



February 2026

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 61st year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Quietly Awesome'
(Tasco, 2020)

Marcusen Sculpture Gardens,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2025

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President's Message

Bingo! We'll be playing Dykes Medal bingo at our next meeting. Besides having fun and winning fabulous prizes, we will learn a lot about the top award-winning iris over the years. Iris have progressed so much in the last 100 years in colors, form, and patterns.

Things loving the recent rains: me, the iris, the wildflowers, and especially the weeds! Keep weeding and fertilize a little regularly to nurture those iris stalks to enter in our April show. The more flowers the better for us and the public.

- Kevin Kartchner

"While it is still February, one can taste the full joys of anticipation. Spring stands at the gate with her finger on the latch." - Patience Strong

Upcoming Events

Dues are due - \$15 per household per calendar year. [Form](#) on TAIS website or pay at the meeting

Next meeting: February 14, 1 PM, Miller-Golf Links Library, 9640 E. Golf Links Rd. Dykes Bingo led by Kevin Kartchner

March 14 meeting: 1 PM, location TBA. "Historic Irises and the Historic Iris Preservation Society" by Cathy Egerer

Birthday Wishes to:

Dave Smith

Sue Clark

Shirley Andrews

Barb Nicholson

Sam Wymer

Candace Pappas

Thomas Modaff

Marie Radecki



Source: [LoveThisPic.com](#)

January Meeting Minutes



10 Jan 2026 - Twenty members gathered for a presentation by Eugene Zielinski of our sister club in Prescott. See notes on p. 7.

General Meeting: Kevin announced that our theme this year is "We're Trekking." Dues are \$15 for the calendar year and are due now. He thanked Pat for hosting the November potluck and Plant Share. Terry will once again chair the combination Iris & Rose Show in April. The Auction still needs a chairperson. Pat offered to run the Sale in September. Sue will manage the Photo Contest. Pat will present a program to the Tucson Garden Club on January 21. She explained the Trek, which is a regional meeting and educational opportunity that will include a speaker, judges' training, chances to meet other Irisarians, as well as a raffle and auction. There are lots of opportunities for TAIS volunteers during this event at Tohono Chul. Pat is chairing this event and Diane is handling Publicity. Diane mentioned that TAIS

has a [new Facebook group](#) with 47 Followers so far. Sun County Iris Society will host the [Spring Trek](#) (which includes three garden tours) on April 10-11. Info on p. 10-11. Terry, Dave, and Jessie won irises as door prizes, while Kevin, Jim, Dan, and Mary Ann won AIS calendars. Thank you to Howie Dash for donating the irises. Sue presented Kevin with wind chimes from the club to place in his garden in honor of his late father.

Board Meeting: Sue will spend \$450 on rhizomes for the Auction (which will be shipped to Joyce) and Pat will spend \$1600 on those for the Sale. Pat suggested we might sell any leftover rhizomes at a nursery, to iris lovers in Green Valley, or at the Trek. Since we need a bunch of potted irises to sell at the Show, this was tabled. Linda and Cindy motioned to accept the annual budget and this was approved by a vote. Pat will order a dozen of Paul Black's 'Desert Oasis' iris since that is the name of our

Trek. These will be prizes at the event. If you have any items that you wish to donate for door prizes at our meetings, please let Bonnie or Susan know. To be sure that everyone has a nametag, Linda and Cindy will give Kevin an updated membership list after the February meeting since everyone will have had a chance to pay their dues by then. Kevin will print new nametags. They will bring blank stick-on nametags for visitors or anyone who does not have one for any reason. The password-protected membership list on our website includes only those members who have given permission for their information to be on it. A general membership list is kept digitally. An option to pay dues online was suggested to streamline the process, which starts with Linda and Cindy receiving the forms and checks, then sending the information to Sue for emailing the newsletter, and sending the checks to Jim. Kevin mentioned that his iris '[Again and Again](#)' is a reliable rebloomer. He brought one to the meeting, as well as a large and fragrant potted orchid. Terry said that there will be a new requirement for the Modern category of artistic arrangement at this year's Show: an underwater arrangement. One third of the actual arrangement must be under water, so a cylindrical or oval glass vase or a fish bowl would probably work best. - Sue Clark, secretary

