

The Review

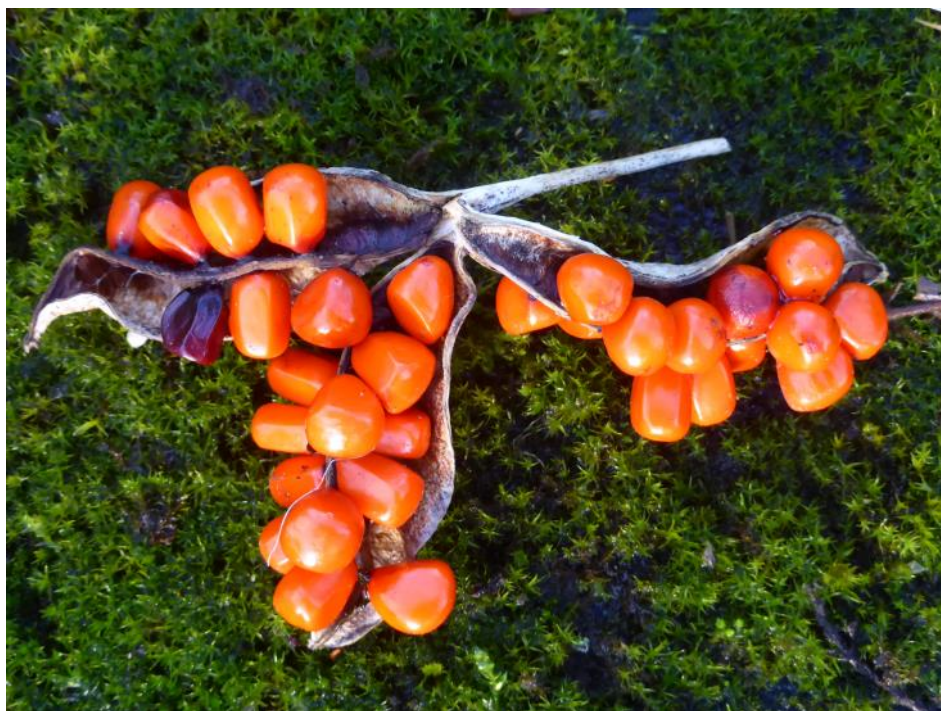
A close-up photograph of a yellow and purple iris flower. The petals are a pale yellow with prominent purple veins. The center of the flower is a darker purple, and there is a distinct beardless center. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a garden setting.

The Group for
Beardless Irises

No 17 Winter 2020



Two of many seed colours of *Iris foetidissima* © Jill Whitehead



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Front cover: *Iris foetidissima* © Jill Whitehead

Back cover: A glimpse of the beautiful garden at Tor Garden Plants

Editor's Notes

Brita Carson

We can't pretend that Covid-19 hasn't happened, nor pretend it isn't still with us but what we can do is to fill our minds with exciting thoughts. How about a Beardless Day at the Gobbett Nursery near the end of the Siberian season and hopefully the start of the Japanese season, Wednesday July 7, 2021. See page 20. With a little luck we will see excellent plants of irises still in flower. Chris and Gordon Link have so many other species it is impossible to name them. Do look at their website - The Gobbett Nursery.

We suggest you bring your own packed lunch or buy on the way. We hope to be allowed to provide tea, coffee and cake depending on the rules. We do not want to have to cancel a hall or any other arrangements so it will be an exploring meeting of the nursery. Chris and Gordon have a large number of other plants at the nursery and there are also rare breed chickens if you want to practise your clucking noises. They look lovely and I love chickens. Look online at their website. Please email me or Alun Whitehead if you are interested in the adventure. A look online before coming would be useful and even better would be to order online beforehand and then pick up your order on the Day.

Alun has written an article about naming plants but I am wondering about going further and stricter with naming new plants. We all happily want to register new plants but how do you feel about only being allowed to give new plants a name if they pass a test as to their garden worthiness and general public acceptance of their worthiness. Plants need to pass lots of criteria before they can be entered anywhere competitively; position of flower to stem; ability to grow straight and hold the flower head; colour fading as the flower ages; how many years have you watched it flower and many more questions. Should it be necessary for a new plant to pass some of these? It might be useful to have a list of criteria to check before new plants are registered.

The more I look up the iris wiki the more overwhelmed I become by the likeness of some of the flowers. It would not be fair to give examples or name names but some policing is becoming necessary to keep new plants in check. Siberian irises are possibly the worst culprits after the TBs. Unfortunately it is possible to get a nearly identical colour pattern on two plants by two different routes of hybridising so how can policing be done? DNA testing would be too expensive at present but that will be a great help with identification one day.

If you have ideas or you agree or strongly disagree with me and would like to have your say here, please email me. I would like to print your thoughts. Meantime keep hybridising and enjoy your irises whether you make crosses or not.

Anne Blanco White tribute

Anne died on Christmas day 2019, and although many of us feared she would not last long when we heard she was unwell, there was no time for anyone to gather their thoughts together to pay her the kind of tribute that she deserved before the last *Review* went out. Now over a year later seems a long time to remember all the thoughts of what a wonderful person she was. We still miss her and all the funny little things she did and said. We miss her ability to advise us on a great many subjects and not always irises. She was a very wise old lady in her nineties. She was kind, helpful and all these nice things we feel about someone we greatly admired but have loved and lost.

I have chosen two tributes to add, one from experienced hybridiser Alan McMurtrie from Canada, and one from John Mullen from Kent who is a fairly new member. Both authors are so sincere in their thoughts but accept that a year has past and we should be moving on.

Brita Carson

Alan McMurtrie, Canada, also printed in 2020 Year Book.

Anne was a very special lady. She had a unique personality with a positive attitude. She didn't mind trying something just for the fun of it. It was a treat to occasionally see her face light up with delight when she thought of something particularly funny or brilliant to say. She was a bit tenacious and would see that things got done. The only thing that held her up was her knee, which made getting around very painful. She would push through the pain but it did hold her back somewhat. In 2018 she had an operation that put metal plates in the front half of her knee. They made a world of difference. At the time in mid-Nov, Anne wrote,

“Three days in hospital and a week in a sort of nursing home. Good food, comfortable bed, friendly and efficient staff and tolerable company. My own impression in the light of my age was that they regarded me rather as you might an elderly pooch allowed to do what it wanted, when it wanted, why it wanted, as long as nothing resulted in any subsequent discomforts to it. Gallant attempts to convince me that ice packs would improve the discomforts of swollen areas resulted in the packs being found parked on my table instead of my knee because I never took kindly to cold treatments. Always worried because I would just shower peacefully on my own. And as far as I can seriously make out, the detailed instructions for doing helpful exercises are really intended for the sort of elderly folk who haven't stretched a muscle in the last five years. And as for the quantities of pills I consumed! Anyway, as long as I don't do anything silly in the next few weeks I'll be signed off in early December.”

I first started corresponding with Anne in 1985 prior to my plant collecting trip to Turkey (which of course focused on irises), and in March 1995 we

were lucky enough to meet in person at the Gardening with Iris Species Symposium in St. Louis, USA. Anne was an extremely knowledgeable Irisarian, with a keen interest in species, especially Evansias. I was fortunate to be able to stay with her for a few days in February each year, from 2016 through 2019, when I stopped off in London on my way to the bulb fields of Holland to see my Reticulata Iris hybrids in bloom, as well as to talk to bulb growers and visit a lab doing polyploid conversions for me.

