.70
Sale supplies-----	0.00-----	224.42
TOTAL-----	13.81-----	3188.43

Ending checkbook balance (31 Oct 2023) ---11,444.96
 Petty Cash-----+8.70
Net Worth-----11,453.66

1 JAN 2023 checkbook balance 7023.95
 31 Oct 2023 11,444.96
YTD CHANGE +4421.01

Tips for Photographing Butterflies

Take lots of pictures. Try Burst or Continuous modes if available on your camera. Delete photos later that don't measure up.

Start from farther away so as not to scare the butterfly. Zoom and/or crop later. Gradually move closer as possible.

Try Macro mode when you are close. Try Action mode to capture butterflies in flight.

Photograph in early morning when butterflies are warming up and their wings are open. In late afternoon, you may find resting butterflies and be able to photograph the undersides of their wings.

Be careful not to touch butterflies, since that would damage their fragile wings.

Source: [5 Essential Butterfly Photography Tips, Birds & Blooms](#)



Pollinator of the Month, Part VII - Butterflies

Like iris flowers, individual butterflies are not around for long. Depending on the species, butterflies live from a week to a year, long enough to sip nectar, eat some pollen, pollinate, mate, and lay eggs for the next generation. Perhaps it's this ephemeral nature that makes us love them so much. Well, that and their fluttering way of flying. Their name comes from the Old English words for *butter* and *fly*, and may relate to the bright yellow color of the male brimstone butterfly (photo at top right), or to the fact that butterflies appeared in the spring when grass was growing and butter was being made.

Moths developed around the time of the Triassic-Jurassic boundary, about 200 million years ago, and butterflies developed from moths. The oldest-known butterfly fossils are from the Paleocene and date to about 56 million years ago. The oldest American butterfly fossil dates to 34 million years. See engraving at right. Butterflies lay their eggs on a specific food plant. Their larvae - known as caterpillars - feed on this host plant until they form a pupae (chrysalis), and upon completion of their metamorphosis, an adult butterfly emerges. After its wings dry, it flies off. Adults sip nectar by means of a coiled tube called a proboscis. If you've ever played the game of Cootie, picture the Cootie's mouthpart. Many species also use their proboscis to eat pollen.

Butterflies and caterpillars may look harmless, but they possess some defensive strategies. Many sequester toxins from their food plant of choice and advertise the fact with bright colors. Others camouflage themselves as leaves or twigs. Some caterpillars have frightening eyespots, fake heads, or hairy bodies, while others resemble bird droppings.

Attract butterflies to your garden by providing plants for both them and their young. Many caterpillars eat **dill**, **parsley**, **asters**, or **milkweed**. Flowers for butterflies include **asters**, **coneflowers**, **allium**, **daylilies**, **lantana**, **zinnia**, **snapdragon**, **sweet alyssum**, **blanket flower**, **coreopsis**, **Gregg's mistflower**, **goldenrod**, **yarrow**, **sedum**, and **trumpet vine**. [Native species](#) are best. Types of milkweeds for us include **butterfly weed** (*Asclepias tuberosa*), **antelopehorns** (*A. asperula*), **rush** (*A. subulata*), and **Arizona** (*A. angustifolia*). Plant swaths of plants to attract butterflies flying over your yard. Work in some flowering shrubs and trees such as **cherry** or **plum**. Strive for at least three seasons of bloom, although it's easy for us to provide four blooming seasons here in the desert. Find a sunny spot and add a shallow basin filled with smooth rocks and water so the butterflies and bees can drink safely. I read that a bright yellow one works best. Most importantly, make your garden a refuge from pesticides.

