



October 2026

TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 61st year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Chief Redskin'
(Hamner, 1984)

Sharon Petterson's Garden,
Gilbert, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2026

President's Message

It is Trek time! After over a year of meticulous preparations, the Fall trek for the American Iris Society's Region 15 is here in Tucson. Thanks to Pat Olsen's exhaustive planning and the Trek committee's hard work, we will enjoy an excellent Trek on October 17. I will see you there.

We had a good September rhizome sale. Thanks to everyone who contributed to our success. One customer's comment from their credit card payment, "TAIS is so organized! My questions were answered almost before I could ask! So friendly. And I now have a chance to grow my own beautiful irises." Another comment, "The guided potting of one of my Iris was well done!" We had a few more left-over rhizomes than we would like and appreciate your thoughts on how to handle those. The sale is our fundraiser for the year and, per our bylaws, helps us to spread iris culture to the community.

- Kevin Kartchner

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"A birdnote sounding here and there, A bloom, where leaves are brown and sober, Warm noons, and nights with frosty air, And loaded wagons say, October." – Thomas Stephens Collier

Upcoming Events

October: TAIS Annual Photo Contest - Enter up to 15 of your best photos! Submit Oct 1-8, vote Oct 12-20. See p. 8 for details

October 17: Region 15 Trek hosted by TAIS, 9 AM - 4 PM, Tohono Chul. Details on our [website](#). No regular meeting this month

November 14: Noon. Potluck with plant- and seed-exchange. Details TBA

December: No Meeting

Birthday Wishes to:

Linda Briggs • Sally Vega • Melania Kutz
Terry Swartz • Rhonda Willard
Pam McConnaughy • John Scire • Barbara Barnes
Mary Ann Albano • Jody & John Williams



Iris foetidissima

Source: AIS Wiki; likely from a 1996 Herball text

Report from the Sale



19 Sept 2026 - Our annual rhizome sale was held at Harlows Gardens again this year. The area under their shade structure is perfect for this event and they generously advertised the sale twice in their weekly email blasts. We ordered rhizomes from Sutton's, Mid-America, and Bee Haven Iris this year, and these members donated some from their own gardens: Kevin, Pat, Joyce, Susan, Sally, and Nancy. Dave and I couriered the Bee Haven order to the sale from Chandler.

Members had an hour to shop before the sale opened to the public at 9 AM on Saturday. Members received a discounted price of \$9 on their selections, earning a free rhizome upon purchase of six. Non-members paid \$10, with the same buy six and get one free deal. Cathy did her usual excellent job of selling landscape irises, aka NoIDs - all 40 bags of them!

Volunteers, most of whom worked both the set-up on Friday and all morning on Saturday included Pat (chairperson), Kevin, Cathy, Joyce, Bonnie, Cindy, Linda, Dan, Terry, Martin, Ron, Jim, Maureen, Elaine, Diane, Brian and Leigh, and Dave and I. Apologies if I missed anyone. Sally and Mary Ann stopped by to buy irises during the morning, and Nancy dropped in to say hi.

We filled out Tally Sheets for individuals in the check-out line again this year, counting the rhizomes and totaling the sheet to speed up check-out. We had separate lines for cash and credit payments, with Joyce, Maureen, and Jim as cashiers.

Pat held two educational sessions in which guests could plant one of their purchased rhizomes while learning many tips about planting and growing irises. The guests seemed to enjoy this activity and the finished product. Dan was co-pilot of this activity. Soil and pots were courtesy of TAIS, while fertilizers were courtesy of Pat.

Officers and Board members received a Club iris today or at the auction as a thank you for their service this year.

Although we had fewer customers and quite a few rhizomes left over this year, we netted about \$4000. So, another successful sale! Excess rhizomes will be planted and grown for future events such as next year's show and sale.

At the end of the Sale, an anonymous donor provided lunch as a Thank You from TAIS to Harlows and their employees.

- Sue Clark, secretary

**Photo Contest &
Trek This Month!**



**We're on the web:
Tucsoniris.org**

Trek Update by Pat Olsen

Just 17 Days to Go!

