



November 2024

# TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 59th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



**'Clown Around'**  
(Christopherson, 2003)

Marcusen Sculpture Gardens,  
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2024

## President's Message

At long last, I think our eternal summer has come to an end. I thoroughly enjoyed Dr. Walworth's fertilizer presentation at our October meeting. I gained a whole new perspective on how plant nutrients function and how fertilizers act. I also learned how our desert soils and water interact with plant nutrients, as well as symptoms and solutions to nutrient problems. For Jim's presentation and informative notes, it's on our website: <https://www.tucsoniris.org/articles>.

November is food month, yes? In addition to great food and company at the TAIS potluck, we also exchange plants, seeds, and experiences. RSVP and then bring it all to our gathering on November 16th. See you soon. - Kevin Kartchner

*"The wind that makes music in November corn is in a hurry. The stalks hum, the loose husks whisk skyward in half-playing swirls, and the wind hurries on.... A tree tries to argue, bare limbs waving, but there is no detaining the wind."*

- Aldo Leopold



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## Upcoming Events

Potluck: November 16, Noon, Bonnie's house. Bring food to share & any excess seeds and plants to exchange. Important: RSVP to [TAISnewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:TAISnewsletter@yahoo.com) for the address and to ensure a seat!

Happy Holidays! No meeting in December. Newsletter will continue

Looking ahead: 2025 will be TAIS' 60th-anniversary year! Think about ways that we can celebrate and honor this milestone

2025 schedule: TBA

### Birthday Wishes to:

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



*Happy Thanksgiving*



# October Meeting Minutes



Our October 12 meeting was called to order by President Kevin Kartchner at the Ekstrom-Columbus Library. We welcomed new member Suzanne Irving to our club.

There are a few changes to our board for 2025: Pat Olsen and Sally Vega, Programs and Places, and Diane Pavlovich, Publicity.

The rhizome sale resulted in over \$3,000 in profit. We started with more than 2,000 rhizomes for sale and many, many landscape irises. The remaining named iris were sent home with club members to grow for our 2025 show and sales, and the remaining landscape irises were donated to Harlow's in appreciation for allowing us to hold our event on their property. Metal plant labels were available after our meeting at a special price of \$1 each. Thank you again to all members who donated time and/or rhizomes for this fund-raising event.

The results for the 2024 iris photo contest are in! 110 pictures were submitted for voting. Iris bucks were awarded for our winners. See them on p. 6-8.

A discussion was held regarding the TAIS label maker, which Kathy Windischman has located. It was suggested that the label maker be available as a 'check out' item from our library. Members would need to provide their own labeling tape.

In 2025, our club will celebrate 60 years of existence! We would like to form a committee to research ideas for this celebration, but a committee chair did not volunteer. It would be best if ideas could be presented to our club at the January 2025 meeting, as some are time sensitive.

On April 19, 2025 our iris show/sale will be held in conjunction with the Tucson Rose Society. Please remember to grow out those nubbins in 1-gallon pots which we can

then present for sale at the show. Terry Swartz is our Chairperson for this event and will present more information at the January meeting.

Terry announced that Margie Valenzuela has additional iris that she will donate to our club members. Interested members should contact Terry or Kevin for more information.

Our next meeting will be a potluck lunch held at Bonnie Else's home on November 16 at noon. Please bring a side dish or dessert to share. Bonnie will provide the main course (turkey as of now). This is a meeting where seeds or plants are exchanged. Bonnie would appreciate an RSVP to [TAISNewsletter@yahoo.com](mailto:TAISNewsletter@yahoo.com). Directions will be provided at that time.

Iris door prize winners were Taffy Holvenstot and Kathleen Marron and our new member Suzanne won an attractive iris-themed lamp.

Our speaker, Dr. Jim Walworth from the University of Arizona, specializes in management of nutrients, salts, and water in our Tucson area soil. He presented a very informational PowerPoint program to club members. It was followed by many questions and answers. If you missed the presentation, a [pdf version](#) of it is posted to our web site. Thank you Dr. Walworth!

No board meeting this month.  
- Joyce Knill, substitute secretary



See some of Dr. Walworth's tips on p. 4. More next month. - SC

**Do you have any  
ideas for our 60th  
anniversary year?**



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

## Region 15 Fall Trek by Lois Shoaf



These pictures are from the Region 15 Fall Trek on 10-12-24 sponsored by the Prescott Area Iris Society (PAIS) in Prescott, AZ. The Speaker/Judges trainer was hybridizer Rick Tasco from Superstition Iris Gardens in Catheys Valley, CA. His topics were arils and arilbreds. The meeting was chaired by Region 15 VP, Beth Train. TAIS attendees (that I know of) were Kathy Chilton, Pat Olsen, Leeann Shoaf, and Lois Shoaf.

