



November 2026

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society – established 1965

Our 61st year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Absolute Treasure'
(Tasco, 2006)

Marcusen Sculpture Garden
Prescott, Arizona
Sue Clark, 2025

President's Message

After over 100 TAIS president's messages, it's time to hand over the rhizomes. So many wonderful memories. We've had some lean years with a flower show of less than a dozen entries to our current impressive, judged shows combined with the rose society. We stayed active during COVID while some iris societies folded. We continue to have first-rate rhizome sales and of course hosting our amazing Fall trek for the first time in many years. Obviously, all this is made possible only by you, the hard-working TAIS member. Change is good and Cindy and the new officers will bring new ideas and improvements to TAIS. Thanks for everyone's continuing contributions to TAIS and see you at the potluck this month to cap off an eventful year.

- Kevin Kartchner

Please consider serving on the TAIS Board. See p. 9 for a list of positions which are open for the coming year, including hospitality. - SC

"Some of the days of November carry the whole memory of summer as a fire opal carries the color of moonrise. These are the days I especially love, when the air lies soft and quiet over the dreaming earth; it is a reflective and thoughtful time."

- Gladys Taber, "November"

Inside this Issue:

Report from the Region 15 2
Fall Trek, LA & SPU Tidbits

Photos from the Region 15 3-4
Fall Trek & Raclette

Treasurer's Report, Color in
the Garden - article & photos 5

TAIS at Garden Expo, TAIS 6
Mystery Gardener, More Trek
Acknowledgements

The Language of Iris – Tall 7-8
Bearded, Part II

What to do in the Iris Garden 9
in November

Autumnal Haiku, Did You 9
Know? Tips, Bit of Botany
and Iris History

Upcoming Events:

November 14: 11 AM to 2 PM. Annual Potluck with Seed- and Plant Exchange, [Dove of Peace Church, 665 W. Roller Coaster Rd.](#) Bring a dish to share. Note earlier start time

December: No meeting. Happy Holidays!

January 9 meeting: 1 PM, TBA

Birthday Wishes to:

Angela Powers

Ron Kelsen

Susan Schaefer

Laura Brian

Donna Witschi

Candace Shelton

Andrew DeMato



Report from the Fall Trek



We ♥ Irises

17 Oct 2026 – TAIS hosted the Region 15 Fall Trek for the first time in many years. Held at Tohono Chul, it was an enjoyable day with 45 irisarians from around Arizona and California. The Trek Committee thought of every detail for the event, from goodie bags to lunch to fabulous prizes, ranging from door prizes of 10 AB [‘Desert Oasis’](#) rhizomes (Black, 2025), to raffle items of 46 rhizomes and 26 gift baskets, to silent auction items including baskets with iris liquour, three quilts, and other iris-themed articles. The Committee, chaired by Pat, included Joyce (registration), Bonnie (prizes), Cindy (welcome gift), and Kevin (MC). Besides these worker-bees, volunteers for the day included Diane (who also handled publicity), Terry, Leigh and Brian, Elaine, and me. Nancy was there in support of the club, and we signed on a new member, Scott, who recently relocated to Tucson from Tennessee.

Jody Nolan, AIS past-president, presented Judge’s Trainings on Louisiana and spuria irises sandwiched between Region 15 meetings.

All in all, a great day, filled with careful planning, education, and prizes! – SC

Louisiana Iris Tidbits

All five species are native to the United States and range from Louisiana to Florida and north into Ohio. There are many hybrid Louisianas available. Beauty and distinctiveness of the flowers rate highly with judges, and different growing conditions can cause slight changes in size and color. Foliage is typically yellow-green or blue-green. Some Louisianas that Jody likes include [‘Atchafalaya’](#) (Campbell, 1998), [‘Cajun Sunrise’](#) (Mertzweiller, 1993), [‘Electric Storm’](#) (Jackson, 2018), and [‘Tribal Fire’](#) (Pryor, 2001).

