

# TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 59th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



*Iris pseudacorus*

(yellow flag, very invasive)

Boyce Thompson Arboretum,  
Superior, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2023

## President's Message

Wow, it's March already and it's feeling like spring with all the fast growth on my iris. Our show is just around the corner. Come to our March meeting to share your show tips and learn from our local expert Pat Olsen how to prepare your winning entries. See you there. - Kevin Kartchner

*“The little white clouds are racing over the sky,  
And the fields are strewn with the gold of the flower  
of March, The daffodil breaks under foot, and the  
tassled larch sways and swings as the thrush goes  
hurrying by.” – Oscar Wilde, *Magdalen Walks**

## Upcoming Events

**Next meeting: March 9, 1 PM. Miller-Golf Links Library, 9640 E. Golf Links Road. TAIS member Pat Olsen will share tips & experiences about preparing blooms for an iris show. Learn how to make an iris transport device from PVC pipe à la Kevin**

**April 20: TAIS Iris Show, Trinity Presbyterian Church, 400 E. University Blvd. Entries accepted 6 AM to 9:30 AM. Judging begins at 10 AM. Free and open to the public from 1 PM to 4 PM. In conjunction with the show of the Tucson Rose Society. Click [here](#) for TAIS show schedule with all the details**

**April 20: [Region 15 Spring Trek](#), Riverside, California**

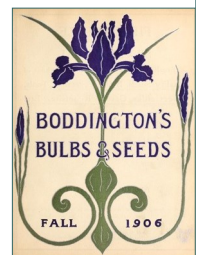
**May 11 meeting: 1 PM. TBG's Porter Hall. Kevin Kartchner on how to harvest, plant, and grow iris seeds**

## Birthday Wishes to:

**Kristee West    Martin Juarez    Sharm Gregoire  
Joyce Knill     Sandy Ellis     Kathy Smith  
Cindy Long     Jim Ganem     Linda Ammon**

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# February Meeting Minutes



10 February 2024 - Twenty-four members picked up tips for creating artistic floral displays for our upcoming iris show while watching Terry Swartz construct three such arrangements. Two were in the east-Asian style (low and high containers) and one a traditional western-style mass arrangement. Terry has been studying with the Ohara Ikebana group in Tucson for about ten years. His materials of choice for this demo were pine, which he said is typically featured in winter arrangements, white chrysanthemums, Dutch iris and some leafy branches similar to olive. He bought the foliage (except the pine) and the flowers at Trader Joe's.

Diane commented that what she learned last year was that wrapping iris buds with damp paper towels, refrigerating them, and removing them from fridge two days before the show worked well, and that geranium leaves were useful in her mass arrangement.

Sue learned that irises must dominate arrangements, that a mass arrangement should be much fuller than she had thought, and that fresh irises are crucial.

**General Meeting:** Dues are due - \$15/household. Kevin placed an order of 70 varieties with Sutton's Iris Gardens, partly for our sale and partly for individuals. Sam reported that Adam Ferrell-Wortman of TBG secured a grant from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust for TBG's iris beds. It is designated to be used mostly for aesthetics, but will include some expansion, especially in terms of iris species grown. More to come in an upcoming newsletter. Three irises were blooming in the beds there today. See p. 5. Door prizes of irises, gloves, & a vase were won by Dan, Jim, Diane, & LeeAnn. Nancy won one of Terry's arrangements. No Board Meeting this month. - Sue Clark, secretary

**CONSIDER  
ENTERING  
OUR SHOW**



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

## Tips for Artistic Arrangements

Consult [2024 show schedule](#) for specific details about each of the five possible arrangements

Containers should be plain and simple - no distracting designs. Find them at thrift shops, [Etsy](#), Michael's and other places

Use Oasis foam for mass arrangements since it holds water. Soak it for 24 hours before beginning. East Asian styles are built on a *kenzan* instead. It's a lead disk with numerous small spikes to hold and position foliage

Use foliage suitable to the season. Foliage is the star of the arrangement, rather than flowers, so place it first. A natural, windswept look is ideal

Flowers are to face upward toward the sun, signifying happiness. Use the most perfect bloom at the bottom center of a mass arrangement

NoIDs and purchased irises may be used in arrangements. You do not have to grow them or even know their names

Negative space is an essential design element. Materials are typically tilted from the vertical axis and should not touch each other

Odd numbers and clean lines are other essentials to remember

Imperfect items are valued for their *wabi sabi* factor and to signify the transient nature of life

