



March 2025

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 60th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Sneezy' (Rebloomer)
(Keppel, 1995)

Marcusen Sculpture Gardens,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2024

President's Message

My iris are finally starting to grow again after January's freezes (except for the gopher-eaten ones). I hope they revive enough in a month to put on a decent show. How is your crop?

The countdown to our show continues. Last month we had some excellent arrangement information and this month we'll hear from a panel of experienced flower-exhibitors. Learn how to select promising iris stalks, some techniques for transporting them, and what those judges are looking for. Meanwhile, nurture them to the best of your ability.

- Kevin Kartchner

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"The brown buds thicken on the trees, Unbound, the free streams sing, As March leads forth across the leas The wild and windy spring." - Elizabeth Akers Allen

Upcoming Events

Annual dues are past due! \$15/household. Form & details on our [website](#)

March 8 meeting: Panel discussion of tips for presenting at the Iris Show. [Link](#) to the show schedule with all the rules and guidelines

TAIS Iris Show: April 19 in combination with the Rose Society Show, Trinity Presbyterian Church. Set-up 6-9:30 AM. Open to the Public 1-4 PM. Show something and make us proud!

April 25-26: AIS Region 15 Spring Trek, information [link](#)

Birthday Wishes to:

Kristee West	Martin Juarez	Sharm Gregoire
Joyce Knill	Sandy Ellis	Kathy Smith
Cindy Long	Jim Ganem	Linda Ammon



Iris ensata

Source: Biodiversity Heritage Library

February Meeting Minutes



8 Feb 2025 - Twenty-six members and guests met at Eckstrom-Columbus Library for a presentation on floral arranging by Cindy Grimm. See my notes on p. 5.

General meeting: Kevin shared the following event calendar of the busy flower-months of March and April:

March 1-2 - Orchid Show at Mesquite Valley Growers

April 5 - Master Gardeners Tour

April 19 - TAIS & Rose Society Show

April 26 - TAIS Members Garden Tours

Terry has 95 potted irises to sell at the Show, Bonnie has about 90, and Susan and Sally have ten each. Most are fairly small at this point (as are my own irises).

Susan received a certificate and a medallion for having the Queen of Show iris in 2024 ('Belle Fille'), Kevin for 2nd place, and Susan again for third. Terry reminded everyone who plans to enter the show to please read through the schedule.

Cindy offered to help with the Auction.

Kevin ordered 150 rhizomes, including our commemorative gift(s) for TAIS' 60th Anniversary celebration. We silently voted to hold our commemorative luncheon at the community center in Bonnie's neighborhood, and voted by show-of-hands to hold it during our regular meeting day of May 10. Bonnie's research shows that a taco bar would cost approximately the same as sandwiches and pasta salads from Baggins. New member Jody recommended The Kitchen at the Student Center as a possible option.

"Arizona Illustrated" on PBS is considering doing a story on TAIS as part of the local flavor of Tucson.

Kevin mentioned that the Oracle Historical Society would like to have a presentation on irises. Any takers?

Door prizes of potted irises and an aloe were won by Pat, Barbara, Taffy, Cindy Grimm, and me. Three arrangements from Cindy's presentation were won by Linda, Lois, and new member John.

We need more Styrofoam wedges to hold stems steady in the vases at our show. Any ideas about where to buy these or how to make them? Foam make-up wedges are too soft for this purpose.

Board meeting: Cindy requested a current address list so that she and Linda can purge old nametags. Taffy will send the list to her. The Hospitality Crew will provide a light breakfast for the 13 judges and various others at our upcoming Show. Terry suggested coffee, donuts, and fruit for about 30. Coffeecake and bagels were other ideas. The Rose Society will be in charge of providing lunch. Meal costs will be split.

- Sue Clark, secretary



'Fried Green Tomatoes' iris (Stout, 2019) blooming in early February 2025 in TAIS member Dan Schroeder's garden in Green Valley. Photo by Dan



June 2-7

**AIS Convention in
Billings, Montana**



We're on the web:

Tucsoniris.org

February Meeting - photos by Dave Smith



Treasurer's Report for February - submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

BEGINNING BANK BALANCE

1 FEB 2025	12,930.33
<u>FEB INC</u>	<u>462.05</u>
	13,392.38
FEB EXP	<u>1,735.19</u>
28 FEB BAL	11,657.19



Images: Chris A. Hamilton, Brent E. Hendrixson, Jason E. Bond, "Taxonomic revision of the tarantula genus *Aphonopelma* Pocock, 1901 (Araneae, Mygalomorphae, Theraphosidae) within the United States" - Wikimedia Commons

Beneficial Arachnids, Part II: Tarantulas

Both tarantulas and trapdoor spiders catch their prey by ambushing it. I debated about including the ambushing spiders in this column because they don't typically live in people's gardens and help reduce insect populations there. But since they eat many creatures that cause problems in our gardens, they will get their mention here. They are working in the background to help us.