How to:
[InfoHybridizingSpurias](#)
[ByNiswonger < Main](#)
[< Iris Wiki](#)



We’re on the web:
Tucsoniris.org

Spuria Iris Tidbits

This type of iris, with its tall clumps and large, dramatic blooms, is a stand-out in the garden. It blooms later and thus extends the iris season – into July in Ohio where Jody gardens! They do not need to be divided, so you just plant them once and enjoy. If you want to give a few to friends, just use a shovel to remove some from the edges of the clump. Varmints leave them alone, but ants are attracted to the nectaries in the flowers, so rinse them off before bringing them inside. Spurias may go dormant depending on the climate. Ours do, Jody’s don’t. She loves them for the back of a border. Some that Jody likes: smaller varieties [‘Tiny Lou’](#) (Jenkins, 1990), [‘Sunny Day’](#) (Sass, 1931), and [‘Elfin Sunshine’](#) (Jenkins 1998), and taller ones [‘Speeding Star’](#) and [‘Lemon Chiffon Pie’](#) (both Cadd, 2002, 2006), [‘Lemon Shortcake’](#) and [‘Russian Blue’](#) (both Niswonger, 2013, 1983), [‘Blue Spiderweb’](#) (Ferguson, 1966) and [‘Sky Dancer’](#) (Hedgecock, 2010). There were lots of spuria fans in attendance, including Andy Rivarola, president of the Spuria Iris Society. He encouraged us to hybridize spurias, as only a handful of hybridizers exist. Small varieties and fragrant varieties are possible goals that he suggested.

– Sue Clark, secretary

Some Trek Photos by Sue Clark (and one by Pat Olsen)



Post-Trek Raclette Dinner hosted by Jody & John Williams



The first six pictures are by Joyce.

The rest are by Pat, except for the Trek photo of Pat and Jody, which is by Isabel Olsen of PAIS



Treasurer's Report for October by Jim Wilcoxon

No report this month.

Color in the Garden, Part I – Red, Orange, & Yellow

According to Jan Johnsen, landscape designer, color enhances a space, creates a mood, and even affects our bodily response to a place. Nature uses color to attract pollinators and to direct them to the goodies. We can use it, too – not only in our selection of plants, but also for colorful pots, chairs, doors, and gates, to name a few. Color can draw our eye around the garden or to a specific focal point.

Red signifies power, courage, excitement, and good luck. It increases our confidence, metabolism, pulse, and heart rate. Red is often used at entries because it is the first color that humans perceive as infants. Red front doors and red geraniums at entrances and gates are common. While large swaths of red are rather overpowering and cause stress, pops of red can be used quite effectively in the garden as focal points or to create rhythm and move our eyes around the space.

Orange commands attention and is the color of vitality and of autumn. It radiates a sense of optimism and warmth, as well as stimulates the release of serotonin and helps us think. It is known to encourage conversation, so consider growing containers of orange flowers around your patio. It also acts as a wayfinder, drawing guests forward along a garden path.

Yellow has many positive attributes. It causes serotonin to be released, thus lifting our spirits. It stimulates our intellect and creativity, promotes clarity of thought, and grabs the eye in a garden. Monet's dining room was yellow.

Thinking about irises in these colors, red brings us '[Over Heated](#),' '[Cherokee Blaze](#),' and '[Lest We Forget](#);' orange is well-represented by '[Orange Crush Cocktail](#),' '[Orange Popsicle](#),' and '[Orange Juice](#);' while yellow brings us '[That's all Folks](#),' '[Notta Lemon](#),' and '[Big as the Moon](#).' And there are many others in each color.

See photos at right for a sampling of plants that can add these colors to our desert gardens. Others that are suitable for growing in containers or the ground include:

- red – snapdragon,* geranium,* *Salvia*, *Agastache*, coral fountain, lantana
- orange – calendula,* *Tecoma*,* marigold, lantana, nasturtium, *Rudbeckia*
- yellow – yellow bells *Tecoma*,* petunias,* lantana, marigold, *Rudbeckia*

Jan reports that flowering plants in the warm colors of red, orange, and yellow look especially beautiful when planted to catch the afternoon sun or when planted against a backdrop of dark evergreens. More on color next month. – SC

* cool-season container plants and shrubs recommended by Noelle Johnson, the AZ Plant Lady

Sources: "Designing with Color" webinar by Jan Johnsen, 14 May 2026, from her handout and my notes. [Johnsen Landscapes](#) is her website; and "Plant for Success" webinar by Noell Johnson, the AZ Plant Lady, 8 Oct 2026, my notes. Her [website](#). Also [Iris Wiki](#), [Schreiner's Iris Gardens](#) (I used their filter by color feature), and "Red is the First Color a Baby Sees" [article](#)



