

August 2025

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 60th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Artistic Web'
(Tasco, 2010)

Marcusen Sculpture Gardens,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2025

President's Message

Going, going, gone! It's time to add some of the latest and greatest beauties to your iris garden. August is our annual members-only auction, this year featuring rhizomes from Mid-America Garden. We'll soon have the list available so you can plan your bidding strategies.

I'm always trying to optimize my monsoon watering schedule. How long should I wait after a "good" rain before watering? Less is probably better during an active monsoon. Check your soil moisture (a finger works) and let things dry out for a few days after that "good" rain to minimize rhizome rot this time of year.

- Kevin Kartchner

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"Buttercup nodded and said good-bye,
Clover and daisy went off together,
But the fragrant water lilies lie
Yet moored in the golden August weather."

- Celia Thaxter (1835-1894)

Upcoming Events

August 9: 1 PM, Tucson Botanical Gardens. TAIS Rhizome Auction, one of our few members-only events

September 13: 9 AM to Noon. TAIS Rhizome Sale at Harlow's Gardens nursery, 5620 E Pima St. Set up Sept 12. Members early-bird discount hour 8 to 9 AM

Late Sept. - October: TAIS Annual Photo Contest. Details TBA

October 18: Region 15 Fall Meeting: [link](#)

Birthday Wishes to:

Kathleen Marron

Pat Olsen

Diane Pavlovich

Lois Shoaf

Juliet Westbrook

Rose Clark



Iris bulbosa

Source: Iris, Daniel Raben, Theatrum Florae,
c. 1623-27, Plate 43

TAIS Tour: Joyce's Garden - photos by Barbara & Joyce



TAIS Tour: Kevin's Garden - photos by Barbara & Kevin



KK



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Treasurer's Report for July submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

BEGINNING BALANCE:	10,878.11
Income: dues	45.00
Expenses: rent Tohono Chul for Trek	696.87
Ending balance:	10,226.27

Corrections: Last month, I mistakenly reported that Anna Cadd's garden was Bee Haven Garden. It is actually [Beehive Garden](#), exactly as Joyce had written in her notes. Margie Valenzuela's red iris on the front page was mislabeled. It should say 'My Little Wagon' rather than 'My Red Wagon.' - SC

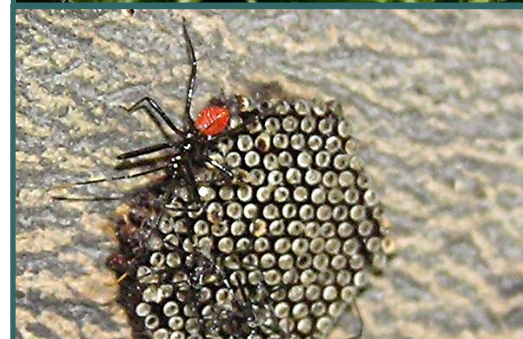
Beneficial Insects, Part IX: Wheel Bugs

At 1 1/2" long, wheel bugs are a top predator in the insect world. For this variety of assassin bug, the cogwheel-shaped crest on their back gives them their name and serves as a type of armor. Their gray-brown bodies are shield-shaped and their heads sport long curved antennae and a beak-like proboscis that houses their piercing and sucking mouthparts. They jab these into their prey and inject toxic saliva which liquifies the insides of the victim, which they then suck out. Some of the wheel bug's favorite meals include: aphids, Japanese beetles, tent caterpillars, caterpillars of cabbage white butterflies, brown marmorated stink bugs (an invasive species which other bugs decline to eat), and many other insects. No wonder they are considered beneficial garden visitors! Don't mess with these bugs if you happen to see them in your Arizona garden (or anywhere-else garden). They don't bite, but they can stab you with the afore-mentioned proboscis and inject their toxic saliva. The associated pain and numbness can last for months, but is not life-threatening.

Wheel bugs are found across much of the United States. After being most active during the summer, their eggs overwinter and their nymphs hatch out in the spring. These resemble spiders, but have six legs. They are often red and go through five molts before reaching adulthood. Their crest appears only upon the final molt. Wheel bugs make a chirping sound by rubbing their proboscis against their bodies. They have scent glands and can release a pungent odor if disturbed.

Organic gardeners are known to rejoice at the presence of wheel bugs in their gardens, since these apex-level predators (think lions or eagles) indicate a healthy and pesticide-free ecosystem, with all levels of food webs intact. One downside is that wheel bugs will eat helpful insects such as ladybugs and honeybees. - SC

Sources: [A Wheel Bug is Harmless to Plants, but Ouch! Watch Out!](#); Wikipedia article: [Arilus cristatus](#); [So, Just What is a Wheel Bug?](#)



From top: Wheel bug (Source 1), wheel bug in profile showing the cog-like disk on its back (Source 3), wheel bug hunting in a sunflower (Source 1), and a spider-like wheel bug larva near the egg mass from which it hatched (Source 2: [by Trakkerog](#))



Seedlings at the AIS Convention - photos by Joyce Knill



Seedlings at the AIS Convention - photos by Joyce Knill



More Highlights from the 2025 AIS Convention by Joyce Knill

Thursday, Friday, and Saturday were devoted to tours of 7 gardens, each one different from the others. Evenings included banquets, live iris auctions, a silent auction, and more seminars! Thursday evening featured a panel discussion with Rick Tasco, Lynda Miller and Thomas Johnson. Each hybridizer had tips when growing iris and hybridizing. One topic was 'Scorch' which has been around for 30 years. Found in the Midwest, East coast, and in Billings, it is a bacterial infection caused by a sucking insect such as a leaf hopper. The pathogen, which appears to only affect bearded iris, is found in the plant, not in the soil. The tip of the leaf will turn yellow, the base brown, and within 3 days the entire plant will be brown and dead. We saw these stages in several gardens on our tours and the hundreds of plant labels removed from destroyed rhizomes!