The 1,100 species of tarantulas are large and generally covered with hair-like setae. They are found on all continents except Antarctica. The oldest fossil tarantula has been found in Burmese amber, which dates to 100 million years ago in the mid-Cretaceous. Females are larger than males. Most species of tarantulas hunt on the ground, but several species hunt solely in trees. The arboreal types spin silken tube tents as their residences, while the terrestrial ones prefer to live in burrows whose insides have been stabilized with silk. Both types ambush their prey from these shelters. Their diet consists mainly of crickets, grasshoppers, beetles, and cockroaches. Additional prey includes centipedes, millipedes, and other spiders. The bigger species of tarantulas supplement these by eating mice, lizards, birds, bats, and small snakes. Larger and crunchier prey gets coated in digestive juices to soften it, so that the spider can suck out the liquified remains.

The largest tarantula is the Goliath birdeater of Venezuela and Brazil. It can weigh 6 oz (compare to the weight of 6 AA batteries) and from leg-tip to opposite leg-tip, it measures 12." In Arizona, we have the Grand Canyon Black Tarantula and the Arizona Blond Tarantula. (See photos). Tarantulas are not aggressive toward humans, but will rear up on their hind legs when threatened. Certain types can flick off some of their hairs, which can irritate the skin and especially the eyes of the perceived threat. These defensive hairs, known as urticating hairs, are replenished with each molt.

Tarantulas are considered a delicacy in Venezuela and Cambodia, where they are roasted, fried, and reportedly taste like shrimp (and not chicken). - SC



Image: John, flickr.com/photos/8373783@N07/3093829339



Image: Marc BRETHERS - Wikimedia Commons

From top left: Grand Canyon Black tarantula female and male, Arizona Blond Tarantula female and male (Source 3)

Sources: [8 Beneficial Insects You Want to See in Your Garden](#), Wikipedia article: [Tarantula](#); [Types of Arizona Spiders \(With Pictures\)](#); [What do Tarantulas Eat?](#)

My Notes from Cindy Grimm's Floral-Arranging Presentation

Cindy has flowers deeply imbedded in her DNA. Her great-great-grandmother traveled to the Willamette Vally of Oregon in a covered wagon, bringing various seeds, bulbs, and rhizomes with her. Cindy's great-grandmother sold irises commercially, and her grandmother sold dahlias commercially. Cindy's parents had a nursery and florist business, and Cindy herself worked as a florist for over 40 years. She brought a silk flower arrangement with her and created two with fresh flowers in front of us. (See them on p. 3).

Her tips:



