



March 2026

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 61st year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'White Hot'
(Tasco, 2008)

Marcusen Sculpture Gardens,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2025

President's Message

It always happens. Looking over my iris, all I see is a sea of green leaves. Where are the flowers or even buds? But it always happens. Only a few weeks from now, there will be thousands of iris flowers to enjoy. In only seven weeks, there will be even more and a select few worth taking to our show. Adapt your iris culture to our early heat and keep growing.

To appreciate how amazing today's iris are, come learn all about historic iris at our March meeting. We'll hear from HIPS (Historic Iris Preservation Society) about what they do and how we can help. We should all grow some historic iris to preserve our iris ancestry. See you there.

- Kevin Kartchner

"March is the month of expectation, the things we do not know." - Emily Dickinson 

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Upcoming Events

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

March 8: 2 PM. "Caring for Iris and Bulbs," a presentation by Catesby Suter, M.S. Acadia Ranch Museum, 825 E. Mt. Lemmon Highway, Oracle. \$5 suggested donation

Next TAIS Meeting: March 14, 1 PM, Murphy-Wilmot Library, 530 N. Wilmot Road. "Historic Irises and the Historic Iris Preservation Society" by Nancy McDonald. Join by Zoom if you are unable to attend: <https://us05web.zoom.us/j/89170458063>

March 14-15: [Tucson Garden Club Show](#) at [Oro Valley Public Library](#)

April 10-11: [Region 15 Spring Trek](#), Phoenix. Hosted by Sun Country Iris Society. See information and forms on p. 7-8

TAIS Iris Show: April 18 in combination with the Rose Society Show, Trinity Presbyterian Church, 400 E. University Blvd. Prep time 6-9:30 AM. Open to the Public 1-4 PM. [Schedule available](#) on TAIS website. Show something and make us proud! No regular meeting in April

Birthday Wishes to:

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



Iris albispiritus

Source: by Mary E. Eaton in Addisonia magazine

February Meeting Minutes



14 Feb 2026 - Thirteen members gathered at the Miller-Golf Links Library. Kevin led the group in a special game of Bingo which featured Dykes-Medal-winning irises. There is one Dykes winner annually, so they are the best of the best. Kevin pointed out the sweeping changes in modern-day iris flowers as compared to the smaller, longer-and-narrower-falled ones of old. Sam won the game, with Brian and Bonnie taking 2nd and 3rd place, respectively. Prizes were Iris Bucks. Thank you to AIS for including all of the information necessary for Dykes Bingo on their website.

General meeting: Reminder that Sun Country's Region 15 Spring Trek will be April 10-11 in Phoenix. This is a great chance to see many newer varieties of irises growing in three gardens with a similar climate to Tucson's. See forms on p. 7-8. Kevin brought TAI's book collection so that members could check one out until the next meeting. He mentioned Tucson Botanical Gardens' Zoom class on February 25 about how

to paint irises using watercolors.

The Tucson Garden Club enjoyed a presentation by Pat on January 21, and they have invited our members to participate in their flower show on March 13 and 14 at the Oro Valley Public Library.

2026 TAI's Event Chairs:

Show - Terry

Auction - **We still need a chairperson.** Leigh will prepare the Powerpoint presentation.

Sale: Pat

Photo Contest: Sue

We tallied potted irises for the upcoming sale at the Show:

Terry - 12, Diane - 12, and Bonnie - 30, for a total of 54.

Sam and Jim won't be available to serve as cashiers at the sale at the show, so **we will need two cashiers.**

Door prizes of potted irises were won by Cindy, Kevin, and Sam, who gave his to Jim. These were gifts from Howie Dash and the Mesilla Valley Iris Society's sale via Lois and Leeann. Thank you!

For our Show in April, consider entering irises or an arrangement!



We're on the web:

Tucsoniris.org

Board meeting: Kevin requested approval to purchase a new projector which will provide much clearer images. Terry motioned and Cindy and Dave seconded. "Ayes" cinched the vote. Cindy asked about the process for being named a Life Member. Someone nominated Kristee be one a few years ago, which was approved by voting. No one knew more than this. Kevin will send the membership list to our webmaster when Cindy and Linda have it ready. Sue will send out an email message about dues, and include a membership form. Diane created the show schedule and it is already posted to our website. She is now working on the posters for the show and our Fall Trek.

