

The Group for Beardless Irises of the British Iris Society

Newsletter No.41 - December 1997



THE GROUP'S OFFICERS: Chairman: Mr.Ray Bomford, The Hills, Tanhouse Lane, Beoley, REDDITCH, Worcs B98 9AB.

Vice Chairman: Mrs. Hilda Goodwin, Corner Cottage, School Road, GREAT BARTON, Bury St.Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 2RT.

Treasurer & Membership Secretary: Mr.Philip Allery, 199 Walsall Road, ALDRIDGE, Walsall, West Midlands, WS9 OBE.

Newsletter Editor & Librarian: Ms. Sue Pierce, 89 High Street, Measham, SWADLINCOTE, Derbys DE12 7HZ.

Seed Distribution Officer: Mr.Gary Lewis, Rancho Lodge, Stone Street, WESTENHANGER, Kent CT21 4HS.

Honorary Auditor: Mrs.L.Wilkins, 17, Lancaster Avenue, ALDRIDGE, Walsall, West Midlands WS9 8RE.

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES: North Western Area:VOLUNTEERS PLEASE.

Southern Area: Mr.Adrian Whittaker, 'Chestnuts', Hilden Way, LITTLETON, Winchester, Hants. SO22 6QH.

Eastern Area: Mrs. Shirley Ryder, Toadshole Cottage, Old Road, FEERING, Colchester, Essex CO5 9RN.

West & Midlands Area: Mr.Philip Allery, 199 Walsall Road, ALDRIDGE, Nr.Walsall, West Midlands WS9 OBE

London Area: Mrs. Anne Blanco White, as above.

SPECIALIST HELP: Japanese Iris Specialist: Mrs. Anne Blanco White.

Pacificas Specialist: VOLUNTEERS PLEASE.

Sibirica Specialist: Mrs.Jennifer Hewitt.

Spuria Specialist: Mr. Adrian Whittaker.

OVERSEAS CONTACTS: Japanese: Mrs. E. White, Editor, The Society for Japanese Irises Review, 193 Jackson Hill Road, Minot, ME 04258, USA.

Pacificas: Lewis Lawyer, Editor, SPCNI 'Almanac', Adele Lawyer, Sec.-Treas., SPCNI, 4333 Oak Hill Road, Oakland, CA 94605, USA.

Sibiricas: Mrs.J.Hollingsworth, Editor, 'The Siberian Iris', 120 Sherwood Road, East Williamstown, MI 48895, USA.

Spurias: Carole Speiss, Editor, Spuria Iris Society's 'Newsletter', 6204 N 15th Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85015, USA.

CONTENTS:

Page 1: Chairman's Comments- Ray Bomford

Page 1: Secretarial Section- Anne Blanco White

Page 1: Treasurer & Membership Secretary's Report- Philip Allery

Page 3: Editorial- Sue Pierce

Page 3: Northern Region Report and WMIG Show- John Beal

Page 4: South of Watford- Anne Blanco White

Page 4: Southern Area Report- Adrian Whittaker

Page 5: Eastern Region Report- Shirley Ryder

Page 5: West & Midland Region Report- Philip Allery

Page 5: Iris Information

Page 8:The Great Gale, Ten Years On- Anne Blanco White

Page 9: Sing the Praises of Pseudacorus- Adrian Whittaker

Page 9: More Swings and Roundabouts in the Frozen East- Geoff Wilson

Page 10: An Interest in Irises- Chris Sutton

Page 10: To Reason Why- Sqdn. Ldr. M.B.McCarthy

Page 10: Sibiricas and Others in 1997- Jennifer Hewitt

Page 11: Landscaping with Siberians-a Different Point of View- Matthew Schueler

Page 13: Ensata x Siberians- John Coble

Page 13: In Praise of 'Annick' (a small iris for small places)- Fran Hawk

Page 14: Spring Versus Fall Planting- Sandra Rawlings

Page 14: Iris Notes From British Columbia- Doug Murray

Page 15: An Adaptation of: Expedition 1997, Roseburg, Oregon- Adele Lawyer

Page 15: Mixed California Iris Seed- Diane Whitehead

Page 15: An Adaptation of: How Do Your Iris Grow-compiled by Lewis & Adele Lawyer

Page 20: An Adaptation of:Seedling Production Guidelines- Lewis Lawyer

Page 20: An Adaptation of: Update on The Lates- Lewis Lawyer

Page 20: An Adaptation of: Germinating Seed in a Cold-Winter Climate- John White

Page 21: Report on Wisley's Spuria Trial Replanted 1994- Pauline Brown

Page 21: Who Will Develop Reblooming Spuria Iris?- Clarence Mahan

Page 22: Bloom Season 1997- Tom Abrego

Page 23: Potted Louisiana in New Zealand- Isabel Simpson

Page 23: An Adaptation of: Japanese Irises-Waterlovers???

Rich Randall

Page 23: An Adaptation of: Peacock Dance- Carol Warner

Page 24: An Adaptation of: 'Rose Adagio'- Popular Iris- John Coble

Page 24: An Adaptation: Pursuing Improvements in Japanese Irises-

Jill Copeland

Page 25:An Adaptation of: 3 Fall - 6 Fall Genetics- John Coble

Page 25: Lexington's Meteorological Misfits- Mark A. Cook

Page 26: My Early October Garden- Shirley Spicer

Page 26: Irises as Herbs- The Hamlyn Colour Guide

Page 27: A Triterpene from *I. missouriensis*-courtesy of Prof.Dr.El Emary

Page 27: The Lurghu File; Stars and Stripes- Anne Blanco White

Bacteriophages in Russia

Page 28: Compost Heaps

Page 28: Seed Distribution

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Well we were let off the hook. Was it because of a change of Government in May? I am referring of course to my hobby-horse of drought and climate changes. The record June rainfall certainly let the Government off the hook too although I do not expect them to recognise the fact. Gardens apart, the national potato crop not to mention the sugar beet and spring malting barley crops would have been devastated without that rain, and as it was, crops suffered drought in the east. The average man in the street would soon have recognised the rise in basic food prices and that of a pint of beer. As it is the potential disaster has passed him by. We are not out of the wood yet. September has been drier than usual and so we need above average rainfall in October and November. There is yet to be a run on rain-butts in the Plant Centres, but will an edict be forthcoming to that effect from our leaders such as "Save 200 gallons per head of population or else!" I would be a disastrous dictator, would I not?

As you will know all too well the now to be expected spring frosts arrived when least welcome. As a result there are no pears at all here and very few apples. Yet by a quirk of nature we did have a few greengages. We normally expect a decent crop in England once every twenty years. Half of my ancient tree is covered by a tall hedge so the frost was partially averted. Sometimes neglectful practices (ie laziness) produce the goods. Not only the fruit crop will be lighter but the amount of Iris and Lily seed set seems almost negligible. Mrs Criddle, our B.I.S. seed distributor, has been pleading for even the very small amounts that we might salvage.

That leads me to register our thanks and appreciation of our overseas seed donors. We would be lost without them. I hope that we do not take them for granted. Let me assure them that I for one regard their generosity as the mainstay of our organisation. As you all well know, any developments and advances in all plant growing depends upon the seed crop. So many, many thanks to all our donors. Now let us know what we can do for you in return.

Best wishes to you all. As before I hope that we are all *almost* flooded out this winter, or even snowed under.

Ray Bomford

SECRETARIAL SECTION

The affairs of the Group continue in an exemplary fashion and provide your secretary with little to do except approve layouts for publicity leaflets - now in eye-catching yellow. Incidentally, if any of you think you would have an opportunity to display these at your local Horticultural Society meetings, you can get copies from either Philip Allery or myself. And it occurs to me that those of you who try your hand at breeding your own irises might benefit from the latest BIS publication: Judge for Yourself. Many of our members can't get to shows and are a little reluctant to launch their seedlings into space in case they get sneered at. Actually, those of us who do most of the judging don't sneer, but we do worry. There was a very difficult situation once where a member of the RHS sent spikes to the JIC at Chelsea. They were magnificent spikes, but we had to turn them down because they were ten years out of date - the quality of the flowers was quite inadequate. To our horror, the same thing happened the next year and that time our John Taylor, who was chairman, was deputed to go and have a chat with the exhibitor and explain our reasoning. So, if you are a potential breeder -and Jennifer Hewitt is always hoping for more registrants- get a copy and read it carefully over the winter. The advice on staging alone may encourage you to exhibit and get advice on the spot. In addition, the secretary of the Awards & Judging committee will help you to find someone to grow and assess your plants for you if that would be a help.

Anne Blanco White

REPORT OF THE HON. TREASURER AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Finances: A balance of £597.95 at 30th September last with estimated printing costs of the October newsletter already advanced means that it is unnecessary to increase the 1998 membership subscriptions. They will remain unchanged at £2.50 for U.K. and Europe; and £3.00 for other members overseas. However these alone would be insufficient to cover the Group's running costs during the year and we are very grateful for the donations of cash and seeds; which with plant and seed sales provide the essential extra income. Donors will be listed in my year-end report. Income from seed sales cannot be estimated accurately, or indeed relied upon as our Seeds Officer, Gary Lewis, tells me that there is less interest than anticipated. This is an extra-ordinary state of affairs as the Group receives generous donations of excellent seed from many overseas members, including Currier McEwen, Tony Huber, Charles Jenkins and Dave Niswonger. Without seed we cannot raise and evaluate new seedlings or subsequently sell them to raise funds for the Group. I urge all members to support the seeds sale scheme. Take that first step and join the adventure. We are at the threshold of a new era in beardless iris hybridisation. Germination and cultivation guides are available at a modest charge.

In the April newsletter I reported the receipt of a bequest of £200 from the late Miss E.M. Sharland. In consultation with the officers approximately £130 of the sum bequeathed has been used to employ a graduate to prepare card indices; one of members and their donations and subscriptions: the other of newsletter contents. The membership index will enable me to keep up-to-date records for my successor when the time arrives, whether or not he or she has computer facilities. A metal Rotadex cabinet has been donated for use with this membership index.

The other index is of articles in the S.S.& J. 'Newsletter' from its formation in June, 1976 to the date of its re-naming. This index by subject/author and author/subject, is to be held by the Hon. Librarian, Sue Pierce. It is hoped that computer data base will be available for members, on request, from mid-1998 onwards.

The April newsletter cost £130, of which approximately £40 represented postage costs. This brings me to the question of overseas mail to our members. Sue Pierce tells me that a member in correspondence with her has mentioned the time it takes for the newsletter to reach our members overseas. The current membership subscription is calculated to allow for postage at printed paper rate by surface mail. The extra cost of airmail at printed paper rate for a newsletter of the size now published would be not less than £1.00 per annum, with airmail letter rate an average of an extra 50

pence. Until this facility becomes a general feature of newsletter publication I am prepared to provide an airmail service for those requiring it on payment of the appropriate extra sum. If you are interested please contact me.

I am still experiencing difficulty in obtaining some subscriptions despite the code reminder on your address slip. If your subscription falls into arrears I shall be forced to withhold postage of the 'Newsletter' until payment is received. In the meantime one reminder only will be sent to you. Please check to see whether I have included one with your newsletter. If so additional expenditure may have been incurred to change from printed paper rate to letter rate for this newsletter. I am sure you will agree that this is an unnecessary waste of time and resources. Where else could you obtain a publication with such generous content for such a small outlay? Do consider whether you are able to include an advance payment, at least equivalent to one year's estimated subscription, when you next make your subscription payment. This practice will always keep you in credit. Many members do so already and it makes life much easier for me, especially as I have now taken on the duties of the Hon. Literature Secretary of the British Iris Society, for which post there seems to be a dearth of volunteers.

Many members have given me much encouragement and support during the past months during which bereavements and ill-health have been a problem. My sincere thanks to you all: this support is much appreciated. If I have failed to reply to your letters, etc., as promptly as you, and I, would have wished, you now know the reasons for the delay on my part. I am making an excellent recovery from a recent mild heart attack followed by a debilitating attack of shingles, so I hope "normal service" will be resumed in the near future.

MEMBERSHIP: Those of you who have not read The British Iris Society Autumn Newsletter may not be aware of the recent death in June last of Mr. Robert A. Wise, or Bob as he was always known., whose renewed membership was reported in the October '96 newsletter. The Group for Beardless Irises has a special reason to mourn his passing for he had built up a fine collection of sibiricas and PCI's, with notable successes in his "Pinewood" PCI range. The Group's sympathy is extended to his family.

Ill health has forced the withdrawal from membership of Mr. Ray Wilson, our Pacificas Specialist, who has been a valued member of our Group (and the S.S. & J. Group) for many years. Thank you Ray for your stalwart support in the past. Regional and Specialist representation is being reviewed and a report will be included in the next newsletter. Volunteers are urgently required.

We welcome to membership Mrs. Sue Wittall of Old Court, BREDWARDINE, Herefordshire HR3 6BT and Christine Wharton Nebbett of DAWLISH, Devon EX7 0RF; Mr. & Mrs. K.N. Edmondson of 'Hopcroft' BEWDLEY, Worcs. DY12 2QT, and Ralph Medcalf of 3, Valentines Way, Rush Green, ROMFORD, Essex RM7 0YD. Ralph Medcalf is a water garden enthusiast and it would be interesting to learn how many members have a similar interest.

Mark A. Cook, a regular contributor to the 'Newsletter' and formerly of Kentucky, has now relocated to 9100 202 Ave. Rd., Dunnellon, FL. 34431-5745 where we hope that he, his mother and his irises will do well.

Mr. Akira Horinaka has now returned to his former address: Oide-cho 9-31, Nishinomiya 662, JAPAN, and we send him our good wishes.

The address of Mr. B. Charles Jenkins is: 9426 East Topeka (not Tapeka) Drive, SCOTTSDALE, AZ. 85255, U.S.A.

Members of the The West and Midlands Iris Group visited my small garden in July and were able to see the garden pool which I have recently enlarged to facilitate the display of beardless irises. The garden should be a lot tidier next year and if any member would like to visit me during the last two weeks of June and the first week of July (peak bloom time for my Japanese irises), giving advance notice, they would be welcome. It is planned to have on sale plants raised by the Chairman from seeds donated by members. Group funds will benefit. More about this in the Spring newsletter.

Philip Allery

OBITUARY: BOB WISE

With the recent death in June of Robert A. Wise or Bob as he was always known, the British Iris Society has lost a member of over 40 years and an outstanding exhibitor. A full obituary will appear in the Year Book and other places but the Beardless Iris Group has a special reason to mourn his passing. For the first of his thirty years with the BIS, Bob concentrated on tall bearded hybrids but Eileen Wise was already aware that the acid sandy soil of their garden in Iver Heath was ideal for PCI's and was growing many of the Brummit and Ghio hybrids for the floral decoration classes. Bob had been steadily building up a fine collection of Sibiricas and PCI's as part of his commitment to maintaining a BIS Awards Garden and in 1986 he embarked enthusiastically on a breeding programme for new PCI cultivars.

He was delighted to discover that the number of acceptable plants obtained from one cross was high, in marked contrast to the situation with TB's, and he was soon having new seedlings selected for trial at Wisley. Many of these have received RHS award status and he founded a series called Pinewood after the nearby film studios. Notable among his introductions are 'Pinewood Poppet', 'Pinewood Charmer' and 'Pinewood Sunshine', the latter a bright yellow which often has four flowers per upright stem. This represents a significant advance on either the usual two buds, or else stems having many flowers but lying on the ground. It is useless to speculate on what he would have achieved in further years; by cruel fortune so many buds of his new seedlings were blighted by an unseasonable frost in his last year, but I still hope we may see some of these appearing on the Wisley Trial.

P.M.

OBITUARY: JACK ASHFORD

We are very sorry to hear of the death of Jack Ashford of Nairn, Scotland, a long time member of the Group and contributor to the 'Newsletter'. A keen gardener, his interest lay mainly in sibiricas and Japanese irises and he raised several promising ones from seed, one of which was registered in the 1980's and named for his wife. 'Connie A' is a tetraploid sibirica, a lovely combination of mid blue with a gold signal. J.H.

EDITORIAL

Officers and members have performed wonders for me in this issue and I'm very much indebted to them. It does put a smile on my face to be inputting original information and to read of what members are up to. Hopefully these articles will have the same effect on most of you and more such pieces will come my way. They're always especially welcome. The regional reports are most interesting and wonderfully lengthy and I earnestly hope that they will prove a regular autumnal event. Heartfelt thanks to you all. Philip is taking over the Midlands Region as of January the 1st, but a successor to Ray Wilson is urgently needed to carry on the good work up north. This edition has been delayed by the need to wait for seed, some of our most exciting donations not arriving until December, so I apologise for allowing it to (undoubtedly) get delayed further due to the Christmas post.

In reference to Ray's comments on our weather, my mother tells me that she heard on BBC Radio 3 that rainfall after April is too late to penetrate below the level at which the burgeoning plant growth will slurp it up wholesale and thus prevent it from eventually reaching the aquifers, if, indeed, it doesn't just run off the droughted soil into the watercourses. Perhaps the answer to some of the agricultural problems ignored by Government is to reinstitute the ancient practice of sacrificing one's leaders if the crops failed, as being culpable. Enough incentive to do the necessary I'd have thought, it certainly seems rather too often as though any smaller stick won't do so. Maybe someone should suggest it at the Kyoto Summit on Climate Change, in the hope that some of those governments that opted out last time over emissions, will see the light.