- Use Oasis wet foam. It can absorb 10 times its volume in water and needs to be soaked in water at least overnight. Add more water as necessary to keep it submerged
- Make a fresh cut at the base of the stem of each flower and piece of greenery
- Use a [floral knife](#) or sharp clippers rather than scissors to make clean, sharp cuts and to avoid crushing the base of the stems. This allows the stems to continue to absorb water, thus keeping the flowers fresh longer
- Cut Oasis about an inch above the top edge of vase. Secure it with floral tape if need be
- Be sure that none of your mechanics show: foam, tape, flower frogs, etc. Hide them with moss or other greenery
- Clean off all leaves that will be below the water level because they will rot, and cut all leaves off mums because they don't age well
- For a traditional mass arrangement (Class 3 in the Show), she used a spherical vase filled with Oasis foam. She refers to this type of arrangement as a "Roundy Moundy," and said that if someone can do this type well, then they can do any kind of arrangement. Her sequence: three pussy willow stems in the top of the foam (about 2X the height of the container), one Dutch iris on top and two in front facing out, six stems of silver-dollar eucalyptus to fill in, spider mums to fill in more (numerous singles - some facing downwards - and several in bunches), ditto with red carnations, and she finished with pink statice
- Adding flowers before adding the greens is more economical
- Consider line, color, balance, focal point, rhythm, weight
- Balance materials and colors. This creates rhythm around the focal point because it keeps the eyes moving
- Add texture and color when possible. This might include pebbles in a "Long and Low"-style arrangement
- Avoid using heavy greenery with petite flowers
- Be sure to use flowers and greens that are in top condition
- Critique your own work
- You don't have to use odd numbers of materials. Many of the old rules have changed
- Cindy did a second arrangement in a tall, narrow vase. She started out by placing five pussy willow stems and several stems of silver-dollar eucalyptus into the vase as a support structure for the flowers. Then she added more pussy willows, purple and pink statice, some long-stemmed roses, spider mums, Dutch irises, button mums, and flowers from a colorful mixed bouquet
- Statice can be spray painted
- Herbs such as rosemary and sage can be used as greenery and are fragrant
- Pittosporum works well as a green. There is also a variegated type
- Use silicone strippers for rose thorns so as not to damage the stems
- Use a flower preservative. FloraLife is best
- Add water to arrangement daily to keep the Oasis foam wet
- Dump the water and wash the vase every three days. Give the stems a fresh cut on the bottom. Add clean water, FloraLife, and a few drops of bleach
- If flower is a bit wilted, trim off base of stem and lay the stem horizontally in lukewarm water to revive the flower
- Gerbera daisy stems can be supported in special clear tubes or by running a piece of floral wire up the stem, being careful not to run it through the flower
- Curly willow is a good choice if pussy willow is unavailable - SC

Tips from Diane Pavlovich for Anyone Planning to Enter Artistic Arrangements in the Show: Supplies - Where & How to's

Oasis floral foam is available at Michael's Craft stores and at Hobby Lobby. There is a "wet" version and a "dry" version. Be sure to buy the correct version, which for a fresh arrangement is "wet". It will state it on the packaging. Michael's offers a four-brick package of Oasis, and Hobby Lobby may offer it in a similar quantity.

I am not aware that there is a floral preservative added to the Oasis that you buy at craft stores (maybe it is for florists). So I feel that you need to mix a floral preservative into the water you are soaking the Oasis in.

In my experience, the best thing to do is to cut the brick to the approximate size you need before you soak it. I do this because once the Oasis is wet, it will begin to deteriorate and become unusable within 24 hours. I have found it necessary to weigh it down when you start to soak it. After an hour or so, take a paring knife and poke just a couple of slits in the middle of the brick to help water to soak into the inside. I only soak my Oasis for about 5 hours before using it. I get up early in the morning of a show to make my arrangements, so I start the soaking before I go to bed and it's ready to use when I get up.

It would be best to buy Oasis sooner rather than closer to the Show so that you can be sure that it's in stock before the big rush.

FloraLife flower preservative can be purchased in a 5-lb pail [here](#) from the FloraLife website. The current cost is \$16.10 plus postage. You do not need much if you are just making an arrangement for the show, so it might be something that could be purchased by someone who will dole out small containers to others who want to try it out. Or people can go together to purchase it. In a lidded container, it can last a long time, as you only need about a teaspoon per ½ gallon of water. Mix well.

There are all kinds of concoctions that claim to make flowers last a long time, but FloraLife is the only one that provides the flowers with nutrients and thus keeps them alive and fresh if properly stored. I have been able to keep roses useful for as long as two weeks with FloraLife, water, and refrigeration. Tall bearded iris flowers, however, will not last longer than two days. That's just the nature of that bloom. Dutch irises tend to last a bit longer. You basically want to cut your iris flowers the night before the show, put them in a vase with FloraLife and leave them in a cool room (not in the refrigerator). In the morning or at the show, make your fresh arrangement. The irises should make it through the show and into the next day looking pretty fresh.

Michaels and Hobby Lobby have floral tape and various sizes of floral wire. Both stores carry several types of vases and containers if you do not have what you need. My recommendation is to not use a family heirloom or a vase that you care about. While it makes a beautiful display, save that type of arrangement for home. I've seen arrangements fall over or be dropped in transit. Vases get broken and there have been thefts during the dismantling of shows. So best to leave the good stuff at home.

Hopefully that will help those who are looking for supplies and further tips. - DP

A little more from the editor:



The 5-lb bucket of FloraLife is \$33.64 on Amazon, but they sell a [liquid version of FloraLife for \\$14.99](#). Amazon also offers many types of [kenzans](#) (spiked flower-holders) and [Ikebana vases and kits](#). **Please consider creating an arrangement for our Show!** - SC

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

Maintenance: Keep iris plants hydrated during this interval of rapid growth. Monitor with moisture meter. Check for aphids and other pests. They can be dislodged with a burst of water. Remove weeds and any debris. Replace faded labels, as names are required when showing irises.