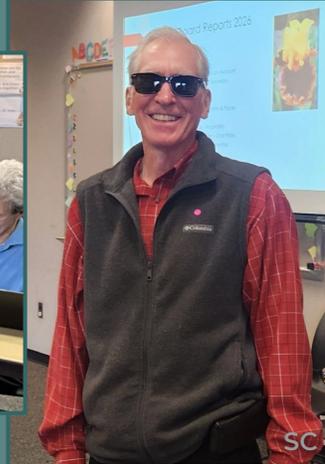
- Sue Clark, secretary

Mulch & Compost

Terry asked what type of mulch people used for their irises. He is trying mushroom mulch this year. Susan uses no mulch for her potted irises. Kevin said that he adds a compost to his soil, but doesn't use mulch. His compost is made by his neighbor and consists of woodchips, horse manure, and grain. I use pine needles as mulch for my Louisiana irises which grow in 5-gallon buckets, but none for my potted or in-the-ground irises. I make my own compost, which I add to potting soil and native soil when planting anything. - SC



February Meeting - photos by Dave Smith (& two by Sue)



Treasurer's Report for February

- submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

BEGINNING BALANCE 17,238.73

INCOME

Dues 120.00

SUBTOTAL 17,401.73

EXPENSES

Rhizomes - Auction 450.00

Rhizomes - Sale 800.00

Rhizomes - Sale (K) 800.00

Printing - Show 49.00

SUBTOTAL 2099.00

ENDING BALANCE 15,302.73



Source: Britannica



From top: rove beetle (iNaturalist), mealybug destroyer larva (Source 3), mealybug destroyer adult (by Gilles San Martin on Wikimedia), and a jumping spider (by Kevin Collins)

Beneficial Garden Bugs, Part XId: Aphid-Eaters

We've looked at fourteen insects that eat aphids, either during their larval or adult stage, and learned some ways to attract them to, and host them in, our gardens:

- growing beds of perennials for both cover and nectar
- including their favorite flowers: dill, Queen Anne's lace, fennel, cosmos, goldenrod, marigolds, calendula, daisies, sunflowers, sweet alyssum, and yarrow
- avoiding pesticide use

We'll finish out our study this month with three more aphid-eaters. **Rove beetles** are long and slender like earwigs. Their short wings don't cover their abdomen, and when threatened, they curl their abdomen up so that they resemble a scorpion. Leaf litter and organic mulch will attract rove beetles, who climb plants to hunt aphids. **Mealybug Destroyers** eat aphids, mealybugs, and other soft-bodied insects. They are a type of ladybug whose larvae look like a wild and wooly many-legged creature. These insects were brought from Australia for pest control and are sold commercially. **Jumping spiders** are arachnids rather than insects, but they help out in the garden by actively hunting insects. Smaller species of jumping spiders eat aphids, while larger ones prefer prey such as grasshoppers and caterpillars. With over 7,000 species, jumping spiders are the largest and most diverse family of spiders, and range in size from 0.04"-1."

Thus ends our study of 17 bugs who dine on aphids. - SC

Sources: [BH&G: How to Get Rid of Aphids and Protect Plants](#); [17 Beneficial Insects that Eat Aphids](#); [8 Bugs You Should Never Kill In Your Garden - Birds and Blooms](#), [Will Jumping Spiders Eat Aphids](#); Wikipedia article: "[Jumping Spider](#)"; Britannica article: "[Jumping Spider](#)"

The Language of Iris by Pat Olsen

The Early Bloomers – Reticulata and Miniature Dwarf Bearded

Before the tall bearded irises take center stage, the iris season begins at ankle height.

Iris reticulata is a bulbous iris growing from a bulb rather than a rhizome. Reticulatas are classified by the American Iris Society (AIS) as Species (bulbous and beardless). Reticulatas are the first to bloom in a garden. They grow four to six inches tall with blooms three to four inches in diameter in grass-like foliage. They can be a deep rich color or warm and muted. Reticulatas may bloom as early as January in Tucson but are more likely to bloom in late February with the daffodils. Cooler winters and drier summers are ideal for reticulatas. To avoid rot, it is best to underwater than overwater in the hottest season.

