

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 59th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



AB 'Vivid Dream'
(Tasco, 2019)

Marcusen Sculpture Gardens,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2023

President's Message



"The ice has broken on the Santa Cruz" is a longtime Tucson saying for the first 100° day of the year, and now it's time to survive. I find June to be one of the most challenging gardening months as it is so very HOT and DRY. I've tried various methods to keep my iris going through the summer with varying degrees of success: light mulch, shading, cleaning up (or not) the dried foliage, and just the right amount of water to keep them alive but not rotting. Re-read the [February 2024 newsletter](#) for more ideas on summer survival from our panel discussion. Try something and share your successes and failures. Stay cool and keep them thriving.

- Kevin Kartchner

"And what is so rare as a day in June? Then, if ever, come perfect days: Then Heaven tries earth if it be in tune. And over it softly her warm ear lays. Whether we look, or whether we listen. We hear life murmur, or see it glisten."

-James Russell Lowell (1819-1891)

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Upcoming Events

June and July: no meetings. Newsletters will continue

August 10: 1 PM, Tucson Botanical Garden's Education Room, Rhizome auction for members only

Rhizome Sale: September 21, 9 AM to noon (or when we run out), Harlow Gardens, 5620 E. Pima. Members-only discount hour = 8 to 9 AM

Birthday Wishes to:

Rebecca Hill

Christy Lewalski

Paul Guengrlich

Olive Modello



Iris savannarum

May Meeting Minutes



11 May 2024 - 20 members enjoyed Kevin Kartchner's presentation about how he hybridizes irises and raises their seedlings. See notes on p. 7.

General Meeting: Dick Butler, a new/old member from decades ago attended today. Kevin gave Iris Bucks to those who tended irises to sell at the show and to those who won blue ribbons. Terry told us that it was Diane's idea last year to combine the iris and rose shows. Joyce mentioned that she posted the show info on her HOA's Facebook page and that many neighbors reported favorably back to her about the show. She also said that she purchased four folding tables for the club. Terry believes we could sell 200-300 potted irises at next year's show. Thank you again to Terry and to all who participated in making the show a success.

Today's door prizes of irises, other plants, and an iris oil painting by Dan were won

by Dick, Linda, Cindy, Susan, Sandy, Bonnie, Dan, and Madeleine. Thank you to Jim, Kevin, and Dan for contributing additional door prizes.

Kevin announced that Bob Van Liere's [Iris4U](#) is closing.

Board Meeting:

Show business: Kevin suggested we have a visitors' sign-up sheet to receive an email about the sale. We need more foam wedges for the vases; Bonnie and Kevin volunteered to research them. Terry suggested a membership table with applications for both societies. Coffee and pastries will be coordinated with both groups for next year. We motioned and approved \$250 for Kevin to purchase 200 plastic pots and 10 bags of soil for potted irises for the 2025 show. We had fewer artistic arrangements than we did last year. Terry thought that this was because some of the Ikebana Society

members did designs with roses this year. Dan suggested that TAIS members wear nametags and/or club shirts.

Sale Business: We motioned and approved \$800 for Kevin to order 200 more rhizomes for the sale. Estimates for rhizome donations: Diane 30-40, Sally 20, Joyce 20, Susan 20, Terry 30-40, Pat 100, Kevin 350. Dan and Cathy will likely have some, too. Rhizomes will be sold for \$8 or buy 5 and get one free. Bonnie suggested that we could buy AIS calendars in bulk and sell them at the sale. Diane is working on publicity. Terry will speak on growing irises in beds at 10 AM.

TAIS shirts: You may take a shirt of your choice to [Renegade Classics](#) Biker Outlet, 4745 E. Speedway, and have a TAIS emblem embroidered on it. You may choose the colors for the flowers and text.

Mealy bug treatment per Joyce: Drench irises completely with Triple Action by Ferti-lome at first sign of infestation. She recommends spraying plants in the evening, and every 10-20 days to disrupt the life cycle. Triple Action is available at Ace Hardware and from [Amazon](#).

Miscellaneous: Dan said that people join societies such as ours because they want to learn.

Longer roots are better for irises according to Van Liere, per Kevin.

There is an iris named '[Tucson](#).'