It's hard to believe, but when you read this, we'll be just **17 days away from the 2026 Region 15 Fall Trek — Desert Oasis of Iris!**

After months of planning, we're down to the finishing touches. There is still work to do: finalizing our **raffle and silent auction**, confirming our final attendee count, organizing materials, and making sure all those last little details are in place.

Help Us Capture the Day!

There will be lots of moments we'll want to remember, and everyone can help! Throughout the Trek, **take out your phone and snap some pictures**—friends arriving, judges training, presentations, volunteers in action, raffle and silent auction fun, and those spontaneous moments that make a gathering memorable.

We'll have a **QR code available for members and guests to share their favorite photos with TAIS**, so keep those phones handy! By the end of the day, we hope to have a wonderful collection of photos showing the **Desert Oasis of Iris** through everyone's eyes.

Continued on p. 7...



**TAIS
Mystery
Gardener
#2**

1. My favorite flowers are any that bloom!
2. I enjoy seeing different flora and fauna in all kinds of diverse environments.
3. My main roles in the garden are gnashing my teeth and rending my garments because my thumb is not green.

Who am I?

Last month's Mystery Gardener was Dave Smith

Rhizome Sale - photos by Dave Smith (& one by Sue)



Rhizome Sale - photos by Dave Smith



Treasurer's Report for September

- submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

BEGINNING BALANCE \$13,072.54

INCOME

1,184.00	Cash Sales (includes \$200 petty cash for sales event)
254.00	Check Sales
404.00	Iris Bucks
3,233.90	Credit Card Sales
5,075.90	TOTAL GROSS SALES
360.00	Trek
5,435.90	TOTAL INCOME

EXPENSES

200.00	Petty cash for sales event
15.00	Snacks
450.00	Rhizomes
665.00	TOTAL EXPENSE

ENDING BALANCE \$17,843.44

Note: Net Sales event \$4,410.90



More Heat-proof Plants mentioned in last month's article: From top: pink muhley grass ([sacredrootsnursery](https://sacredrootsnursery.com) on Etsy), firesticks (plantshappen.com.au), and blue elf aloe ([alvareznursery](https://alvareznursery.com)). Spittlebugs' foam shelters on goldenrod in my Mom's yard in PA (by Sue Clark)

Tips for Heat-Proofing Your Garden, Part II

More tips from Noell Johnson for your garden in our ever-increasing heat:

- Add new plants in fall or winter so they can grow a good root system
- Excessive pruning of plants, especially in summer, can cause scorching or burning, not to mention unsightliness
- If a plant needs extra water, use a soaker hose or poke three holes in a gallon jug, fill it with water, and place it near the plant. A hot nail can be used to make the holes. Loosen the lid of the jug a bit so that the water will slowly leak out into the ground
- Most desert plants do not need fertilizing - ever
- Plants in pots *do* need fertilizer. Add a slow-release fertilizer in March for plants such as roses and hibiscus
- Fertilize a vegetable garden every 4-6 weeks with an organic fertilizer mixed at half-strength
- Flowering annuals require fertilizer even in the summer. Apply according to instructions on the label
- Mulching around plants aids in watering deeply and allows roots to go down deep
- Bigger plants need deeper water:
 - Trees - 2-3' deep
 - Shrubs - 18-24" deep
 - Cacti and succulents - 8-12" deep
- This final tip is about a pest rather than a heat-related issue. Spittlebug larvae leave spit-like clusters on the stems of plants such as rosemary. Blast them off with water from a hose. - SC

How to tell: Wait one hour. Poke in a piece of rebar or a soil probe. It will stop at the depth the water reached

Source: Heat Proof Your Desert Garden webinar, June 11, 2026 - my notes. [Website](#)

The Language of Iris #8 by Pat Olsen

TB — Tall Bearded Iris

Part 1: From the Irises We Remember to the Irises of Today

When I was growing up, an iris meant one thing: a Tall Bearded iris. My mother grew irises. Her mother grew irises, and her mother before her. Generations on both sides of my family grew them. My mother used to visit a hybridizer's garden, and I remember walking the fields with her. They were all Tall Bearded irises. It wasn't until I became deeply involved with irises myself—and joined an iris society almost on a whim—that I discovered just how many other classes of iris there were. So perhaps it isn't surprising that when many of us picture an iris, we picture a Tall Bearded, or TB.