'Autumn Breeze' is another reliable rebloomer for Kevin



We're on the web:
Tucsoniris.org



January Meeting - photos by Dave Smith



Treasurer's Report for January

- submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

BEGINNING BALANCE	17,255.50
DUES	<u>240.00</u>
	17,495.50

EXPENSES

SPEAKER	75.00
ADMIN EXPENSES	105.79
ZOOM	<u>32.98</u>

ENDING BALANCE	17,281.73
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Above: aphid midge larva (BugGuide.net)



Beneficial Garden Insects, Part Xlc: Aphid-Eaters

I find it amazing to consider all of the insects and arachnids working quietly in the background and helping us out. Not that they intentionally eat aphids and other pests just to help us out, but we - and our gardens - benefit nonetheless. We'll look at several more aphid-eaters this month. **Spined soldier bugs** have the characteristic shield shape of all stink bugs but with a spine on each "shoulder." Both larvae and adults consume aphids, caterpillars, and about 90 other pests, with larvae also eating thrips, mites, and whiteflies. Attract these beneficial insects by growing beds of perennials for shelter. **Aphid midge** larvae eat up to 65 aphids per day. They inject a paralyzing toxin and suck up the liquified insides of their prey. These small black flies, which look like fungus gnats, are common throughout North America. They are sold commercially to control aphids in greenhouses. Attract the adults with nectar-producing plants and a water source. Wooly aphids are on the menu of **Common earwigs**, as are plant lice and bluebottle flies. They also eat plants and arthropods, and are scavengers of decaying plant and animal matter. **Ambush bugs** are related to assassin bugs, but are only about 1/2" long. They lie in wait for insects - good and bad - who visit flowers. Their young eat soft-bodied insect pests, including aphids, mites, thrips, and mealybugs. Attract ambush bugs by growing cosmos, goldenrod, and Queen Anne's Lace. **Big-eyed bugs** are tiny (about 1/10" long) with disproportionately large eyes. Their piercing and sucking mouthparts search out such pests as aphids, mites, and whiteflies in gardens, fields, and turfgrass. Attract them by growing perennials to provide shelter. More bugs next month... - SC

Sources: [BH&G: How to Get Rid of Aphids and Protect Plants](#); [17 Beneficial Insects that Eat Aphids](#); [Will Spined Soldier Bug Eat Aphids](#); [Aphid Midge Beneficial Insect -- Harvest to Table](#); [Big-Eyed Bug Beneficial Insect -- Harvest to Table](#), Wikipedia articles: [spined soldier bug](#), [earwig](#), [Phymatinae](#), [Geocoris](#)

From top: spined soldier bug (by [Christina Butler](#)), aphid midge (Source 4), male common earwig feeding on flowers (by [James K. Lindsey](#)), ambush bug (by [WanderingMogwai](#)), a species of big-eyed bug eating whitefly larvae (by [Jack Dykinga, USDA](#)) - note the piercing & sucking mouthpart

2025 AIS Convention Gardens - Photos by Joyce Knill



Top Row: Eagle Ridge Gardens

Middle Row: DanWalt Botanical Gardens

Bottom Row: Pat in Muriel's Iris Garden



More 2025 AIS Convention Gardens - Photos by Joyce Knill



Top Row: Two photos of Bonnie getting a private lesson from iris judges in the DanWalt Botanical Garden and one of Tina and Daughters Iris Garden

Middle Row: Two views of Tina and Daughters Iris Garden and one of Zoo Montana AIS Garden

Bottom Row: Zoo Montana AIS Garden

The Genus *Iris* - my notes from Eugene Zielinski's presentation

Eugene's slides provided a window into the great diversity of this genus, native exclusively to the northern hemisphere. Besides having standards and falls, all irises grow from either a rhizome or a bulb.

There are six subgenera of the genus Iris:

1. **Bearded (subgenus Iris)** - native to Europe and Asia, prefer drier conditions, possess a fuzzy beard on their falls, grow from rhizomes (rhizomatous), about 60 species
2. **Beardless (Limniris)** - world-wide, prefer moist to very wet conditions, rhizomatous, includes Siberian, Japanese, Spuria, and Louisiana irises, 45 species
3. **Tall bulbous (Xiphium)** - native to SW Europe and n. Africa, grasslike leaves, grow from bulbs, includes Dutch, Spanish, and English irises, 8 species
4. **Dwarf bulbous (Hermodactyloides)** - from central Europe and central Asia, rushlike leaves, bulbs have a fibrous net-like (reticulate) pattern, 11 species
5. **Juno (Scorpiris)** - from Middle East and central Asia, wide leaves, fleshy bulb with fleshy roots, 60 species
6. **Nepalensis** - native to Himalayan area, flat leaves, rhizomatous with fleshy roots, 4 species

Some of the irises that Eugene showed, including *I. variegata*, *I. aphylla*, and *I. pumila* have been crossed with tall bearded irises to add colors, branching, and shorter stature, respectively. Another type is being grown in Tucson by Kevin and by Adam at the Tucson Botanical Gardens: *Iris unguicularis*, the Winter Iris.