- Sue Clark, secretary

**Do you have any
rhizomes that you
can contribute to
the Sale?**



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

May Meeting - photos by Dave Smith



Artistic Arrangements at the Show - photos by Dave Smith



First arrangement by Dave Smith, others by Sue Clark

Artistic Arrangements at the Show - photos by Dave Smith

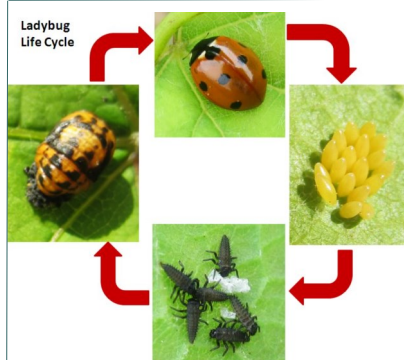


Arrangements by Sue Clark, except the one below which is by Cristina Bertoldi of the Arizona Chapter of the Ohara School of Ikebana

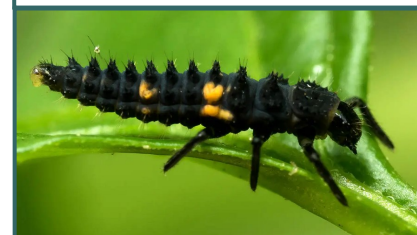


Treasurer's Report for May - submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

<u>MAY 2024</u>	<u>YTD</u>		
<u>DUES:</u> INC	95.00	+595.00	TOTAL INC FROM DUES
EXP	-13.60	postage	
	-36.00	refreshments	
	-500.00	web	
	-213.41	books	
	-45.00	AIS	
	-120.00	region 15	
	-928.01	TOTAL EXP FROM DUES	-293.01 ACT BALANCE
<u>SHOW:</u> INC	539.27	square sales	539.27 square sales
	795.00	cash sales	795.00 cash sales
	1334.27		1334.27
EXP	39.14	TAIS show expenses	39.14 TAIS show expenses
	441.02	ROSE SOC	441.02 ROSE SOC
	480.16	TOTAL SHOW expenses	+854.11 ACT BALANCE
<u>SALE:</u> INC	+339.48	rhizome	
EXP	-2483.73	rhizomes	
	-2144.25	TOTAL SALE EXPENSES	-2144.25 ACT BALANCE
<u>AUCTION:</u> INC	0.00		
EXP	0.00		
CHECKBOOK BALANCE 31 MAY 2024 \$9413.24			



Above: Ladybug life cycle diagram (from [enoviti](#)): adult, eggs, larvae, and pupa. Eggs are usually laid on a plant that is infested with aphids or scale insects. (Source 5, below). Yarrow, dill, and tansy are favorites. (Source 6)



Beneficial Garden Insects, Part I: Ladybugs

Backyards may host thousands of insects, but only about a tenth of these do any damage. Most are beneficial or harmless. Beneficial ones are helpful in one of three ways: Pollinators (which we have examined in detail over the past year, so we won't focus on them here), Predators (which eat pests), and Parasitizers (which lay eggs on or in pests and then their larvae consume the pest). As Eleanor Perenyi wrote in her book, *Green Thoughts*, "Every insect has a mortal enemy. Cultivate that enemy, and he will do your work for you."

I am something of a ladybug nut. My favorite tea mug is decorated with ladybugs, I have a ladybug paperweight and small glass ladybugs in assorted colors on my kitchen window sill, I designed a ladybug quilt for a workshop that I hosted years ago, and I am making two other quilts with ladybugs in them. Oh, and I have a quilt in a show right now made of fabrics with sunflowers and ladybugs on them. So we'll start our study of beneficial insects with ladybugs.

Ladybugs, or ladybirds as they are known in the UK, are small beetles. Some refer to them as lady beetles since they are not true bugs. There are over 6,000 species of ladybugs spread across the world. They are named for the Virgin Mary, who is often referred to as "Our Lady." Mary was frequently pictured wearing a red cloak in early artwork. Ladybugs are rare in the fossil record and although they may have a Cretaceous origin, the oldest ones are found in amber in France and date to the early Eocene, 53 million years ago. Many others are fossilized in Baltic amber which formed later in the Eocene.