'Kudos Red' *Agastache* ([Monrovia](#)), 'Cherokee Sunset' *Rudbeckia* ([eBay](#)), *Calendula* ([Etsy](#)), and *Rudbeckia* black-eyed Susan type ([Amazon](#))

I chose some plants that grow in our area. From Top: Autumn sage, *Salvia greggii* ([The Spruce](#)), Mexican bird of paradise ([The Spruce](#)), Mexican honeysuckle ([GardenersPath.com](#)), Desert marigold (by [Stan Shebs, Wikimedia](#)), and Desert Museum Palo verde ([PlanetNaural.com](#)).

See also: [Best Tucson Native Plants to Add Beauty in Fall](#), [Tucson Shade Plants](#)



TAIS at Garden Expo at SaddleBrooke

Linda and Cindy represented TAIS at the Southeast Pinal County Master Gardeners Desert Garden Expo at SaddleBrooke Ranch in Oracle on October 14. Their table was filled with growing tips, photos, and membership information. Cindy reports that many people stopped and asked about growing irises. Several recalled irises grown by family members or themselves in the past and were surprised that irises can grow in the desert. Thanks, ladies, for spreading the word! - SC



Photos by Cindy Long



**TAIS
Mystery
Gardener
#3**

1. I enjoy visiting botanical gardens and arboretums wherever I go.
2. My main roles in the garden are fixing everything that is broken, keeping everything alive while hoping for thriving, acquiring more plants than I have time for, and enjoying it all in the few minutes that remain after everything else is done.
3. Orchids and irises are my favorite flowers.

Who am I?

**Last month's Mystery Gardener
was Linda Briggs**

More Trek Acknowledgements

Irises were donated by Pat Olsen, Joyce Knill, Kevin Kartchner, Doug Karanowski (Mariposa Iris), Rick Tasco (Superstition Iris Gardens: 2 gift certificates for 2027 intro), Schreiner's Iris Garden (\$50 gift certificate), Steve Kelly (Adobe Iris), and Claire Schneider Sue Clark - two quilts
Pat Olsen - one quilt
Margie Valenzula - many raffle items
Melody Van Ess - fused glass garden art
Bonnie Else - centerpiece/wreath
Linda Briggs - Crocheted pillow
Mark's Ace Hardware - garden gloves
Healthy Skin Dermatology - skin care samples
Rillito Nursery and Garden Center - wind chime
Barbara Else - 6 Hand painted wine glasses, miniature greenhouse
Sam Wymer - Iris Print
Terry Swartz - Iris Canvas
HiDesert and Sun Country shared lanyards and raffle supplies
Thank you to Ben Olsen for printing our name tags and transporting the gift baskets to the trek. – Pat Olsen

The Language of Iris by Pat Olsen

TB — Tall Bearded Iris - Part 2: When a TB Comes Home to Tucson

Last month, we looked at what makes a Tall Bearded iris a TB, how modern hybridizers have transformed the flower, and some of the things that catch my eye when choosing a new variety. But choosing an iris is the easy part. The real test begins when I bring it home to Tucson.

Does It Earn Its Place?

The longer I grow irises, the more attention I pay to **increase**. A beautiful bloom isn't enough if the plant doesn't perform in my garden. There are even Dykes Medal winners that I simply don't particularly like or that haven't performed well for me. An award tells us that an iris achieved exceptional recognition within the AIS awards system; it doesn't guarantee that every gardener will love it or that it will perform equally well in every garden.

If an iris isn't increasing after three or four years, I may dig it up and make room for something else. There are simply too many beautiful irises available to devote precious garden space indefinitely to one that isn't happy here. But I'm not always that ruthless.