What Makes a TB a TB?

The American Iris Society defines Tall Bearded irises by height: 27½ inches (70 cm) and taller. But height alone doesn't make a great TB. A good Tall Bearded iris is a complete plant. The flower should be in proportion to its stalk, the stalk should be strong enough to support those large flowers, and the branching should display individual blooms without crowding them. Bud placement and bud count help determine how well—and how long—the stalk puts on its show. And that is something I've learned to notice. Years ago, I probably would have looked only at the flower. Today I look at the entire plant.

Color Gets Me Every Time

Still, I'll admit it: color catches my eye first. A bright yellow iris can call to me from clear across the yard. A pale, pastel iris you have to walk up to it and really look at it to appreciate its more subtle coloring. That's part of the fun of TBs. Some shout from across the garden. Others invite you closer.

(continued in next column...)

From Simple to Spectacular

One of the most interesting presentations I've seen was given by Thomas Johnson of Mid-America Garden. He compared older irises with today's modern forms. The difference can be remarkable.

Look at an older historic iris and you may see relatively simple, smooth-edged standards and falls and a less elaborate beard. Compare that with many modern introductions: larger flowers, broader standards and falls, extraordinary ruffling, heavier beards, and increasingly unusual colors and patterns.

There is a fascinating history behind that transformation.

Many of the older garden irises were diploids. The introduction of tetraploid irises into breeding programs helped change the size and form of Tall Bearded irises. Hybridizers haven't stopped experimenting. A wonderful current example is 'Sandy Claws,' introduced by Lynda Miller through Mid-America Garden in 2026. Its registration describes yellow-and-cream flowers with orange-yellow beards ending in unusual pompom appendages. It even has a slight sweet fragrance.

Who would have imagined that when my grandmother was growing irises?

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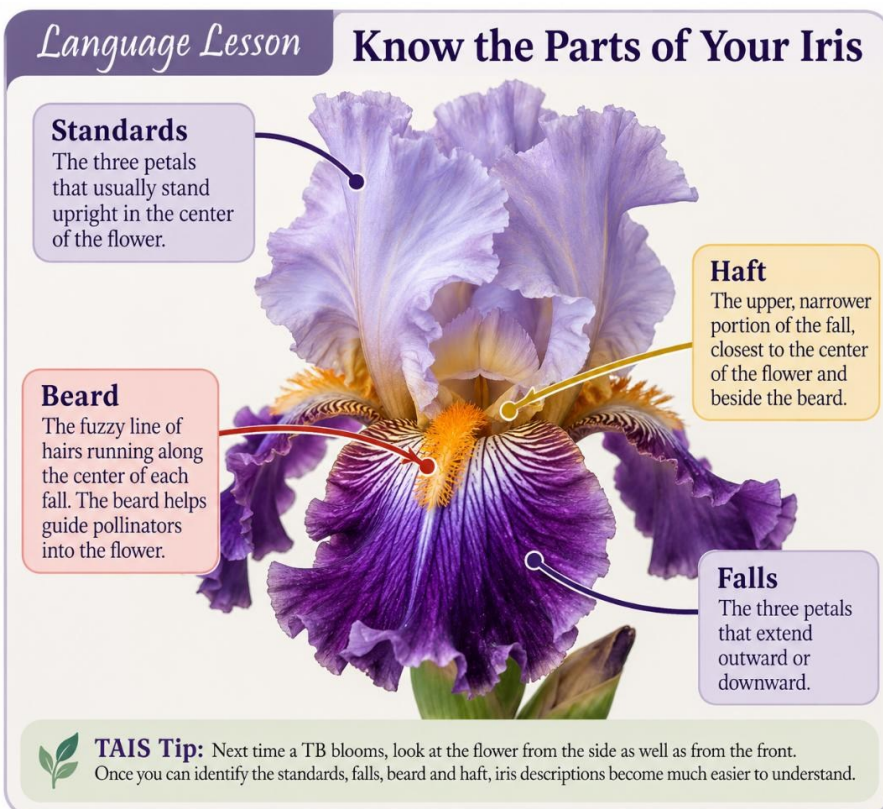


Seven Tall Bearded irises, seven very different personalities. Most photographed in my own garden.