Check out the butterfly gardens at Tucson Botanical Gardens and Boyce Thompson Arboretum. Our late member Diane Tweedy had a lovely butterfly garden. Plant one and think of her! - SC

Sources: [Butterfly - Wikipedia](#), <https://www.almanac.com/plants-attract-butterflies>, <https://www.almanac.com/building-pollinator-garden>, <https://www.birdsandblooms.com/gardening/attracting-butterflies/milkweed-guide/>, [Butterfly Anatomy: Everything You Need to Know - Birds and Blooms](#), [The Gardens - Boyce Thompson Arboretum \(btarboretum.org\)](#), [Attract Pipevine Swallowtail Butterflies to Your Garden - Birds and Blooms](#), [Home - Native Plants Finder \(nwf.org\)](#), [Shop here: Butterfly Habitat Scatter Garden Best Pollinator Garden for Butterflies - Etsy](#), [Bee & Butterfly Bath | Acorn \(acornonline.com\)](#)

From top: Male brimstone butterfly (by Charles J. Sharp), 34-million-year-old butterfly fossil from the Florissant Formation in Colorado (1887 engraving by Samuel H. Scudder) (both images via Wikipedia), monarchs on Gregg's mistflower ([Etsy](#)), pipevine swallowtail on thistle (Birds & Blooms)

Winning Entries: 6th-annual TAIS Photo Contest

Six individuals submitted 80 pictures in three categories this year: Single flower or stem (51 entries), Macro (10 entries), and Miscellaneous (19 entries). Winners were selected by popular vote via email and winning photos were featured during our October meeting. All prizes are Iris Bucks. Thank you to the 22 members who voted, Kathleen Marron for compiling the votes, and to our webmaster Tim Valenzuela for handling the submissions!



From left:



'Blutique' by D. Pavlovich



'Autumn Reising'
by Diane Pavlovich

Two-way tie



'War Chief' by Sue Clark

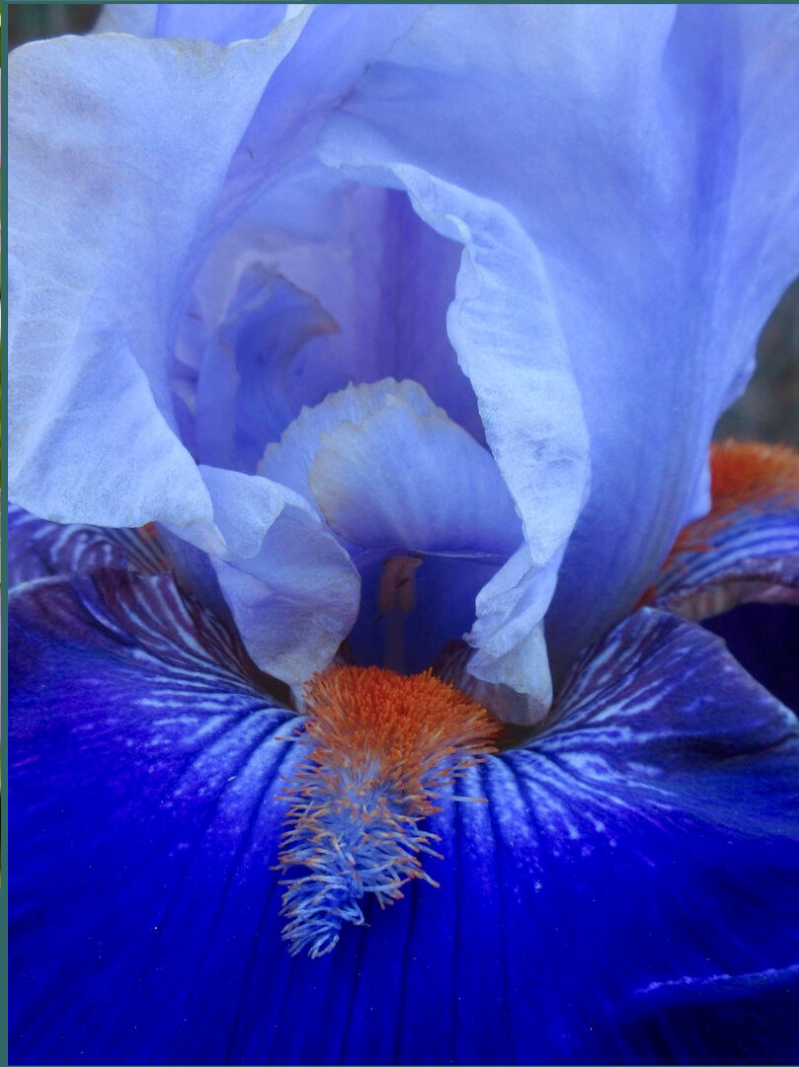


a Louisiana Iris at TBG
by Cindy Long



Flower category

Macro category



Clockwise from above:



'Hobnobbing' by Rebecca Hill

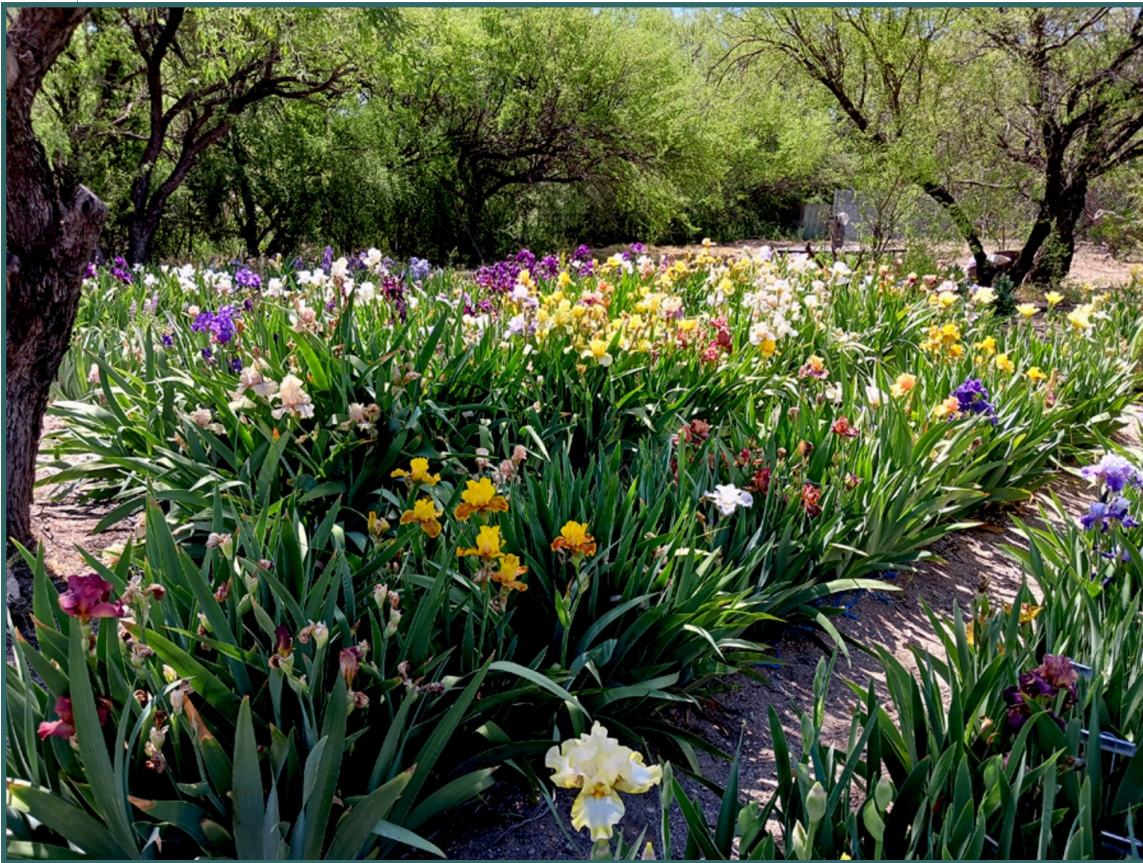
Two-way tie



NoID by Cindy Long



'Thornbird' by Dave Smith



**Kevin Kartchner's
Garden by D. Pavlovich**

Miscellaneous & Garden category



**Above: Another view of Kevin
Kartchner's Garden
by Rebecca Hill**



Two-way tie:

Pond at the Arboretum by Sue Clark



Artistic Entry at TAIS Show by Dave Smith

TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2024

Kevin Kartchner - President

Cindy Long - 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 November:

Make a label for each new iris - try these [metal plant markers](#). Use a label maker such as [DYMO LabelManager 160](#) or write on plant markers with a #2 pencil, china marker, or [paint marker](#). Monitor for fading monthly so you don't lose the names of your irises.