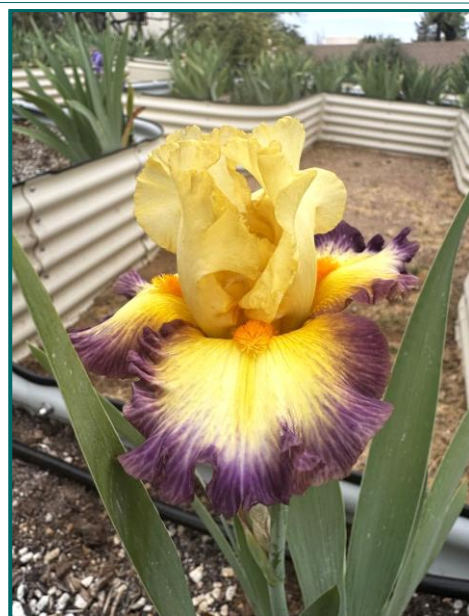
I've forgotten about an iris only to have it finally bloom after five or six years. Suddenly I'm standing there thinking, *I've never seen you bloom before!* There is something exciting about realizing that a plant has finally adjusted to your soil, your growing conditions, and your climate—and you're at last seeing the beauty its hybridizer created.

So some irises get three or four chances. Some get five, six or seven. And occasionally a bonus iris arrives that I simply don't like. That one may get **zero**.

Growing TBs in Tucson

Growing Tall Bearded irises in the desert has taught me that gardening advice has to be interpreted through the place where you actually garden.

When I lived in Illinois, irises seemed able to grow and bloom with relatively little attention. Tucson is different. Our summer heat can be brutal, and drainage and watering matter. Bearded iris rhizomes need good drainage. Keeping them too wet, particularly when conditions are hot, can



'Boxing Ring,'

Thomas Johnson, hybridizer

encourage problems including rhizome rot.

For a new Tucson iris grower, my first advice is simple: **be especially careful about overwatering during our summer heat, give plants enough room for growth and air circulation, and pay attention to pests such as mealybugs and grasshoppers.**

(continued on following page...)



'Della's Destiny,'

Jim Geditz, hybridizer

The Language of Iris, continued...

Bloom time can be surprisingly local, too. In my garden, peak TB bloom may arrive around the beginning of the second week of April. Yet another grower only ten miles away may not reach peak bloom until considerably later. That's Tucson. Our elevation, exposure, temperatures and individual garden conditions can make a difference. Even observations such as bloom time are most meaningful when we know **where and when** the iris was grown.

Planting time is another place where I've learned to watch my garden rather than simply follow a calendar developed somewhere else. In Tucson, I wait for the intense summer heat to subside. Late September and October can still provide time for newly planted rhizomes to begin establishing themselves. The traditional advice gardeners hear elsewhere—such as planting around Labor Day or well before the first frost—doesn't necessarily fit our desert calendar. **Desert iris growing requires dedication.**

What I Wish Modern Irises Had More Of

For all the advances hybridizers have made—larger flowers, ruffles, unusual patterns, remarkable beards, and increasingly novel forms—there is one characteristic I would personally love to see emphasized more: **fragrance**. I grow hundreds of irises. When I bring blooms into the house, I can smell them. Outside, however, I usually have to approach an individual flower and deliberately smell it. I'd love to walk into my backyard during peak bloom and be greeted by the fragrance of the entire iris garden.

That isn't a criticism of modern hybridizers so much as something on my wish list for the future. Perhaps the next great advance in Tall Bearded irises won't be something we see. **Perhaps it will be something we smell.**

Why Tall Bearded?

After all these years, there is another reason I appreciate TBs that has nothing to do with awards, branching, ruffles, or color. **They're tall.** That matters.

A Tall Bearded iris puts its flower where I can see it. Usually I need only bend slightly at the waist to study the standards, falls, beards, and all those little details that make one iris different from another.

As gardeners age, that accessibility becomes increasingly



'Doctor Who,'
George Sutton, hybridizer

valuable. The shorter iris classes can require a deep knee bend, getting down close to the ground, or cutting a flower and bringing it inside to really examine it. A Tall Bearded iris brings the flower to us.

Maybe that's part of why, generations ago, my family grew Tall Bearded irises—and why, after discovering the much larger world of iris, I still find myself drawn to them.

They're colorful. They're constantly changing. They're sometimes frustrating. They don't always behave the way the catalog says they will.

And every spring, they still make me stop and look.