Organic care: Dose with [greensand](#) and [bone meal](#) (1 T each) for the spring. Do NOT put bone meal on Japanese irises! Feed with [fish emulsion](#) every other week and [feather meal](#) monthly. Apply humic acid as desired.

Non-organic care: Apply weekly or every other week: [Scott's Super Bloom](#) (12-55-6), Miracle-Gro [Bloom Booster](#) (10-52-10), [Schultz Bloom Plus](#) 10-54-10), or Ferti-lome [Blooming & Rooting](#) (9-58-8). Mix as indicated on package. - SC

**Tip Exchange**

If you would like to have a TAIS image on a shirt to wear at our events, such as the Show or Sale, you may take any type of shirt and have irises and "Tucson Area Iris Society" embroidered on it. Martin set this up for us some years ago. He mentioned that the woman who does the embroidery has relocated and is now at [RC Stitch & Sew](#), 1620 S. Craycroft Rd. (south of 22nd St.) (520) 647-9427. Just take your shirt in!

Iris Limerick

I wish for an iris so green -
The greenest that I've ever seen.
It'd be so lovely
And quite a discovery
To grow a flower so green.
- Sue Clark

Did You Know?

You can buy or swap seeds online through [The Exchange](#) by [Seed Savers Exchange](#).

Gardeners from around the country list seeds that they have grown in their own gardens. Many of these 14,000 varieties are heirloom types. The print version of the Seed Savers Exchange has over 600 kinds of seeds. They check the germination rate so that you can be sure that these seeds will grow. Source: [A Way to Garden e-newsletter](#) by Margaret Roach, 9 Feb 2025

*Iris ensata*

Source: Child's Rare Flower Catalog

**"March in the garden - my hostess shows me
brown sticks and speaks of flowers." - Sister Benedicta**

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Japan's borders had been closed to outsiders for 200+ years until Commodore Perry sailed into Tokyo Bay with five warships in 1853 and forced the opening of the country to western trade. Portuguese and Spanish missionaries attempting to change the culture of the country were what had prompted the shogun to isolate Japan in 1639. Once it was opened, botanists were among those who came with the Dutch East India Company. Two that were important as far as Japanese irises were concerned were Englebert Kaempfer and Carl Thunberg. It was Thunberg who named these irises *Iris ensata* in 1794. A German botanist, Philipp Franz von Siebold named them *Iris kaempferi* in 1886 in honor of his fellow countryman, Englebert Kaempfer. According to botanical naming rules, the first published name is the official name, but in this case it took a long time to sort out. It wasn't until 1985 that the name *I. ensata* was revived, so *I. kaempferi* it was for 99 years. You may still see this name used.

Thomas Hogg was appointed by President Lincoln to serve as a customs agent in Japan in 1862. During his eight years there, he studied the native plants and sent many to his family's nursery in New York. Japanese irises were likely among these exports. No Hogg catalog has been discovered, but a 1879 catalog from the Woolson and Company nursery of Passaic, New Jersey states, "We offer seedlings from the best European stocks, and also named varieties from the stock originally introduced from Japan by Mr. Thomas Hogg." Hallock & Thorpe of Queens, Long Island was importing Japanese irises by 1885. In 1920, this nursery was expanded to 20 acres by John Childs, who called it Flowerfields. It was filled with Japanese irises, including new varieties bred by Childs. (See illustration above). The Yokohama Nursery Company began exporting Japanese irises to nurseries in the United States. In 1893, they set up the first proper display of Japanese irises in the USA at the World Exhibition in Chicago. Their exhibit of about 150 varieties did much to popularize Japanese irises in this country, and five years later, they opened a nursery in New York. To be continued... - SC

Sources: "Japanese Iris Come to America," by Kathleen Sonntag in *AIS 100 Years Bold*, Supplement 2 of 5 to *IRISES: the Bulletin of AIS*, 2020; *The Japanese Iris*, C. McEwen, 1990



2025 Tucson Area Iris Society Show

**Saturday, April 19 at Trinity Presbyterian Church
400 E. University Blvd.**

Free and open to the public 1-4 p.m.

Potted iris plants for sale

Entrance on the east side of the church