I. domestica, the Blackberry Lily, is truly an iris based on its DNA, and was therefore transferred from another genus. My mom grows this lovely plant in western Pennsylvania. Like many irises, it is native to China. It is hardy only to USDA Zone 5.

Eugene spotted *I. missouriensis* growing on Mt. Lemmon. It likes moisture.

Pat mentioned that her wetland-loving irises are on a separate dripline that waters multiple times a day. Mary Ann said that her Louisianas grow in a stock tank that receives water several times a week. Joyce and I grow ours in 5-gallon buckets. Several members grow spuria and Dutch irises. And Terry's Japanese irises flourish in his colder microclimate near downtown Tucson.

Learn more from the [AIS Wiki](#), [Aril Society International](#), [Species Iris Group of North America](#), and the [Pacific Bulb Society](#).

- Sue Clark

(I supplemented with some information from Wikipedia on the subgenera). - SC



The Language of Iris by Pat Olsen

My husband always comments the same thing after listening to me talk irises with iris-loving friends, "You're speaking a *foreign language*." He's not wrong. Irises have a unique vocabulary filled with abbreviations, pattern names, and style terms. Iris classifications and terminology are based on standards established by the American Iris Society (AIS). Once you understand the language, iris descriptions begin to make a lot more sense..

Irises fall into one of two **primary divisions**, based on whether they have a beard or not on the falls. **Bearded irises** have a fuzzy "beard" running down the falls. 'Miss Purl' and 'Desert Moth' are examples. (Photos below). Both have thick, bushy beards. **Beardless irises** lack a beard but may have a crest, signal, or smooth falls. 'Sedona Skies' is a beautiful example of a beardless spuria with a gorgeous yellow signal.

How many times have you learned a language only to be told *that's true in most circumstances but not with this word*. The same is true in the Language of Iris. **Species iris** can be bearded or beardless, allowing them to fall into either of the two primary divisions.

After the division of irises into either bearded or beardless, there are **15 basic classifications** recognised by AIS. Additionally, descriptions include **color and pattern terms, pattern overlay groups, and special traits** - all of which help describe what an iris looks like and why it stands out in the garden.

Next month, **The Language of Iris** will take another small step toward making iris terminology easier and more fun to understand.



'Miss Purl'

'Desert Moth'

'Sedona Skies'

Trek Update by Pat Olsen

The Trek committee met following last month's club meeting. We are suspending raffle and auction donations, as we have received or have been informed of an abundance of items. Thank you all for your generous contributions. We may request additional donations in the future.

The Spring Trek will be held on April 10th and 11th in Phoenix. This is an excellent opportunity to tour three gardens hosting 250-300 guest irises. These irises were planted in the fall of 2024 by members of the Sun Country Iris Society (SCIS). The tour features newer introductions from 2023 and 2024 by hybridizers including Thomas Johnson, Paul Black, Jim Geditz, Lori Rhodes, Elizabeth Rieniets, Howie Dash, Robert Treadway, Hooker Nichols, and Rick Tasco. Jim Geditz, Lori Rhodes, and Elizabeth Rieniets also provided seedlings. The plantings include Tall Bearded, Spuria, and Louisiana irises.

One of the featured gardens belongs to Sharon Pettersen. As a former nursery owner and operator, Sharon has cultivated a magnificent garden that is sure to provide inspiration for our own backyard havens.

Bonnie Nichols, AIS President, is the guest speaker. On the evening of Friday, April 10th, she will speak on Novelty Irises. On Saturday, April 11th, Bonnie will lead a discussion in the garden.

If you are interested in attending, please register early to allow SCIS to more accurately plan.