'Folklorico,'
Steve Kelly, hybridizer

TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. for 2027

Cindy Long- President

Pat Olsen – Vice President

Linda Briggs – Secretary

Joyce Knill – Treasurer

___ & ___ - Programs & Places

Diane Pavlovich – Publicity

___ - Hospitality

___ - Door Prizes

___ - Membership

___ - Photographer

Sue Clark – Newsletter

Kevin Kartchner – Past-President

Autumnal Haiku

Fall's welcome coolness
 Drapes itself over us all -
 And we are grateful.

- Sue Clark



'Xanadu' (Edringer, 1968)

Source: AIS Wiki

Did You Know?

The giant water lily, [Victoria amazonica](#), native to the Amazon basin, has circular leaves with vertical rims. The leaves can be up to 10' in diameter. Like all water lilies, it grows from a rhizome. Each August, there is a competition to see how much weight can be supported on an *amazonica* leaf. The record is 285 lbs! - SC Sources - email from 'A Way to Garden,' Margaret Roach, 16 Aug 2026; [Denver Botanic Gardens article](#) and [update](#)

What to do in the Iris Garden during November:

Maintenance: Move potted irises to sunny spots for the cool season. Make a label for each new iris - try these [metal plant markers](#) or buy [Paw Paw](#) ones from TAIS at \$2 each. Use a label maker such as [DYMO LabelManager 160](#) or write on plant markers with a #2 pencil, china marker, or [paint marker](#). **DO NOT use Sharpie** - it will fade. Monitor for fading monthly so you don't lose iris names. Remove weeds and pests.

Organic care: Apply fish emulsion every other week. Mix as on package. Provide the fall dose of green sand (1 T) and bone meal (1 T) (the latter is **not** for Japanese irises!) Humic acid improves soil texture. Apply anytime.

Non-organic care: Feed with a fairly-balanced fertilizer. The first number should be 10 or less to reduce risk of rot. Try [Comanche Acres](#) (ships free), [Schreiner's](#), or a balanced one. Water it in. When planting, put 1 T into the hole. For established irises, scratch fertilizer into the soil and then water it in. - SC

**Tip Exchange**

Discourage cats by planting some of these flowers in your garden: lavender, rosemary, and/or lemon thyme. Cats do not like these scents.

Keep hummingbirds safe from cats, praying mantises, and snakes by hanging feeders away from walls, fences, trees, and shrubs. - SC

Source: Birds & Blooms [article](#)

"November is a month of transformation and preparation." - Catherine Pulsifer

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

Phil Edringer of California has loved flowers, irises in particular, since young childhood. He recalls that a "common purple" reblooming iris grew everywhere in California, whether or not anyone took care of it. When he was 6, a neighbor gave his mom 'Nemo' (Cayeux, 1927), a lavender TB, and young Phil learned that irises had names and came in different colors. The next spring, his mom ordered him a catalog from a nursery in Washington and he paid 25 and 35 cents each for four irises *and* received a bonus rhizome. Phil began attending iris shows and buying more irises. A couple with an iris nursery in the San Fernando Valley gave him five issues of the AIS Bulletin, which he devoured. One of these contained information about hybridizing irises, so he tried that. Fascinated by the ancestry of irises, he ordered the 1939 checklist from AIS. Phil became interested in historic varieties and began fitting these into his family's suburban yard. Alarmed at how many gardens of aging irisarians were being disbanded, plowed under, or otherwise destroyed, he joined the Historic Irises Round Robin, which dispersed collections before gardens were razed. He credits Harriet Sagessemann, a longtime volunteer at Presby Memorial Iris Gardens in New Jersey, with periodically "liberating" some rhizomes from Presby so that they were growing in at least one other garden. An example is '[W. R. Dykes](#)' which grew only at Presby. In 1984, Ellen Robertson's presentation about the Presby collection, of which she was the director, led to the formation of the Historic Iris Preservation Society (HIPS) two years later. Besides collecting (mostly) historic irises and hybridizing, Phil was Garden Editor for Sunset Books from 1969 until he retired in 2007. He has a list of seven irises that he would take if exiled to a desert island - all historic ones, as you might guess! Which irises would be on your list? - SC

Source: "My Life with Irises," by Philip Edinger " in *AIS 100 Years Bold*, Supplement 3 of 4 to *IRISES: the Bulletin of AIS*, 2020; ROOTS, Spring 2023, p. 29