They held a silent auction of potted irises and a few miscellaneous items, along with a raffle of various donated items including a box of chocolates, iris-themed books, puzzles, jewelry, pillows, shirts, gift baskets, etc. Many door prizes were also given away. We came away with lots of cool freebies and a couple of new iris babies to add to our garden.

The event was well-planned and coordinated by the members of PAIS – Thank You PAIS! It was a fun, enjoyable day of information, socializing with other Iris lovers, and being up in the cooler weather in Prescott.

We also received a “KUDOS” to Sue for our newsletter. They commented that they thought it was one of the **best newsletters** in the Region and specifically gave a BIG thank you to Sue for her great work in publishing it monthly. **“WAY TO GO SUE!”** - LS

*Thank you to all for the gracious compliment! - SC*

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

<u>OCT 2024</u>	<u>YTD</u>
<b><u>DUES</u></b>	
<b>INC</b>	+740.00 TOTAL YEARLY INC FROM DUES
<b>EXP</b>	-13.60 postage
29.37 turkey	-65.37 refreshments
	- 500.00 web
	-213.41 books
	-45.00 AIS
	-120.00 region 15
9.48 snacks	- 34.38 snacks
	-991.76 TOTAL EXP FROM DUES <b><u>-251.76 ACT BALANCE</u></b>

<b><u>SHOW</u></b>	
<b>INC</b>	539.27 square sales
	<u>795.00</u> cash sales
	1334.27
<b>EXP</b>	<u>441.02</u> ROSE SOC
	480.16 TOTAL SHOW expenses <b><u>854.11 ACT BALANCE</u></b>

<b><u>SALE</u></b>	
<b>INC</b>	+6353.67 rhizomes
40.00 rhizomes	
20.00 plant tags	
<b>EXP</b>	-3679.78 rhizomes
	-22.28 printing
	-17.92 ID material
17.92 ID material	-3719.98 TOTAL SALE EXPENSES <b><u>2633.69 ACT BALANCE</u></b>

<b><u>AUCTION</u></b>	
<b>INC</b>	1242.00
<b>EXP</b>	0.00
	<b><u>1242.00 ACT BALANCE</u></b>

**CHECKBOOK BALANCE 31 OCT 2024 \$15,052.77**

### Some Tips from Dr. Walworth's Fertilizing Presentation

Our club learned how to identify Nitrogen and Iron deficiencies in early and older leaves and how to manage salt build up in both pots and in-ground. Dr. Walworth stressed the importance of [chelated](#) forms of minerals (Iron, Zinc, Manganese). Many members use a water soluble fertilizer such as Miracle-Gro, which Mr. Walworth endorsed but also spoke at length about pelleted fertilizers such as Osmocote, which will disperse Nitrogen over a greater length of time, a very beneficial aspect.

It is important to apply Phosphate (Super Phosphate is good) to the root area of any plant, as Phosphates do not travel. Nitrogen, on the other hand, can be applied away from the base of the plant, as it will travel with moisture and time. He mentioned that Triple Super Phosphate is only about twice as strong as Super Phosphate. (cont. at top of next column)

### Dr. Walworth's Tips, cont.

He stressed that when your iris show signs of growth, it is time to begin fertilizing. For all of us who purchased iris at the September sale, you may be seeing new growth. This would be an excellent time to begin fertilizing.

Salts will make soil water less available to your plants. Thus, it is important to regularly flush your soil, whether in ground or in pots, to leach the salts from the root zone.

An interesting point he made was the importance of adding compost or manure to our soil, even potting soil. We club members have applied Phosphate at a higher percentage to encourage flower buds. Dr. Walworth pointed to a recent iris study indicating that Nitrogen, applied often, was far more beneficial than we originally thought.

Please review the [PowerPoint](#) slides, as the commentary is quite explanatory. - JK

Because our water is alkaline, it will gradually raise the pH of our soil. Dosing with soil sulphur must be repeated from time to time because of this and because any remaining calcium carbonate (caliche) will dissolve and raise the pH. - SC

More of Dr. Walworth's tips next month...

## Beneficial Insects, Part VI: Praying Mantis

Praying mantises are debatable as beneficial insects because they are indiscriminate predators that do not specialize in a single pest and they do not multiply rapidly in response to an increase in prey. Most of the insects featured in this column also have a varied diet, so the praying mantises get to have their own feature article here, too.