My resolution last year was to keep a note of how the irises did over the year in a general fashion to include here, but as that didn't happen I asked my mother to tell me what she'd noted down about meteorological aberrations here as she has a better idea anyway, due to her daily dawn gallivantings with the dogs and endless hours of gardening. Here it is; January 1st, minus one degree Celsius with snow in the second week; March, dry; April 12th frosty, 20th cold and windy with the end of April and the beginning of May being wet. 24th May, frost; the second to fourth week of June, wet; third week in July hot, as were the first two weeks of August, although the third week was wet. The second week of September was wet too and so was the start of October although as I'm writing this on the 28th, our nightly rains and occasional wet days have dried up and it's sunny and frosty overnight. As you can see, it's not been a straightforward year. It was the best year yet for my TB's for flower, and the Sibiricas seemed happy too, but nothing else did very much and the bearded seem rather exhausted now, but I won't go into that. There wasn't much seed, except on Sibiricas and chrysographes hybrids, and nothing seemed to grow very well on the allotment, although the garden had it's most rampant year ever. In my idiocy I thought that if I had a lot of seed, then so would everyone else, and threw it away as it was only open pollinated 'Red Flare' which is still in the Seed Bank, so if you don't hear from me in the spring it'll be because some irate Seed Distribution Officer came visiting. Quite a few seedlings flowered for the first time this year, mostly from crosses that hadn't done so before, which was especially exciting but perhaps not so informative as the ones which filled up the rows that had only had a few do so to date. I duly sent rather 'hot' colour balance photos off to Jennifer who most kindly replied with a lengthy document detailing just why the vast majority should be composted. I can't say that I was thorough, as I spent most of the summer on the bed, being feeble about such extremes of heat, but I did have a good go later on at rooting out some of those that my ignorance had a soft spot for but that Jennifer, and Anne too in some cases, were quite horrified about, although I couldn't remember exactly which some were, so either they've been reprieved for a year or I've outed the wrong ones. This left me with a few pockets in which to tuck potfuls of seedlings that had roots emerging out of the bottom of their pots in what seemed to me to be indecent haste, but hadn't made enough top growth for me to feel confident about the outcome of subjecting them to my hasty way of rowing out.

When the WMG visited on October 18th, Jennifer mentioned that it was then too late to be splitting, so I didn't row out any stronger seedlings, but I must confess that the most desperately congested of my adult bucketed moisture-lovers that should have been split last year, had been rended in the first week of the month. These were *I.fulvala*, *laevigata* 'Nou Beni' (possibly not), an unflowered seedling from L.'Asukaji', *pseudacorus* 'Phil Edinger' and 'Holden Clough'. I varied my usual method of bucketing by making the bottom third of each a mixture of old horse-muck and grit with the usual J.I.No.3 on top for the extant roots. It seems that in some of them I forgot the grit, and it took ages for their initial and only watering to percolate through the buckets. I shall let you know whether they all survive the winter. I've also left a bucketed *I.fulvala* quite alone in its water to see which do best overwinter. I had split a few ensatas for the A.G.M., and their remainders -such that were decent enough- had sat in water ever since waiting for the WMG visit, and those that didn't sell there were potted up pronto afterwards and haven't died yet, but that may be the best that gets said about them. I'm sure that Philip will be bald after reading this. He advised me that ensatas are best split into pieces of two fans, three at the most, as these apparently sorry sections get away better than larger lumps, so there was something that I've done correctly. *Laevigata* 'Weymouth Midnight' is unfortunately not doing well but everything else seems to be doing fine in its J.I.No.3, but then, maybe I simply don't know what they really ought to be doing. For these icy nights I've fashioned a little tent out of bubble plastic with an internal newspaper for an offset of a violet *laevigata* that Jennifer kindly brought over at the meeting, but as the temperature today (1.12) is too much for me, I can't say that I'm confident about its future. Still, hope is vital to gardeners of any sort after all.

Sue Pierce

NORTHERN REPORT & WMIG SHOW

Well! Another peculiar season draws on under the maturing sun and for me at least has delivered a number of new experiences, some to do with Irises. We had a warmish winter with sudden unexpected severe late frosts within an early spring, a period of unseasonal colder weather and then came the heat. The net result of all this was that the WMIG show on June 7th looked quite likely to be florally challenged. However in the event, our second year at David Austin Roses proved to be a smashing day with sufficient entries to cover the tables. There were only three spikes of tall bearded! However four members made entries in the beardless classes with as ever Jennifer Hewitt finding some very nice spikes. In the class of 28 chromosome sibiricas Jennifer showed 'Rossandel' (Hewitt 1995), a nice pink, 'Welfenbraut' (Ahlburg 1992), a yellow, and two attractive seedlings, one a large ultramarine and the other a white infused with green. Peter Hewitt showed 'Gull's Wing' (McGarvey/Wadepammer 1988) a white, 'Violet Joy' (McEwen 1980) a rounded blue, 'Welfenbraut' (Ahlburg 1992) and a rather nice purple with a moderate white flare. In the 'other' beardless class Peter won with 'Roy Davidson' (Hager 1987), a 'Holden Clough' seedling moving toward *pseudacorus* supported by spikes from a well branched seedling from 'Rising Sun'. Jennifer showed *I.laevigata* x *I.versicolor*. The species iris or iridaceous produced four entries, Chris Sutton taking the honours with

I.pseudacorus, Jennifer produced colour forms of *I.versicolor* and Peter *I.pseudacorus bastardii*. The potted plants produced a plummy-purple ensata from Wendy Farrell to win with other entries from Chris Sutton and Jennifer.

Now to my growing observations. Remarkably my large muddy clump of pseudacorus did not infloresce -was it frosted in earliest spike? An overlooked pot of ensata seeds produced a very high germination in two inches of water and several damp late shelled pods of beardeds produced good germination from a messy slimy mass. Circumstances dictated that I had to plant out various pots of beardless seedlings in some relatively poor limestony soil. With the rain they all seem to have made quite splendid plants. Sadly the labels were undecipherable so I await the next season with great interest.

John Beal

John has stood in as Northern Area Representative due to Ray Wilson's failing health whilst someone is found to take the job on. He is in urgent need of a successor to the post, and this is his last report. We thank Ray most kindly for all his efforts to keep us informed and devoutly hope that one of you in approximately -very if need be!- the right geographical location will be prepared to take on this over from John in time for the next report.

Ed

SOUTH OF WATFORD

Frankly, the less said about this area this year the better. We had virtually no rain over the winter and I was definitely hoist with one of my own petards - I had flu and so couldn't even water the beds which really would have benefited from it at that time. I have said it before and, no doubt, I shall say it often again: wet-land irises like to start the year with a saturated soil. Then we had a nice, warm spell in early spring which brought everything along a treat. The plum blossom was fabulous; well a lot of plants did actually enjoy last year's heat. The smaller bearded irises at Wisley were a fortnight ahead of themselves and an emergency JIC was called for a Monday morning. That was just after the weekend of The Great Frost. The Trials have been a pretty horrid sight ever since. Both the Wisley shows were fiascos, though the one at the Hadlow Convention was good. Sibiricas have flowered poorly mainly because the spikes got frosted, the P.C.I. trial was virtually wiped out because when evergreens lose most, let alone all, of their leaves, there is little you can do to save them. There will be a total replant of damaged cultivars at the same time as the new trial is started. The Portsmouth field is very prone to radiation frosts at the best of times, but this was a real killer at -10 degrees C on soft foliage and irises weren't the only sufferers.

Luckily, the ensatas and spurias which flower later were relatively unscathed. Some of the foliage was damaged, but spikes were thrown up fairly generously in both groups. I find that my own spurias were split into two groups: the sulkers who either felt they had done their duty last year and weren't going to play again this year or ones which normally don't bother to flower and decided that last summer was just what they liked. 'Highline Halo' (McCown 1975), in London, has been a regular performer, but my garden spring was depressed by the summer and it failed this year, but another plant which came clearly labelled as 'Sunlit Sea', and it isn't, produced some spectacular spikes in deep purple with a yellow signal merging into the purple of the fall. (Would any one like to guess what it might be? Only four flowers.) I've made another silly discovery here, too. My spurias normally set seed on a reasonable scale except for one 'Frigia' (Rodionenko) which is in Sussex. I put that down to an absence of nearby ants nests in the past, but this year, in spite of 10cm of rain in a fortnight, I thought I would try hand pollination. There wasn't a grain of pollen to be found, but there were lots of dear, little black beetles tootling round and they had hogged the lot! Next year, if I remember, I will put a smear of Vaseline round the stems before flowering time because I don't think they fly up to those heights; it is less trouble to climb.

Anne Blanco White

SOUTHERN AREA REPORT

This year has been one of mixed blessings, in spite of the long, dry, hot summer. Many of the irises have put up a good display but the water loving ones planted in the ground have, understandably, shown obvious signs of the lack of water. Even those in the small pool -as a result of a significant drop in the water level during a brief holiday- were very slow to pick up after a top up and as a result I lost the two *laevigatas* (the best, of course, 'Violet Parasol' and a seedling from 'Aoitori'). I realised that 'open border' plantings of water loving irises on thin, hot, alkaline soil were never going to be easy, but it takes a couple of much drier years in succession to really show how much of a problem it can be. Tap water for these is the only solution while the drought persists, if water restrictions permit, but in this area it really is slow poison for the acid-lovers. There is a finite limit to the amount of humus available to bolster up the soil and also to the willingness to undertake heavy daily watering -particularly after you pass the sixty barrier!

With the spurias and pseudacorus I've found that the best answer is very good and deep preparation of the soil at planting time. I try and dig a largeish hole in the chalk, break up the bottom well and then fill this with good soil or compost. The compost like all humus soon breaks down but topping up solves that and this system does appear to give some sort of reservoir of moisture at least sufficient to carry the plant over a couple of weeks or so. These two species are clearly much better suited to cope with alkalinity than most of the water lovers so this was one of my major reasons for attempting to grow these here. After twenty years or so I'd broadly say that the technique is successful. The spurias have been good this year generally, but for some reason none of the wine/maroons have flowered. I thought I was getting together a group of reliable flowerers for southern England and then nature steps in and tells you otherwise. Everything gets much the same treatment so as they say 'it must be the weather!' One or two of the darker seedlings are showing promise in the reliability direction, but these have unfortunately much fewer flowers per stem than I started off with in the parents -a well know facet of breeding i.e. it always seems much easier to accentuate the worst features than the best.

I wouldn't let any of this put off those of you out there who may be thinking of trying spurias, they are generally well worth the effort.

Adrian Whittaker

EASTERN REGION REPORT

It's painful to recall this last season, but I expect I will many times because I could sum it up in one word -UNFORGETTABLE! It started off very badly last autumn because we can only ever count on a meagre rainfall of 22" and by March we had only received about 7" during those months when we expected it to fall. I should have been more vigilant but in the Autumn I tend to switch off with great relief after having spent most summers doing a two hour watering every day.

The first failure was the *Lungicularis* which gave me two flowers in March! Next came the heaviest frosts I have ever experienced when the S.D.B.'s were in bloom. They did look rather beautiful, just like wedding cake decorations. The frost also claimed the T.B.'s. Having been so disappointed I really looked forward to the P.C.I.'s but then discovered that most of them were missing and I can only put this down to the lack of rain in autumn and winter. The few that I had left did flower quite well. Then we had the gales for two days which sent a greengage tree crashing down on an iris garden and I thought that it would ruin the sibiricas. I needn't have worried though because they weren't just late in blooming, they weren't going to flower anyway. I didn't have a single bloom on any of them. Then came the rain for a week and I was highly delighted to receive one bloom on *I. missouriensis*, *I. tectorum* and a couple of xiphiums. As is the case usually with growing Irises, it is swings and roundabouts. I had many roundabouts this year but I did also have one swing and that was the spurias. They came at the right time and all flowered and made me decide not to throw in the towel after all.

This is our third year of drought in the Essex area and as of this date (Sept. 18th) I am still having to water everything every evening. There is much discussion about the gardening situation here and it has been suggested that we should start thinking about growing Mediterranean plants instead. To give this credence there is one iris in my garden that is really doing well here and towering above all else looking extremely healthy and that is *I. cypriana* which I have grown from seed and am hopeful of getting it through the winter. However, that is never really a problem here, instead it is the vicious spring frosts which rob me of my much revered *I. japonica* every year. I think often of moving house, but where to? Has it ever been decided where the spot is in the U.K. that will grow the most amounts of species successfully?

Shirley Ryder

WEST AND MIDLANDS REGION REPORT

Now that I have greater mobility I have agreed with John Beal to take over the duties of reporting on items of interest in the West & Midlands Region. It is too late in the season to remember weather patterns accurately. This must be one of my New Year resolutions (and you know what happens to them!). However I do suggest that the work of the Group is being concentrated in too few hands and that fresh blood would be welcome. As far as this region is concerned I would welcome assistance in reporting items of interest which occur north of the M4. A further division East and West would appear desirable so I do entreat you to play a much more active part in the Group's work. Regional reporting is important in many aspects such as weather patterns, iris shows and other activities, e.g. garden visits; special items of interest, i.e. successes and failures in hybridising plans, whether man-made or natural; diseases and pests, including the New Zealand flatworm.

This year I invited members of the West & Midlands Iris Group to visit my garden in mid July, in the hope that they would be able to see my beds of Japanese Irises in bloom. That the season was at least two weeks early goes without saying (Murphy's Law applies here nowadays!), but my visitors were able to see 'Southern Son' in bloom. This Currier McEwen tetraploid is a very striking blue. As it happened I came across a diploid of a similarly striking blue; very fertile, in a nursery at Burbage in Leicestershire, some three weeks before the visit, so I was able to make divisions available to those who visited me. I plan to use this diploid in some of my hybridising plans next year and if any U.K. or European member would like to try his/her hand at pollen daubing of *I. ensata* I can assure you this is a worthy parent. I believe it to be named 'Blue Prince', a good commercial variety which was registered in the 1930's. This is still being investigated, but the possibilities of outcrossing are exciting.

You have a report on the W&MG Show from John Beal. How I envy that Group's ability to bring members together. A friendly and dedicated group of iris enthusiasts who demonstrate the real purpose of such activities, i.e. to enjoy and publicise irises! I shall have plants to sell next year in aid of Group funds, many raised by our Chairman this year, so do write to me if you are interested. With the Chairman's co-operation I plan also to sell some in aid of the Heart Rehabilitation Care Unit which is giving me considerable help and support, so don't delay, members have priority!

This year's weather has demonstrated the potential destructive force of the greenhouse effect, and I fear we haven't seen anything yet. Seasonal variations and severe frosts; droughts; floods; severe gales and the like are hazards which we will have to face and overcome if we are to be successful iris gardeners. Rise to the challenge!

Philip Allery

IRIS INFORMATION

Mr Norman Bennett has regularised names of his laevigatas as follows: 'Elegant' is now 'Weymouth Elegant'; 'Surprise' is now 'Weymouth Surprise'; 'Midnight' is now 'Weymouth Midnight'; 'Purity' is now 'Weymouth Purity'; and 'Weymouth' is now 'Weymouth Blue'. They will appear of course in the forthcoming Year Book.

Ensatas at Wakehurst. The old Japanese garden at Kew's country estate was wrecked in the Great Gale of '87. I don't think it has been replaced as such because there is new one at Kew, but they have been given a large number of cultivars from Japan. These were quite unaffected by the Great Frost, but it was only their first year in the garden and flowering was very sparse. But if you are in the south of England next year it should be worth visiting during the last fortnight of June and the first of July.

'A Guide to Species Irises'

This contains lots of photographs, line drawings and maps and covers nearly all of the known irises of the world. Naturally, more have been described over this last winter, but that's nature for you. The BIS can provide copies at £52.00 to members who can collect it or employ someone to do so from the Society Shows at Wisley or the AGM. For those others of you not as fortunate, it can be bought for £55.00 including p&p from Mr. Philip Allery, Hon. Literature Secretary, who is our Treasurer and Membership Secretary. His address is given on the front page.

Mr. Rob Soames of 148 Moricel Rd, Lyndhurst 2192, Johannesburg, South Africa, writes that as they can't get imported plants of Siberians to grow over there, would anyone collecting seed from selfed registered varieties please remember him and send him some. This may well get to you all too late and you'll have done whatever you usually do with it, but there's always next time. He only has 'Caesar' available to him in Jo'burg, and is getting desperate.

Jill Copeland's 'Pixie Won' (1997) is the first successful *I.pseudacorus* x *I.ensata* cross to be registered and introduced by a U.S. hybridiser. Hybridisers in Japan have made the cross several times in shades of white and yellows with various amounts of brown markings. 'Pixie Won' is unique in its violet color with white styles and it is a first for a U.S. hybridiser.

John Coble, 'The Review', Vol.34.No.1.Spring 1997

We've never heard of (but watched for) a beardless iris seedling that bloomed in the same year that it germinated. In June 1996 it happened in our garden. Is this a first? In early March, we germinated our Japanese and Siberian seed indoors, raised the seedlings under lights and planted them in the garden about June 1st. On June 22, one seedling bloomed -out of a single fan, a blossom squeezed out at the base of the fan. Four months old! It was a pale pink 3F bloom about three inches in diameter, normal size for the cross. The plant was a yellow foliaged seedling out of a white *pseudacorus* x 'Otome Kagami' a 6F pink Japanese iris.