- SC, from my notes

# February Meeting - photos by Dave Smith



## Treasurer's Report for February - submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

9411.35—Checkbook balance 1 Feb 2024

### INCOME

135.00—Dues

8.70—Petty Cash

143.70--TOTAL

### EXPENSES

0.00—Refreshments

0.00 —Rhizomes

0.00--- Web

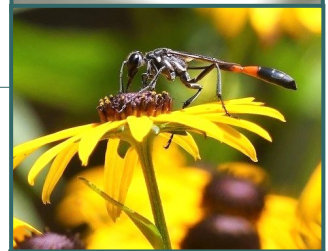
0.00-----Books

0.00--- --TOTAL

8462.62 CHECK BOOK BALANCE 28 FEB



Above: ant [pollinating a pipewort flower in Brazil](#) while snacking on pollen



## Pollinator of the Month, Part XI A: Incidental Pollinators

In our overview of various pollinators, we have examined several insects, a bird, and a mammal, including hover or syrphid flies, bumblebees and other native bees, honey bees, midges, butterflies and moths including hummingbird- and sphinx moths, hummingbirds, and bats. Besides these major pollinators, many other animals serve as incidental pollinators, and most of these are insects.

Certain types of **ants** are drawn to sweets - the kind of ants who come uninvited into kitchens. They are attracted to nectar for the same tasty reason. Their flowers of choice are often low-growing and inconspicuous, but also include dandelions, some euphorbias, and *Euonymus americanus* (Strawberry bush). There is even a name for this - *myrmecophily*, meaning 'love of ants,' which includes other ant-organism relationships besides pollination, such as providing nesting sites and protection from animals. The mutualistic relationship between ants and peonies falls into the latter category. Peony buds have external nectararies to attract and feed ants, who in turn protect the buds from damaging insects.

**Beetles** may have been the original pollinators of angiosperms or flowering plants. Their preferred flowers are open types with sexual parts exposed and typically possessing a fruity or foul odor. Some of these flowers produce heat internally so as to disperse their odors more effectively. Cycad cones also do this. Beetles pollinate magnolias, pawpaws, pipevines, sassafras, cycads, and waterlilies.

Some other insects that serve as incidental pollinators include wasps, other kinds of flies, and even mosquitos. **Wasps** eat nectar and disperse pollen in much the same ways that bees do. The thread-waisted wasp pollinating black-eyed Susans is one example. **Flies** are attracted to flowers that are dark maroon or red and smell fermented, earthy, or like rotting meat, such as those on a starfish cactus (*Stapelius grandiflora*), stinking trillium, or *Rafflesia* with its 39" blossom. The stinky blooms of my starfish cactus are covered with houseflies each September. **Mosquitos** eat nectar for much of their lives and pollinate flowers while they are doing it. Males only eat nectar, while females seek a blood meal solely when it's time to lay eggs. Some of their flowers of choice include lantana, asters, and the blunt-leaved orchid. - SC

Sources: [Myrmecophily - Wikipedia](#), [Ants. Unlikely Pollinators \(gardeningsoul.blogspot.com\)](#), [Ant pollination of Paepalanthus lundii \(Ericaulaceae\) in Brazilian savanna | Annals of Botany | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#) Myrmecophily - an overview | ScienceDirect Topics, [Ants on Peony Flowers: An Example of Biological Mutualism // Missouri Environment and Garden News Article // Integrated Pest Management. University of Missouri, davesgarden.com/guides/articles/beetles-and-their-role-in-pollination](#), [Thread-Waisted Wasp: Harmful or Helpful Insects? - Birds and Blooms, What Purpose do Mosquitoes Serve? - The National Wildlife Federation Blog \(nwf.org\)](#), [Flies as Pollinators | Garden Ecology Lab \(oregonstate.edu\)](#)

From top: pollen-dusted ant ([by Bob Peterson](#)), beetle pollinating magnolia ([Maryland Agronomy News](#)), thread-waisted wasp ([by Christine McClusky](#)), fungus gnats on trillium ([Oregon State](#)), and zebra mosquito pollinating lantana ([by 5248 Franco](#))



**Blooming at TBG  
on 10 Feb 2024**

Clockwise from top  
left: ['I'm Back,'](#) ['Old  
Blue Eyes,'](#) a bed of  
tulips, and ['Peggy  
Sue'](#) - SC



**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 March:**

**Maintenance:** Keep iris plants hydrated during this interval of rapid growth. Monitor with moisture meter. Check for aphids and other pests. Remove weeds and any debris. Replace faded labels, as names are required when showing irises.

**Organic care:** Feed with fish emulsion every other week and feather meal monthly. Dose with greensand for the spring. Apply humic acid as desired.