Move potted irises to sunny spots for the cool season. Consider adding fish emulsion every other week. 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](#), which also ships free, from Comanche Acres Iris Garden. When planting, put 1 T into the hole. For established irises, scratch fertilizer into the soil and then water it in. SC



Tip Exchange

Contact dermatitis? Several kinds of plants make me itchy: lantana, blackberry, and certain kinds of weeds. Last month, my mom gave me an excellent tip about how to stop this contact dermatitis instantly - by rubbing an ice cube over the affected area. Wow! - SC

Fertilize spuria irises with a blend of [6-24-24](#) from Comanche Acres Iris Gardens or with other fertilizer blends with low nitrogen, such as 5-10-10 or 6-12-12. - email newsletter from Jim Hedgecock, dated 28 Aug 2023

Limerick:

There once was a man named Otis
Whose favorite flower was lotus.
He was so fond
That he dug a big pond
And filled it with one hundred lotus.
- Sue Clark

Did You Know?

Although the soil in the iris beds at TBG had already been enriched with organic matter, Adam told us that he added the following to the iris' new beds: sand for drainage, green sand and crushed crab and lobster shell mix for nutrients and moisture retention without being too wet, and he uses biochar which has been charged by organic liquid fertilizer. He recommends adding an inch of soil over the rhizomes, a top dressing of [Tony's Magic Mix](#) fertilizer, and about an inch of mulch. Adam's other go-to fertilizer for irises is fish bone meal. Newly-planted rhizomes will receive water every other day and later this will taper off a bit. - my notes, 7 Oct 2023 - SC, verified by Adam ([Where to buy Tony's](#))



Iris aphylla

Source: Flora von Deutschland (1900-1906), by Sturm

"My road leads me, lures me west, east, south and north;
most roads lead men homewards, my road leads me forth."
- John Masefield, "Roadways"

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

The last of the five species that enriched the gene pool of garden irises of the late 1800's is *Iris aphylla*. The five wild species are all tetraploids (with four sets of 12 chromosomes), while the garden irises of the day, *I. variegata* and *I. pallida*, are diploids (with two sets of 12). The intent of blending the wild iris species into the mix was to enhance the size, heft, branching, and flowering of the garden irises (by adding extra chromosomes, although chromosomes were still unknown at the time). *I. aphylla* in particular is crossed with tall bearded irises to increase branching and bud count and to reduce the size of both plant and flower. Many of the crosses are classified as Miniature Tall Bearded.

I. aphylla, from the Greek for 'without leaf,' is native to central Europe from Germany to the Caucasus. It is a deciduous iris, with no leaves during winter. Registered by Linnaeus in 1753, this iris has many subspecies and forms. They all have short stems that branch below the halfway point. (Image above). Imagine your tall bearded irises without branched stems and with only one or two flowers at the top of that single stem and you'll know why the branching habit of *I. aphylla* is valued in hybridizing.

Besides branching, the other contribution of this species is its role in the eventual development of black irises. The species' flowers are small and light gray-blue to dark purple with bluish beards. According to Phil Edinger's article, only about three *aphylla* offspring entered the breeding pool: 'Crepuscule' (Verdier 1863), 'Blue Boy' (Foster 1913 - you probably knew Sir Michael had to be involved with this species, like all the others in this series of reports), and 'Harmony' (Dykes 1923). Robert Schreiner postulated that 'Crepuscule' was a parent of 'Souv. De Mme. Gaudichau' (Millet et fils 1914) because of the latter's saturated color, partially blue beards, and knobby increases - all signs of the species. 'Mme. Gaudichau' was considered one of the four finest irises in the world in 1928 per information from the AIS Iris Wiki. A few generations after crosses using 'Blue Boy' and 'Harmony,' Paul Cook's 'Sable' (1938) and 'Sable Night' (1950) and Robert Schreiner's 'Black Forest' (1945) led to darker and darker irises and eventually to black ones. - SC

Sources: "The Tall Bearded Iris, a Manufactured Marvel," by Phil Edinger in The Early Years - Supplement 1 of 4 to IRISES, *Iris aphylla* articles from: [Wikipedia](#), [Kew Gardens](#), and [AIS Iris Wiki](#)