John Coble, as above.

Thanks again John, for writing lots of articles for me to appropriate, and to Evelyn White -as all the other overseas Editors- for her kind permission. Without all this input from foreign publications, I'd have to rely on what kindly members send in, so this would be a slim 'Newsletter' indeed. To those of you who do write for me, grateful thanks.

Ed

American Iris Society's Mitchell Award 1997

Winner of the A.I.S. Mitchell Award 1997: 'Night Editor' (Ghio 1987), 21 votes.

Ruiners-up: 'Foothill Banner' (Lawyer), 17 votes; 'Smuggler's Cove' (Wood), 15 votes.

SPCNI 'Almanac' Fall 1997 Vol XXVI, No.1.

SPCNI Needs New Officers

Adele and Lewis need a committed person to take over this twice yearly production of the 'Almanac'. Proof reading and mailing round off the task, although they could be split up. They also need people to take over the other positions which they share between them so that they can live a little as well as getting on with their gardening and the contribution to the PCI book that they're involved in. Anyone willing to take the Society into the next century as Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Chairman or Publication Chairman, get in there quick, this one's running out fast.

Ed

New Zealand Iris Society's International Symposium

I have apparently misinformed you all totally by amalgamating two different events, for which I can only apologise, profusely and abjectly. I am aware that there are no excuses for getting such things wrong. Here is the **correct information**:

It is hoped that an International Symposium on the Iris may be held in late October to early November in the year 2000 when the NZIS will be celebrating their 50th Anniversary, including a tour of private and public gardens in the 'off' season of the northern hemisphere. They are looking for more researchers who could consider presenting new material there and are considering offering a lecture tour of New Zealand geared to the different varieties in flower in the various areas. Anne can recommend -from personal experience- the wines available to New Zealanders, and reckons that with proper care and attention to detail, you could visit the Australian irises too. Mrs. Alison Nicoll is the person to book up with, 376 Hill St., Richmond, Nelson, New Zealand, and if you can go, please book early as estimates of visitor numbers would be a help to the organisers.

The information that I gave in the last issue about the Official Opening and Introductions on the Friday evening, garden visits on the Saturday, a Judging Workshop on the Sunday morning and then AGMs of the Dwarf and Species sections and more garden visits and workshops on the Monday, actually refers to their Iris Convention which was held in Marton from Friday 7th to Monday 10th of November this year. They promised '...the most amazing array of iris species from extreme dry conditions to the boggy swamps to the woodland shadings, from the small corner garden to large commercial ventures.' (Courtesy of 'Spectrum' No.31.) I do hope it was great fun.

To add to my catalogue of mis-deeds, Gwenda Harris has kindly written to correct my statement in the last issue that the organ of the NZIS was the 'Review', when it is in fact the 'Bulletin'. Full marks to those of you who noticed, I shall have to ease up on the midnight oil and get it all right this time around. No, *don't* tell me!

Ed

The Central Iris Society of Russia's First Convention

This Society will be holding its first Convention in June of 1998, probably from June 11 to June 13 or 14, and would be more than delighted to welcome any members of other iris societies who would like to join them in Moscow. It is not possible to offer a precise programme of events yet, but there will be visits to botanical organisations which grow irises, private gardens and tours in and around Moscow as well as meetings and discussions in general. There are plans to simplify the issue of visas to visitors: the critical date is 10 JANUARY 1998. Those who hope to attend should:

WRITE to Sergei Loktev, P.O. Box 54, Moscow 129226, Russia

FAX Liudmila Rosanova (7 095) 235-0252

E-MAIL sms@comtel.ru

The information needed is the full name and address of ALL individuals together with fax or e-mail details if available.; the dates of the period you would like to stay in Moscow; what kind of accomodation you would like such as single or double rooms, etc.

As a rough guide, the organisers expect costs will be between US\$70 and US\$150 per day and that the registration fee will be a further US\$100. When the organisers know roughly how many people are likely to attend they can make definite arrangements and will send the information together with an official invitation which will help with obtaining a visa, details of the bank account for payment and any other information. When the visa has been provided, they would be glad to receive all payments by 10 April and it would be helpful if they could be told separately what money has been sent by what means. They are very sorry that the arrangements are a little complicated, but do hope that this will not deter enthusiasts from joining them. It should be a very exciting occasion. Members are reminded that if they do not personally have fax or e-mail addresses these are often available through local newsgagents and copy-shops and greatly add to the convenience of long-distance communications.

Anne Blanco White

If you have the opportunity, the whistle-stop guided tours of the Moscow Kremlin are definitely well worth the effort of finding someone who can get the requisite guide arranged for you, and the open-air market at Ismailova will provide you with traditional crafts to take home at more affordable prices than at US\$ shops. The stall holders will often take dollars, but as the legality of such transactions is questionable, and no English is spoken, discretion is necessary. I'm sure that a taxi will get you there, but you will need a Russian speaker. If you can locate such a valuable person, willing to accompany you, do prevail upon them to tour you around the best stations on the underground, you will be amazed. I advise that you only wander about when escorted by someone who is fluent in the language and preferably a Muscovite. Moscow is probably no more chancy than any other capital, but with the alphabet unrecognisable and with no English speakers about, getting lost or being accosted can be rather problematical.

If you can wangle enough time, although the sleeper from Moscow to St.Petersburg is a misnomer to say the least, the city is something that you really shouldn't miss. I'd recommend a guided bus tour which the hotel will probably be able to set up for you, which will whisk you through a choice of incredible places to return to that you might well otherwise never have discovered. Again, caution is wisest for the tourist.

Ed

Irises and Iridaceae: Biodiversity and Systematics

An international conference organised by the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' and the Societa Italiana dell' Iris of Florence. Held at the Orto Botanico, Rome, on the 8th - 10th (11th) May 1998, this will present up to date research, discuss scientific and applied research on varieties and hybrids on the first two days and highlight the noteworthy work of the Iris Societies of the world. The third day will see an excursion to the Society's iris garden and there is an optional field trip on the 11th. The conference will coincide with the annual 'Concorso Internazionale dell' Irs' and an exhibition of irises. The official language will be English although other European languages may be accepted if there is a substantial summary in English. Anyone wishing for further information or to present papers or posters there should contact Prof. Maria Antonietta Colasante, Dipartimento di Biologia Vegetale, Univerita 'La Sapienza', P.le A. Moro 5, 00185 Roma, ITALY. Tel.=396 49912418. Fax =396 4463865. Email: colasante@axrma.uniroma1.it. She would like such information by Nov 30th, but that's not going to be feasible for many if any of you. There is a second circular to be released with details of the accomodation and social events, but for those of you who are keen it seems that the best thing to do is contact Prof.Colasante whenever you receive this information.

Third Siberian Iris Convention, Iowa, 2000

The Cedar Valley Iris and Daylily Society are to sponsor this event in eastern and central Iowa in early June 2000. Five private and two public gardens will be on the tour. The master planting will be at the Iowa Arboretum where the Morgan and Morgan-Wood Medal winners are on permanent display. During 1997 hybridizers are invited to send (sorry, coming rather too late Ed.) guest plants of Siberians and species. Before sending irises, the 2000 Guest Iris Chairperson, Lois Girton, will need to know the cultivar name or seedling number, the number of divisions to be sent, height, colour and approximate season of bloom, so that they can be located where they will flower for the Convention. Cultural information on species would be appreciated. The Chairperson will distribute the irises so send them to her at 2519 Hoover Ave., Ames, Iowa 50010-4453. Phone 515-233-0841. E-mail L-Girton@moledbio.iastate.edu. Only those plants that are received according to the above procedure will receive official Guest status.

The Siberian Iris' Spring 1997.

I must add here that as their preferred periods for receiving irises were April 1 -May 20 / August 1- September 1, the above information can undoubtedly safely be ignored by all interested parties, who did it all months ago, but I thought I'd play safe. I'm sure they'll be just as happy to have visitors instead.

Ed

Siberian Checklist Update

This can be obtained on paper in the time honored fashion from Howard Brookins, N75 W14257 North Point Drive, Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin 53051, USA. The cheque, made payable to The Society for Siberian Irises, should be for \$6.50 for 'locals' or \$10.00 for interested parties overseas. Futuristic folk can receive it from Howard on computer disc by writing or phoning him on 414 251-5292 or faxing him on 414 251-8298.

Siberspaces

Remember that you don't need to live in America to join these societies and get their unexpurgated information as opposed to my fillets. You can play origami with the best of them in various robins. There's also the SIBROB, which you can join even if you don't subscribe to iris-I, which now has 20 members scattered around the world (thinly!) and they'd be pleased to hear from more folk. Ellen Gallagher wrote in this spring's *TSI*; 'We are pretty low-brow in our discussions and we welcome anybody who would like to join us -all you need is an interest in Siberian irises and an E-mail program on a computer....log in!' She is their Director and is at e_galla@moose.ncia.net dare I put in a stop to end the sentence? I dare, I dare. It was that one. *TSI*'s editor, Judy Hollingworth can be found at 72302.1143@compuserve.com if you wish to send her anything, not necessarily text for her next issue, but she would of course love that too. She also writes that for Siberians in colour on the internet, the best web page is Anderson gardens who 'list around fifty Siberians with a description and a color photo of each cultivar'. You will find them at HTTP:// www.Andersongardens.com. There may be a gap after the three w's stop but as the address changed lines in *TSI*' at that point, your guess will be better than mine as I know nothing of nets of any sort, even tangible ones.

Ed

For those among you who either haven't forgotten childhood games, or are rediscovering them, the leaves of pseudacorus apparently make good sailing boats, for fairies at least. Select a long leaf, make a small lengthwise slit about half way along, bend the tip over, pushing a little through said slit, which, so the article stated, forms a sail and keel at one stroke. The piece was quite convinced that even the slightest breeze would be enough but I've not tried it as our local pond is bedenized with fishermen whom I'm sure wouldn't take kindly to such trivial games. Anyone who does try it, I'd be delighted to hear from you. At this season about the only suitable water you'll come across will be in the bath, so please remember that I'm too young to be told about most things.

A snippet regarding ancient associations between pseudacorus and kings has come my way too. Apparently, a Frankish king, an unspecified Clovis, managed to escape pursuing Goths by way of a ford across the Rhine noticed by him due to its pseudacorus which were apparently in flower at the time in their shallow water habitat. From what I've seen they don't often do a lot of that in the wild, so he may well have been close enough to spy the ford by less romantic means. Thereafter, Frankish kings adopted the flower, carrying one to their coronations. Somewhat later, one of the Louis' of France formalised the flower for his escutcheon during the crusades and it became the fleur-de-lys. English kings later occupying large tracts of France Anglicised this in their subtle fashion into flower de luces. Apparently it's seeds can be used as a coffee substitute, although I'm sure the French would be horrified at the suggestion. Any souls hardier than I, do let me know what it tasted like. Don't ask me if all this is accurate, but it's rather fun. Any comments from the historically informed will be welcomed as long as they're printable.

Ed

Plants for Sale

I have John Beal's newly registered spuria 'Ashleigh Lemonlime' to sell for the Group as well as rhizomes of the *I. fulva* so kindly sent to me by John Smith which is thriving and has now been split. As I did this in mid October, I don't know how well the latter will get away, but the spurias are in the ground so simply write to me at the appropriate time.

Ed

THE GREAT GALE - TEN YEARS ON

Some of you will remember that I wrote a short piece for Joan Trevithick about the devastation which resulted in my part of Sussex. Some neighbours offered to provide a small fund to help with replanting which was kind of them, but we refused the offer for two reasons: beeches had been growing and dying on the area for a long time and the chances were that new planting would go down with specific replant diseases and there were sufficient trees left to provide fresh mast which would survive in its own time; and, too, there was no way that we could properly look after any newly planted saplings which should have had regular watering. I think we were right in this because another owner did plant a large number of slips the following year. I think there has been a 10% survival rate, but a number of those will be killed off by the birches and brambles.

Our first thought was to try and stabilise the topsoil so that not too much of the surface should be washed down onto the road. All the weeds of the area were introduced - brambles, nettles, foxgloves, you name them, I probably transplanted them and spread seeds as well. The real fun started the next year when there was a major outbreak of ragwort along the edges of the roads which the Council solemnly had hand weeded. Apart from that there was little change. The second year really produced results and very much to everyone's surprise there was major outbreak of buddleias which have continued to do well. Fallen chestnuts threw up new growth and seemed indifferent to their horizontal positions while the ground was widely colonised by brambles and dear, little bright green seedlings. These last are now 2.5m tall birch saplings and growing merrily; sufficiently so to camouflage the

stark line at the top of the hanger and so close together that the deer can't get in between to wreck them by thrashing. The yews and the hollies, but not much ivy, continue to hold their own and there are some beech seedlings again with no sign that the very common local oaks are invading at all.

Shortly after my first article an unknown member sent me a mountain ash seedling through Joan for which I am very grateful and I'm delighted to be able to say that it has set its first crop of berries this year in spite of the frost: next year, I'll make rowan jelly and celebrate our return to the normal cycle of flood, frost and drought.

Anne Blanco White

SING THE PRAISES OF PSEUDACORUS

Having grown pseudacorus since the early seventies, both as an ornamental and for breeding, I've come to respect it both for its elegance as well as its undoubted toughness. The bulk of the plants are grown in the ground and a few on the shelf of a small pool. The generally dry, thin and very alkaline soil here could well be considered rather unsuitable for pseudacorus, but with regular watering whenever possible, most flourish. Before embarking on this method of growing them, I had seen them making good growth in the wild on the margins of local chalk streams indicating that alkalinity was not a problem. The variation in pseudacorus is much greater than is obvious on first contact. Wild populations have produced colours ranging from almost orange to the palest primrose with heights from a foot or so to over seven feet. Double flowers are known but are generally ragged in form in the wild. In some plants the stem and flowers barely rise above the leaves whilst in others they are well above. Flowers per stem range from four or five to into the teens. So, this variation alone makes this a worthwhile plant to consider for a breeding project.

Right at the start I decided that the wild flower form, with pendant falls, was the one I wanted to retain. The objective was a pure white flower, of good substance, in ten plus numbers per stem with the flowers held well above the foliage. Height was not critical, but I wanted to avoid the extremes, if possible. Growing a few tetraploids over the years has convinced me that in the long run they may be the answer for gardens since, unusually, they do not seem to have the rampant growth of the wild diploids but do have better substance in the flowers as normally associated with tetraploids. Unfortunately, this can be associated with coarseness and in some cases, flaring falls. It seemed to me that it was little use trying to combine the colour with conversion to tetraploid in one go so a start was made towards the first objective, i.e. the wanted colour linked with vigour.

With me, plants take at least three or four years to flower from seed, so I knew that this was going to be a long term project. Pseudacorus set seed readily by open pollination by bees etc., and as it was important to prevent this as far as possible, falls and anthers were clipped off just before the flower opened. I started by crossing the two plants with the palest flowers. This gave a low percentage of light coloured seedlings, none really moving the project along any. I crossed the best two of these and obtained one near white, without the curled rather flaring falls of both parents, which proved to be a very miffy grower. I tried for two years to backcross this to the better of the two parents, without getting seed.

So, ten years on, quite a lot more information but no real progress. At this point, Joan Trevithick sent me a few seeds from a white pseudacorus in Japan. I eventually raised one individual which proved to be near white and although weak, less so than my own previous effort. I'm now repeating the exercise using this plant as the basis for my breeding lines, with hope of a break in the right direction.

Close observation of pseudacorus I find interesting. The purplish anthocyanin staining at the leaf bases, very noticeable in some plants, might form a convenient genetic marker for amounts of anthocyanin carried. If so, perhaps it could assist in determining possible flower colour or depth of 'necklace' marking, before flowering the seedlings. With the time factors involved in conventional breeding and limited space, any sound method of early selection is obviously valuable. The very limited number of observations I've been able to make so far make it impossible to draw any conclusions, but certainly the staining is variable. Some individuals with heavy leaf base staining did have a much deeper coloured 'necklace' than the norm, but also had a deeper body colour of the flowers suggestive of high levels of carotene based pigmentation. The visually usually brownish colour of the flower 'necklace' is clearly due to the combined effects of the levels of anthocyanin and carotene pigments in the flowers and is quite variable from very dark to barely visible. In some plants, no marking at all is seen, in others the marking can be pencil lead coloured or even approaching wine. Without very careful and large scale breeding experiments it is impossible to make any definite statements about the genetic patterns involved, but for me the interest remains.

Looking closely at well over a hundred individuals growing in different parts of an ancient marshy common it was interesting to notice that though heights and flower colours were virtually uniform throughout the colony, the 'necklace' colouration and bud count were both highly variable. Necklaces ranged from the normal colour to completely absent and bud counts from six or seven to a staggering nineteen. The origin of the stock was impossible to determine since there were a few houses on the margins of the common, some of which had pseudacorus in their gardens (which came first, garden stock or common?).

Anyway, to sum up, a little progress towards my goal, a great deal of interest and more pointers emerging along the way. All very much sufficient to keep me going.

