

August 2026

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 61st year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Neon Cowboy'
(Bradshaw, 1996)

Marcusen Sculpture Gardens,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2025

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President's Message

Going, going, gone again. Improvements to iris varieties, colors, patterns, etc. seem to be infinite. So come to our August auction and join in some friendly competition for some of the latest and greatest iris rhizomes that you just have to have. We will have rhizomes from Mid-America Garden and from hybridizer donations to our own Region 15. Let the bidding begin.

A proposed slate of new TAIS officers will be presented at our August meeting. Add yourself, or others with their permission, to the slate. The officers then will be selected by an email vote.

- Kevin Kartchner

"By mid-August, I'm ready for cooler winds and golden leaves. I'm ready to watch autumn sweep up summer's display and to see the wisdom in what fades. I'm drawn to this measure of life: from what was to what is now. Lessons learned, growth hard-won, and turned pages. In some ways, I feel like I was made for this side of life. To create and to build and help something prosper." - Joanna Gaines, Magnolia Journal, Fall 2022

Upcoming Events

August 8: 1 PM, Tucson Botanical Gardens. TAIS Rhizome Auction, one of our few members-only events and one of our fundraisers

September 19: TAIS Rhizome Sale, 9-noon, Harlow's Gardens

October: TAIS Annual Photo Contest - start choosing and editing your best photos! Limit = 15 photos per member. Details TBA

October 17: Region 15 Trek hosted by TAIS, 9 AM - 4 PM, Tohono Chul. No regular meeting this month

Birthday Wishes to:

Diane Pavlovich • Pat Olsen • Juliet Westbrook
Debbie Basinger • Kathleen Marron
Kathleen & Ernie Gale • Lois Shoaf • Rose Clark

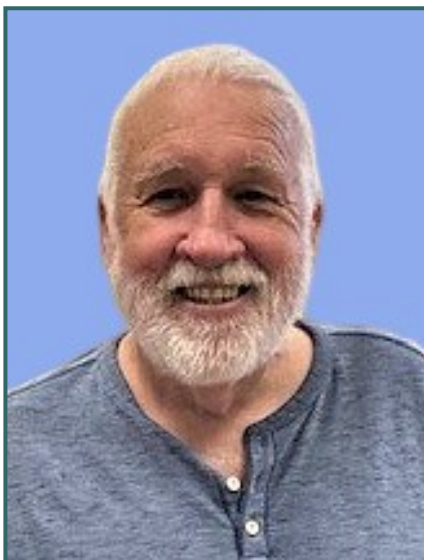


Source: Edwards Botanical Register, plate 1218, 1829

Tributes to Sam Wymer (1944-2026) - TAIS Life Member

Sam was an iris inspiration to me. Around 30 years ago when I first started growing iris, though poorly, I visited Sam's place. He was growing so many well-labeled and thriving iris varieties in his garden that it motivated me to do better in my garden. Like most of us in Tucson, I'm still trying to grow iris better. Sam was easily the current longest-active member of TAIS going back decades. He was helping out even at our most recent sale and show. He also did a lot of volunteer work at the Tucson Botanical Gardens, especially with the iris garden that we help maintain. We are missing you, Sam.

- Kevin Kartchner



I met Sam at my first TAIS meeting. He introduced himself and we soon realized that we were not only fellow Pennsylvanians but fellow Western Pennsylvanians; and yes, that means something when you are from there. Sam enjoyed talking to me about all of the back roads and little towns he used to go to. I enjoyed our conversations immensely. At our most recent Iris sale, Sam shared that his favorite author was William Kent Krueger who wrote mysteries that were set in Northern Minnesota. I enjoy a good mystery myself, so in remembrance of Sam, I am now reading Boundary Waters by Mr. Krueger.

- Dave Smith

From Sam's Facebook and Blogger pages, we learned that he liked family history and doowop music, especially that from Pittsburgh, and had two adult children and five grandchildren. He wrote nine blogs and collected US Air Mail stamps and carbide lamps. Sam was a UA graduate, Master Gardener, and had retired from USWest.

I will remember Sam as a friendly face at all of our TAIS meetings and events. He was our long-time cashier at rhizome sales and iris shows. Sam was good at looking things up on his phone, too. When we were discussing having a banner made to promote the sale, he quickly found an inexpensive online source.