The Language of Iris #8, continued...

Standards, Falls and Beards

To understand TB descriptions, we need to speak a little iris. The three petals that generally stand upright are the **standards**. The three that extend outward or downward are the **falls**. Running along the center of each fall is the fuzzy strip of hairs that gives bearded irises their name—the **beard**. Then come the color-pattern words. A **self** is essentially one color. A **bicolor** has standards and falls of different colors. A **bitone** uses different shades of the same color. And one of my favorites is the **amoena**: traditionally, pure white standards with colored falls. If I could choose only one new iris, chances are an amoena would catch my attention first—although a beautiful blue or multicolored iris could certainly change my mind.



The Glamour Shot

There is something else I've learned after ordering a lot of irises: **The catalog photograph is the glamour shot.** We all do it. We photograph an iris when the bloom is perfect, the light is right and the flower looks its absolute best. So I don't expect every iris in my garden to look exactly like its catalog photograph. That's why, whenever possible, I want to see an iris growing in person. I love visiting hybridizers' gardens and seeing irises at conventions. A catalog description may get my attention, but seeing the actual plant tells me much more.

(continued in next column...)

If I had enough restraint when ordering irises, I would probably order only the ones I've seen growing in person. Unfortunately, restraint and iris catalogs don't always go together.

And ultimately, no matter how beautiful the photograph—or the flower—the real test begins when that iris comes home to my garden.

Next Month: Tall Bearded Irises, Part 2 — When a TB Comes Home to Tucson

Trek Update continued from p. 2...

One Final Walk-Through

Our **final Trek committee meeting will be Saturday, October 3, from noon-2:00 p.m at the Murphy-Wilmot Library in the Large Meeting Room.** We'll walk through the day from beginning to end—registration and welcoming our guests, volunteer assignments, activities, meals, raffle and silent auction, and closing out the day.

This is our chance to catch anything we may have missed and make sure everyone knows where they need to be and what they need to do.

And Don't Forget the Raclette!

The fun doesn't have to end when the Trek does. Afterward, attendees can choose between **Jazz Under the Stars at Tohono Chul** or a **Swiss Raclette Dinner hosted by TAIS members Jody and John Williams.** It should be a wonderful way to relax after a busy day, enjoy good food and conversation, and spend a little more time with our iris friends from around Region 15.

Almost There!

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered, donated, planned, organized, assembled, called, emailed, carried, created, and helped along the way. A tremendous amount of work has gone into bringing the **Desert Oasis of Iris** to life.

Seventeen days to go. The plans are nearly finished, the welcome is ready, and soon our guests will be here!

9th Annual TAIS Photo Contest

Start searching for your best iris photos now! Our webmaster, Tim Valenzuela, has set things up so that all entries can be uploaded directly to our website this year.

Categories

1. Single iris flower or stalk of irises
2. Macro (very close-up view of an iris)
3. Miscellaneous iris photos: garden, artistically-altered image, etc.



GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

- Current TAIS members may submit up to 15 pictures to <https://tucsoniris.org/contest/2026>. You will be prompted to enter your email address and create a password just for the contest
- The website will prompt you through the entry process, requesting your name and the category for your entry. Have the name of the iris ready to enter. If you do not know the name, label iris as a NOID, meaning no ID (no identification). Photos will be displayed anonymously during the contest
- All photos must be your own, although they are *not restricted to your own garden*
- Please be sure that each photo fits the category that you select for it
- Winning entries from previous years are ineligible
- Submissions will be accepted between **October 1 and October 8**
- Help make this a fun, successful, and competitive event by participating!