Adrian Whittaker

MORE SWINGS AND ROUNDABOUTS IN THE FROZEN EAST

The arilbreds made a good show this year although the quantity of bloom was down on last year. PCT's did very well. I managed to avoid getting them frost damaged -there were one or two cold nights just as the first blooms were opening and I covered them with 'Agrifleece'. The bloom was mostly over before we had that horrific two days of torrential cold rain and there seem to be quite a lot of seedpods which I hope will ripen properly if we ever get more than three consecutive sunny and moderately warm days. (July 15th.) The TB's -best we not talk about the TB's. Oh, very well. The TB's are riddled and raddled with just about every lurchi it's possible for them to have: rust; leaf-spot and i aren't look among soggy leaves for evidence of soft rot, which is no doubt having a grand time among the rhizomes. That and about 250,000 slugs and snails!

Geoff Wilson

AN INTEREST IN IRISES

I have been asked to explain how I first became interested in irises and where my current interest lies. I am a recent irisarian so you might think that these facts would be clear in my mind, but I cannot remember for the life of me what happened in the beginning. Fortunately I had scribbled down some notes in 1992. These jogged my memory and so I am able to write. Firstly I have had a long standing interest in wild plants, this fascination led to growing vegetables on an allotment which in turn led to a wider interest in gardening and horticulture. It was at this time that I started to appreciate the beauty and indeed, the diversity of colour and form found in the Tall Bearded iris. So I acquired some rhizomes -hardly ever buying, usually being given odd old rhizomes. That hadn't bothered me until now, because I was very interested in discovering what it was that I'd been given, and whether I had unearthed some old legend. Today I still own relatively few cultivars -with even fewer being modern, but I will gradually rectify this, you see there is so much choice and it's more a question of where to start! In 1994 I self pollinated a few of these irises and 'Dancer's Veil' (Hutchinson 1959) gave a pod full of seed. Some of those seedlings flowered in 1996 but none have so far bettered the parent. My appetite whetted, I cast my eye down the bewildering list of seed offered by the BIS. I concentrated on Section Iris Series *Chrysographes* and Series *Spuriae*. At least twenty packets arrived through the post in February 1996. Most of the irises I ordered, eg *I.chrysographes*, *I.crocea*, *I.kemeriana*, *I.orientalis*, *I.versicolor*, *I.delayvaayi* and *I.forrestii* will ultimately end up in moist conditions. They were sown (Feb'96) in a multi-purpose compost, just below the surface. I used 10cm square pots so as to occupy as little space as possible (good for watering too.Ed). A normal plant label is cut in half so that it disappears into the compost when pushed down. The tray of pots was then placed in a partially shaded cold frame with a sheet of glass over the top to prevent drying out. By June some of the pots showed life and as the green shoots appeared I removed them to a cool glasshouse, where I could protect my precious seedlings from mice and slugs. By late summer at least half the pots had seedlings in them and these were duly potted up. By the autumn more seeds had germinated. These seedlings were left undisturbed to over-winter in the cool glasshouse where the minimum temperature dropped to -5 degrees C.

Chris Sutton

When I got around to asking Chris for an update on this it was the depths of winter, and his sole source of inspiration was his seedlings in the glasshouses which were variously 'growing, rotting or suffering from red spider mite...' I do hope that next year brings sufficient excitements -in the way of irises- to inspire him to write one for us later on.

Ed

TO REASON WHY

The problem is that I have been infected by the iris bug, but I do not have a garden. Or rather, as I live in rented accommodation, I do not have a garden of my own. We Service people tend not to be gardeners; if you spend time and money to obtain a good tilth, you are posted and it is all wasted. At best, someone else will benefit. At worst, the next occupant will not be interested and all your efforts are wasted. Consequently, our gardens are usually neglected, in poor condition and of little potential. Nevertheless, I have done my best to improve the plot of my Irises.

My garden is in Bedfordshire and is on light soil which drains very quickly. I have, like most people, been suffering from the drought, but this year was the worst season that I can remember; only one third of my TB's flowered and apart from *I.pseudacorus* (various), the apogons hardly showed at all. I had been looking forward to new collections of *I.sibirica* and *Jl* flowering for the first time, but not one showed. As Father Christmas had brought me Currier McEwen's books 'The Japanese Iris' and 'The Siberian Iris' I had a look to see what I could do about it. I was interested to note the comments on pot culture in 'The Japanese Iris'. It would solve both the water and the soil problems and it just so happens that I have an obsolete paddling pool (both girls are at college and will not mind). So I have potted up all the Sibs and *Jl*'s and they will get special treatment in the spring. I am sure the Sibs will also appreciate the better soil, moist conditions and regular feeding recommended for the *Jl*'s; watch this space!

Some may query whether it is all worth the effort. To those who have been bitten by the bug, no explanation is necessary. For the others, all I can say is, just the sight of that first bloom of the season on a spring morning and the anticipation of the rest make it all worth while. Even the photographs I take cannot convey the colour, shape, movement and, yes, perfume of an iris flower. Last year I had a single spike of 'Silver Edge' (McEwen 1973) and a healthy patch of 'White Swirl' (Cassebeer 1957). They have inspired me to do better next season with the Apogons and I will report the results to the Editor. In the mean time, I hope you all have a successful season '98.

Sqd. Ldr. M.B.McCarthy

Sqd. Ldr. McCarthy has been looking for *I.latifolia* and its hybrids for some time without success. Those that I sent him of my mother's unspecified dark blue may possibly be virused, so if anyone has any to spare, please can you send him some when next you lift them.

Ed

SIBIRICAS - AND OTHERS - IN 1997

Funny year for weather, it's been, hasn't it? As every report on gardening in Britain will no doubt say. Exhibitors have been especially frustrated, flowers being too early for the shows, ruined by May frosts, or both. Here in the south Shropshire hills the irises have been lucky when the frost mostly flowed on downhill, or less so when heat in late May/early June was followed by a wet spell which ruined many flowers and saw others rot in the bud. I did at least have the compensation of having flowers for the BIS Summer Show, if not as many as I'd have liked, but hybridising was a more misses than hits affair.

It wasn't an interesting year for seedlings on the whole -many failed to flower and those which did weren't exciting, with one exception. This was a reward for patience, or more accurately lack of action. I can't claim credit for making the cross, as in 1989 Marty Scafer put pollen from 'Spring's Brook' onto 'Reprise' and sent me seed. Six seedlings survived but never bloomed, until 1996 when one plant proved to be a 40-chromosome hybrid, not a credible outcome from 28-chr. parents! I must have made a mix-up somewhere. The whole lot would have been given up as hopeless and thrown out

if I'd got around to it, but inertia was undeservedly rewarded this year when one plant produced five spikes with lovely flowers. Rather surprisingly, from violet x blue came flowers with light pinkish-lavender standards, deep red-violet falls, and turquoise style arms, on branched stems. It was Referred for Further Assessment by the Joint Iris Committee (i.e. selected for trial at Wisley) and will be in the 1999-20002 Trial as seedling JPW89/2, unless it is named by then.

Not many of my most recently acquired named plants bloomed in 1997. Of those that did, the tetraploid blue bitone 'Shall We Dance' (Hollingworth 1992) is proving vigorous and generous with its flowers. Somewhat similar in colouring but quite different in appearance, and equally vigorous and floriferous, is the diploid 'Sailor's Fancy', (Schafer/Sacks 1991). 'Magenta Moment' (Helsley 1993) is not only a richly coloured wine red but a good grower and bloomer too, as is 'Roaring Jelly' (Schafer/Sacks 1992) which I have praised before and which Peter thinks the sexiest Siberian of all. Its colouring is rather like that of JPW89/2, as both come from related breeding lines tracing back to Bee Warburton's seedlings from 'Atoll' x 'Ruffid Velvet' (McEwen 1973), among others. Also rather similar in colouring is James Copeland Sr.'s 'Fisherman's Morning' ('94) but from completely different breeding, both parents being seedlings from 'Pink Haze' (McGarvey 1969) crossed with 'Dear Delight' (McEwen '75), still one of the prettiest pale blues. All (except of course 'Shall We Dance') are diploids. 'Roaring Jelly' and 'Fisherman's Morning' are both in the current Wisley Trial but are among several giving cause for concern. This may be due to some outside factor as it seems that many plants in some areas are affected, while other areas appear satisfactory. Performance in different gardens can vary widely, of course, and an example of this has shown up with the winner of the BIS Hugh Miller Trophy, for beardless irises other than PCIs, for 1997. Tomas Tamberg's tetraploid 'Prussian Blue' (1993) does superbly well here and in some other BIS trial gardens, but poorly elsewhere and not well enough in the 1993-'96 Wisley Trial to gain an Award of Garden Merit (A.G.M.), though it has been given a second chance. I hope it will succeed this time as it is so good here and appeals to both specialists and non-iris (but discerning) gardeners. It is not unknown for irises to perform differently in successive Trials and perhaps the position of a particular Trial suits some plants and not others, while the situation can be reversed when the next Trial is planted in a different bed at Wisley.

A diploid which has been named this year is 'Enid Burgoyne', named for a lady now sadly dead who grew many good plants in her Devon garden and was generous with them - I have a lovely white nerine to remember her by, too. It has a profusion of small, vertically formed flowers with white standards and creamy yellow falls with deeper yellow hafts veined in light violet and turquoise, and paler style arms lightly flecked with violet. There is a lot to be said for flowers of this form which, when the clump is of fair size, make a good garden display, and their merits are sometimes recognised even if they don't meet all judges' current preferences. 'Shaker's Prayer' (Warner '1989), violet with a white signal, not only stunned the A.I.S. Convention in Washington DC in 1991 but went on to win the Morgan-Wood Medal in 1996. Others I think valuable are 'Goldkind' (Eckard Berlin, not registered), dark blue with a gold signal, and a very pretty light blue, as yet unidentified, which came from Gary Dunlop of Ballyrogan Nurseries in Northern Ireland - it has pale yellow hafts blending into a white signal, and turquoise styles.

Finally -almost- a selection of 'good doers' with flowers I particularly like: Steve Varner's dwarf 'Precious Doll' (1987), about 12" (30cm) tall, soft lavender and lilac; even shorter, at 6" is 'Huia' (Frances Love 1991), dark blue. In fact, neither the latter nor Currier McEwen's creamy-white 18" tall 'Sassy Kooma' (a fabulous sight in Maine in 1996) can be said to be 'doing good' here at present, but while they survive, I live in hopes, and maybe they just don't like their present places. Moving up in size, a happy plant in more than one place in Marlene Ahlburg's 'Welfenbraut' (1992), one of her lighter yellows. 'Pleasure's of May' (Schafer/Sacks 1995) is described as white to light violet but with me gives a light pink effect, while 'Cheery Lyn' (Anna Mae Miller 1990) and my own 'Roisin' (1996) are similar to each other, palest pink-white standards and deeper falls of almost true pink. Of course it is a special pleasure when a favourite seedling does well elsewhere than in its home garden, and 'Roisin' gained an A.G.M. at Wisley in 1996 as did the pink and red-violet 'Rosseline' which is on the short side. (I hope you will forgive this little puff for my successes; plants raised here do not always do well in drier gardens - and do not deserve awards unless they grow well in different conditions.) All the above are diploids; tetraploids which are proving their worth include the deep blue-purple 'Zakopane' (Cy Bartlett 1995, A.G.M.) and his 'Perfect Vision' (1996 A.G.M.) which, from the same cross, 'Harpswell Happiness' x 'Berlin Ruffles', has given a mid-blue, wider-petalled flower which is very attractive.

And really finally, a few 'others'. Several crosses of *I. versicolor* with *I. laevigata* have yielded lovely plants for growing in water or moist soil. 'Berlin Versilae' (Tamberg 1988) is reddish violet; 'Aquatic Alliance' (Lorena Reid 1994) is more violet, and an unnamed hybrid given to me by Akira Horinaka of Japan some years ago is a true violet colour. All are well branched and give plenty of elegant flowers, but while the last two actually do well in water, 'Berlin Versilae' seems happier if it is not too wet.

My last iris is definitely not the least - quite the contrary, as it is 5' (153cm) or more tall, has 3-4 branches and 8-10 flowers of the largest *I. pseudacorus* type I have seen; the falls have 3" wide blades. I grew it from seed offered by the BIS in 1994 as coming from 'Rising Sun' which is not registered, but listed in a German catalogue *I. ensata* x *I. pseudacorus*. There are fertile hybrids from the reverse cross but they are scarce ('Chance Beauty', Ellis '88 and 'Hatsuho', Kamo, Japan, unregistered, are the only two I have heard of) and most do not produce viable seed. So I was dubious, but three seedlings germinated and grew well, one especially so (I think it has actually swamped the others). Goodness knows what it would do in water, rather than the dampish soil where it is now. The name 'Sun in Splendour' came into my mind and seemed too good not to use, so it has been registered. If any member would like a piece of it, or the violet Horinaka hybrid mentioned above, I have plenty of both. Send me £2.00 per plant and when the postage to you has been paid, the rest of the money will go to Group funds. The plants will be sent in spring 1998 as autumn is not a good time for transplanting these irises.

Jennifer Hewitt

LANDSCAPING WITH SIBERIANS, A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

Barberries, potentillas, yews and junipers are over-used in American landscapes not only because these shrubs are cheap, adaptable and durable. The only member of the iris family that can hope to be as widely useful to the landscaper is the Siberian. It is more tolerant of pH range than most beardless irises, thrives in soil that would rot any bearded iris, and once established, its wiry grass-like roots protect it from drought. Unfortunately, like all irises east of the Mississippi, Siberians are sometimes attacked by borer. Although I have seen whole clumps destroyed by borer,

and flowers are sometimes damaged by verberna bud moth and rose chafer, simple hygiene is enough to negate these problems in the home landscape. This is important because more and more Americans are wary of using chemicals in the garden. As an aside, have other iris fanciers noticed that borers seem to prefer some cultivars over others? If members could compare anecdotal evidence of irises least attacked by borer perhaps it could lay the groundwork for a more scientific study. Also, are there any organic methods available deserving of more attention? A neighbour of ours seems to have great success using mothballs -not that they are organic, but safer, I assume, than 'Cygon'. I divided her TB's last fall, and they were free from any sign of borer damage; this on a property surrounded by wetlands and across the road from several acres of cultivated irises! The problem of pesticide use should be a matter for concern to this organization since I believe it has, and will increasingly, deter people from growing irises.

There is another factor that keeps irises from being used by landscapers: lack of knowledge about cultivars. Most landscapers can rattle off a list of *Juniperus* cultivars useful in a variety of situations, but ask them about Siberian irises and you will be lucky if one of ten knows any except 'Caesar's Brother' (Morgan 1931). What is it that makes an iris useful in the landscape? By what criteria should they be judged? When rating a Siberian's usefulness for the landscape, the show bench is a poor arbiter. Fortunately, Carol Warner has developed a rating system that is a great help to landscapers and growers who supply them. I suspect that my occasional disagreement with her ratings on plants, has to do with regional growing conditions. **First comes vigor:** a plant should grow well in a wide variety of situations, not just optimum ones. It is important to know of cultivars which excell in extremes of shade or alkalinity. **Second is foliage:** A plant that blooms for two weeks needs to play a useful role for the rest of the growing season: No floppy foliage, an attention to useful variation in leaf color and absolutely no allowance for spotting and premature yellowing. Is there a possibility for a strong growing variegated Siberian? **Lastly comes the flower:** Even here the show bench gives the landscaper short shrift. The recent trend toward breeding for big, flat flowers tends to produce flowers that bloom on one plane, and occasionally in the foliage. Cold weather followed by a hot spell accentuates the problem of foliage-smothered flowers. This is a common weather pattern for us in the north-east. Older cultivars tend to shrug this off, as do newer ones such as 'Shaker's Prayer' (Warner 1989).

The most common landscape use of Siberians is in mass plantings, and they are perfectly suited for the job. They hold their space well against invading weeds and have the power to draw your eye across a great distance. Landscapers will probably continue to use them in this way, as strong, clear colors will remain their favorites. I still love 'Summer Sky' (Cleveland 1939), though it's not a great iris by any of my criteria. It is very active when planted en masse. Neither blue nor white, its tint seems to shift with every breeze. This returns me to my earlier criticism of the modern flat flower. Lacking either drooping falls or differing height of flowers, many modern cultivars are oddly static en masse. Even though there are more square inches of flower per plant, they somehow lack 'oomph'. Mass plantings can be made more energetic by mixing colors. Moving shades of blue and whites across a planting gives the effect of sky or water moving. Reds and black-purples are dramatic, while a good pink and soft blue or blue-stippled-white in combination can be very restful on the eyes. For this pairing, I recommend 'Maggie Smith' (McGarvey 1976) and 'Super Ego' (McGarvey '66). These are not perfectly in sync. in terms of peak bloom time, but have enough in common for a long display. Flowering time of a mass planting can be extended by using early and late season Sibs., but an even better way to make a patch of ground work for you is to include daylilies. Sibs. and hems. are perfect companions. The daylilies can be woven through the Sibs. or planted on the outside if you use a weak foliageed Siberian that tends to be knocked down by late summer rains. If you throw in a couple of very early orange daylilies, such as 'Orangeman' or *H. middendorffii*, and use a strong purple iris -'Caesar's Brother' perhaps- you are ready for fire-works. It may sound dangerous to the faint of heart, but it's a great combination. After you have agreed to mix some daylilies with your Siberians, fill every square inch with minor bulbs such as scillas, galanthus and muscari, and you have transformed a patch of ground from two weeks of flowers to months. Not bad. In the Smith's garden at the M.A.S.S. Medley, I saw foxgloves had seeded themselves through the irises, and that really got me excited. You can be sure I'll try that combination in a mass planting in the future.