Sam grew up in the county beside the ones where Dave and I grew up and we began chatting with him about that at the first TAIS meeting we attended in 2016.

He was a longtime volunteer at the Tucson Botanical Gardens and kept TAIS fliers stocked in their iris bed on his own dime. These had information about the club on one side and tips about growing irises on the other. And Sam was generous with sharing seeds at our November potluck and plants from his garden as door prizes for meetings.

I will miss you, Sam. - S Clark



Some Irises in Flagstaff - photos by Sue Clark



Clockwise from upper left: 'Kathy's Carnival,' unknown type, *Iris missouriensis*, *I-pallida* (sweet iris) leaves, 'Hold My Hand,' and another *I. missouriensis*. The species irises were at the Flagstaff Arboretum and the others in our hosts' garden

Treasurer's Report for July

- submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

JUNE/JULY 2026

BEGINNING BALANCE	14,389.28
Income	
Trek	480.00
Dues	<u>15.00</u>
TOTAL	495.00
Expenses	
Website	595.00
Projector	<u>784.28</u>
TOTAL	1379.69
ENDING BALANCE	13,504.59



Iris Pathogens, Part I: Southern Blight Fungus

In her article about the Spring 2026 Iris Trek, Joyce mentioned Southern Blight Fungus as an iris pathogen that we might have to deal with. Other names for this infection include southern blight, southern wilt, southern root rot, and mustard seed fungus.

Caused by the fungus *Agroathelia rolfsii* (also called *Sclerotium rolfsii*), this soil-born pathogen attacks over 500 types of plants, including irises and many food crops. It prefers warm, humid conditions (even *our* summer humidity), so is most destructive in subtropical and tropical regions and during the summers in the USA. The first sign of trouble is a discolored lesion where the plant's stem meets the soil line, which is quickly followed by discoloration of the lower leaves, wilting, plant collapse, and death.

Watch for telltale signs of a fungal presence: a network of white *hyphae* (the rootlike growths of fungi), collectively known as *mycelia*, in the soil around the rhizome. This particular fungus produces abundant *sclerotia*, small survival structures resembling mustard seeds, with a hard rind surrounding a core region of hyphae. Sclerotia may occur on affected plants and in soil, and are the main way that this pathogen spreads. They can survive for up to five years in soil.

What to do? Use sanitized tools, pots, and other equipment; use new potting soil, solarize soil, or till beds to bury sclerotia to a depth of 8-10" so that they cannot germinate. One source (#4) suggests that iris rhizomes can be placed in 122° F water for 30 minutes to kill the fungus. I have not tried this, but please report in if you try it and the results. Sources #3 and 4 suggest several fungicides which are effective against Southern blight fungus, including Torque. - SC

Sources: Wikipedia articles: [Agroathelia rolfsii](#), [mycelium](#); article on [Southern Blight](#) on UC website; [article](#) on NC State Extension website; and article on [Soft Rot and Louisiana irises](#) on LSA AgCenter website

From top: Louisiana irises infected with Southern Blight Fungus - note mustard-seed-like sclerotia (source #5), ditto but on a zinnia - note white weblike mycelia and tan spherical sclerotia (source #4), mycelia on soil - each strand is called a hypha and it absorbs nutrients from the soil (source #2 - by [Lex vB](#)), and a close-up of sclerotia (source #3). Sclerotia serve a similar function to seeds

The Language of Iris #7 by Pat Olsen

Miniature Tall Bearded (MTB) Iris

Originally introduced as the “Table Iris” class by Ethel Peckham in 1929, the Miniature Tall Bearded (MTB) iris has become one of my favorite classes. The original “Table Iris” name reflected their ideal use in small floral arrangements and table decorations, where their graceful stems and perfectly proportioned blooms could be appreciated up close. MTBs have all the beauty of Tall Bearded (TB) irises, but in a smaller, more delicate package.

MTBs share the same height range as Intermediate Bearded (IB) and Border Bearded (BB) irises—between 16 and 27½ inches (with an optimal height between 21 and 22 inches). Their blooms are relatively small—typically about 3 inches across, although the AIS classification allows blooms up to 6 inches if they remain in proportion to the stalk. Their stems are remarkably slender—measuring just ⅛ to 3/16 inch beneath the bud—which contributes to their graceful, airy appearance.