Mantises are thought to have evolved from cockroach-like ancestors and have been found in amber and rocks dating to the early Cretaceous period (about 145 million years ago).

There are four similar-looking mantid species in the United States. Only the Carolina and California mantises are native, though. The Chinese mantis was accidentally introduced by a nursery worker near Philadelphia in 1896. The European mantis was introduced to help control the gypsy moth (which has been renamed the spongy moth). Both of the non-native species have spread widely throughout the US and Canada, where they often outcompete the native mantises for food. Chinese mantises are green and brown, slender, and about 5" in length. European mantises are a brighter green with a bullseye marking under their forelegs and are typically 4" long. Compare this to the native Carolina mantis, which is green to dusty brown to gray and about 3" long. It ranges from NY and Indiana to Brazil. The native California mantis is about 2-3" long. It can be green, yellow, or brown, with purplish wings, orangish forelegs, and black spots near its mouth. Its range has expanded north to Idaho, east to Texas, and south into Mexico.

With their elongated and spiny front legs, large compound eyes, and the ability to rotate their head 180°, mantises are fearsome ambush predators. Prey includes grasshoppers, crickets, cockroaches, spiders, butterflies, caterpillars, and even small reptiles, amphibians, and hummingbirds. They perch in a plant or on the ground and wait for prey to pass by. Their color can even change to match their surroundings, and they might sway to mimic movement caused by wind. Some actively stalk their prey. Once I saw a praying mantis hanging on the side of one of the basins in our fountain. I sent a picture of it to my sister, who asked if I thought it was hunting my hummingbirds? Well, I had *not* thought of that, but I certainly did then! It was perched just out of sight of any bird that came to drink or bathe at the fountain. So I picked it up and relocated it across the yard.

In the fall, mantises lay eggs and then cover them in a foamy substance which hardens to a rigid foam. The nymphs emerge from this egg mass, called a *ootheca*, usually in the spring and pass through about 10 instars or stages before becoming adults. Egg masses are typically found on twigs, plant stems, or fence posts. The shape of the egg mass varies with the species that laid it. Carolina mantises have a distinctive oval ootheca with brown and tan stripes. Chinese mantises create a straw-colored round-to-cube-shaped foamy-looking ootheca, while the European mantises create an oval ootheca that is solid light brown in color - no stripes. The Brandywine Conservancy article goes as far as saying to destroy the egg masses of the two non-native species to give the native Carolina mantises a chance to survive. They recommend crushing them, submerging them in water, or feeding them to chickens. My mom often finds the ootheca of the Chinese mantises in her flower beds as she is trimming. She ties the cut stem of their egg mass onto another stem in a safe place for the winter. She was not happy when she heard about them being invasive. They are getting fed to my sister's chickens from now on. I think the ones we see in our yard in Chandler are possibly the European kind since they are fairly bright green. Many of the babies I see are about 3/4" long and are white, which I read is a temporary color after molting. - SC

Sources: [Beneficial Insects: Meet the Beneficial Bugs in Your Garden \(with Pictures\) | The Old Farmer's Almanac](#), Wikipedia: [Mantis](#), [Chinese mantis](#), [European mantis](#), and [Stagmomantis californica](#); [The Invasive Mantis Species](#) article; bugguide.net: [image](#), [image](#), and [post](#), South Carolina Encyclopedia: [Carolina Mantis](#) article



From top: Carolina, Chinese, European, and California mantis (images 1-3 from Brandywine Conservancy, 4 from bugguide.net); ootheca (egg mass) of the Carolina mantis (Brandywine Conservancy); ootheca of the California mantis. (bugguide.net). These are the egg masses of the good guys, the native mantises. Do not feed these ones to chickens!

## Winning Entries: 7th-annual TAIS Photo Contest

Eleven individuals submitted 110 pictures in three categories this year: Single flower or stem (63 entries), Macro (24 entries), and Miscellaneous (23 entries). Winners were selected by popular vote via email and the winning photos were featured during our October meeting. All prizes are Iris Bucks. Thank you to the 18 members who voted and to our webmaster Tim Valenzuela for handling the submissions!