Siberians are great edging plants also. Along a path, their strict upright form can serve as formal a function as a boxwood hedge. Here is a place where the flat forms can be shown off and subtle patterns will be appreciated. Of course perfect foliage is also required. For an old-fashioned feeling, alternate or back Siberians with peonies in your hedge, but stake those peonies, or use single flowered ones that can hold their heads up! Shorter Siberians can shine in spaces near paths. Use them like SDB's -as pools of vibrant color. I love 'Walter' (Savage 1978) for its rich, saturated blue, but I suspect the borer does too. You might do better with 'Baby Sister' (McEwen 1986), 'Precious Doll' (Varner 1987) or similar little ones seen at the M.A.S.S. Medley. 'Flight of Butterflies' (Witt 1972) is a favorite of ours for use in doorway plantings. It is at home with dwarf conifers and heathers and always in scale with the finest alpines. You can find a place for it in the rockery. The thin grassy leaves of 'Flight of Butterflies' are found on a larger scale in other cultivars and, indeed, Siberians are well suited for use in substitution or combination with ornamental grasses. They are at home in the New American garden: up and active when *miscanthus* species are still moping under the cold, cold ground; flowering before the larger grasses overwhelm them. I have seen fifty year old clumps of Siberians blooming and thriving at an abandoned flower farm near our home -untended since the onset of World War II. Surely this is a plant that should be the basis of our new low-maintenance gardens!

Last but not least, there is the Siberian as specimen. It is in this realm that we are overjoyed by the myriad subtleties of flower and form. We can overlook many weaknesses in a plant by placing it properly in the border, letting it serve as a perfect foil for other plants, and then letting it fall to the background. If you love the pale yellow of 'Butter and Sugar', (McEwen 1977) use it; just put a strong late summer perennial in front, such as Joe Pye Weed or a grass, to hide its disappointing foliage. We go to great lengths to hide glorious -but-brief poppies; why not the Siberian shade that you can't do without? Still, a Siberian with good foliage can play a role long after bloom. Pair the yellowing fall foliage with the bright reds of hardy geraniums or plumbago (*Ceratostigma plumbaginoides*). As specimens in the garden, I tend to use plants that make the most of their space and are proven performers for me. The McGarvey cultivars were developed in our area and, I believe, compare favorably with the newest plants. 'Ego' (McGarvey), 'Super-Ego' and 'Maggie Smith' are the plants I most often ask for by name in a garden plan. Bee Warburton's 'White Triangles' (1986) is formal and clean and serves well as a sort of floral sherbert between contrasts in the garden (though its foliage is a bit weak later on); others will have their own favorites for this purpose. Rebloom, or recurrent or extended bloom is a plus in a specimen plant. 'Reprise' (Warburton 1986) has served well in that regard for us. And of course the work hybridisers are doing on branching and increased bud count will contribute.

After seeing 'Percheron' (Warburton 1982) looking perfect on every garden in Massachusetts, I'm in a hurry to have enough stock of it for wider use. The rich purple of 'Regency Buck' (McEwen 1985) and its incredible texture make me want to use more of it also. The sheer size of 'High Standards' (Hollingworth 1986) warrants its use. Our clump is only two years old; seeing it in the White garden in Maine makes me anxious to see how it performs over time in our own garden. We have 'Shaker's Prayer' planted next to the late lilac 'James McFarlane' (this escaped us.) above a path here at the farm. The combination of colors and height is great; the blooms dance at eye level, seeming to float unattached from the ground. Interestingly enough, it was a slight Siberian with an old-fashioned look that won the Foster Cup (Best Introduced Guest) at the M.A.S.S. Medley. 'Lorena Cronin' (Art Cronin 1991) has delicate blooms scattered across the height and width of the plant. This gives it the look of a perfectly arranged bouquet in the garden. Perhaps the number of species lovers in the crowd helped this small flowered cultivar win.

What will be the next 'Caesar's Brother'? It should be a plant that scores at or near that perfect 5-5-5 on the Warner scale in many regions, and additionally offers some of the flowering and color advances the hybridizers have been perfecting. I have often thought that the daylily community has a good idea with the Lenington All American Award. This is given to a cultivar which has been introduced for at least ten years and which receives support from a majority of regions as a good grower. We have found that the Lenington winners do well in our tough northeast climate -even those originating in the sunny south. To suggest a similar award for Siberians or other irises does not imply a criticism of the medal system; it merely acknowledges a difference in emphasis between the general horticultural world and that of the iris collector and specialist. It's enjoyable to me to see hybridizers pushing Siberians in such diverse directions as 'Lorena Cronin' and 'Careless Sally' (Schafer/Sacks 1996). The colors and forms I saw at the convention astonished me: true yellows; subtle pastels; blossoms with a Louisiana iris look; many variations in color, form; pattern and foliage -the future is exciting. It is to the credit of the S.S.I. that the traditional and modern flower forms continue to be equally acceptable in judging standards. Form *does* follow function; encouraging diversity can only extend the acceptance of the Siberian iris by the general public. I am also happy that some of our best hybridizers are reticent about making introductions. To those who push for accelerated introduction, I say, "Slow down!". Every flower grows on a plant. If we can't grow the plant well, then we can't enjoy its flowers!

Matthew Schueler, PFF Landscaping, upstate New York. *The Siberian Iris*' Spring 1997

I must admit here that the registration dates have been added, for which Jennifer's generous help was vital, so any mistakes will be mine rather than hers, although *of course* there won't be any....hopefully.

Ed

ENSATA X SIBERIANS

Got your attention didn't it?! The title refers to Ensata Gardens (Bob Bauer & John Coble) making Siberian crosses! What have we been doing since 1994 when we introduced 'Lee's Blue', 'Sprinkles' and 'Mesa Pearl'? Our next 'big hope' was in a cross of 'Mesa Pearl' x 'Silver Illusion' (1990). All shades from light grey and pearl to lavender resulted with just a couple of whites. Many were ruffled like 'Silver Illusion' and all had excellent blue-green foliage. Several were kept for evaluation and are still in trial beds to select the best. One that we called a "ruffled 'Sprinkles'" was crossed with 'Ranman' (Shidara, unregistered) and gave some very nice multi-petal pink-lavenders. In 1995 the best multi-petal pink (12+ petals) was then crossed with 'Cheery Lyn' (Miller 1990), the best pink, and those seedlings will bloom this spring (1997). The most interesting multi-petal seedlings have come from two of our seedlings that show a signal in the standards and thus have a tendency to double; one is a grandchild of 'Temper Tamtrum' (McGarvey 1986) the other is out of 'Shirley Pope' (McEwen 1979). These two were crossed with pollen from a Hollingworth seedling out of Sultan's Ruby' (Hollingworth 1988) that tended to double. The resulting seedlings were then crossed with Shidara's 'Uzushio' (unregistered) and gave some hose in hose blooms with up to 27 petals in the first generation. Of course the stamens and styles have gone petaloid! An anther was found on one late bloom, so the next generation will bloom this spring. The multi-petal seedlings have ranged from 6-27 petals, but it is going to take another couple of years of observation to verify consistency of doubling and petal count before any registration. Some of the better seedlings will take even a couple more years to repair the mouse (vole) damage they suffered this last winter because we didn't get the foliage cut off in the fall.

Repeat blooms on some *I.typhifolia* seedlings were crossed on to repeat blooms of 'Creme Chantilly' (McEwen 1981), 'Spring's Brook' (Warburton 1988) and a 'Mesa Pearl' seedling. The resulting seedlings all bloom 7-10 days before other Siberians, and all on tall (4') branched stalks. The bloom forms have been in-between the species *typhifolia* and the modern form parent. Some of the seedlings have been producing a few repeat stalks 3-4 weeks after the initial bloom period. Selected seedlings are being observed for late summer foliage habits; *I.typhifolia* tends to grow tall and then sprawl!

So you haven't seen our names on new introductions for the past few years, but we are working on more: line breeding for more refinements, evaluating 'selects', and rebuilding stock of those the mice took away! And of course, the new crosses certainly should give us better seedlings this coming season which will make us throw away the previous 'selects' and start propagating all over again!

John Coble, Michigan, *The Siberian Iris*' Vol.9.No.3.Spring 1997

The R&I information in the above piece was researched by myself and Jennifer, so again, any mistakes will be mine.

Ed

IN PRAISE OFANNICK (A small iris for small places)

Gardening on a city sized lot doesn't leave a lot of room to play in. As a result, I've been accused of planting my garden with a shoehorn to get everything in. 'Annick' (McEwen '86) is a dainty but robust grower in dark violet blue with a white signal. At only 12" this iris is ideal for planting in my garden. At bloom time it's always covered with a blanket of flowers, even on one year clumps. I use it and other dwarf Siberians (i.e. 'Baby Sister' (McEwen 1986) and 'Precious Doll' (Varner 1987)) as a front border to my main bed of Siberians.

Fran Hawk, Washington. *The Siberian Iris*', Spring 1997

SPRING VERSUS FALL PLANTING

I have only been growing Siberians since 1993, so I'm certainly no expert. In fact I joined a Siberian robin in 1996 so that I could pick the brains of more experienced growers. The subject that I would like to bring up is spring versus fall planting of Siberians. I bought my first Siberians from Ensata Gardens, who shipped both Siberians and Japanese in June 1993. I followed their instructions to mulch and keep the plants watered during the summer and all the plants did well. My three year clumps look great. As my interest in Siberians increased, I started ordering from other growers in order to get the varieties I wanted. In 1994, the ones I got from Ensata were again planted in June and did very well, but those acquired from another source in late August struggled through their first year and were not strong enough to get through the winter on 1995-96. The same story is true for those planted in the fall of 1995. For whatever reason, we've had numerous periods of abnormal weather in recent years (I'm not sure what normal is anymore). The problems appear to extend almost everywhere - it's too dry in the south-west, too wet in the midwest, too cold yesterday and too hot today! If certain gardening practices are marginal for some areas, it seems reasonable that a round or two of unexpected, extreme weather may be the straw that breaks the camel's back.

Most growers do not offer spring shipping and I have discussed the matter with a couple of them. One felt that it would be an almost impossible task due to their heavy, wet clay soil, another cited the limited resources of a small operation in providing two shipping seasons, as well as having limited stock so early in the season, all of which I can appreciate. Last year, I planted as early in August as growers would ship, but I'm not sure this was a good idea. I mulched and kept them watered, but it was very hot and most seemed to go dormant very quickly (at least I hope that's what they did). I'll find out in a few weeks if I've done more harm than good. I suspect that unless one can plant by mid-June, it would be best to wait until late August or early September in this part of Ohio. I am planning orders for 1997 to be shipped in late April, May-June and late August. I'll keep actual records (not just recall), and forward the results. If a few other members would do the same, the results could be compared and perhaps a better determination made regarding the best time to plant Siberians in northern areas. I do think controlled tests would be useful to determine if spring versus fall planting really does make that much of a difference. As previously stated, I am a novice, so my observations are not based on any long term experience. I'm just hoping to glean information from those who do have the knowledge, and I would be happy to participate in any tests deemed worthy.

Sandra Rawlings, Ohio. *The Siberian Iris*' Spring 1997

IRIS NOTES FROM BRITISH COLUMBIA

Our perennial rainforest garden is located in USDA Zone 7 and has yearly rainfall between 60 and 100". It has a short frost season and so produces irises and irids from late February to mid-October. Reticulatas and David Sindt's tiny 3" pumila hybrids start the show, vesper iris (*P.dichotoma*) and *Sisyrinchium*s usually end it. Our family of 40 Siberians fills the time gap between 20 distinct clumps of *I.setosa* and various forms of the 40 chromosome Sino-Siberians. The *I.setosa*'s, from 8-38" tall and from white to dark purple, bloom with species such as *I.gracilipes*, *I.ruthenica*, *I.cretensis*, *I.oxypetala* and an interesting group of *I.lactea*. Next in sequence are our Siberian hybrids and *I.sanguinea* 'Kamayama' (a sanguinea form native to Japan) which bloom with the TB's. Siberians thrive in our climate but need to be fertilised quite heavily due to the leaching effect from our heavy rainfall. Some of our favorites include 'Adj' (McEwen 1983), 'Butter and Sugar' (McEwen 1977), 'Regency Buck' (McEwen 1985), 'Forrest McCord' (Hollingworth 1984), 'Jewelled Crown' (Hollingworth 1985), 'Ruffled Velvet' (McEwen 1973) and 'Percheron' (Warburton 1982). 'Illini Charm' (Varner 1974), 'Illini Flirt' (Varner 1984), and 'Vi Luhn' (DuBose 1973) are probably the most consistent bloomers.

Most beardless irises thrive in our damp climate, and the Sino-Siberians are no exception. *I.forrestii*, cultivars 'Rainbow Island' (L.Reid 1973) and 'Puget Polka' (Mize-Ruggles 1964), Calsibe 'Golden Waves' (Witt 1979) and many seedlings from Jean Witt's 'mixed 40's' follow the Siberians. Perhaps the best of my seedlings is a reverse *Chrysographes* cross which is a clear brilliant gold with almost black hafts. The five major 40 chromosome species cross so easily that it's nearly impossible to grow a true species and the best hope is probably obtaining seed from China. Seedlings which will bloom this spring (1997. Ed.) include five clumps of *Sibtosia* from Tamberg seed and dwarf Siberians from McEwen seed. *I.typhifolia* has bloomed very late for me so far, with the last of the Japanese irises. With luck, other Siberian related groups will join the crowd next year. Calsibes are normally sterile, but I obtained two small batches of tetraploid Calsibe seed. They could be the start of a unique group with features quite uncommon to our present varieties, including hardiness. Also from Dr.Waddick's rare iris study center and the British Iris Society's seed exchange, seed has arrived from southern Russia from a white species Siberian and other Russian species. These could provide another Siberian form and possibly another bloom period.

All beardless irises, including Louisianas and Japanese are trouble-free here, with no major pests or diseases. To achieve continuous bloom over such a long period our flower beds are layered 3-4 plants deep and planted tightly. Bearded irises are about one third of our total of about 400 clumps but need regular spraying for leaf-spot, planted as they are in such wet and tight conditions. They are increasingly used specimen rather than mass planting, as are Arils and most Spurias. One example of our mass planting is *I.reticulata* and *I.danfordiae* planted tightly between clumps of Japanese irises, as they finish blooming before the JI's start to grow. Siberian clumps are often massed with peonies, lilies and oriental poppies. , Setosas with daylilies and perennial geraniums. Many of the species share space with evergreen alliums and heath-heather clumps and bloom almost year round, even under the snow.

I would be delighted to hear from anyone interested in this form of gardening. I'm always willing to trade or buy any unusual irises still missing here, *I.lacustris* and *I.verna* come to mind- they're among my failures.

Doug Murray, *The Siberian Iris*' Vol.9. No.1. Spring 1997

Again, the registration info. is added, so if it's wrong, blame me.

Ed

An Adaptation of: EXPEDITION 1997, ROSEBURG, OREGON

Colin and Teresa Rigby scouted the terrain for irises, interesting gardens and picnic spots and organised the transport and watering place. May 10th and 11th were decided upon and the Lawyers set out to hunt down the site of beautiful hybrid swarms of *tenax* and *innominata* in advance. Whilst wiggling about the countryside on a bear hunter's directions they spied some handsome white *Erythroniums*, but no substantial colonies of irises, and then found the road to Eden Valley chained against them and had to retrace their tortuous route. The Loops had been travelling about looking at the possibilities too, and when they all met up for resuscitation, they weren't impressed with what they'd seen either. They all continued prospecting west of Rosenberg the next day, discovering that roads had been seriously damaged by rain, sections having dropped as much as 15' in places, and that there were major landslide sites in the areas they were interested in. Along the way they got mixed up with a similar scouting party from a rock collecting society but, you guessed it, they still couldn't find a way in to Eden Valley.

On the first day they visited the Cruger's 5 acre garden on the Umpqua River. The owners had had to absent themselves, but their acreage was so immaculate that the guests all cheered when someone managed to find a very small weed. An ingenious labelling method in use there was to paint the name of the plant on a blackened rock placed at its foot. Their next stop was a neglected area within a cemetery where *I.tenax* was flourishing in shades of purple as it was throughout the Douglas County areas which they would be visiting. Sites on the Oak Hill Road and at the Rock Creek Fish Hatchery exhibited more profusions of *tenax* and there are photos accompanying this article showing people wandering happily all over various roads in defiance of any traffic taking admiring photos of the banksides. The colour photo of *I.tenax* shows me that their enthusiasm was completely justified, even acknowledging the rather over excited colour balance. The next site, at River Road, was lower and moister with taller *tenax* in some of the darkest purples and then they were off to Jean Caldwell's steeply inclined 20 acres and her welcome hospitality. After their dinner they were shown videos taped during the day and slides of the '96 expedition to see *I.hartwegii* in the Sierran foothills. Traditionally their expeditions include a botanist or native plant specialist and on this trip Ted Kipping, as resident, stuck all his finds on cards which were passed around -all 91 of them! (Including a tick...) - so that anyone who had photographed any of them could identify them.