A real treat in the morning was Anne's homemade orange marmalade that she and her daughter Susan made from time-to-time in large batches. In the evening we would sit and chat in Anne's front room while sipping a glass of wine. Sometimes the conversation would be about the history of her family name and her early life in India, or the history of the area where she lived, or her adventures being an army driver during the war. Of course the conversations would often turn to irises. Typically in the morning there would be a couple of publications laid out by the couch where I would sit, with slips of paper marking articles for me to read regarding what we had been talking about.

Anne was almost 93 when she passed away. I had been expecting she would live to at least 96, and wouldn't have been surprised if she made it to 100. Unfortunately cancer had other plans. I had actually contacted Anne in November about the possibility of staying with her once again in 2020. At the time she said that life was complicated then and that she would be in touch. As Susan later suggested, Anne hadn't accepted the seriousness of the situation but then what is one to do in similar circumstances? I can almost hear Anne making a snide comment about the situation (a sort of twisted humour), but I can't quite make out exactly what she is saying. I wish I had recorded our conversations in some fashion, along with some of her typical sayings and those humorous quips. It's one of those things where you are hearing a lot of new facts and details for the first time — you really need to hear them at least three times. The second time triggers remembering what was said the first time, and if you are paying attention, the third time locks in what was said. Of course I was simply enjoying the moment, and not wanting to spoil it and I was expecting there was a good chance I'd be back again next year, and perhaps the year after that. I was, of course, sad to hear of her passing, but glad for the time I was able to spend with her.

I was lucky to be able to get a few of her books when I was over in February, and will have those as reminders of our time together, along with all of the memories.

A Tribute to Anne

John Mullen, also printed for the BIS in the 2020 Year Book

Some four years ago, I had the privilege of working closely with Anne to help the Society along through a difficult patch. I had just joined, so it was quite an adventure, hilarious if hectic at times, and she did suggest at one point, “John, I think we might well have the basis of a good novel here!” Amidst the endless correspondence, including tips for an iris novice, I received some rhizomes in the post from her one day.

These were what I know now are inter-specific crosses. One was ‘Enfant Prodigé’ (Huber, 1993), the other ‘Bazylissa’ (Komarnicki, 2008). A letter accompanied them, briefly describing diploid and tetraploid features and practices but cautioning that “you really won’t want to play with this, even for the benefit of your school children’s garden class for a little while, but, if I’m still around and *compos mentis*, try and see if I can help. Think in terms of that man with his peas whose name escapes me. Come whatever, have fun. Anne”.

Unfortunately, I did lose the ‘Bazylissa’ in the first winter, but the ‘Enfant Prodigé’ lives on. So too do some other little things that often found their way from her garden to the Society’s Show sales table, as plants or seed, which many others will also have enjoyed growing, and now in memory of her.



©John Mullen

‘Enfant Prodigé’ (Tony Huber, R. 1993)

[probably SPEC X *I. ensata* recorded in wiki]

Tributes to Members we have lost

Ian Smith

Ian Smith did enjoy pogon irises, the colour and the scent, but he only registered apogons; two Siberians and three Sino-Siberian cultivars. I don't think the latter survived, but we enjoy growing the Siberians, 'Bournemouth Beauty' and 'Bournemouth Ballgown'. He was BIS Literature Secretary for a number of years and took an interest in all things *Iris*. Ian was usually to be found at the BIS shows. Unfortunately in 2008, he had a serious accident travelling to a show from which it took a long time to recover. His cheeky sense of humour can be gathered from his introduction to the Wisley PCI trial report in the BIS 2003 *Year Book*:

*Here in Bournemouth, I have experienced so much difficulty in trying to grow PCIs that I have now given up. I suspect that it's either too hot and dry in summer or too wet in winter or maybe a combination of both, so I have great sympathy for the staff at the Wisley trials ground who watch helplessly as one by one plants go brown, wither and die.**

Ian served on the Committee overseeing the trials and was clearly brave enough to take on the unpleasant task of reporting on a poor one. We will continue to enjoy his irises, which were chosen with an eye for something different.

**In fairness to Wisley, the trials were testing plants for general garden worthiness and PCIs often do well if you can find the right niche for them.*

Norman Payne

Norman Payne was a close friend of our previous Editor, Philip Allery, and both shared a passion for *Iris ensata*. I believe there may have been a joint venture between them, but when I first knew Norman, he was the sole proprietor of *Payne's Japanese Irises*. He was on a mission to improve the knowledge and use of the Japanese cultivars after being shocked in the 1960/70s by so few people knowing of these beautiful irises – named cultivars being almost impossible to get in the UK. As far as I know he pioneered the technique in this country of growing these in pots in plunge pools during the summer, which were drained over the winter. He must have been successful as he donated 240 irises to the Isabella Plantation in Richmond Park in 1992 for their stream-side planting.

Latterly he was disappointed in the performance, or rather non-flowering, of the tetraploid Japanese cultivars on which Currier McEwen had worked. From my experience here, I would agree that the tetraploid *ensatas* were not successful (please correct me if I am wrong!). However, visiting his garden on a sunny June day the impression was one of colour, interest and his sheer enthusiasm. We have no formal knowledge of Norman's passing, but the loss of contact and the enquiries received about his plants sadly makes me think otherwise. Please contact us if you know differently.

Alun Whitehead



'Bournemouth Beauty' (R. 2002)



'Bournemouth Ballgown' (R. 2005)

**Three new Awards of Garden Merit (AGMs)
from the 3 year Reticulate Iris Trial at RHS Hyde Hall**



• *I.* 'Harmony'



I. 'Lady Beatrix Stanley'



I. 'Katharine's Gold'

Tor Garden Plants — Making the most of Lockdown

Emma Robertson

We launched Tor Garden Plants in 2019, reopening the nursery formerly known as Rowden Gardens under a new name inspired by the amazing view we have from the nursery of the church on the Tor at Brentor. After a positive first year, we were never expecting a global pandemic to hit us in our second year. At first it struck fear into our hearts wondering how we would get through it. Thankfully we were already set up for online sales and we supply all of our plants bare root via mail order. Once the initial panic subsided and everyone settled into lockdown life, the orders started coming in online and without plant fairs or being able to open the nursery, it definitely saved us.

After the initial terror had passed and we too settled into lockdown, we found it gave us a real opportunity to do things in the nursery that we wouldn't normally have time for. The biggest bonus was being able to spend time with the irises. I have slowly been getting to know them over the past few years but this year I could really immerse myself. We have over eighty different named iris in the nursery. Starting with the collection of water irises, *I. laevigata*, *I. pseudacorus*, *I. versicolor*, x *I. robusta* and their many cultivars. Leading to *Siberian* and then a great collection of *Iris ensata*. Many of the irises are part of the Rowden National Collection that were bred on the nursery by John and Galen Carter over the past thirty-five years. The National Collection of Rowden Irises is held at RHS Rosemoor but we are also lucky enough to have the Collection here, making them available for others to enjoy in their gardens and ponds.

The water iris are planted in individual groups within ten, twenty metre long, canal-style ponds that run down the acre nursery. Many had grown into large clumps and started to merge with other groups. Our first job was to get in the ponds and start separating them into individual islands, removing years of mud and debris in between each one so the water became deep and clear again, followed by splitting and dividing the large clumps so they have more room to multiply. It was a lot of work but really satisfying to see each island of iris emerging, allowing me to have clear plans of where each group was situated in the ponds. Luckily we also had a heat wave so splashing around in ponds wasn't as bad as it could have been.