### Three-way Tie

Left: *Iris pseudacorus* in Pond by Sue Clark

Center: 'Bottle Rocket' by Diane Pavlovich

Right: 'Dignified' by Pat Olsen



Flower Category

## Winning Photos - Macro Category



Above Left: Spuria NoID by Sue Clark



Above Right: NoID by Kevin Kartchner



Bottom Right: 'Rustling Devil' by  
Sue Clark

## Winning Photos - Miscellaneous Category



Left: 'Naturally Sweet' with bumblebee visitor by Sue Clark



Center: 'Making a Splash,' Marcusen Sculpture Garden by Dave Smith



Bottom: 'Alabaster Unicorn' by Kevin Kartchner





**TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2025****Kevin Kartchner - President****Cindy Long - Vice President****Sue Clark – Secretary, Signatory on Account****Jim Wilcoxon – Treasurer, Asst. Secretary****Pat Olsen & Sally Vega - Programs & Places****Diane Pavlovich - 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](#) or buy PawPaw ones from Kevin at \$1 each. Use a label maker such as [DYMO LabelManager 160](#) or write on plant markers with a #2 pencil, china marker, or [paint marker](#). **DO NOT use Sharpie** - it will fade. Monitor for fading monthly so you don't lose iris names.

Move potted irises to sunny spots for the cool season.

**Organic care:** Add fish emulsion every other week. Mix as on package. Add the fall dose of green sand (1 T) and bone meal (1 T) (the latter is not for Japanese irises!) Humic acid improves soil texture. Apply anytime.

**Non-organic care:** 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**

Results of my summer experiment: I put my thirteen 1-, 2-, and 3-gallon pots of irises up off the hot ground on top of soil in 5-gallon pots. There were two survivors: 'Double Ringer' (1.5 gallon pot) and a NoID (1 gallon pot). 'Ozark Mountain Rebounder' (3 gallon pot), 'Mesmerizer' in 2-gallon pot, and 'Alabaster Unicorn' (3 gallon) died in late September or early October. I added shade cloth in late July for further protection. I will do it earlier next year. And water more to flush salts. - SC

**Haiku**

**Cool weather blew in.  
The people were delighted  
And hurried outdoors.**

- Sue Clark

**Did You Know?**

There are many ornamental grasses and grasslike plants to choose from for the garden. Their graceful presence is a highlight throughout the year and their texture a strong foil to the architectural lines of irises and other plants. Some good ones for us include [pink muhly grass](#), [purple fountain grass](#) (not invasive like the green one), [deer grass](#), [blue grama](#), [sideoats grama](#), [bamboo muhly](#), [creeping lily turf](#), [black mondo grass](#), [lemongrass](#) (which may be used for cooking), and [zebra grass](#). Sources: Birds & Blooms [article](#) and an email response from Joyce Knill, MG



AB 'Elmohr'

Source: AIS Wiki

*The soft November days are here, The aftermath of blossom's year.*

~ Sara Louisa Oberholzer, American poet (1841-1930)

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

This month, we are featuring another medical doctor who hybridized irises. Phillip A. Loomis graduated in 1904 from Rush Medical College in his hometown of Chicago. Recently diagnosed with tuberculosis, he headed to Colorado for its curative fresh, dry air and sunshine. Not sure that he would like it, he bought a round-trip ticket. Phillip spent as much time as possible outdoors and was cured within several months. He decided to stay, setting up his medical practice in Colorado Springs and starting a family there. Dr. Loomis is noted as a "pioneer western heart specialist and he installed the first electrocardiograph machine west of the Mississippi."

It was in 1912 that Dr. Loomis turned his hand to breeding irises and he enjoyed it so much that he continued with it for the next 50 years. Touring his garden was a treat for many people. His first introduction was '[Blue Velvet](#)' in 1929. He noticed a pink bud in his iris beds in 1931, and named it '[Seashell](#).' It was the first clear true pink iris. This major breakthrough in breeding pink irises caused quite a stir at the 1933-34 World's Fair in Chicago. More than one visitor to the display garden there was heard to exclaim that "Irises don't come in that color!" In 1937, his rosy pink blend, '[Morocco Rose](#),' advanced the color class even farther. Dave Hall used it extensively to create the first true pinks with tangerine beards in 1942.

Dr. Loomis did not confine his breeding efforts to pink irises, though. His large-flowered white iris, '[Spanish Peaks](#)' (1947), went on to parent two Dykes-winners by other breeders: '[First Violet](#)' (1952) and '[Swan Ballet](#)' (1955). He won a Dykes Medal in his own right in 1945 with '[Elmohr](#)' (1942). This large-flowered red-violet arilbred was the result of a long-term hybridizing effort. The rule had been recently changed to allow non-tall-bearded to win the coveted Dykes Medal. Dr. Loomis died in 1969 at age 94. The other half of his original round-trip ticket transported his body back to Chicago for burial. His test gardens in Colorado Springs survive and they showcase new irises from around the world. - SC

Source: "Phillip A. Loomis: "Irises don't come in that color..." by Anne Lowe in *AIS 100 Years Bold*, Supplement 2 of 4 to *IRISES: the Bulletin of AIS*, 2020