One characteristic of MTBs is their branching. A well-grown stalk often carries numerous branches and many buds, producing an extended bloom season despite the smaller flowers. The stems sway gently in the breeze, creating movement that larger irises simply cannot match.

Miniature Tall Bearded irises bloom during the Tall Bearded season, adding texture and elegance to the garden when the larger blooms are putting on their spectacular show. They blend beautifully into rock gardens, perennial borders, and mixed beds, where their smaller flowers do not overwhelm neighboring plants. Lynda Miller’s MTB *Shirts and Skins* is a standout in my garden.

- Continued on following page...

Photos from the Top:

1. ‘Gesundheit,’ Charles Bunnell, R. 2011, Williamson-White Medal 2019
2. ‘Sari's Dance,’ Ginny Spoon, R. 2007, Williamson-White Medal 2016
3. ‘Holiday in Mexico,’ Riley Probst, R. 2011, Williamson-White Medal 2018
4. ‘Dividing Line,’ Charles Bunnell, R. 2004, Dykes Medal 2014
5. ‘Shirts and Skins,’ Lynda Miller, R. 2020, Honorable Mention 2023



The Language of Iris #7...

Miniature Tall Bearded (MTB) Iris *continued from previous page*

MTBs are exceptional as cut flowers. Their slender stems fit comfortably into smaller vases, and multiple blooms create arrangements that are refined rather than overpowering.

Because their flowers are smaller, MTBs are sometimes overlooked when gardeners are selecting irises. Up close, MTBs display the same intricate ruffling, color combinations, and striking patterns found in larger bearded irises. Many are delightfully fragrant, and their abundant branching often means you'll enjoy blossoms for several weeks.

For exhibitors and judges, proportion is everything. The flowers should remain in scale with the stalk, producing an overall appearance of balance and elegance rather than size.

If you've never grown Miniature Tall Bearded irises, consider adding a few to your garden. Their graceful habit, abundant branching, and delicate beauty make them one of the hidden treasures of the iris world.

Trek Update by Pat Olsen

I'm happy to report that planning for the **2026 Region 15 Fall Trek – Desert Oasis of Iris** is nearly complete. The committee has accomplished a tremendous amount, and we're right on schedule. That's fortunate, because August and September will be filled with our members-only auction, annual rhizome sale, and coordinating the volunteers who will make all of our fall events possible.

In addition to a full day celebrating irises, TAIS members **Jody and John Williams** will host an authentic **Swiss Raclette Dinner** following the Trek. Raclette is less about the meal itself—warm, melted Swiss raclette cheese scraped over potatoes and other Alpine favorites—and more about gathering around the table to visit, laugh, and continue the friendships made throughout the day. We are grateful to Jody and John for opening their home and providing this special opportunity to unwind after a day of irises.

For those who prefer, **Jazz Under the Stars** at Tohono Chul will also take place that evening. Please see the announcement on p. 8 for complete details about both evening options.

Registration is now open! We encourage all **TAIS members—including our volunteers—and our friends throughout Region 15** to register early. Early registration helps us finalize meal counts, prepare name badges and welcome materials, and ensure we're ready to provide a memorable experience for everyone.

If you plan to join us for the **Swiss Raclette Dinner**, please include your RSVP with your Trek registration. Reserve your spot today!

And One More Picture of Sam...



TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2026**Kevin Kartchner - President****Cindy Long - Vice President****Sue Clark – Secretary, Signatory on Account****Jim Wilcoxon – Treasurer, Asst. Secretary****Pat Olsen & Brian Moon - Programs & Places****Diane Pavlovich - Publicity****Cindy Long and Linda Briggs - Hospitality****Bonnie Else & Susan Schaefer - Door Prizes****Linda Briggs and Cindy Long - 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 soil reads Dry 6" down. 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. Detach 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**

Consider that you might create your own version of a friendship garden by trading plants with your friends! The annual TAIS potluck with plant- and seed-exchange is an excellent opportunity. Over the years of potlucks, I have gained a rainbow agave and a variegated agave, an African violet from Bonnie, dill and lupine seeds from Sam, poppy seeds and a sweet potato vine from Kevin, among other plants. Not to mention irises from door prizes, TAIS friends, and some from the rhizome sale. - SC

Iris Haiku

Blazing summer days,
Always followed by autumn
And later, iris

- Sue Clark

Did You Know?