We also decided this was the year we would start collecting seed with a view to producing our own water irises. This is such an exciting concept for us and one we have been waiting to do for many years. Spending time with the irises in flower, really getting to know them and seeing their individual qualities, allowed us to choose some parent plants that we would like to work with to produce new plants. I am attracted to the pale and subtle iris like *I. versicolor* 'Rowden Madrigal' whereas my husband Tom wanted to work with *I. versicolor* 'Rowden Jingle', working on a red colour. We collected lots of other seeds to see what exciting things might pop up. Another couple of years and we will see our first seedlings. It's part of a long process but this year allowed us to start.

The water iris are then succeeded by *Iris ensata* later in the year and we had been kindly given the majority of the Rowden ensatas by Galen Carter last year, with a view to making them available for sale once again. This is arguably the best way to conserve a plant for the future, by sharing it with others. The ensatas were all in large pots so we decided to plant them in the ground. This meant filling in one of the ponds with a mixture of clay soil and manure. Sixteen tonnes of clay top soil, a load of manure and some heavy machinery to move it around resulted in the perfect bed for the ensatas to be planted out with space to grow. I can't wait to see this area in the next few years when it will be awash with *I. ensata* and other moisture loving perennials.

When I look back on this crazy year, I can at least say it has been productive. It allowed us the time to stop, look around, really take in the plants and invest time in the nursery that will hopefully pay off in the next few years, but who knows what next year will bring? www.torgardenplants.co.uk



Pond clearance



Top, 'Rowden Jingle' lower is 'Rowden Madrigal'

What's in a Name

Alun Whitehead

When you start gardening, you buy a few plants, the names are on the labels and all is good. Then at some stage you come across a different plant with the same label or the same plant with a different label and you generally assume, the second is a mistake – that you have the original “right plant”. This is especially true when we have grown a plant for a long time and it has become a faithful acquaintance. Unfortunately, mistakes can creep in anywhere and the possibilities are that the first or second plant is correct, or more worryingly perhaps, both are wrong or both are right! I raise this issue now as from our perspective, the mis-naming of plants is becoming more common.

Having had a National Collection, we were naturally on the lookout for missing cultivars to fill gaps. We were pleased when we found a reputable nursery with a plant, but often disappointed when it flowered. Relying on a good source will help, but it does not guarantee success. We have known plants sold by a leading Botanical Garden to be wrong; a look at the labels in their borders will give an indication of the standard of care, but bear in mind that their sales plants are probably sourced elsewhere. We have even heard of a plant from the breeder being wrong. Janet Miller kindly sent me a magazine article showing *Iris* ‘Tamberg’ at Chelsea – and you assume you can’t get a better source than that. Instead of the violet-blue, this version was on the red side. The name *Iris* ‘Tamberg’ is also problematic for other reasons which I’ll come to later.

I am painting a negative picture, so I had better put it into perspective. I am sure that the vast majority of plants are correctly named and for some people misnaming isn’t a problem. If you grow a plant in the garden and it is working well then that is great. It is only when you want to communicate with someone so they can repeat your success that names start to matter. We are very lucky being iris lovers in that our cultivars are registered. If you have doubts or would like to check, the register should be your first port of call. The American Iris Society have this freely available on line <https://wiki.irises.org/> and it is a moment’s work to check. Some of the more historic entries may seem vague as there were fewer cultivars at the time to differentiate. Nowadays accompanying photos from the hybridisers will reduce the ambiguity. Others can also submit photos to this “wiki style” database and so you may need to be discerning on odd occasions as to which is likely to be true.

Not all iris cultivars are registered. In the Siberians, ‘Royal Blue’ and ‘Southcombe White’ spring to mind, but they are very few in number. Given that registering an iris name is straightforward and relatively cheap (£10 in the UK and you can download the form from <https://www.britisshirissociety.org.uk/registering-a-new-iris/>), there seems no reason not to have the name linked with the plant. Once registered, a

second iris cannot be given the same name and it uniquely defines the first iris. Why would you want to avoid registering?

Any register has to follow some guidelines. You will find the rules in *International Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants* published by the International Society for Horticultural Science. The current version is covered by copyright and needs to be bought. Older versions are available such as

<http://www.actahort.org/chronica/pdf/sh10.pdf>

Registrants of iris names luckily do not need to search through this legal document as the Registrars are there to put you right if they foresee a problem. However the old recommendation is followed:

A cultivar name whose epithet is or contains the name of a living person should not be published unless that person has given permission for their name to be used.

And hence we come back to *Iris* ‘Tamberg’ in whichever flavour you find it. Not being registered, it does not uniquely define a cultivar and the name would only be allowed with Dr Tamberg’s permission. For interest, the Chelsea version looks remarkably close to some photos of Ben Hager’s ‘Sparkling Rosé’ – it is intriguing how the colour can drastically change with the angle of the light.

The above discusses cultivars but you will be pleased to learn that the American Iris Wiki also covers species. I have noticed a few times that descriptions of species are too definite as to colour, size and shape. If there was no natural variation in them, our hobby would be a lot duller and we can all appreciate how different culture and weather can change a plant.

Irises or Lilies of the Field? Alun Whitehead

One thing that really annoys me when doing crosswords is the clue “Iris” and finding the solution “Lily”, or *vice versa*. Botanically it’s madness. The confusion is often attributed to the biblical “lilies of the field”, in an era long before Linnaeus became involved, let alone our own Brian Mathew. Some modern dictionaries even allow a broad definition of lily to include members of the iris family.

My reason for raising this now is the chancing upon a coin from Jerusalem c.130 BC with an attractive flower upon it. Initially it looked like a tulip, but a second look and two better examples clearly show the anthers above the petals and the leaves indicating that a lily was intended. The lily was the emblem atop the columns of some temples and the reference to a lily on the coins is presumed to relate to the temple in Jerusalem.

Coins were a means of propaganda and important crops/produce of a town were often displayed on its coins, in this case the temple was perhaps the “tourist attraction”. At this time, temples often acted as banks. It may seem strange to modern eyes, but if you robbed a temple, the Gods were likely to take his/her revenge and so it was a safe place to store valuables. It seems natural to us that money lenders should be cast out from the temples, but in those days the temples were the money lenders, as the accounts of the temples such as Delos will testify. If you were a hard-up monarch and needed to replenish your coffers, you tried to raid a temple. The illustrious Seleucid monarch, Antiochos the Great, died this way. It is said the people were angered by the desecration, but they were probably just protecting their savings.

It is natural to ask if Iris appears on other ancient coins and she may do. Not the flower in this case, but her personification c.400 BC in Asia Minor. This is before Alexander the Great swept the Greek/Macedonian influence across the Middle East in the Hellenistic period and here the older Persian character is unmistakable.

Of course, iris flowers do appear on more modern coins - an example perhaps is the 2019 Flowers of Israel series.



**British Iris Society
Hybridiser's Award 2020 — Joe Ghio
Jill Whitehead**

Each year the British Iris Society (BIS) looks at possible recipients for the Hybridiser's Award. This award was instigated in 2011 in memory of Margaret Hall, who gave a legacy to be used to “promote research into the growing and breeding of iris”. Margaret Hall was the BIS Treasurer on three separate occasions, stepping in to help whenever she was needed. Her husband Charles successfully raised a number of TBs, gaining two Dykes medals and was also President and Editor of the *Year Book*. In all these activities he was supported by Margaret.