Friday and Saturday evening sessions were devoted to LA iris. We saw before- and after pictures of the bogs in Louisiana after hurricanes passed through and the work the LA Iris Conservation Initiative has been doing. Howie Dash will be introducing seedlings in 2026. Heather Pryor from Australia presented her program "The Australian Style" to a packed room. She explained how the hybridizing in Australia is having an effect on LA iris worldwide. Her goal was to produce an orange iris and it went on from there: shorter stems, broken color, rebloomers and increasing bud count. Her PowerPoint presentation was beautiful, but considering the very long day, age of

attendees, and the very late hour, she joked that she was unable to keep the crowd awake.

All attendees were asked to vote for their favorite iris from the gardens.

And the Winners are:

President's Cup (hybridized from the host Region 11)

1. [Mama Quel](#)
2. [Cowboy Coffee](#)

Franklin Cook Memorial (our overall favorite iris)

1. [Ignite the Light](#)
2. [Gotham](#) (Rebloomer)

Ben Hager Cup (Median iris)

1. [Crazy Chaos](#)
2. [My Gal](#)

Zurbrigg-Clarence Mahan Award (seedling)

1. seedling by Mitch Jameson
2. seedling by Gary Slagle

Favorite Private Garden Award: Cynthia St. Charles, who appears below between Bonnie and Joyce



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 - Hospitality****Bonnie Else & Susan Schaefer - Door Prizes****Taffy Holvenstot - Membership****Dave Smith - Photographer****Sue Clark - Newsletter****What to do in the Iris Garden during August:**

Maintenance: Be sure irises receive afternoon shade. Monitor soil with moisture meter and water irises when it reads close to dry. Continue checking for aphids and other pests. Remove pests, weeds, and debris. Replace faded labels ASAP so you don't lose the names of your irises. Remove spent stems if you have not done so already. They can be a disease- and pest vector. If grass has invaded your beds, try spraying it with [Grass-B-Gon](#), which should not harm the irises, but apply it with caution. Saturating the grass in full sun works best, and it may take a few applications before the grass is destroyed.

Organic care: Feed with fish emulsion every other week and with feather meal and alfalfa meal (or pellets) monthly. Apply humic acid as desired.

Non-Organic care: No fertilizer required till fall. Continue watering reblooming irises. - SC

**Tip Exchange**

Go out on a limb and try something new and different! Terry was told that he shouldn't be able to grow Japanese Irises in Tucson, but he had already been growing them well for years! Try a type you have not grown before. These grow successfully in the area - tall bearded, miniature TB, intermediate bearded, border bearded, miniature dwarf bearded, standard dwarf bearded, arilbred, spuria, Louisiana, Dutch, Japanese, *Iris albicans*, *I. unguicularis* (Winter iris), and *Moraea* iris, an iris cousin which blooms for three to four months. - SC

Iris Limerick

There once was a man named Tom,
With irises, he was The Bomb.

He grew so many,
Used up every penny,
That wonderful man named Tom.

- Sue Clark

Did You Know?

Arizona has more species of hummingbirds than any other state in

the country. Of the 12-17 species seen in Arizona, most are found in southeastern part of the state, including Tucson, Ramsey Canyon, and Madera Canyon.

If you have ever wondered how hummingbirds find feeders, even years later, it's because they have exceptional spatial memory due the hippocampus portion of their brain being large. This region is responsible for learning, memory, and spatial navigation. Source: *Desert Leaf* magazine, v. 38, no. 4, April 2025



JI 'Flashing Koi'

Source: photo by Jeff Bennett via AIS Iris Wiki

"The English winter, ending in July To recommence in August." - Lord Byron

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Walter and Louise Marx of Boring, Oregon continued the work with Japanese irises after becoming iris fans in the 1930's. Walter ordered a collection of these irises from Japan in 1937. His hybridizing efforts soon focused on the Higo type of Japanese iris. Walter called his seedlings the Marhigo strain, and began selling them in 1953. By the late 1960's, he offered over 100 varieties of Marhigos. Several more varieties were introduced by Louise Marx during this interval. The catalogs of the Walter Marx Nursery, with their full-color photos, were a key factor in popularizing Japanese irises during the 1950's and 1960's. A few of the most popular varieties include '[Flashing Koi](#),' '[Peacock Dance](#),' and '[Frosted Pyramid](#).' Many Marhigos are still grown and loved in gardens around the world.

By the late 1970's, circumstances and ill health conspired to cause the demise of the garden and the hybridizing program. After Walter's death in 1978, Alan and Dorothy Rogers from nearby Sherwood, Oregon took over most of the Marhigo program from Louise. Some went to a few other growers. The Rogers had been friends of the couple and had learned how to hybridize from them. During the 1980's, the Rogers introduced ten of Walter Marx's seedlings and Melrose Gardens of Stockton, California introduced four more. - SC

Source: [The Japanese Iris](#), 1990, by Currier McEwen, published by University Press of New England for the Brandeis University Press, © by the Japanese Iris Society; AIS Iris Wiki for the links and photo

The Tucson Area Iris Society Presents
2025 Rhizome Sale



Saturday, September 13, 2025
9 a.m. to noon

at Harlow's Garden Center
5620 E. Pima St.

Come early for best selection.

Whether you're new to iris planting or need a refresher, join TAIS at the demonstration table for interactive sessions at 9:30 & 10. Participation is limited to the first 50 guests who will take home their planted complimentary iris.