The concept of Friendship Gardens began in 1934 on land donated by Dr. Frank Warren to the Stauffer brothers, who then requested that world leaders send their favorite plants for a friendship garden. The King of Persia sent roses, Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands sent 200,00 tulips, and the King of England sent a gardener and plants for a cottage garden. This [Friendship Botanic Gardens](#) is still thriving in Michigan City, Indiana. - SC Sources: Missouri Star Quilt Company email of 1 July 2026 and [Friendship Botanic Gardens article](#)

**'Chantilly' (Hall, 1943)**

Source: AIS Wiki

*"Oh, the summer night Has a smile of light,
And she sits on a sapphire throne."* -Barry Cornwall

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

This month, we'll look more at David F. Hall and his goal of developing truly pink irises. He crossed his flamingo pink seedlings with some of their offspring, resulting in variations such as apricot-colored irises with tangerine beards, and later on, a pink and purple bicolor and a white iris with tangerine beards. The striking flowers of ['Chantilly'](#) (1943) were the first ones with lace on the edges. (Photo above). Hall developed some fine yellows and equally fine copper irises. Of particular note is ['Golden Eagle'](#) (1942) with flowers up to 8" across on well-branched stems.

David Hall introduced only irises that were "sufficiently distinct" from others that were already in commerce and insisted that they be good, hardy perennials, not just possess a novel color or form. Many of Hall's irises were used by other hybridizers for breeding, including his most expensive (\$30) offering, ['May Hall'](#) (1954), named after his wife. The next-most used ones were from his least-expensive offering, a \$15 box of random Hall pink seedlings.

David Hall lived from the time of horse and buggies to men orbiting the moon. He always gardened in a white shirt and tie, and said that he loved all irises equally so did not have a favorite. He lived to be 93 and credited gardening, good genes, and a healthy lifestyle as being responsible for that. When he was introduced at a garden club meeting as "David Hall whose flowers have added to the charm and beauty on every continent," he was greatly pleased. Thank you, David, for your dedication - and for pink irises! - SC

Sources: "David F. Hall - The Flamingo Pinks" by Anne Lowe in *AIS 100 Years Bold*, Supplement 3 of 4 to *IRISES: the Bulletin of AIS*, 2020; AIS Wiki

After the Trek... Choose Your Perfect Evening

As the Desert Oasis Trek comes to a close, your Tucson experience doesn't have to end.

Option 1 – Jazz Under the Stars

Remain at beautiful **Tohono Chul** and enjoy an evening of live music in the gardens during their popular **Jazz Under the Stars** program.

Option 2 – A Swiss Raclette Evening

Join fellow Trek participants for an authentic **Swiss Raclette Dinner**, graciously hosted by TAIS members, Jody and John Williams.

Using a traditional half-wheel raclette cheese melter, our host will scrape warm, bubbling Swiss raclette cheese over potatoes, cured meats, and other Alpine favorites. The word *raclette* comes from the French *racler*—"to scrape"—and the meal is as much about conversation and fellowship as it is about the food.

Rather than a formal dinner, raclette is an interactive experience. Guests gather around the table, share stories from the day, return for another helping of melted cheese, and enjoy a relaxed evening with friends old and new.

Saturday Evening • October 17, 2026

Following the Trek

Whether you choose an evening of music beneath the desert stars or the warm hospitality of a Swiss raclette table, we hope you'll make your Saturday in Tucson one to remember.

If you plan to join us for raclette, please RSVP in advance so we can prepare plenty of food and seating. If you'd like to enjoy a little music first, simply join us later in the evening – we'll keep the cheese melting.

RSVP TAIS.Trek.Committee@gmail.com





2026 Annual Iris Rhizome Sale

Saturday, September 19

9 a.m. to noon

Harlow Gardens

5620 E. Pima St.

Fundraiser for the Tucson Area Iris Society
(Come early for best selection. Supply limited!)



Potting Demonstration

9:30 & 10:15 am

Join us, for a fun, hands-on
potting presentation. Plant
one of your newly
purchased rhizomes with
guidance from our
experienced members.