The Hybridiser's Award is in the form of a paperweight with the BIS motif engraved inside. It is not automatically awarded each year, only if a worthy recipient is nominated. The first recipient was Dr Tomas Tamberg, and other beardless hybridisers have included Olga Wells (2013), Alan McMurtrie (2016) and Jennifer Hewitt (2017). This year it has been awarded to Joe Ghio from the USA for his work in growing and promoting PCIs. He has also registered a large number of TBs; his near blacks are very dramatic.

Joe has been growing irises for 67 years, ever since his first order to Schreiners back in 1953. It was Bob Schreiner's tips on how to cross irises which sparked Joe's imagination and his advice, “cross the best with the very best available to you” which became his motto for all of his breeding work. For those of you who don't know why Joe first grew PCIs, the story in Joe's

words goes as follows:

“On a visit to Jack Craig...he gave me a tour of his plantings, of the house, greenhouse and gave me starts of many things including Evansias and he had eight bottles of different Pacifica seed. He asked if I wanted some. I had seen them growing in the mountains around me and wasn't impressed, but to be nice I said OK. So, eight packs of seed went home with me as well. Come Fall I felt I had to plant the seed. So I filled eight coffee cans with dirt and sowed the seed, ignoring them the rest of the winter. To my surprise they germinated like grass. Not having space to plant out all that grew, I simply transferred the whole can to a shady spot in front of a stone wall and ignored them. Come Spring I was shocked to find they came in colours and had nice flowers that bore little resemblance to what grew in the wild. And from there the Pacifica breeding lines began. That was in 1960.”

(Extract from The AIS 100 Years Bold - Supplement 3)

So, his breeding really started because of his sense of duty!

Joe has registered over 300 PCIs, his name features high on the list of recipients for the Sydney B. Mitchell Award. This award is the highest award that is given to PCIs by the American Iris Society (AIS), to recognise the achievement of the breeders. It was first awarded in 1973, and Joe's first win was in 1979 with 'Los Gatos'.

In the 1980s he had an unbroken run of winners and was again successful in 2019 with 'Da Vinci Code'. Joe was awarded the AIS Hybridisers Award in 1979, and in 1991 he was made an Honorary Member of the Society of Pacific Coast Native Irises (SPCNI), in recognition of his work. Some would say he has done more to popularise PCIs in the USA than any other breeder. His aims were the same as for his TB breeding: colour, form and “different-ness” all being important traits. Also important is attractive plant growth, good bud count, branching and substance to the flowers. Joe's observations made it interesting to note that if a plant has good, glutinous, thick, heavy foliage with good substance then the flowers will also have good substance, which in turn will give good rain resistance.

One of Joe's irises which we grow is 'Big Money', which was registered in 1982 and won the Mitchell Award in 1990. I was pleased to see that it has one of Marjorie Brummitt's irises in its background, 'Banbury Princess'. In 1985 Joe wrote about how he first became interested in PCIs and who influenced and encouraged him. It was one of his early crosses, 'California Native', which was the first to show multi-branched stems, thick foliage, heavy substance and ruffles. He used this extensively in his breeding work. But he noticed that Marjorie Brummitt's irises were significantly different from his own, despite them both being based on *I. innominata* x *I. douglasiana*. In selecting her seedlings, Marjorie favoured the species look, smaller and more graceful flowers, but what caught Joe's eye was colour, and some clear colours which were new to him. Hence they corresponded by letter, with no email for a quick response in those days, and eventually traded irises. He was taken by 'Banbury Velvet', a rich, dark, black-purple colour which was new to



Two modern seedlings from Alun Whitehead. Note the lovely shape and colour of the petals. Both of these seedlings only have seedling numbers at the moment.



'Pajaro Dunes' (Ghio, R. 1984) has 'Banbury Candy' in its heritage.



'Peacock Pavane' (Nora Scopes, R. 1993). 'Spring Daze' X unknown.
'Spring Daze' (R. Ghio, 1982)



The PCI 'Blue Bossa' was raised by Fred Webbing from Joe Ghio seed. Fred sent for seed and then shared it amongst fellow irisarians.

him, and 'Banbury Candy', a smooth, caramel brown. He crossed both with 'California Native' and they formed the basis of his purple and brown lines. His iris 'La Madrona' (1985) was a salute to Marjorie Brummitt for the contribution her irises had played in his breeding work.

Several UK hybridisers of PCIs used Joe Ghio introductions in their own breeding work. Nora Scopes, who was a very active hybridiser or pollen dauber as she liked to call herself, used Joe's 'Spring Daze' as one of the parents for 'Peacock Pavane'. She registered over 25 irises and Ghio's plants feature in many of them. Bob Wise, well-known as a TB hybridiser, also benefitted from Joe's introductions. These he crossed with Marjorie's 'Banbury' series, which in turn gave him the 'Pinewood' series of PCIs. 'Pinewood Amethyst' is a cross between 'San Lorenzo' (Ghio 1972) X 'Banbury Velvet' (Brummitt 1969). It is sharing the irises which is so heart warming. I find it fascinating — when you look at the history of some of the UK breeding, it is shared collaboration which comes to the foreground. Many years ago we obtained seed from Joe and have benefitted from his generosity and enthusiasm, as have many other BIS and GBI members.

Joe was kind enough to send his PCI seed around the world when many seed sources were offering insipid alternatives, and he thus engendered interest in these colourful and rewarding irises, for which we are all grateful. Although he no longer publishes a catalogue, he is still actively breeding and as he says "I continue growing and breeding, but in my ninth decade, my life isn't so easy to do any more, but it is no less exciting



'Spring Daze' (Ghio, R. 1982) contains 'Banbury Princess' in the production of this iris. One of many registrations containing one of the Banbury series.



'Pinewood Poppet' (Wise, R. 1994) 'San Lorenzo' X unknown
['San Lorenzo' (Ghio, R. 1972)]
Bob Wise registered this PCI and the others in the Pinewood series. He ordered seed directly from Joe Ghio.

This lovely article has been reprinted from the *Mercia Group Newsletter* 2001. Unfortunately there isn't such a Group now. Below, John Beaumont is writing to Eileen Wise, the Editor.

“Dear Eileen,

I'm sure I speak for others when I say how much I enjoy reading the *Mercia Newsletters*. I love your relaxed style and interesting articles but it must take a lot of time and effort to find material and keep it flowing. You once asked me to contribute an article but not being much of a scribe I was reluctant to take it on. Since then however, we've acquired a computer with all the trimmings, the secrets of which I am slowly unravelling, (I love the way it corrects one's spelling mistakes) and being someone who believes in “doing one's bit” for the cause, I've decided to have a go. At the risk of sounding corny, I've decided to call it -

THE PROBLEMS AND PLEASURES OF PROPOGATING PCIs

About four years ago, Fred Webbing mentioned that he intended ordering some PCI seed from Joe Ghio in the States in which I showed an interest. Fred was willing to count me in on the deal, splitting the cost equally but subsequently the order was divided among several BIS members and as a result I received about a hundred and twenty seeds. This was more than enough because the possibility of a high germination rate would give me nightmares finding room for the mature plants. As you know, I won't relinquish my vegetable space for anything.