Numerous species of ladybugs are red and spotted, some are yellow with spots, and there is even a brown type with no spots. The reason ladybugs are so valued in the garden is because their larvae can eat 40 aphids per hour! These larvae are quite ferocious and are nicknamed *alligators* because of their scaly appearance. Eggs are typically yellow and are often laid near a source of prey. After three instar (between-molt) stages, a larva forms a pupa, which opens to reveal an adult which can live for one to two years. Studies have revealed that about 68% of ladybug species in temperate areas eat aphids and about 36% of all ladybug species eat scale insects. Additional insects on the menu include mealy bugs, mites, thrips, and whiteflies. Unlike other insects, ladybug larvae and adults eat the same food. Ladybugs can multiply rapidly during an aphid outbreak and then switch to another food when the aphids become scarce.

The red coloring of many adults signals that they are toxic and foul-tasting. They can secrete a poisonous gel from their legs. When ladybugs need to fly, their hard outer wings spring open to reveal transparent wings underneath which unfold and stiffen for flight. Ladybugs are preyed upon by birds, spiders, beetles, ants, and lacewings. They may be required to defend themselves against ants that tend aphids for their [honeydew](#). These ants may attack both adult ladybugs and their eggs to protect their honeydew food source.

As far back as 1814 in England, it was noted that ladybugs eat pests. How can we attract and keep them in our gardens? Grow native plants, leave parts of the garden a bit messy to provide hiding and nesting spots, and eliminate use of chemical pesticides. Specific ladybug-attracting plants include **marigolds, angelica, butterfly weed, sunflowers, dandelions, cosmos, cilantro, dill, tansy, and yarrow**. Ladybugs that grow up in your garden are much more likely to remain there than those you might purchase in a container at a nursery, which are often dehydrated, illegally harvested, and not native to your area. A food supply is crucial, so if you do purchase ladybugs, release them in the evening at the base of a plant infested with aphids. Spritz the ladybugs with water and provide a shallow bowl of drinking water with some rocks in it so that any insects that fall in can crawl out. A bug hotel can provide shelter for them and other beneficials. - SC

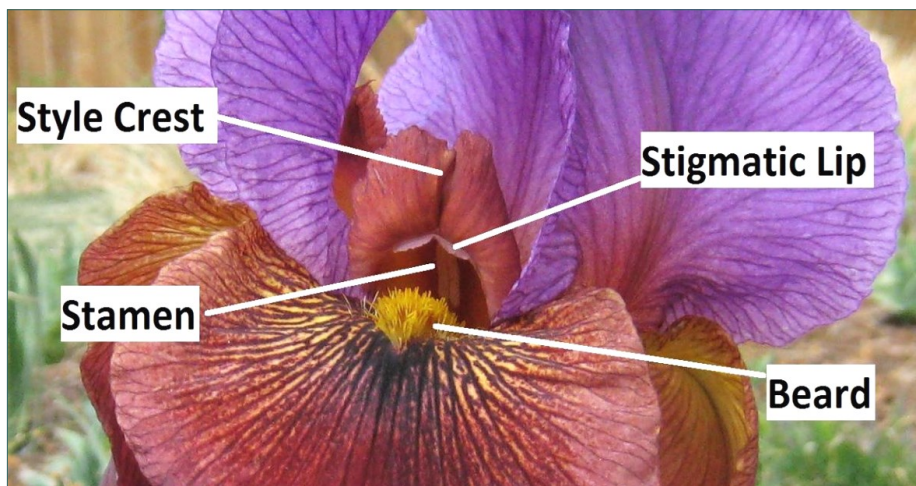
Sources: Wikipedia article - "[Coccinellidae](#)," [Beneficial Insects: Meet the Beneficial Bugs in Your Garden \(with Pictures\)](#) | [The Old Farmer's Almanac](#), [8 Beneficial Insects You Want to See in Your Garden - Birds and Blooms](#), [How to Attract Ladybugs to Your Garden \(and Actually Keep Them Around\)](#) - [Garden Betty](#), [Identifying Eggs And Larvae Of Ladybugs - Tips On Keeping Ladybugs In The Garden](#) | [Gardening Know How](#), [Should You Buy Ladybugs For Natural Garden Pest Control?](#) ([msn.com](#)), [Ladybug vs Asian Beetle: What's the Difference?](#) - [Birds and Blooms](#), [7 Fascinating Ladybug Facts You Didn't Know - Birds and Blooms](#), Realistic lifecycle figures in a kit available [here](#). Good children's book - [The Grouchy Ladybug](#)