The second day saw them firstly at Canas Summit with 'ample quantities' of *I.chrysophylla* and a wood lit with a 'luminous golden-pink light' which housed Calypso orchids in flower. Then they toiled along to China Flat and a shady picnic spot where there were quantities of a yellow orange *innominata* which excited them enormously as they'd previously seen only purples and whites. In this area there were beautiful specimens of serpentine rock too, 'an essential element to many of the floral species specific to the Siskiyou Mountains'.

The Hills', following instructions from an employee at the fish farm, tootled off a few days later to the Jim Creek Road area where they found 'huge clumps of *tenax*', some being of the 'Valley Banner' (Hardy 1958) type, in an area that they thought had been logged about ten years ago. They aimed to return for seed, and hopefully were successful.

SPCNI 'Almanac' Spring 1997 Vol XXV, No.2, with apologies to Adele, should they prove necessary.

MIXED CALIFORNIA IRIS SEED

There it sat among all the carefully documented seed packets -'mixed California iris'. It had a lot more seeds in it than the pedigree ones, but sometimes a lot of seeds demands more attention than one can give. Would these be worth the effort? Had they been collected by someone who loved every plant in the garden, or had some carefully selected plants produced too few seeds to warrant separate packages? I took the chance. Two years later, one of the plants flowered. Unexciting. Off-white. Oh dear. There were still thirty or more to flower the next year, and maybe they would be better. I potted up a couple and put them in a cold frame to see if they would flower soon enough for our usual April rock garden show. They missed that, but opened just in time for the University Gardens plant sale the first weekend in May. One was the off-white of the year before, and I put it in the Natives section. The other -I could hardly believe what I saw when it unfurled the day of the sale. It was a sumptuous combination of wine and old gold. This plant was worthy of more than the crowded Natives section. I placed it between two young trees that echoed the colours of its flowers, on the Silent Auction table. In front of it I placed a sign explaining that it was the only plant of its kind in the city, and whoever won the chance to buy it would be able to name it if they wished. Off I went to look after the House-plants section. Every once in a while, a woman would come over and ask about the iris. Where had I got it? Didn't I have another piece of it at home? What was she going to do? She must have the iris, but someone else kept upping her bid, and perhaps the rival would have the lucky bid when the bell rang to end the auction. Whichever one was the lucky one paid \$34 for the plant. (Will someone *please* write in to tell us how these silent auctions work?! Ed.)

A couple of weeks later the plants that had remained in the garden began to flower. One was a miniature dark purple, some had broad ruffled petals, and interesting blends of colours. A beige washed with faint purple bloomed for over a month. A wide petalled ruffly one of yellow, off-white and light brown with red veins, had a very slight scent. It was obvious that whoever collected those 'mixed California iris' seeds had collected from some very special plants. Who was it? I asked, and fortunately the club member who had bought the seeds three years ago had kept the name: B. Charles Jenkins.

Diane Whitehead, Victoria B.C. SPCNI 'Almanac' Vol XXV.No.2 Spring 1997

An Adaptation of: HOW DO YOUR IRIS GROW

Lewis and Adele have sorted the replies to their request for performance details on individual Pacifica clones geographically and each area may be repeatedly mentioned if new reports are sent to them. Response was best from areas where PCTs are easiest to grow and they were asking in the spring for more information from places where only a few varieties manage to hang on, so please write to them if you grow PCTs and haven't already.

Southern California Area

Southern California was once the centre of the PCI hybridising world, and Marion Walker of Ventura was one of its earliest hybridisers. Ventura and neighbouring Santa Barbara occupy one of the best citrus-belt areas in the world, just west of the Los Angeles conurbation, on a line of longitude that passes also through Morocco. Perhaps a degree or two warm for some PCIs.

Marion Walker: "I used to have a three acre planting, but now it is all in houses. We have a gardener to keep a few irises growing, but nothing like we used to have. Of my productions, 'Ojai' (1959) is the only one that is still around." According to the Lewis's calculations that clump must have been there for at least 38 years...

San Fernando Valley

This lies in Los Angeles County north and east of the Santa Monica mountains and the Hollywood hills which deter tempering sea breezes. Its climate is therefore a little extreme for most Pacificas, but ideal for seedlings or named cultivars selected in and for the area.

Teresa Sage, Woodland Hills CA writes that she only has three named PCIs; 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974), 'Big Money' (Ghio 1982) and 'Munras' (Ghio 1987), but that a seedling from Ghio seeds which she has registered under the name of 'California Skies', but not yet introduced has been a heavy and reliable bloomer since its first season in 1990. It also transplants fairly easily provided that she does it in late October or early November and once established, increases easily. Ms. Sage's PCIs are from Ghio seed, the SPCNI and her own. The weather with her in 1996 was unpleasant. December, January and part of early February gave her about 16" of rain, and that was it. Then later on they were suffering in 96 degrees.

Northern California

Alameda County

This county fronts onto the San Francisco bay which tempers its climate. It is primarily a sedimentary water-front plain rising to wooded hills along its eastern border. The climate is almost ideal for PCIs. The Waters' live at the foot of the hills in Berkeley and the Lawyer's in the hills above east Oakland. The 38th parallel lies just north of these two locations, and also just north of Seville in Spain.

Olive and George Waters write that as their garden was emptied of plants whilst the soil was renovated and consequently most labels were lost, they can only mention a few by name. Some PCI hybrids are still in pots, others are in ideal, well drained soil with good exposure and still others are fighting tree roots in heavy shade. 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974) is one firm favourite of theirs being a free flowering 'aristocrat' with leaves that stay bright and shiny. 'Upper Echelon' (Ghio 1988), a medium sized well shaped chesnut and yellow combination is another favourite and has a very long flowering season although 'Cup of Tea' (Ghio 1987), a cv which arrived at the same time only produces a slowly diminishing number of flower stems. 'Philosophy' (all I could find was a TB...Ed) flowered for the first time with the Waters' in 1996 and with its 'sturdy, upright flower stems, fat spathes and huge somewhat frilly flowers of rich purple' would, they thought, have combined well with 'Soquel Cove' (Ghio 1976), the latter being 'smoother and more elegant', had it not vanished from their garden some years ago. 'Night Editor' (Ghio 1986), 'a dusky beauty', is always first of the season with them and they forgive it its nearly prostrate stems for its near black flowers and because it performs well in the shadow of a *Garrya elliptica* where it rarely sees the sun. 'Sierra Dell' (Lawyer 1987) never fails to command attention, theirs as well as that of visitors, despite their familiarity; 'those bright blue flowers, smooth and elegantly poised, have no rivals in the iris garden.'

Among those at the Waters' that have lost their labels are several of the 'Banbury' strain. Marjorie Brummitt's PCIs may lack the bold assertiveness of such as 'Philosophy', but 'they survive where some others don't, and it would be an unfeeling gardener, and an unwise one, who dismissed them entirely in favour of today's broads.' The Waters' are searching for the identity of a hybrid with ivory or cream flowers veined purple on 8" stems which has been flourishing with them for many years. Despite consulting Checklists, they've simply become more baffled than before.

Adele and Lewis write that in 1996 they grew 157 named PCI clones, 68 clones selected from their own crosses, 27 species clones and 37 pure species seedlings (now 2nd year clones.) By far the poorest growers were the species grown from wild collected seed where they had interbred for centuries. This weakness is very apparent in clones up to 6 years old which only barely survive and in the fact that they lose over 50% of the seedlings from their 37 pure species. Gene Loop's inter-species crosses performed normally despite having weak parents and several clones of species from garden-grown seed did very well. Their supposition is that plants from wild seed where the surrounding plants were all related would lack hybrid vigor. Apparently, one of the two inbreds that produced Del Monte's prize sweetcorn hybrid was so weak that it was a major production problem. In their planting of named varieties and pure species, the difference was startling; at the end of the first year all the former had clumps with leaves a foot or so long, while the best species plant had three 4" leaves only. The best named clone in their garden at present is 'Canyon Orchid' (Denney 1982) which is 'Canyon Snow' x 'Abell' and *munzii* material from Lee Lenz. The rest of the best have been listed alphabetically: 'Age of Chivalry' (Ghio 1992), 'Ami Royale' (Luhrsens 1957), 'Califia' (Ghio 1970), 'Canyon Snow' (Emery 1974), 'Deep Blue Sea' (Ghio 1992), 'Fairy Chimes' (McCaskill 1972), 'Fault Zone' (Ghio 1991), 'Gold Dusted' (Jenkins 1990), 'Greenan Gold' (Meek 1992), 'In The Money' (Ghio 1987), 'Jean Erickson' (Rigby 1993), 'Mantra' (Ghio 1993), 'Night Editor' (Ghio 1986), 'Pacific Rim' (B. Jones 1991), 'Santa Cruz Beach' (Ghio 1987), 'Seabright Cove' (Ghio 1993), 'Sierra Dell' (Lawyer 1987), 'Solid Citizen' (Ghio 1987) and 'Tidy White' (Hager 1988).

Contra Costa County

This lies mostly east of the Alameda County hills, just south of the 38th parallel and is a little colder in winter and hotter in summer but is still fairly compatible with PCI growing.

Francisca Thoolen, Orinda, CA, wrote that the request for information arrived just too late for her to have taken notes and although they had a lot of flowers, only 'Gordola' (Ghio 1996) stands out in her memory, a petite yellow that 'bloomed its little head off, yet still left increases for next year. Its leaves had no leaf spots in spite of the constant rain we had this winter and early spring. If it had a fault it was that the leaves were slightly taller than the bloom stems, but not enough to be objectionable from a landscape point. I could see it fifty feet away from the kitchen window. I liked it so much that I ordered 5 more plants this year to add to my landscape bed.'

Sonoma County

The Coast Range areas of Sonoma and Marin Counties are ideal for PCI's and grow wild over much of the range. South slopes of open hills are about the only places where they're absent. Hal Mattos, on the eastern edge of this area, on a latitude which also runs through Alicante in Spain, has had some difficulties, while Elyse Hill, in the centre, is doing quite well.

Hal Mattos, Petaluma, CA writes that prior to '86, when he lived in Foster City, they grew PCI's very successfully. In the fall of '87 they planted several PCI's in their new home. As their soil is very heavy adobe, they added a lot of improvers and ended with a 2' x 10' raised bed which housed PCI's and Loisianas. These all did quite well in their first year, and some flowered, but most had died by the following year and their replacements mostly died within a year too although the Loisianas thrive. 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974) grew well for several years. At one point they had clumps in two different parts of the garden but both shrivelled up and died in the same week one winter during their spurt of new growth. Over the years Hal has grown hybrids from Ghio, Lawyer, Wood, Weiler, Rigby, Marchant and Belardi. He has two PCI's at present, 'Pacific High' (Belardi 1987) and 'Sea Gal', (Belardi 1994) which he has been growing since their years of introduction and which have done well to date.

Elyse Hill, Sebastopol, CA reports that 'Big Wheel' (Ghio 1981), 'Endless' (Ghio 1984), and 'Fort Poin' (If this is actually 'Fort Point', then it's Wood 1987. Names being what they are, who knows. Ed) are the most reliable with her.

Oregon, Washington, British Columbia

Oregon hosts five PCI species and there is one in Washington State but none in British Columbia although they can be established there, especially in areas tempered by ocean breezes. Western Oregon could be said to be near the ideal for PCTs, but it gets progressively more difficult as Washington is approached. This year the entire region was drenched with all the spring rain that should have fallen in California.

George Gessert in Eugene is smack on the 44th parallel which runs just north of Firenze, Italy, although such comparisons may well be pointless. Any geographers amongst you, do write in. He wished everyone a better season than he was having as he reckoned that 1997 was going to be the worst year for bloom that he'd ever had. He had lost about a third of his plants in 1996, an improvement on 1995 when he lost half of them. The survivors of these two years of record rain should be tolerant to wetness. He has been growing many named hybrids without any special regime of care and if they're going to turn their toes up, he lets them get on with it. They usually spend their first year in pots and are then planted out into heavy clay and partial shade. Although he hasn't kept notes on everything, he has done so for 'All Around' (Ghio 1981), 'Big Money' (Ghio 1982), 'Black Eye' (Ghio 1989), 'Canyon Snow', (Philbrick/Emery 1974), 'Charter Member' (Ghio 1993), 'Cozumel', (Ghio 1996), 'Del Rey' (Ghio 1979), 'Escalona' (Ghio 1993), 'Eye Patch' (Ghio 1995), 'Fault Zone' (Ghio 1990), 'Feature Attraction' (This is listed as being a Schreiner TB in 1994. Ed.), 'Flamenco' (Apparently another TB, although these name may have been released and re-used for PCI's. Keppel 1975), 'Hands On', (Ghio 1993) 'In the Money' (Ghio 1987), 'La Selva Beach' (Ghio 1993), 'On the Wild Side', (Ghio 1991), 'Pac 4' (Ghio), 'Pomponio' (Ghio 1985), 'San Lorenzo' (Ghio 1972), 'Skylash' (Belardi 1993), 'Western Queen' (Stambach 1967), 'Wilder than Ever' (Ghio 1992), 'Wildest Imaginings' (Ghio 1995). The two most vigorous with him are 'Canyon Snow' and 'Western Queen', the least so 'Cozumel' and 'Escalona'. 'Del Rey', which is part *munzii*, survived temperatures in the low tens and has produced some truly blue progeny when crossed with *I. tenax*.

For color and patterning, many of Ghio's introductions are excellent, especially 'PAC 4' (a Ghio reselection included as an extra), which has an amazing neon-purple signal, and 'Wilder Than Ever', which has the most complex signal pattern I've ever seen. However, I don't like the ruffling on most Ghio hybrids -or on most other contemporary iris hybrids for that matter. There is no bigger iris cliché than ruffles. I try to breed them out, but it is slow going. For form, 'Western Queen' and 'Canyon Snow' are superior to almost anything more recent. In my breeding I am especially interested in vein patterns (and for these) the most interesting parent of any named hybrids that I have used is 'All Around'. This is a rather modest-looking plicata, and not vigorous here. When crossed with 'Valley Banner' (Hardy 1958) type hybrids, it parents plicatas, but also plants with a range of unusual patterns for which there are no names. The most interesting progeny have extremely thin, but interestingly pigmented veins. Hybrids tend to grow better than species, except for *I. douglasiana*, which grows like a weed here. My most vigorous plants are my own hybrids between 'Western Queen', 'Canyon Snow', or various Ghio cv's, and *tenax*-derived hybrids. The only exception to this is an extremely vigorous hybrid between 'Canyon Snow' and a wild collected *innominata*. I should name and introduce it, I suppose, since the flowers are extraordinary -pure white, covered with fine magenta veins. How does 'Noam Chomsky' sound?

Roger Nelson, of Iris Country in Brooks, which escaped my Reader's digest atlas, had a wild and wet winter last year followed by a late, wet spring. He is a man with a taste for vintage irises and has four that are dependable every year which he treasures. In order of best performance, these are;

'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974), 'Poppy' (Edinger/Patterson 1980), 'Crandall's White' (a white seedling from Fred Crandall widely distributed in the Seattle area), and 'Amiguita' (Nies 1947) although he lost one of his two plants of that last autumn for no apparent reason. His opinion is that it makes the best looking clump each year, it's foliage is shorter than that of 'Canyon Snow', and at peak bloom the stalks are in better proportion to the plant.

Kathy Millar is in Duncan, British Columbia, near the southern tip of Vancouver Island on a similar latitude to Stuttgart. There they average about 40" of rainfall annually, receiving most in October and May. Last spring was exceptionally wet with them. Minimum temperature is about 14 degrees but every decade or so it drops to zero. Maximum temperatures are 100 degrees, but their average is closer to 75. Kathy's soil is an acidic sandy gravel at about pH 4.5 to which she adds dolomite lime each year. She also mulches with shredded oak leaves while using an 8-10-20 fertiliser in the spring and 'Sevin' drenches to control the June Beetle larvae. Her beds get 3 hours of watering weekly except for the Ghio's as they're in her vegetable patch and so get an extra session. One bed has a 50% shade cloth over it, the rest are in hot sun. She sows her seed in 1" square cell packs in a soil-less peat mix and leaves them outside over winter. She considers fresh seed to be the best and gets ready germination from it, but struggles to keep the seedlings going until they bloom, 'and even then they die'.

Kathy has registered the following two: 'Dorothy V' (Millar 1991), 'nice big cream blooms, nice form and substance. Forms a fairly vigorous loose clump. Tough and transplants well. A survivor and a good bloomer.' 'Vera Hayes' (Millar 1990), 'Small bluish-purple blooms, nice color, blooms prolifically and very vigorously...forms good clumps and transplants well.' 'Big Wheel' (Ghio 1981), 'Earthquake' (Ghio 1990), 'Fault Zone' (Ghio 1990), 'Herald' (Ghio 1989), 'Simply Wild' (Ghio 1980) and 'Sierra Dell' (Lawyer 1987) were planted out in 1992 after being overwintered in pots. These comprise about 40% of the original 1991 order from Joe. They are slow to increase and 'Sierra Dell' doesn't bloom every year. It also doesn't form a clump so I think there are only 3 fans! I did, however, gather seed and now have about 25 plants in 1 gallon pots that may bloom next year. Overall, Joe's plants took a while to settle in, but now they probably need to be divided.