A Quilt for a Prize at the Fall Trek

Here is a photo of the quilt that I am making for TAIS to offer at the Trek via raffle or auction. It's not all sewn together yet, but will be suitable for a wall hanging or door banner. The technique is called paper piecing and the pattern is [Iris, by Piece by Number](#). - SC

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 & Linda Briggs - Hospitality
Bonnie Else & Susan Schaefer - Door Prizes
Cindy Long & Linda Briggs - Membership
Dave Smith - Photographer
Sue Clark - Newsletter

What to do in the Iris Garden during February:

Maintenance: Check for aphids. Blast them off with a jet of water. Remove weeds and plant debris. Keep plants hydrated during this interval of rapid growth. Use a moisture meter to monitor them. Replace faded labels, as Sharpie markings will disappear with time.

Organic care: Continue feeding with fish emulsion every other week, and alfalfa meal and feather meal monthly. Apply humic acid as desired.

Non-organic care: Apply weekly or every two weeks: Scott's **SuperBloom** (12-55-6), Miracle-Gro **Bloom Booster** (10-52-10), **Schultz Bloom Plus** 10-54-10, or Ferti-lome **Blooming & Rooting** (9-58-8) through May. Mix as on package. TAIS' Susan starts this on New Year's Day; Kristee on Valentine's Day. - SC

**Tip Exchange**

Sometimes, an iris collection must be reduced in size, whether due to a move, a feeling that one cannot care for so many plants anymore, simply a need to downsize, or other reasons. Mike Unser said, "... honestly, the room I have to grow in now is about all I can keep up with, so the restraint is a positive, even if my iris greed says otherwise."

Source: "More than Just Another Pretty Face: Refining an Iris Collection" by Nancy McDonald with help from Mary Hess and Mike Unser in *ROOTS: Journal of the Historical Iris Preservation Society*, vol. 38, #1, Spring 2025

Iris Haiku

Iris grow briskly
 All through the desert winter,
 Incubating blooms within
 - Sue Clark

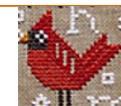


Source: AIS Wiki. Hybridized by Geddes Douglas, 1933

Did You Know?

Arizona is home to 13 species of owls. They range in size from tiny elf, pygmy, and burrowing owls to the 2'-tall great horned owls. The whiskered screech owl prefers to inhabit *sky islands* (isolated mountain ranges) in southeastern Arizona. Another local owl is the ferruginous pygmy owl, who nests in saguaros in holes made by woodpeckers. Often called the cactus ferruginous pygmy owl, it is the northernmost subspecies of this owl. It was delisted from being Endangered in 2006. - SC Sources: Owl talk at Wild Birds Unlimited in Mesa on 3 Jan 2026, Wikipedia [article](#)

"IN THE GARDEN OF LIFE, A CARDINAL IS THE FLOWER THAT BLOOMS IN WINTER." - UNKNOWN

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

Over the past few months, we've been following the creation and development of the median irises, which began with Robert Schreiner importing seeds of *Iris pumila* from Austria in the 1930's. *I. pumila*, a dwarf iris, was crossed with tall bearded irises to create seedlings which were fertile, unlike all other crosses between small irises and taller ones. These novel mid-sized irises attracted people from across the country, all of whom were interested in creating "something new under the sun." The final step in their acceptance was when the American Iris Society recognized the four kinds of medians and then established a series of awards, one for each of the four types, granting them status comparable with the other categories of irises.

Geddes Douglas, who was instrumental in the median movement and the founding of the Median Iris Society, summarized the accomplishments:

1. New garden types of irises were developed, which included Standard Dwarf Bearded, Intermediate Bearded, Miniature Tall Bearded, and Border Bearded. You may refer to the diagram in our [Nov 2025](#) issue for sizes and bloom-times.
2. Blooming intervals were extended, so that there were now irises blooming between the end of the miniature dwarfs and the start of the tall bearded.
3. Color patterns which had only occurred in *I. pumila* now existed in tall bearded.
4. Hardiness and disease resistance of tall bearded was likely increased by the combination of genes from *I. pumila*.

Both Geddes Douglas and Paul Cook, who had sent pollen back and forth to create medians, lend their names to the medal awarded to Standard Dwarf Bearded irises, the Cook-Douglas Medal. See one of Douglas' irises in the photo above. - SC

Source: "The Median Iris Movement," by Geddes Douglas in "AIS 100 Years Bold," Supplement 2 of 4 to *IRISES: the Bulletin of AIS*, 2020 - reprinted from "The Median," volume 1, 1958