I sowed them individually in multiple modular seed trays and in the interest of economy chose the smaller 35mm modules. I later discovered that this was not such a good idea as they could easily dry out in warm weather and would need constant attention. I started them outdoors in December to endure a spell of cold weather and after about eight weeks moved them into the unheated greenhouse to await results. It was a bit like watching a kettle boil because as the days rolled by and nothing happened, the doubts started to set in. Then, after about five weeks the first tiny green spike appeared, followed a couple of days later by another and another. Soon it was hard to keep count and by the second week I gave up trying. Eventually I ended up with 73 little seedlings with the largest already showing their roots well below the bottom of the module. I was now to discover the second snag from using the small modular cells. That of trying to remove the plugs intact from a large floppy seed tray without damaging the roots or the adjacent seedlings but my luck was in and I managed to transplant them into 2 inch pots of John Innes No. 1 without loss.

After a further brief period in the greenhouse, I transferred them outdoors to a sheltered spot on the north side of a fence and was surprised how quickly they made growth losing only three or four of the weakest plants. By August it was obvious that they would soon need transplanting but the ground was dry and I didn't have room so I had no choice but to pot them up and apply TLC. Fortunately, Fred Webbing came to my aid again. He had discovered a source of inexpensive ‘grow pots’ and was able to supply me

with as many as I needed of the 1.5 litre size at ten pence each. Not being sure what was best for these plants at this time I decided to break a horticultural rule and experiment with a fifty-fifty mixture of ordinary potting and ericaceous composts which fortunately suited them well as they thrived without further loss.

Christmas came and went, the weather was mild and the plants were healthy but Wendy and I were going away for two and a half weeks in January and I was concerned about their survival should the weather become extreme, which left me with no option but to put them back under cover for the duration of the holiday. Some of the plants, I noticed, had roots already showing through the pots so as a precaution I placed them on a bed of wet, sharp sand in the (unheated) greenhouse and left Grandad in charge to see that it didn't dry out. So I could blissfully forget about Iridaceae while we lost ourselves somewhere in the Serengeti for seventeen days.

On our return all appeared to be well. Grandad had done a good job. The plants had put on weight and were looking healthy but it struck me as somewhat odd that they had done so well in that short time. Then I saw why. They had enjoyed the wet sand and produced roots of 3 to 4 inches long. This now presented a new problem of either moving them at the wrong time of year or leaving them where they were until the ground warmed up. I chose the latter where I could keep an eye on them and seven weeks later, they were still there taking up all the bench space in the greenhouse. Due to late frosts the ground outside was if anything colder, so stay they must.

Well, the TLC must have paid off because a few days later I noticed a swelling in one of the shoots. Could it be, so early in April? It was indeed, and in a matter of days had opened into a rich yellow self with oxblood red veining radiating from a red halo signal. It was quite different from any PCI that I had seen. More followed and by the end of April I had 21 blooms in a variety of colours and shapes including a truly red iris, the first I have seen, a 'black' of doubtful shape and a selection of mauves and purples some of which had very attractive silver linings. They certainly lived up to their epithet of being the flowers of the rainbow! I realised of course, that being maiden blooms in pots, they weren't necessarily an exact representation of how they would be when mature and so would need another year or two to establish their true form.

Before I started out on this quest I had decided that being short of growing space I would keep only a dozen of the choicest flowers and somehow dispose of the rest but to make my selection I needed to see them all in bloom which meant waiting another year. At about this time I saw my ex-doctor and friend. He is now retired and spends most of his spare time working on his extensive garden. He mentioned that he was about to do away with his disused tennis court to make way for a wild flower garden. What luxury, I thought, to have all that lovely space. I then told him about my predicament with the irises and to my surprise and joy he offered me a small plot adjacent to it, the only price being a small amount of preparatory work on my part. By mid-May it was

ready. The PCIs were beginning to outgrow their pots and although not the ideal time for transplanting I had to take the risk, putting the best of those that flowered in my garden and the remainder in the new plot, and with just one exception they all survived the move.

One year on and I was making regular trips to my new haven, complete with camera and note book to discover what delights there were in store, and I wasn't disappointed. My limited power of description can't do them justice so I won't try. I'm no judge either but I could distinguish what looked promising from the rejects and there were plenty of those. My ultimate problem however, is which do I chose to have a dozen plants to keep for my own garden. At the moment I have a short list of 20, including a gorgeous blue self, but that could change by next year. Already seven of them have inexplicably died, including two of my favourites but I guess that's PCIs for you. If the *Mercia Group* is still flourishing in the autumn I'll provide an update."

Well, that's it Eileen. I hope it meets with your approval and if there's a moral to this story it must be, 'Never sow your seeds at random unless you know a good doctor'!

Sincerely, John Beaumont."

And John's **PCI Enthusiasm**

In January 2001 *Newsletter*, I finished an article on PCIs with a vague promise of an Update. To recap; in 2001, I had about 50 plants left from the 73 that germinated, divided between my garden and a corner in that of my doctor friend, a few of which had not bloomed. By spring 2001, the remainder did bloom, but seven or eight had died, amongst which were a couple of my favourites. As if to compensate, there were two very attractive colours in the new arrivals, a deep, almost black, purple and a ruby purple with paler standards, both now in my shortlist of twenty to keep. The attractive blue that I mentioned then had improved with time. I pray it will continue to do so. These were among a bunch much admired by members at a spring meeting.

To make room in my garden for my final selection I was going to have to be ruthless and dispose of the rejects. They weren't all thrown on the heap though. A friend willingly took several to fill a void in a wild garden he was making. Soon there will be more because I will have to make the agonising decision of which dozen to keep out of the thirty or so plants left. HELP!

Ed. Perhaps we need another update John!? John kindly gave me permission to reprint his article although he can't actually remember it. I rather cruelly told him he could re-read it in this Review.

Japanese Irises, Gobbett's Nursery Gordon and Christine Link

Well after a very wet winter last year we had an extremely dry spring, summer and early autumn once again, which didn't exactly suit these Japanese irises at all well. The plants in the field did receive a couple of brief irrigations but the container-grown plants do have to take precedent on the nursery, not only the iris but all the other shrubs and perennials we grow as well. Most plants survived but they didn't look particularly happy and growth and flowering was somewhat poor this year. Plus I think I was a little on the mean side with feeding this year. One thing I am beginning to realise is Japanese irises require much more feeding than the Siberians which we also grow and even on our heavy soil they will need more watering before flowering if we get another dry spring.

We did not get many plants setting seed this season, even the pot grown plants failed to produce. I think the main reason was the very warm weather meaning that the flowers were over very quickly. I have noticed we get a much better seed set if we have cool weather at flowering time. The flowers last longer and have more vibrant colour.

As a small nursery we rely on plant shows and plant fair sales and this year has been a little trying, with over 50 selling days cancelled. It was such a pity as the potted irises, which are watered everyday during the warm weather, looked particularly good with numerous flower spikes. Still we survive to sell another day, thanks to a little mail order and deliveries to customers in the local towns who have supported us brilliantly. So roll on spring and some slightly warmer weather when I must find time to split some of the potted iris not sold last season, as well as another round of weeding. The weeds seem to grow whatever the weather.

However, it wasn't all doom and gloom here and some varieties did perform well, including *ensata* 'Second Wave', 'Absalom', 'Kozasa Gawa', 'Light at Dawn' and 'Sue Jo'. 'Light at Dawn' and 'Sue Jo' always do well here.



'Absalom' (S. Innerst, R. 1994)



'Kozasa Gawa' (S. Hirao, R. 1993)

Japanese Iris Day

Wednesday July 7

Please arrive at Gobbett's Nursery 10-10.30 am. Tea,
Coffee, & Cake

We will have to keep to any Covid-19 rules on the day.