From top: a close-up of a red ladybug ([by Dominik Stodulski](#)), 22 spot ladybird in Germany ([by Olei](#)), a ladybug with its outer wings (*elytra*) open and raised showing the transparent inner wings that it uses for flying ([modernhealthcare.com](#)), and a ladybug larva (aka alligator) ([GardenBetty.com](#))

Hybridizing Irises and Growing Their Seeds, à la Kevin

Kevin began hybridizing irises about six years ago after Rick Tasco spoke about it to our club. Kevin began his presentation with thoughts on what hybridizing is and why people do it. He does it for fun and to spend more time in his iris beds, as well as to see what he can develop. He showed photos of Dykes-winning irises from the early years of the Medal (mid-1930's to mid-1940's) and compared them with photos of the eight most-recent Dykes winners, which all have bigger and bolder flowers with ruffles and some with lace. Iris anatomy was reviewed, as well.

Kevin reported that he usually looks around and decides upon two flowers to cross. He heeds advice from Thomas Johnson about choosing flowers with excellent form over ones with specific colors. Using a hemostat or tweezers, he plucks the stamen from the Dad plant, known as the Pollen Parent, and rubs the pollen grains onto the stigmatic lip of the Mom plant, known as the Pod Parent. Some important considerations: the anther (the "head" of the stamen) must be fresh-looking and be covered in floury-looking pollen, and the stigmatic lip must be sticky and shiny. It looks like a tiny roof and you may need to pull it forward a bit to get the pollen grains onto the sticky part. Morning is the best time to do this, when the flowers are freshest. The pollen remains viable for a few days to a few weeks. Rub the other two anthers onto the remaining two stigmatic lips on the pod parent. Attach a label with **the name of the pod parent X the name of the pollen parent** written on a tag. Kevin uses [30 X 48 mm paper tags](#) and writes in pencil.



Within about a week, the ovary will begin to enlarge if the cross has been successful, or "taken." This becomes the seed pod, which will continue to swell, eventually drying and darkening until it splits open. Kevin ties an [organza bag](#) around each pod so that the seeds don't fall out. He reports about a 20% success rate in his crosses. Note dates and parents.

The resulting seeds must be *stratified* before planting. This involves soaking them for several days to remove the germination inhibitors. Change out the water every day. (This process could be accomplished in the toilet tank). To finish the stratification process, the seeds must be refrigerated for a couple of weeks. Place them in a plastic bag with moist vermiculite or a damp paper towel. Kevin does the stratifying during the month of October. In late October, plant seeds about 1" deep in 1-gallon pots. Keep them watered. They usually germinate in February or March. Wait until September to transfer the young plants to a bed. They are typically 4-6" tall at this point. Be sure that the bags of seeds remain labeled throughout the whole process. Kevin uses a plastic label during stratification and then it becomes the marker in the pot with the young seedling.

Evaluate the flowers to determine which are best. Kevin admitted that culling the iris seedlings is the most difficult part of the process. He has found his seedlings to be some of the most vigorous irises in his garden. One of them has been introduced with the name '[Kelsey Rose](#).' - SC, from my notes, checked by Kevin

Some Things I Learned Doing Artistic Designs This Year

- Trader Joe's will Hold flowers for you. Order in person or by phone 3 days before you need them. Pick up at the Customer Service area. Dave and I planned to do 6 arrangements, so on Friday, I picked up 7 bundles of Dutch iris, of which we used 5. I bought two other types of bouquets there for specific flowers, and asked 2 friends for stalks of TBs
- The Dutch irises were in tight bud, so we put them outdoors for the afternoon. Purple ones opened a day ahead of yellow
- 2 colors of Dutch irises provided more options for design
- I chose the container for each arrangement in advance
- I soaked the Oasis wet foam in water for 24 hours
- I made a list of what I might use in each design. Irises must predominate in each arrangement
- I collected items from our yard and neighborhood, including palo verde blossoms, aloe flowers, hesperaloe leaves and stalks, dill, asparagus fern, seed heads of purple fountain grass, a lacey weed for the base of the irises, and geranium leaves to hide the Oasis foam
- Extra kenzans stuck onto the sides of the Oasis foam helped it to remain upright. Floral tape stretched across the foam can anchor it to the side of the container
- Judges felt my orange Gerbera daisy became the focal point instead of irises and that a rock was too far away from irises - 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 June:

Maintenance: Monitor soil with moisture meter and water irises when it reads close to dry. Check for aphids and other pests. Remove pests, weeds, and debris. Update or create a map of your iris beds and containers in case labels fade or disappear. Replace faded labels. Remove spent stems near base using scissors to avoid damaging the rhizome. Move pots to shade. Add shade cloth to irises in beds.