**Non-organic care:** Apply weekly or every other week: Scott’s [Super Bloom](#) (12-55-6), Miracle-Gro [Bloom Booster](#) (10-52-10), [Schultz Bloom Plus](#) 10-54-10), or Ferti-lome [Blooming & Rooting](#) (9-58-8). Mix as indicated on package. - SC



**Tip Exchange**

If your iris beds get too wet, dig a trench along the edges to drain them. If you find rot in any of your rhizomes, Jim Hedgecock of [Comanche Acres Iris Gardens](#) recommends scraping the rot out with a spoon, and if at least half of the rhizome is left, treating it with Comet cleanser. Leave the hole open for 2-3 weeks before re-covering the rhizome. If the rhizome is beyond saving, remove it along with 6” of dirt from all sides. Carefully dispose of all in the garbage. **Do not** compost any iris debris, especially rot. [Remember to sterilize your equipment with rubbing alcohol or diluted bleach. - SC] - Source: Comanche Acres e-newsletter of 10 Feb 2024

**Iris Limerick:**

I wish for a lovely green iris,  
As green as a piece of papyrus.  
I’d dance some wee jigs  
Then eat a few figs,  
And treasure my papyrus-green iris.  
- Sue Clark



Source: AIS Wiki

‘Dusky Challenger’

**Did You Know?**

Gothic gardens, or Goth gardens for short, are popular this year. Think of dramatic dark and moody foliage and black flowers. Some options are black pansies and roses, dark calla lilies, and [black hollyhocks](#) such as ‘Black Knight’ or ‘Watchman.’ Some deeply-colored forms of coleus and dark red sunflowers such as [ProCut Red](#) or [Chocolate Cherry](#) would fit in well, as would [Chocolate cosmos](#). And of course, we would want to feature black and dark purple irises! For foliage plants, try black mondo grass, black elephant ears, black heucheras such as Forever Midnight, and dark-colored ornamental grasses. Add some wrought iron furniture, moss-covered rocks, and perhaps an urn and a gargoyle or two. - SC Source: BH&G [email of 3 Feb 2024](#)

**“It is spring again. The Earth is like a child that knows poems by heart.” – Rainer Maria Rilke**



**A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History**

The Schreiner family is celebrating 99 years in the iris business this year. Their founder, Francis Xavier (known as F. X.) Schreiner, met John C. Wister in 1920 while on a business trip. They talked of iris, and F. X. rapidly became an avid collector. He began importing irises from Europe and soon had over 500 varieties. His children were also hooked. In 1925, he published the first price list for [Schreiner’s Iris Gardens](#). A black and white catalog without pictures followed three years later. Before his death in 1931, F. X. urged his children to move the family business from Minnesota to someplace more hospitable. So Bob, Connie, and Gus studied USDA yearbooks and sent irises to various locations to test growing conditions. They decided on the Willamette Valley of Oregon and settled on 15 acres just north of Salem in 1947. Their first color catalog appeared that year. Connie managed the office, Bob wrote the catalogs and helped with breeding, while Gus hybridized and managed the digging & shipping crews.

In the 1970’s, national nurseries began ordering huge numbers of irises from Schreiners. Plots grew to 50 acres, then 100, then 200. The third generation entered the enterprise during the 1980’s, with Bob’s son David at the helm of the business and the catalog. His brother-in-law, Tom Abrego, served as comptroller, and Gus’ sons Ray and Steve joined. Ray was the hybridizer and ran the crews, and Steve took the photos for the catalog and oversaw fulfillment. Their sister Liz and her husband Leonard Schmidt joined in the 1990’s, with Liz managing the office and Leonard as general maintenance. In 2016, Ray’s son Ben was the first of the fourth generation to enter the family business. David, Tom, and most recently Steve have retired. Like all successful businesses, Schreiners has adapted through the years. With the rise of internet sales, they’ve reduced their printed catalogs from three to one per year, and with more mechanized planting allowing more densely-planted fields, they’re back to 100 acres - and a 10-acre display garden on their original 15-acre plot. They’ve won 11 Dykes medals through the years, including one for ‘[Dusky Challenger](#)’ (1986) which has dominated AIS’ annual popularity list for 25 years! - SC

Source: “The Schreiner Iris Garden Story” by Liz Schmidt, Steve, & Ben Schreiner, in The American Iris Society, 100 Years Bold!, The Early Years, Supplement 1 of 4, 2020; 2024 Schreiner’s catalog; AIS Wiki

**The Tucson Area  
Iris Society  
and the  
Rose Society of  
Tucson  
will combine for  
a fabulous spring  
flower show  
Sat., April 20, 2024**



**At Trinity Presbyterian  
Church  
400 E University Blvd.  
Open to the Public  
1-4 p.m.  
Free Admission  
Free parking behind  
church**

**Potted iris, rose plants  
and bouquets for sale**