This is a chance to meet and visit the nursery and we
will see if more can be added nearer the time.
There will be no charge.

If you are interested please email me, or Alun
Whitehead to book a place or to request more details

www.thegobbettnursery.co.uk



'Second Wave'
(T. Aitken, R. 2005)
©Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden

'Light at Dawn'
(Walter Marx, R.
1957)



'Sue Jo'
(Delmez, R. 2003)

Spurias - an initial look

Alun Whitehead



FIG. 5. Capsules of *I. spuria*.

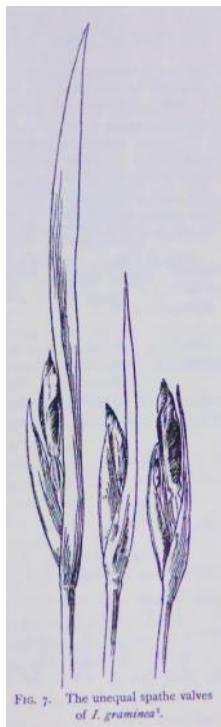


FIG. 7. The unequal spathe valves of *I. graminea*.

Seed capsules, *I. spuria*, and the unequal spathe valves of *I. graminea*.

Tall, stately, stunning – just some of the adjectives that spring to mind when thinking of garden spurias. They range in height from 20cm to 200cm and can even be fragrant. The colours are a long way from the original species plants – so what is the current situation? No doubt the final scientific word has not yet been written about these plants and so this is more of a back of an envelope type of article for someone wanting to get a mental picture of them and their possibilities, covering:

- The spuria species
- Hybrids between the species
- Hybrids with other irises

You will find useful information on this Iris Series in *A Guide to the Species Irises* published by the Species Group of the British Iris Society (**SB**) (1997), but as you will appreciate there have been changes since that was written. Firstly, is the Series Spuriae still relevant? Recent DNA evidence has shown that beardless irises in general are quite a disparate collection, not naturally related. However, from my layman's perspective, the unique seedpod characteristics of this group would seem to indicate a shared past at some stage in evolution. The alternative is to accept that the same seedpod change happened spontaneously multiple times. If you look at the spuria seedpod it splits into three sections as you would imagine, but they are separated by a

ridge of two close parallel lines instead of only a single one. Other characteristics common to the Series are two-toothed stigma and the seed having a loose papery capsule.

Useful references referred to in this article:

The American Iris Society Iris Encyclopaedia <https://wikiirises.org> (AISW)

Kew Science www.plantsoftheworldonline.org (KEW)

The Spuria Iris Society - *The Illustrated Checklist of Spuria Irises 2009* - a later edition is now available (SPU)

The Plant List – a collaboration between Botanic Gardens, but still a work in progress www.theplantlist.org (TPL). The following page with the current and superseded names is very useful: <http://www.theplantlist.org/tpl/search?q=iris>

The Species

Naming seems to be the greatest difficulty here. Some plants have been in cultivation for a long time and deciding which are species is not straight forward. For instance, take *Iris spuria* itself. It was described by Linnaeus, but by the time of **SB**, there was no actual *I. spuria*, only an archetype for use in describing subspecies and a variety. It seems now that *Iris spuria* subsp. *spuria* var. *danica* is now associated with the archetype.

A list of names you are likely to meet follows, with hopefully (fingers crossed) their current status.

**I. crocea* Jacquem Ex. R.C. Foster. A well-known species from the W. Himalaya about 1m in height and a distinctive mid-yellow. The description by Baker appears to be invalid.

I. graminea L. (2n=34). The scented enchantress even of the shady corner, having a large range in Europe, 20-40cm. Individual plants vary greatly as to the quality or absence of the scent, leaf colour and even the spathe length. The var. *pseudocyperus* was not considered valid by Dykes and the name is now just a synonym.

**I. halophila* Pallas (2n=44, 66 & 20!). Often listed as *I. spuria*. subsp. *halophila*. I liked Dykes' observation:

This iris is one of the most vigorous of all the forms of I. spuria. The plants quickly grow into close masses of foliage from which emerge numerous stems. The individual flowers are small but they are produced so freely that the whole effect is ornamental. Cultivation is extremely easy, for the plants seem to succeed in any soil. Moreover, the flowers are self-fertilised and seed is produced in abundance. It germinates readily and halophila is one of the greatest offenders in Botanical Gardens, where its vigorous self-sown seedlings oust the original occupants of the beds and then in their turn provide seeds which are distributed under the names of the plants whose positions they have occupied.

Sounds ideal for the natural garden! As well as the ubiquitous yellow, it has a purple form.

I. humilis M. Bieberstein (2n=70?). Mentioned by Dykes, now considered as *I. pontica*. The name is invalid and is associated with a pogon, but the Spuria checklist gives the chromosome count and so it is included for interest.

I. kerneriana Ascherson & Sintensis Ex. Baker (2n=18). **KEW** gives *Iris haussknechtii* Bornm. ex Baker (syn. *I. kerneriana*), the reverse of **TPL** – are we about to see a name change? A well-known iris from Northern Turkey. Flowers are white with yellow centres to the falls & standards, 25-30cm RHS AGM.

I. klattii* Kem.-Nath. Violet. **TPL gives this a synonym for *I. Spuria* subsp. *cathaliniae*, whilst the AIS seems to recognise the name. There are different opinions held and I would not be surprised if the name did not become accepted more widely again.

**I. lilacina* Borbas. An invalid name and synonym for *I. halophila*. It was grown in the Wisley trial for a time.

I. longipedicellata Czeaczott. Currently thought to be a synonym for *I. orientalis*. Collected in Turkey in 1932 but no recent reference.

I. ludwigii Maxim. A creeping miniature, 10-30cm from Kazakhstan, Altay and Mongolia. The **SB** says it is growable on a rock garden, but the flowers are within the 50cm leaves.

**I. monnieri* De Candolle. An old and widely grown variety now considered a synonym of *I. orientalis*.

**I. orientalis* Mill (2n=40). Usually with a large mid-yellow centre to the white falls, 40-90cm from NE Greece, Turkey, although escapees are found naturalised in the UK. RHS AGM.

I. pontica Zapal (2n=72). A short 10cm flower within the taller leaves. However, photos on the web show it can be a gem on the rock garden. Violet blue with varying amounts of white.

I. pseudonotha Galushko. From Caucasia discovered in 1983. There seems to be little information on it so far.

I. reichenbachiana Klatt. Now a synonym of *I. spuria* subsp. *spuria*. Not to be confused with the pogon iris of this name.

I. sintensisii Janka (2n=16, 32). The iris originally described by Janka is now subsp. *sintensisii*. An easy blue dwarf (10-30cm) from E. Europe and Turkey.



I. 'Lilacina'

There was only one record with the higher chromosome count, but does it indicate a naturally occurring tetraploid? RHS AGM.

I. sintenisii subsp. *brandzae* (Prodan) D.A. Webb & Chater (2n=20). Romania. Narrower leaves than the type with taller stems, not evergreen and growing in salt marshes.

I. sintenisii subsp. *sintenisii* var. *urumovii* Velen (syn. *I. urumovii*) (2n=20). A slender, elegant, floriferous, non-evergreen subspecies from Bulgaria.