Nothing can beat the *I.douglasiana* and *I.innominata* species. They increase and bloom well. *I.tenax* persists too, and throws lots of seedlings. *I.bracteata* has survived, but I had to move them this spring, so we'll see. They are shy bloomers. To conclude: 'Dorothy V' and 'Vera Hayes' perform the best, but Joe's are more exciting colorwise. I have a bunch of Joe's seedlings that are gorgeous, but still lose a few each year so can't say yet if any are reliable. I think a person has to test these iris for at least 5 bloom seasons before they can recommend them.'

U.S., East of the Pacific States

Trying to grow the PCI in any area of the U.S. other than the favoured sections of the three Pacific states brings difficulties. Bob Ward, the SPCNI Chairman, has had the most success, but he's apparently found it a struggle even with his well planned strategies. Lewis reckons that, given the right approach, PCIs can be developed to fit almost any climate, he writes, '...it's going to take lots of you, lots of patience, lots of time and lots of seed, but plants have wonderful abilities to change genetically and adapt to whatever faces them. They have already adapted to elevations from 6900 feet in the dry Sierras to the salt sprayed edges of the Pacific. ...from the hot dry slopes of the Sierra foothills to the 100 inch rainfall slopes of the coastal mountains in Oregon. The one thing common to all the areas where they are native is the absence of summer rainfall. But don't be disheartened. The genes must be there, or at least willing to mutate. Maybe Bob has already found some of them.'

Bob Ward is in Little Rock, Arizona, on a line of latitude running just north of Tripoli. He finds that the following do well with him 'Agnes James' (A collected form of *I.douglasiana* registered by Starker in 1939), 'Banbury Gnome' (Brummit 1974), 'Black Eye' (Ghio 1989), 'Blue Sage' (Nies 1947), 'Califia' (Ghio 1970), 'Chief Sequoia' (Weiler 1990), 'David Mark Ward' (Fabel-Ward 1989), 'Honta Yo' (Rigby 1985), 'Shamayim' (Fabel-Ward 1992), 'Susie Knapp' (Phillips 1970), 'Wolkentanz' (Fabel-Ward 1992), seedlings from 'Valley Banner' (Hardy 1958) and a 'Banbury Gnome x 'Agnes James' seedling. The following species grow well with him too: *I.bracteata*, *I.chrysophylla*, *I.douglasiana*, *I.innominata*, *I.macrosiphon* and *I.tenax*.

Outside the United States and Canada

Australia has many suitable areas for PCIs and some excellent breeding material has come from exchanges between U.S. and English hybridisers and Australians such as Fred Danks, D.Hargraves and Barry Blyth.

Robyn Rorlach is in Bowen Mountain in New South Wales, which has escaped my atlas but N.S.W. is about as southerly as one can get in Australia. Robyn has mainly grown the CA species and most of the few hybrids she has grown over the last 25 years or so have been unnamed and have come from seed from SIGNA, the BIS and elsewhere. In the early 1980's when she lived in South Australia, she bought a few registered ones from Barry Blyth 'but they were unsuccessful'. Robyn has been quite mobile, and while spending five years in Yackandandah in northeast Victoria she grew some 'unnamed hybrids of uncertain parentage' in various colours, but in 1995, just as she was considering ordering some registered varieties, her husband was transferred to where they are now and she's been doing battle with her plot ever since, to great effect, as she has a species collection to maintain too, but it's taking her a while. She now has mostly species seedlings and 'the handful of seemingly-inevitable nameless crosses.'

Her soil is poor and the rains have been 'erratic to say the least' and on top of that she's not sure that the climate is suitable anyway, and she's lost a lot to rot that she grew in pots to plant out in the spring, 'especially those from named hybrid parents.' Species do better and she now has seedlings of *I.bracteata*, *I.douglasiana*, *I.fernaldii*, *I.hartwegii*, *I.innominata alba*, *I.macrosiphon* and *I.purdyi*, some of which did better when sowed directly into the soil.

Robyn has ordered named hybrids from Australian sources and from Joe Ghio in the U.S. She will be keeping Lewis informed, which should keep both him and I happy. She writes that PCIs aren't widely available in Australia and while Barry Blyth grew and sold them in the late seventies and early eighties, problems with rust put him off and he reverted to the more popular TB's, spurias and Louisianas. He gave his stock to Iris Acres Nursery

in south Australia, who now have an extensive catalogue of them. Red Hill Iris Nursery in Victoria also sells them potted or bare-root and Robyn thinks that they've been operating since the early 90's. They stock the following:

'Alberton' (?), 'Bendigo' (D.B. Perry 1906), 'Big Money' (Ghio 1984), 'Big Wheel' (Ghio 1981), 'Bogong' (Blyth 1987), 'Bottom Line' (Ghio 1984), 'Bunyip' (Blyth 1987), 'California Mystique' (Ghio 1981), 'Campaigner' (Ghio 1984), 'Chelsea' (this is listed as a TB (Cook, F.N., 1939) so the name may have been re-used.), 'Chiminta' (Blyth 1983), 'Deepening Shadows' (Ghio 1984), 'Dorrigo' (?), 'Echuca' (Blyth 1987), 'Endless' (Ghio 1984), 'Flotilla' (Blyth 1983), 'Frankston' (?), 'Glengarry' (?), 'Going West' (Ghio 1984), 'Go Wild' (Ghio 1981), 'Grand Design' (Ghio 1983), 'Hastings' (?), 'Jamieson' (?), 'Kiewa' (Caldwell 1977), 'Leongatha' (Blyth 1987), 'Long Shot' (Ghio 1984), 'Miramar' (Ghio 1984), 'Montara' (Ghio 1983), 'Moresco' (Blyth 1983), 'Nagambie' (Blyth 1987), 'Nayook' (Blyth 1987), 'Neerim' (Blyth 1987), 'Orbost' (?), 'Pajaro Dunes' (Ghio 1984), 'Queen Califa' (Ghio 1985), 'Roaring Camp' (Ghio 1984), 'Tanjil' (Blyth 1987), 'Tongala' (Blyth 1987), 'Uvas' (Ghio 1985), 'Warragul' (Blyth 1987), 'White Sails' (?), 'Wild Party' (Ghio 1982), 'Wish Fulfilment' (Ghio 1983), 'Wonga' (Blyth 1987), 'Zayante Creek' (Ghio 1983). Iris Acres stock most of the above along with 'Aldinga' (Schmidt 1995), 'Benalla' (Blyth 1987), 'Echunga' (Schmidt 1995), 'Kangarilla' (Schmidt 1995), 'Kuitpo' (Schmidt 1995), 'Meadows Magic' (Schmidt 1995), 'Mitta Mitta' (Blyth 1987), 'Moanana' (This may be 'Moana', Schmidt 1995), 'Nangkita' (Schmidt 1995), 'Noarlunga' (Schmidt 1995), 'Smoky Bandit' (Heidi Blyth 1986, Barry Blyth's daughter. All other Blyth's are his. J.H.), 'Willunga' (Schmidt 1995), 'Yankalilla' (Schmidt 1995), 'Yaroona' (Schmidt 1995), 'Yundi' (Schmidt 1995). Ivar Schmidt runs the nursery with his wife, Carol, and has named many of his introductions after South Australian towns.

(My apologies for being so ignorant of Australian registrations, if anyone wants to send some R&I's over, please do. Ed)

Like Australia, much of England is well-suited, or fairly easily adapted to growing PCI's, and substantial pioneering breeding work was done by English hybridisers and gardeners.

Pauline Brown, in the far flung reaches of Surrey, which lies roughly along the same parallel as Yorkton, north of Winnipeg, maintains that '...the Pacifica hybrids are among the most critical of iris to get established and growing well in their first season. This is especially true if they come to the U.K. from the U.S. This may be due to the length of time the plants spend in transit, coupled with the timing of their shipment and arrival dates. Here, September is normally the magic moment to lift, divide, and replant them, although I have from time to time carelessly heeled in rows of 'Arnold Sunrise' and various seedlings in cold and wet Octobers and Novembers. Wouldn't you know that they did better than those carefully planted at the 'correct' time and in 'ideal' conditions! Generally it is difficult to provide just the right amount of moisture required to get them going without going over the top and causing them to rot during establishment. The species grow extremely well, producing lots of good foliage and flowers' whereas the innominata-type hybrids are the most difficult, although they do produce good flowers despite their scrappy foliage. I have found that the British-raised hybrids do best for me, namely: 'Amethyst Crystal' (Earnshaw-Whittles 1981), 'Arnold Sunrise' (Humphrey 1975), 'Banbury Fair' (Brummitt 1969), 'Blue Ballerina' (Knowles 1971), 'Katinka' (Scopes 1988), 'Purple Dream' (Scopes 1983), 'Pinewood Amethyst' (Wise 1991), 'Pinewood Charmer' (Wise 1994), 'Pinewood Poppet' (Wise 1994), 'Pinewood Sunshine' (Wise 1994), 'Popinjay' (Scopes 1988), but also 'Quintana' (Corlew 1980) and the Cal-sib 'Golden Waves' (Witt 1979).

Lewis noted here: 'I have always puzzled over the British considering September the 'magic' time for transplanting Pacificas. Here in my California garden they wouldn't be ready for at least another month. Maybe Pauline has discovered something.'

European climates are not as hospitable to the PCI as are many of the zones on the British Isles. Winters can be compared to those in the central and eastern regions of the U.S., and success will not be attained until some persevering Irisarian in one of those climate zones finds a genetic combination that will thwart the cold. It seems that an *I.tenax* infusion from a cold natural habitat in Washington would be a good starting point, and several of our members are already proceeding on that assumption. Jean Peyrard is trying to short-cut that method by selecting seedlings from good garden types, a method we have enthusiastically supported in our recommendations. His 'Tropezienne' (Peyrard 1995) is a good example of what can be accomplished by selecting where it is to be grown.

M. Peyrard writes 'I have grown since 1986 a lot of named varieties and species with few successes. Named varieties have come from Joe Ghio, and the travel time is 4-5 days. They arrive in October when the weather is often cold and the transplanting difficult. Until now I have lost two thirds of the plants. Actually, I have: 'Black Eye' (Ghio 1989), 'Chief Sequoia' (Weiler 1990), 'It's Wild' (Ghio 1989), 'Napa Valley' (Ghio 1985), 'San Lorenzo Valley' (Ghio 1992), and 'See The Light' (Ghio 1991) since 1995, and 'Wild Time' (Ghio 1986) since 1990. The growth is poor and the stems are short, but the flowers are marvellous, good substance and long lasting as cut flowers. I have some seedlings from Ghio seeds, and I have selected and registered an orchid-pink one under the name 'Tropezienne' (Peyrard 1995). It was introduced last year (1996) by Lewisia, a nursery specialising in American perennials. My goal is to get hardy plants for my climate. This climate is continental, warm and often dry summer and cold and snowy winter. The soil is rich in clay, and a little acid. All the species are grown in pots, and until now only *I.tenax* have bloomed -and died. Tender species are protected in winter under the basement where there is no frost, but no water.'

Lewis Lawyer SPCNI "Almanac" Vol. XXV, No. 2. Spring 1997

I must note here that Jennifer really deserves to have her feet kissed next time I see her for looking up all the R&I information for this that I hadn't tracked down whilst I was absent. Also, apart from those, in case any of you became confused, anything that's actually informational in the above article is Lewis', and anything waffleous is mine. I apologise to him in advance.

An Adaptation of: SEEDLING PRODUCTION GUIDELINES

Pollination should occur as soon as possible after the flower opens, preferably in the morning before the bees do it. If this is being done for a genetic study where measurements and counts are to be made, both the pollen and the pod parent flowers must be protected from insects (e.g. pollen beetles here.) from before they're open to after pollination has occurred and for 3/4 days further for the pod parent. Anthers should always be removed to reduce selfing, whatever you're after. You can transfer pollen either by brush or by rubbing the anther over the stigma. Once the pod swells, pull down the surrounding sheath to reduce aphids and moulds which are keen on such areas.

Ideally the seed should be harvested when the pod is just splitting, daily checks being made to ensure that none gets shed. You can wrap the pods in cheesecloth to catch these strays if you haven't the time for such attendance. Normally, 10-40% of the seeds will be hard and these will germinate in the second year, rather than the first, so do wait for them. No scarification method has been shown to alleviate this problem.

No method of germination has as yet been proved to be better than that of planting in pots in a mostly organic planting medium. I use a home-made mix of one third sphagnum peat and two thirds oak leaf mould fortified with a high phosphorous complete fertiliser. This isn't sterile, and a purchased one that is may be better. A pot depth of 5-6" is minimum and the optimum covering depth is 1/4"-1/2" which will keep the seeds continuously moist until germination is complete. Gene Loop's accurately controlled tests ('Almanac' Fall, 1994, 1995) show that germination (sprouting) occurs best at around 50 deg.F, will not occur in temperatures above 70F and is halted around 32F. Seed can withstand freezing but can be killed if held near to it for more than 20 days or so. No pre-planting treatment (freezing, refrigeration, etc) has been found to be beneficial. Ideal temperatures for germination occur outside during the winter in most areas of the three Pacific states, but must be provided in harsher climates. John White ('Almanac' Spring 1997, see below, Ed) has demonstrated how this is done.

If several seeds are planted in the pot their roots will become entangled and must be carefully teased apart on removal. We have always done this by dipping the root-ball in water, but last year we did it without washing them, and had 100% survival of the replants. Duncan Eader recommends 'Supersoil' because of its ability to release the tangled roots when placed in a pan of water. The seedlings can be moved to larger (5-8") pots where they will bloom, or be lined out in the garden. We line out, 6" apart, in rows 1' apart, in a garden soil containing 1/3 sphagnum peat by volume, usually in May or June. It is essential for the soil to be adequately settled around the roots; therefore plants should be well watered on planting.

Lewis Lawyer, Oakland CA. SPCNI 'Almanac' Vol XXV. No.2. Spring 1997

An Adaptation of: UPDATE ON THE LATES

You're not the only ones who experienced an unusual winter this year. By January 25th, we had received 22.81" of rain, 4" more than our normal seasonal total. Then the rains quit, and for three months, including our normally wettest period, we had no useful rainfall. With the lack of clouds came the heat, 8 record high days in succession and a few others scattered here and there for good measure. The Pacifica bloom season, which actually started a little late, caught up with itself in a rush, many plants blooming as much as 21 days earlier than expected. Peak bloom on our named plants occurred 15 days early, on March 31st, with 459 open flowers. By the normal peak bloom date of April 15th, the count had dropped to 312 and 3 blooms were already open on the 'lates'. Peak bloom on these occurred on May 7th, with 98 open flowers. By then there weren't any flowers left on the named Pacificas although there were still 4 on our *munzii*-derived seedlings. One clump of 'lates' still had a flower open yesterday, June 13th, but I think that's the end. Last year peak bloom was May 20th and the last bloom July 7th. Although the 'lates' were 15-20 days earlier than last year, they still fulfilled their function of extending the season fairly well.

Lewis Lawyer, SPCNI 'Almanac' Vol. XXV. No.2. Spring 1997

There is a photo accompanying this article of XP325 clones, taken on May 7th '97, on which I counted about 27 flowers, and on that same day Lewis noted that there were only 4 open flowers in all their extensive non-'late' plantings, so I'm convinced, even if Lewis only reckons they're only doing 'fairly well'!

Ed

An Adaptation of: GERMINATING SEED IN A COLD-WINTER CLIMATE

The seeds were planted on January 28th and placed in a cool room (average 52 deg.F) for 35 days, when they were transferred into a warm room (70-75 deg.F). The first emergence was on March 8th and most had done so by about 45 days after planting. The first eight lots listed were scarified by being shaken vigorously for a couple of minutes in a small sand-paper lined box but the two from Jean Witt weren't.

Seed Germination Results

Source	seed	germinated	%
Amiguita	37	26	70
Idylwild	25	21	84
Roaring Camp	12	8	67
XP325 (96 080)	90	67	74
<i>I. tenax</i> (96 121)	24	3	12
<i>I. tenax gormanii</i>	85	37	44
<i>I. tenax X imominata</i>	68	27	40
<i>I. tenax</i> (96 117)	102	3	3
Mixed varieties (Jean Witt)	85	32	38
Same. colch. (Jean Witt)	60	22	37
TOTALS:	588	226	(Average) 38.4

I don't know why, but it appears that the named varieties had much better germination than the species, and they are quite vigorous. The seedlings from XP353 (Late Doug X XP251, seed exchange lot 96080) are the most vigorous. I think the longer time in the cold room, compared to my last year's test, was beneficial. Maybe 40 days would be even better. I know Gene loop considered that germination was probably complete in 20 days, but there is a difference between germination and emergence.