The earliest bearded iris to bloom is the **Miniature Dwarf Bearded (MDB)** iris. MDBs grow to no more than 8 inches tall (just about ankle height). This is a firm maximum height requirement. While an occasional bloom greater than 8 inches is allowed, consistent bloom greater than 8.0 inches reclassifies the iris as a Standard Dwarf Bearded iris. The flower is very petite, 1.6 - 3 inches in width. Branching is rare, usually one bloom per stalk. MDBs grow in tight, compact clumps. The parentage of MDBs is rooted in *Iris Pumila*. Pure *Iris Pumila* may be found in Eastern Europe. Modern MDBs are 50-75% *Iris Pumila* crossed with other bearded iris classes. Miniature Dwarf Bearded irises display a variety of forms and color patterns, including some very bushy beards (see 'Wild Whiskered Wonder,' Delane Langton, 2026, below, center).

MDBs make great companion plants for succulent containers. In well-amended soil, MDBs are wonderful as borders on pathways or garden beds. MDBs will stand out in rock gardens.

In our desert heat, airflow is essential for irises. Excess water, crowding weeds, and prolonged summer irrigation can trap heat and increase the risk of rot. Once temperatures consistently exceed 100°F, irrigation should be reduced and soil allowed to dry between waterings.

Trek(s) Update by Pat Olsen

As the Reticulatas begin their bloom season, we are excited to announce that Region 15's trek season will begin in Phoenix on April 10th and 11th.

The event will feature a sale of 80 potted irises, including Rebloomers, Louisianas, and recently introduced Tall Bearded and Arilbreds. AIS President Bonnie Nichols will give two presentations, including one focused on Novelty Irises. The trek includes visits to three gardens via bus transportation and two provided meals. This is a wonderful opportunity to see newer introductions in full bloom.

TAIS will be hosting the Fall Trek on October 17, 2026. This one-day event is designed to be a simpler meeting to host, and our guest speaker will be past AIS President Jody Nolin. She is sure to bring a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to her presentations.

The Trek Committee is currently working on registration, raffle prizes, and silent auction items. With the help of all our members, we look forward to a successful event that shines as bright as the desert sun.



From left: *I. reticulata*, MTB 'Wild Whiskered Wonder,' and MTB 'Spot of Tea.' Photos by Pat Olsen



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 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 to enter irises in a show.

Organic care: Dose with [greensand](#) and [bone meal](#) (1 T each) for the spring. Do NOT put bone meal on Japanese irises, though! 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

I have switched back to the non-organic care method (above) after trying (and failing) with the organic care method. Time to try a different strategy after two years of little to no iris bloom. After applying Schultz Bloom Plus weekly, I am using Terry's tip of following that with a thorough watering to push the fertilizer down to the root area. The Schultz fertilizer requires only 1 teaspoon per gallon of water, so it will go three times as far as say, Miracle-Gro Bloom Booster, which takes 1 Tablespoon per gallon. Stay tuned for results! - SC

Iris Limerick

I wish for an iris of green,
The shade of some peas or a lima bean.
It might be bright
Or it might be light,
As long as it's green, green, green!
- Sue Clark



'Christobel'
(Lapham 1934)

Source: AIS Wiki

Did You Know?

An ancient Japanese calendar divided each of the four seasons into six parts known as *sekki*. These 15-day intervals are based on the position of the earth in relation to the sun or moon, or based on natural phenomena. Each *sekki* is further divided into three parts, resulting in 72 microseasons, each about five days long. Some of their names include "The East Wind Melts the Ice" and "The First Iris Blooms." - SC Sources: Jan Johnson's Gardentopia email of 7 Feb 2026 and *Kyoto Journal* [article](#) by Mark Hovane

"In the spring at the end of the day,
you should smell like dirt." - Margaret Atwood



A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Many people dream of a truly-red iris. This month, we'll look at a portion of the quest for such an iris, a quest that has been going on for about a hundred years. For decades, E. Greig Lapham dedicated himself to breeding a red iris, using knowledge gained from breeding fancy poultry, as well as raising and breeding irises and gladioli. Lapham's plan involved studying the available options in the reddish irises of other breeders, making friends with said breeders, and then accepting their proffered help and returning the favors at every opportunity. His breeding plan was to build from the ground up (which I think means that he purchased the reddish irises that he wanted to use), cross the best reds and red blends, select and cross seedlings until red-seeking results are obvious (a process known as "inbreeding"), and then bring in "new blood" to get the traits wanted, such as size (a process known as "outcrossing").