VOTING

- Votes will be accepted from **October 12 to October 20**
- TAIS members may vote for three photos per category (for a total of nine votes) by submitting to taisnewsletter@yahoo.com. See all photos at <https://tucsoniris.org/contest/2026>. Please consider the *quality* of the photos (focus, composition, lighting, etc.), rather than the beauty of the iris(es) featured

Winning photos in each category will be revealed during our November Potluck meeting



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 and Linda Briggs - Hospitality

Bonnie Else & Susan Schaefer - Door Prizes

Linda Briggs and Cindy Long - Membership

Dave Smith - Photographer

Sue Clark - Newsletter

What to do in the Iris Garden during October:

Maintenance: [Divide](#) and plant iris rhizomes early this month, if you have not already done so. This will allow roots to establish before it gets cold. Trim leaves of transplants to 6".

Be sure that iris plants get enough water, since they will be growing and increasing until next bloom time. Soil should be damp, but not moist. Use a moisture meter or finger to determine if soil is dry 2" below surface. Water if so. Do not water from overhead if it is above 85° though, or the rhizomes may rot. **Give soil around each rhizome a dose of fertilizer - [Comanche Acres](#), [Schreiner's](#), or balanced.** Water it in.

Keep area free of weeds, leaves, and pests. - SC



Tip Exchange

Open packages of rhizomes immediately and stand them up so that air may circulate around them. They tend to get damp when boxed. Before planting, soak rhizomes in water for 30 minutes or more to rehydrate them. Then soak them in 10% bleach solution [1/4 c bleach to 2 1/4 c water] for about 10 minutes to kill any pests on their surface. By rehydrating the rhizomes first, they won't take the bleach solution into their roots. Rinse well. Plant within 24 hours. Source: IRIS newsletter, August 2026

Autumnal Haiku

Golden harvest moon.
Glow-light falls upon the Earth
Resting far below

- Sue Clark

Did You Know?

The growing season in Arizona is 34.9 days longer than it was in 1895. In fact, it is longer by 28+ days throughout the western United States with the exception of Nevada and Montana in which it's been extended by 14-27 days. Most of the change has occurred within the last 30 years. While this lengthened growing season gives gardeners more time to grow things, it gives pests opportunities to become active earlier and remain so longer, and to have more opportunities to reproduce. - SC Source: Old Farmer's Almanac [article](#) & email of 30 July 2026



SIB 'Grandis' (Farr, 1912)

Source: AIS Wiki

"I am so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers." - Anne of Green Gables 🍁🍂🌼🌻

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

In 1905, Bertrand Farr of Pennsylvania imported every possible iris cultivar from Barr & Sons in England and from several French nurseries, as American nurseries offered mostly older varieties by Lémon and Salter. When hybridizer Sydney Mitchell of California realized that Farr's iris assemblage dwarfed his own, he wrote, "There is no doubt that the gathering together of this collection and its most attractive listing were primarily responsible for the interest in tall bearded irises that developed in America in the first quarter of the present [now previous] century." Visitors flocked to Farr's gardens in Wyomissing, Pennsylvania from all over the United States. *'Farr's Catalogue of Hardy Plant Specialties'* was first published in 1909, 11 years before the formation of the American Iris Society. His specialties included irises and peonies and he was instrumental in the start-up of AIS.

Here are Farr's thoughts on perennials: "Hardy plants have always appealed to me. They are permanent features of the garden, and there is a personality and a sense of companionship about them that makes one grow attached to them. The annuals and the 'bedding plants' are brilliant and showy for a short season, and pass away - the chance acquaintances of the rush-a-day world; but the perennials - they are old friends that are constant. They are a part of the old associations and the home life, like members of the family. How tenderly we protect them from any harm that may befall them during the long winter, and how eagerly we watch for their first appearance in spring!"

Read more about Farr in TAIS newsletters [here](#), [here](#), & [here](#).

Sources: "Farr's Catalogue of Hardy Plant Specialties" in *AIS 100 Years Bold*, Supplement 3 of 4 to *IRISES: the Bulletin of AIS*, 2020; *Classic Irises and the Men and Women Who Created Them* by Clarence E. Mahan, 2007