I. spuria L. (2n=22). **SB** has this only as an archetype for the subspecies and variety, but **TPL** show the synonym *I. spuria* var. *danica* although with a low confidence rating. Kew shows an herbarium specimen – so a physical plant, not just an archetype! The iris originally described by Linnaeus would now be subsp. *spuria*.

**I. spuria* subsp. *carthaliniae* (Fomin) B. Mathew (2n=44). 90-100cm Caucasus. A well-recognised subspecies. Pale blue, but most photos show pale violet.

I. spuria subsp. *demetrii* (Akhverdon & Mirzoeva) B. Mathew (2n=38). NE Turkey to Transcaucasia. 70-90cm. Violet blue.

I. spuria subsp. *maritima* (Dykes) P. Fourn (2n=38). 25-30cm. Originally described by Jean-Baptiste Lamarck. Distinctly more blue than violet.

I. spuria subsp. *musulmanica* (Fomin) Takht. Central and E. Turkey to Iran. 40-90cm. Pale to deep lavender.

I. spuria subsp. *notha* Bieb. (2n=44). Accepted name, but confidence level low. Caucasus to Kashmir, broad leaves, robustly growing, 60-90cm, violet blue.

I. spuria subsp. *spuria* L. Widespread from S. Sweden through Central Europe. **TPL** gives a low confidence rating for this key subspecies.

**I. xanthospuria* B. Mathew & T. Baytop (2n=40). 50-100cm. S. Turkey and known as ‘Turkey Yellow’.

All species appear to have a yellow area at the centre of the signal to a varying extent. Fuller descriptions appear in *The Iris*, Brian Mathew.

Spuria Hybrids

Being used to Siberians where there are two distinctive groups with their own chromosome counts (28 & 40) which hybridise happily only within their own groups, it seems strange to find a group of related species with such a wide chromosome variation. The tall hybrids which we think of as ‘garden spurias’ are derived from the taller species indicated * above. The spurias will hybridise and produce fertile off-spring despite the different chromosome count of the parents. However, how far we can take this statement is unclear. The large hybrids come from a range of chromosome counts from 2n=38 to 44, but for most hybrids 2n=40 and *I. orientalis* is important in the

origination of the present hybrids. The blue colouring evident in many modern hybrids presumably comes from the $2n = 44$ species; *I. halophila*, *carthaliniae* & *klattii*. It is as if the blue cyanic pigment was bred into the hybrids and by later crosses with orientalis type hybrids, the chromosome number was reduced back to $2n = 40$. A fuller description of this can be found in **SPU**.

I cannot find hybrids amongst the shorter species, so question marks remain as to their possibility. However, with the desire for plants for smaller gardens, shorter hybrids would be welcome. Spurias are good for cutting and arrangements, so there may be an un-tapped market waiting.



'Russian White'
(Niswonger, R. 1982)

So what colours are possible? My understanding is that the pigment in the flower can produce a magenta, but not a true red. Combining this with blue and yellow can get near black, but not a true black. However, the close approximation to red or black is sufficient for most gardeners. Clean white spurias are possible; Dave Niswonger's 'Russian White' was a delight here and amazingly came from 'Blue Lassie' x *I. klattii* so perhaps those recessive genes do exist? The greens would seem to be the impossible spectral range, but impossible has been proved wrong before!

The delight with spurias is far from the individual colours. The falls, standards and style arms all contribute, need not be similar and can all possess different gradient, shading and veining possibilities. It is worth being aware of how the ancestors perform. 'Crow Wing' has lent itself to the browns, but my understanding is that it was a poor grower and the browns have so far been blighted by this (please get in touch if this is wrong!). Charles Jenkin's



'Imperial Sun'



'Innovator'



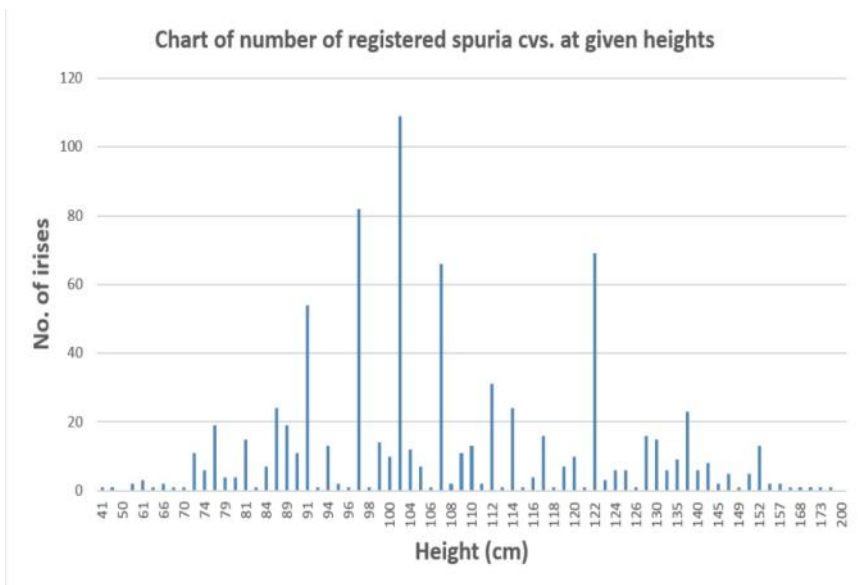
'Falcon's Crest'

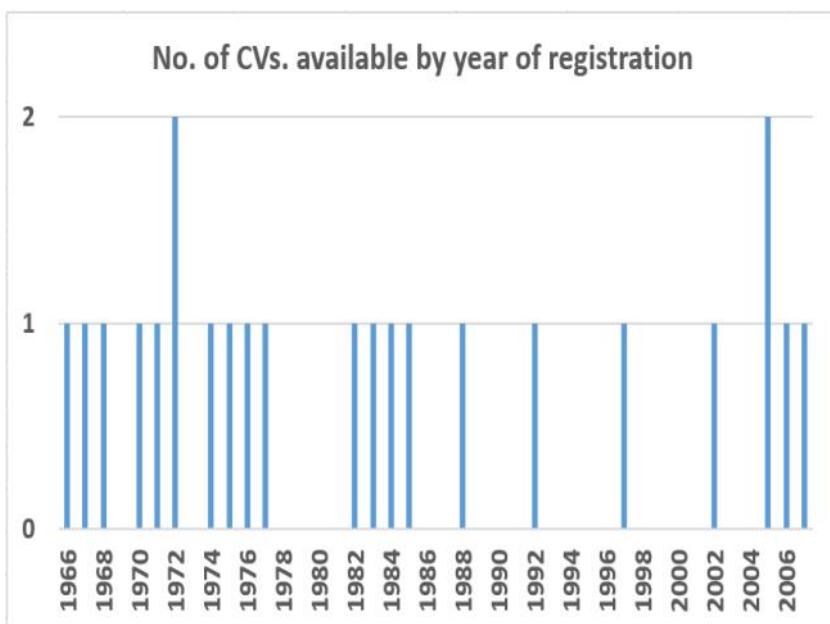


'Shelford Giant' overshadowing other Spurias in Wisley trials

'Falcon's Crest' was recommended for an RHS AGM, but I doubt if anyone has managed to keep it growing in the UK. Of course, the sun loving spurias are up against the British climate here and so it might be a harsher test than elsewhere. A very strong pattern is often when the styles are a strongly contrasting colour to the rest of the flower – 'Imperial Sun' and 'Innovator' come to mind.