The irises Lapham selected were from Paul Cook, Fitz Randolph, and Geddes Douglas. Fred Deforest and Chet Thompkins provided pollen. It wasn't long, though, before the best breeding stock was from Lapham's own seedlings. His first red iris was '[Belle Porter](#)' (1929), followed by '[Jerry](#)' (1933), '[Red Sails](#)' (1937), and then '[Red Ray](#)' (1940). The latter was developed by combining two lines of irises. Now the goal changed to increasing the bloom size, so '[Rameses](#)' (H. P. Sass 1929) was the "new blood" introduced, and when crossed with 'Jerry,' the result was '[Christabel](#)' (1934). This was probably his most famous creation. (See photo above).

Lapham is also noted for his work on pink irises. Important ones are '[Paradise Pink](#)' (1949) and '[Lotte Lembrich](#)' (1951). Modern reds and oranges can be traced to his irises. - SC

Sources: "Greig Lapham; Nearly All Reds Traced to his Irises," by Anne Lowe, 2000 - abridged in "AIS 100 Years Bold," supplement 2 of 4, 2020; AIS Iris Wiki for the links

IRIS ROUNDUP

A.K.A AIS REGION 15 2026 SPRING TREK
HOSTED BY THE SUN COUNTRY IRIS SOCIETY
APRIL 10TH & 11TH

Included: Friday evening (Mexican fare dinner) and Saturday afternoon (Pulled Pork BBQ) plus 3 gardens on tour (Gilbert, Sun City and Phoenix Arizona) by bus. There will be both classroom and in-garden judges training led by **American Iris Society President Bonnie Nichols.**



Meetings and meals will be at the Maricopa County Extension Office, 4341 East Broadway Road, Phoenix, 85040.

Registration is \$100.00 by 3/1/2026; \$110 after 3/1/26 payable by check

Name: _____ Plan to attend Saturday afternoon meal? Yes/No

Club: _____ Plan to attend Friday evening meal? Yes/No

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Special Mobility Needs: _____

Please send checks payable to Sun Country Iris Society along with a completed registration form to: Ann Booth, 2026 trek Co-Chair, 8683 East Golden Cholla Drive, Gold Canyon, AZ 85118, Alaniann@outlook.com, (425) 244-1354



HOTELS

WE ARE NOT HAVING A DESIGNATED CONVENTION HOTEL. INSTEAD, RESEARCH HAS LOCATED THE FOLLOWING PROPERTIES IN THE AREA OF THE MARICOPA COUNTY EXTENSION OFFICE. ALL HAVE FREE PARKING, FREE WI-FI, WHEEL CHAIR ACCESSIBILITY AND ALL BUT THE WYNDHAM INCLUDE A FREE BREAKFAST. ALL ARE ABOUT 4 MILES FROM SKY HARBOR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT IN PHOENIX.

- **Green Tree Inn and Suites** (3 stars) 4234 South 48th Street, Phoenix AZ 85040
.7 miles from meeting site
- **Hampton Inn & Suites** (4.5 stars) 1550 South 52nd Street, Tempe AZ, 85281
1.4 miles from meeting site
- **Home2Suites** (4.5 stars) 4725 East Broadway, Phoenix 85040
.6 miles from meeting site
- **Wyndham Airport/ Tempe** (3.5 stars) 1600 South 52nd Street, Tempe, 85281
1.4 miles from meeting site

OTHER PHOENIX AREA ATTRACTIONS: YOU MAY WANT
TO VISIT DEPENDING ON YOUR LENGTH OF STAY:

- DESERT BOTANICAL GARDEN, 1202 NORTH GALVIN PARKWAY, PHOENIX
85008 - DBG.ORG
- JAPANESE FRIENDSHIP GARDEN, 1125 NORTH 3RD AVENUE, PHOENIX 85004 -
JAPANESEFRIENDSHIPGARDEN.ORG
- HEARD MUSEUM, 2301 NORTH CENTRAL AVENUE, PHOENIX 85004 -
HEARD.ORG

SUN COUNTRY IRIS SOCIETY IS A 501-C3 ORGANIZATION
AND AN AFFILIATE OF THE AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY



**The Tucson Area
Iris Society
and the
Rose Society of
Tucson
will combine for
a fabulous spring
flower show
Saturday,
April 18, 2026**



**Trinity Presbyterian
Church
400 E University Blvd.
Open to the Public
1-4 p.m.**

Free Admission

**Free parking behind
church**

**Potted iris, rose
plants and bouquets
for sale**