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

Non-Organic care: No fertilizer required till fall.

- SC



Tip Exchange

Ensure that a floral bouquet or arrangement lasts longer by adding the packet of floral preservative that comes with it or by making your own version of preservative. Martha Stewart offers this recipe: Mix into 4 c warm water: 2 T sugar, 1 T white vinegar, and 1 T lemon juice. The sugar serves as a nutrient, the vinegar wards off bacteria, and the lemon juice lowers the pH of the water so that it is taken up better by the stems. Dipping stems in alum helps, too. Remove all leaves below the water level. Change water and make new preservative every 2-3 days. Source: [Martha Stewart.com](http://MarthaStewart.com)

BH&G recommends adding a capful of mouthwash (no alcohol) to water in vases to preserve blooms.

Iris Haiku

Early morning mist
Swirled, vanished with the rising sun.
The irises glowed.
- Sue Clark

Did You Know?

The most commercially-important cut flowers in the world in order are roses, carnations, chrysanthemums, tulips, and Gerbera daisies. Americans buy an estimated 10 million cut flowers every day at a total cost of over \$6.43 million. Specialty flowers like sunflowers, daffodils, and irises are typically grown on local farms because of their fragility. - SC

Sources: Wikipedia: "Gerbera daisy" article, [An Overview of the Cut Flower Industry | USU](http://AnOverviewoftheCutFlowerIndustry|USU)



'Ring Around Rosie'
(Ernst, 2003)

Source: AIS Wiki

"A dripping June Brings all things in tune." – Weather Proverb



A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Another staple in the iris world was Cooley's Gardens of Silverton, Oregon. Founder Rholin Cooley received a gift of irises in 1923 from his family doctor, irisarian R. E. Kleinsorge. Cooley purchased additional irises, and because the plants did so well, he and his wife Pauline found themselves with a surplus of this "strangely fascinating flower." Since Rholin worked for the post office, mail order was the way he chose to sell their excess and they published a catalog in 1928. The Cooleys were so successful that they continued publishing a color catalog each year with the exception of 1943 when colored ink was not available due to WWII. Pauline managed the family business until Rholin retired from the post office in 1950. They had ten acres in 1930, and as demand for irises increased, they gradually purchased over 300 acres and leased another 500.

Cooley's Gardens' display gardens, wine-tastings, square dances, and an annual show of cut iris arrangements by Pauline assured that things were not 'all work and no play' for the family. Daughter Miriam, her children, and grandchildren were all involved in the business at various points through the years, especially after Rholin's death in 1971. Miriam's husband Larry Ernst ran the family business until 1996, when their son Rick took over the helm. Rick introduced 252 irises. His '[Ring Around Rosie](#)' (2000) received the Wister Medal in 2007, just one step below the Dykes Medal.

Rick began to downsize to a level that he and his wife Kati could manage with minimal outside help. By 2009, they had five acres of irises. The wholesale operation had been closed and all but 30 acres sold off. Cooley's closed after Rick's sudden death in 2011, as there was no one left to run the business. Family members rallied to dig and ship the rhizomes that year since the catalog had already been mailed out. It was the end of an era. I still hear iris people speak fondly of Cooley's.

Kati arranged for a friend and hybridizer, William Plotner, to introduce Rick's remaining seedlings as soon as they were ready. These included '[Evening Sunset](#)' (2014), the near-red '[Rick Ernst](#)' (2014), '[Corey](#)' (2015), '[Silverton Spring](#)' (2016), and finally '[Kati's Pick](#)' (2016). - SC

Source: "Starting a Backyard Business" and "Cooley's History" in The American Iris Society, 100 Years Bold, 1920-2020: The Early Years Continued, Supplement 2 of 4.