If you ever saw 'Shelford Giant' overshadowing the other tall spuria cvs. in a Wisley Trial, you will understand the emphasis on height, but is this a true perspective or my natural bias? To clarify, I've included a chart of the number of cultivars by height.





I was shocked when I saw one registered at only 16cm – rather ironic as it is called ‘Fly So High’ – databases! Ignoring the typo, the shortest are ‘Jenny Marie’ 41-70cm, ‘Maritima Gem’ 48cm and ‘Elves Gold’ and ‘Leprechaun’s Kiss’ at 56cm. The tallest in the register showing a height are ‘White Ballet’ 183cm, ‘Robin Rebecca’ 173cm, ‘Ellison’ 168cm, ‘Fly So High’ 165cm and ‘Tempting Tigress’ 163cm. As height will vary with culture, don’t take this too literally. The notable absence of ‘Shelford Giant’ is because a height doesn’t appear to be recorded for it. In the Wisley Trial, ‘Falcon’s Crest’ was distinctly shorter than the other cultivars on trial, yet at 104cm the chart shows it near the peak of 102cm, so clearly not that unusual. The other thing which stands out about the chart is the low number of cultivars registered, only about 966 in total. This compares with 1718 Siberians and 42779 Tall Bearded. Could they be an unpopular field for hybridising? Or ideal for someone wanting a challenge?

Saying that there is a lack of interest in these hybrids would be wrong. The RHS Plant Finder currently has 203 entries for spurias, however, only 28 are available (including 4 species).

It appears that nurseries are drawn to try these tall plants, but the majority do not stay in commerce very long. Those being sold are weighted towards the older cvs. ‘Mrs Tait’ (1912) is still available but not included in the chart. There are currently 8 RHS AGM for cvs., but only 2 have suppliers listed.

If you are interested enough to want to start hybridising, there is a wrinkle

which is less obvious. The object is to get the pollen you want on the stigma and avoid any other pollen getting on there. You want the cross you intended and not the one that nature may propose. With other irises, you can remove the falls just as the flower is opening thus thwarting the busy bees. The anthers are also best removed as spuria pollen is light and blowable. You can put a 'rain cap' on to stop the pollen being knocked off before it can grow to reach the ovary. Even so, it is still the spuria's ability to produce nectar and attract ants etc. that may still defeat you, so it is worth thinking how to combat this possibility. And as the pollen has to grow far enough to reach the ovaries, will pollen from taller plants be more effective on shorter ones, rather than vice versa?

It is at least a 3-year investment to get a flowering plant from seed, so it is worth improving your chances and saving your time and efforts by being choosy on the seed you use. Choosing good parents is important. The register and catalogues concentrate on the flower and give little information on bud count, how the buds are held or foliage; the sort of thing that can decide whether an iris is a good garden plant or a few years of wonder. Being architectural plants, which can dominate a flower border from February through to July, good foliage is essential. On our growing area we have small colourful snails which love to climb the stems for a challenge and most cvs. show little or no damage from them.

Intersection Hybrids

SB mentions known hybrids between spuria species and *I. ensata* ($2n=24$), *I. fulvala*, *laevigata* ($2n=28/32$), *pseudacorus* ($2n=24/32/34$) and *sibirica* ($2n=28$). I have not seen any such crosses and the chances of success must be frankly doubtful. In fact, several intersection crosses have been registered that now have question marks attached. It may be an elusive grail, but to whet your appetite there is a report that Edith Cleaves managed a cross of *I. graminea* with *I. foetidissima* ($2n=40$) which appeared similar to *graminea* but with colourful seedpods! Charles Jenkin did try crossing with *I. lactea* and planted many of the resulting seedlings which he thought showed characteristics of both parents. Unfortunately, none of the crosses appear to be registered and so perhaps it just remains a dream. The DNA work of Carol Wilson shows that the closest species outside this section is *foetidissima*, but as Brian Mathew suggested in the last *Review*, a fuller analysis of this section would be helpful.

If you do wish to attempt intersection crosses, do try a cocktail of pollen to improve your chances. You cannot predict which pollen parent may succeed against the odds, so why not dust a collection on to the stigmas. And of course, if you succeed, we would like to be the first to know about it!

Treasurer / Membership Secretary's Report

Firstly, the good news. It has been such a dreadful year that we are extending all paying UK memberships by one year free of charge. Given the high cost of overseas postage, we cannot in fairness extend this to all members, but overseas members will all receive the equivalent credit of £6 off any renewal.

With so much uncertainty in the present climate, there is no point in making a definite plan for the future, but it is worth reflecting on our current position. The Group's activities have traditionally included running a seed scheme and an occasional plant offer when possible. New legislation in 2020 makes this much more difficult. We have always benefitted from our wide geographic spread of members, but the requirement for all seed entering the UK to be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate must have a drastic impact on the scheme. There is a meeting of UK Plant Societies soon to discuss the issue as many others are also affected.

The other side of our activities, relaying information about beardless irises, is more assured. Our e-membership has now surpassed our hard copy membership and this trend is likely to continue. Environmentally, this seems acceptable and it is time to start considering how our constitution should alter to reflect the new reality. The UK Charity Commission sets out two different models for non-profit groups: (1) the association model for groups that meet where members take the decisions; (2) a foundation model where a small number of trustees manage the Group for the benefit of all. Our constitution currently reflects the former model, but with fewer and fewer paying / voting members, there must be some accommodation of the more numerous non-voting e-members. Having the Group's decisions made by e-members who may have little commitment or involvement seems undesirable; better to let the Officers / Trustees of the Group continue to act instead. After all they are doing all the work!

Our Group is a sub-group of the British Iris Society, although there is no requirement that our members be BIS members. I don't see this relationship changing under the new constitution – if we can agree one. With Anne Blanco White's passing, this leaves only three Officers which is barely sufficient. One or two more who are happy to take up promoting beardless irises or Iridaceae would be very welcome. In this virtual world, it might take less time than you think!

Alun Whitehead

2021 Subscription rates for hard copies.
e-membership remains free.

You can pay for 1, 2 or 3 years in advance at the following rates:

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UK (low rate)	£5.00	£9.00	£13.50
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You can pay using the PayPal button on the website, bank transfers details below, or cheques payable to "The Group for Beardless Irises" can be sent to the Treasurer.

Note: The lower rate will receive the *Review* only by post, everything else by email.

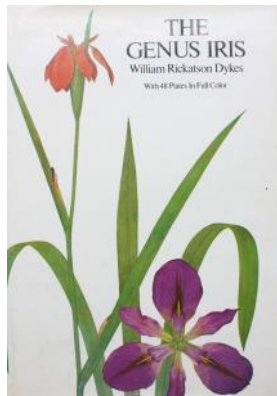
Bank Details: Sort 40-08-14 AC no. 11304852 in name of "The Beardless Iris Group of the BIS". IBAN GB60HBUK40081411304852

Website Update

As you know, all the Group's *Newsletters* and *Reviews* are on-line – many hours of research or relaxed reading are possible. They do pop up in web searches, but it can be difficult otherwise if you are looking for something in particular. To help, I've now added a list of articles by date and by author to the publications page. I've also added a copy of Dykes' *The Genus Iris* (1913) as a handy reference – so many later references rely on him, it is always good to see the original.

www.beardlessiris.org/publications.html

Alun Whitehead



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Two of our members' successes at the shows. Above, A photograph of *Iris* 'Murrayana' ©Judi Deakin and below an exhibit, *Iris* 'Joyce', by Iris Clarke.