So I have about 226 seedlings to line out in the spring. We are having a very late, cold and wet spring this year, (1997. Ed.) but I should be able to plant these seedlings by May 20th, or soon after. I had only one PCI bloom in 1995, a 'Night Editor' (Ghio) seedling, but it did not survive the next winter. I went into this winter with 50 PCI seedlings lined out in 1996, plus 7 plants which survived the 1995-6 winter, none of which bloomed. Of these, there are 6 or so tenax among those lined out last year that look as though they survived the '96 winter. It's too early to tell about last season's other seedlings.

John White, Maine. 'Almanac' Spring 1997 Vol XXV, No.2

REPORT ON WISLEY'S SPURIA TRIAL REPLANTED 1994

Well, hardly a report, rather a post-mortem in some cases, though not all.

'Shelford Giant' which received an A.G.M. in 1994 flowered well again this year, along with 'Monspur Cambridge Blue' (described in the trial as Monnier x spuria 'Cambridge Blue') both sent by Sissinghurst, although there was some doubt as to the authenticity of the latter which will be checked out prior to being recommended for an A.G.M. and the next Spuria Trial when it is replanted next year. Other award winners in the trial include 'Lydia Jane' with an A.G.M. in 1996, 'Belize' and 'Sunny Day', both awarded an A.G.M. in 1994 at the end of the last trial. Among my other notes for the trial are a few 'ok's' which translated means they are in the main doing what they are supposed to do, one 'failing', one 'nearly failing', a couple 'one flower stem only', several 'no flowers', one 'very scruffy' and one or two 'flowering finished but otherwise ok'. There were signs of frost damage with half height aborted stems and some flower damage and so I feel it unfair to single out from the above which were doing what in what has been, in my own experience, the worst bloom season for irises across the board, although nearly all of those Spurias I sent to Wisley have done better here at Westlees farm than they have at Wisley. It would also be fair to say that some others here have not bloomed for me this year. It has been suggested that this particular trial could perhaps have been planted on a more favourable site than under trees but it would be difficult to pinpoint any single cause for the lack of bloom and/or failure of some plants this year due to the peculiar weather we have experienced. On a brighter note (and I do mean bright!) I noted against 'Destination' raised by B.R.Hager and sent by the late Peter Wood, 'Brilliant orange -must have this one!' My only misgivings would be in the shape of the flower, having, unlike most other Spurias, more rounded falls and the whole flower short-clawed giving an overall compactness. But the stems are erect, flowers well spaced and nicely held above the clean foliage. With that colour one could almost forgive anything. It was awarded an American H.M. in 1996 and the Nies Award (best Spuria iris of that year) in 1989.

The JJC must have had a hard task judging this trial which should have at least settled down in its third year. However, they were able to select one or two to recommend for possible A.G.M. next year and a goodly number for further assessment, all of which will no doubt be confirmed in detail in due course.

It is a pity the Spuria Trial has not done better since I find the Spurias among the better behaved of irises once they are established. They are also quite drought resistant and do not require being moved as often as some other irises. Perhaps their fourth year will prove to be their best.

Pauline Brown

I'm greatly indebted to Pauline and Ian for reporting on the Trials of relevant irises for us this year, as we wouldn't have the benefit of their experienced insights otherwise. Thank you both and we look forward to the next round.

Ed

WHO WILL DEVELOP REBLOOMING SPURIA IRIS?

Recently, while doing research on a different topic in back issues of *SIGNA*, I came across an article with the title 'Reblooming Garden Strains' in issue No.8, November 1971. Written by Roy Davidson, this article concludes with an intriguing thought. "A strain of remontant spurias could come from *I.autumnalis*, a plant of *I.halophila* complex designated for its fall blossom. If a reflowering tendency of any plant can be strengthened by cultural practices and multiplied by breeding procedures, a new and valuable race may come about to gladden the days of autumn in the Iris Garden'. Remembering that a synonym for *I.halophila*, Pallas, is *I.guldenstadtiana*, the above quote from *SIGNA* prompted me to recall two articles on autumn-blooming irises written by W.R.Dykes. Both of these articles are reprinted in George Dillistone's 'Dykes on irises'. In a 1910 article, Dykes wrote: 'Another regular flowerer (in autumn) is a form of the ubiquitous *I.Guldenstadtiana*. The flowers are small, of the usual dingy yellow or pale purple, and the plant can hardly claim to be even of botanical interest, the euphemistic term beloved by compilers of nurserymen's lists.' The second article which Dykes wrote about this iris appeared in *The Gardeners' Chronicle* in 1918. The following is excerpted from that article, 'An Autumn-flowering Iris (GULDENSTADTIANA):

The sketch reproduced in fig. 63 (not reproduced in *Dykes on Irises*) is of an iris which does not get much attention or praise when it flowers in June, for then it is over shadowed by finer forms of the Spuria section. When, however, it sends up its second show of spikes in mid-September, and when each spike has as many as three or four flowers open at once, it is a much more valuable plant. Its real name is exceedingly hard, or indeed impossible, to discover, for it is one of a numerous company of Asiatic relatives of *I.spuria*, which seems to abound in every brackish marsh from Smyrna to Srinagar. The oldest name appears to be Pallas' *halophila*, 'salt-loving', and others are *guldenstadtiana*, *sogdiana*, and *desertorum*. It is difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish herbarium specimens of the various forms, and further confusion has been caused by the fact that all seed exceedingly freely. The seeds germinate readily and the plants grow vigorously and easily oust any more delicate species near which they happen to

have sprung up. Anyone who attempts to obtain a collection of iris species by raising plants from the seeds offered by Botanic gardens and continental seedsmen will find that a large proportion of the most attractive names have been attached to seeds of some form of this iris. The individual flowers are not large, for the blade of the fall is only about three quarters of an inch in width, the whole flower measuring about three inches across, the colours vary, but usually consist of more or less faint purple veins on a pale mauve or cream ground, with a central yellow mark on the blade of the falls. One curious form which was sent to me as *sogdiana* by Mme. Fedtschenko has flowers of a peculiar shade of mauve-purple, which could only be matched among the *pallidas*, if, indeed, the exact tone ever comes even then. The seeds of this iris are curious, and well adapted to the marshy habitat in which it grows in the wild state. For each is enveloped in a loose, but air-tight, parchment-like covering, which enables it to float in water. On the surface it is either carried along by any current or blown by the wind until it strands on some bank, where it had more chance of germinating and growing into a plant than if it lacked this covering and sank to the bottom of the water, where the young plant would probably be drowned, even if the seed succeeded in germinating at all.'

Is the autumn-blooming iris grown by Dykes really the iris that has been called *I. autumnalis*? In *The Genus Iris*, pp.237-239, Dykes lists several irises under the heading 'Unidentified Specific Names.' One entry reads: '*I. autumnalis*, Tausch in *Flora*, XVIIp.522 (1834).?=*I. spuria* var *halophila*.' In other words, Dykes thought these irises might be the same species or at least forms of the same species. But he did not know for sure. Dykes 'lumped' several irises previously granted specific status under the name *I. spuria* var *halophila*, including *I. halophila*, *I. gueldenstadtiana*, *I. sogdiana* and *I. musulmanica*. He commented, however, that there was much that was known about these irises (*The Genus Iris*, p.61): 'In spite of many attempts it seems impossible in the present state of our knowledge to classify the various forms of *I. spuria* that are found in the Caucasus and in Persia. The European forms seem to fall naturally into certain geographical classes and at the extreme eastern end of the habitat, the Altai and Turkestan plants can be grouped together under the name of *I. halophila*, Pallas, but in the centre confusion reigns supreme. There seems to be no hope of clearing up the difficulties here involved until we can obtain in cultivation a series of plants from known localities in the Caucasus region and in Persia.'

Progress sometimes proceeds at a very slow pace. In 1989, seventy-six years after *The Genus Iris* was published, Brian Mathew wrote in *The Iris*, 116 '*I. spuria* Linn. This species, or rather species aggregate, has caused much confusion among botanists and will no doubt continue to do so until a thorough study of the wild populations over its complete range from Europe to central Asia can be made.' Mathew, acknowledging that no classification can be definitive based on current knowledge, designates a number of irises as subspecies of *I. spuria*. Three of the irises so designated are irises which Dykes 'lumped' together, i.e. *halophila*, *musulmanica* and *sogdiana*. Mathew recognises *gueldenstadtiana* as a synonym for *I. spuria* subsp. *halophila*. What does all this mean? Although the subject is complex, the answer is simple! We do not know for certain what *I. autumnalis* is. We also do not know for certain whether the fall-blooming *I. gueldenstadtiana* grown by Dykes, and included in the 'lumping' under his *I. spuria* var. *halophila*, is really a form of Mathew's *I. spuria* subsp. *halophila*, *I. spuria* subsp. *musulmanica*, or perhaps even *I. spuria* subsp. *sogdiana*. If I were permitted a guess as to what it was I would speculate that it is 'none of the above.' Knowing that hybrid irises are more apt to bloom in the summer and fall than 'pure' species, I would venture to guess that Dyke's autumn-blooming spuria and the iris Tausch called *I. autumnalis* were hybrids. There is another reason for suspecting that it was a hybrid. I refer to what Dykes said about the readiness of the 'ubiquitous *I. gueldenstadtiana*' to set seed in Botanic gardens. It is precisely in Botanic gardens, where species are grown in proximity to other species, that hybrids often originate.

One fact is certain, Dykes had a form of *I. spuria* that dependably rebloomed in his garden and it was quite floriferous when it rebloomed. Does anyone today have a form of *I. spuria* that does this? Although many modern spuria cultivars do not perform particularly well in my garden in Virginia, many of the species grow and bloom profusely. The only Spuria species that has given me autumn bloom, however, is a white form of *I. spuria* subsp. *carthalinia*. This happened only once. I have long believed that the vigorous Spuria species and subspecies provide excellent opportunities for some hybridizer to 'make a name' in the iris world. Most of our modern spuria cultivars are derivatives of *I. orientalis* (syn *I. ochroleuca*), *I. crocea*, *I. monnieri* and *I. xanthospuria* ('Turkey Yellow'). As a result, most modern cultivars are summer dormant and begin their new growth in the late fall. Although it is possible to grow selected cultivars from such breeding in cold, moist winter regions such as the northeast and mid-Atlantic areas of the U.S., most of the modern spurias prefer a more moderate climate. The hybridizing lines that I am suggesting that offer the most potential to achieve vigorous, cold-hardy cultivars are in a different direction altogether. The considerable number of iris species and subspecies that retain their green leaves throughout the summer, of which *I. spuria* subsp. *halophila* is one, have been little used by hybridizers. Dave Niswonger has been working with *I. spuria* subsp. *musulmanica* (syn *I. klattii*) and *I. spuria* subsp. *demetrii*. For the most part, however, these vigorous irises have been neglected. Many possibilities remain to be exploited. Some bright and adventurous hybridizer might even be able to develop a strain of reblooming spurias as Roy Davidson suggested in 1971. Who is going to do it?

Clarence Mahan, Spuria Iris Society's 'Newsletter' Summer 1997.

BLOOM SEASON 1997

Our weather here in Oregon was ideal during the Spuria bloom season, Finally! This afforded us an excellent opportunity to see new iris bloom for the first time, and to revisit old friends.

Since we began growing 'Diminuendo' (Hager 1986) and 'Small Package' (Hager 1986) we have been intrigued by the smaller plants and feel that there is a real need for such compact forms. 'Baby Chick' (Jenkins 1992), a ruffled yellow self, grows about 30". 'Goblin's Song' (Blyth 1993), a golden yellow self, and 'Pixie Time' (Blyth 1993), a wheat, bloomed for the first time. We'll have to wait for another year to see 'Elves Gold' (Blyth 1993) and 'Leprechaun's Kiss' (Blyth 1993). Interestingly, all four of these Australian originations are from the same cross; 'Satinwood' x self. My love of the ruffled whites continues stronger than ever. 'Highline Snowflake' (McCown 1991) gives us a compact ruffled white flower with luscious yellow signals on relatively short (31") clumps. 'I'll Remembered' (Hager 1992) and 'White Olinda' (Niswonger 1995) are two ruffled whites which have shown superiority in growth and bloom. 'Butterscotch Queen' (Jenkins 1992) stood out with its rich coppery butterscotch color. 'Offering' (Corlew 1992) boasts ruffled sulfur yellow flowers with deeper golden signals, a color combination which we found quite alluring. 'Easter Colors' (Hager 1991) had quickly

become one of our favourites, with its orchid standards giving a crisp, clean contrast to the creamy yellow color of its falls. 'Imperial Seas' (McCown 1994) caught our eye with its smooth violet color. The silky, inky color of 'Mahogany Lord' (Blyth 1993) is quite unique. 'Handsome Is' (Hager 1994) has also quickly established itself as one of our favorites, with its large ruffled and round form. Its color is best described as a rich brownish purple. 'Irene Benton' (Jenkins '93) also has a ruffled and round form, but on more compact flowers. Its standards are blue-violet and its falls are yellow edged in lavender.

Finally, our bloom season report would be incomplete without mentioning two of our personal favourites: 'Belise' (Simonet '67) and 'Lenkoran' (Rodionenko '85). Both have the older 'species' flower form, which seems to lack universal appeal. These are two of the most attractive clumps in our garden this time of year, as they stay green and vibrant throughout the growing season, a definite plus in our book.

Tom Abrego, Spuria Iris Society's 'Newsletter' Summer 1997

POTTED LOUISIANAS IN NEW ZEALAND

Because I have a small garden surrounding a flat on three sides I grow Louisianas in big buckets or spray drums. They have to be replanted annually but grow and bloom well. In the growing season they need plenty of water so that the tubs stand in a trench about 25cm (10-12") deep which is flooded at least weekly. They do not mind being comparatively dry in summer after flowering. I used a mixture of cow-manure, grape-waste (skins, seeds and stems from a winery after crushing) and compost. If I am short I re-use some of the mixture from the previous year. I sprinkle with acid fertiliser and re-plant three rhizomes with the growing points around the edge so that there is growing room. This is done in March-April and they are kept moist. I give them a weak liquid cow-manure each spring. I have seen garden grown Louisianas bloom and grow well in Queenstown. The season is about a week ahead of 1995, and in Hawkes Bay it is very dry and hosing has been necessary for several weeks. I have fourteen tubs of Louisianas and look forward to enjoying them with the *laevigata*, *spuria* and *evansia* hybrids which delight me each year. There are siberians too - a feast!

Isabel Simpson, 'Spectrum' No.31 June 1997

An Adaptation of: JAPANESE IRISES - WATER LOVERS????

Water, water, everywhere, but...Just because it is wet and comes from the ground does not mean that it is consumable to man, beast or Japanese irises. Knowing that J.I.'s do their best when supplied with additional water, I installed a timer and soaker hose watering system. The \$20 timer automatically turned on for ten minutes every other day. All went well for 3-4 years. Then it was noticed that blooms and stalks were smaller and that plants were not as healthy. Fertiliser had been applied on a somewhat regular basis and the Japanese were in a sunny location for most of the day. What had changed over the years? Could it be the water? Though I am not a scientist, I do know that if water smells, it is not good for humans. But then, because it doesn't smell doesn't mean that it is good. Water can still contain undesirable minerals or there may be a lack of desirable minerals. Prior to using the new well water, I had a member take a sample to her testing laboratory. The result determined that it was of quality for human consumption. If it didn't smell and it was fit for human consumption, then what was the problem? What about the soil's pH? I used a Cornell University pH tester - measurements were 6.5, 7.0 and 7.2. Do these high pH readings affect Japanese irises? You had better believe they do. J.I.'s like a low pH of 5.5 to 6.5. How did the pH get so high and what do I do to change it? Asking at a feed and seed store, I found that there are different chemicals to lower the soil's pH and that they will work at different speeds - some taking 6 to 12 months. Which one do I use and in what quantities? Nobody seemed to know, so I bought a few different types to try out. What I eventually used was aluminum sulphate. First the J.I.'s were removed and held in water buckets. Then the soil was tilled to loosen it up. Next a 1lb coffee can of aluminum sulphate was added to 40 gallons of water. This solution was heavily applied with a watering can. Soil was then tilled and re-tested. It usually took 2 to 3 applications and tilling to lower the pH to 5.0/5.5. I used about 50lbs of sulphate for a section 400sq' by 8" deep. The quantity will vary with whatever pH you are starting with. Other products might have the same results, but the aluminum sulphate was water soluble and there were immediate results. Also, I turned off the timers and stopped using the well water. I now let Mother Nature do her thing, because it is not nice to fool with Mother Nature (Hear,hear!Ed.). Why did the pH go so high? Because my well water was alkaline.

Rich Randall, 'The Review' Vol 34.No.1. Spring 1997

I've tinkered very slightly with Rich's piece to render it more concise, space saving becoming an obsession when compiling the 'Newsletter', but hopefully even he will never notice if he ever comes across it.

Ed

An adaptation of: 'PEACOCK DANCE'

One of my very first J.I.'s was a lovely three fall variety originally from George Bush. He was one of the first to grow Japanese in this area and had gotten his stock directly from Walter Marx. Lorena Reid had also ordered 'Peacock Dance' from the Marx garden and received a similar specimen. She has used her plant extensively in her hybridizing program because it will produce six fall offspring with good form. At the 1995 SJI Convention I exhibited my specimen and received a blue Ribbon. Bob Bauer very nicely and quietly told me I had one of my exhibits mislabelled. When he pointed out 'Peacock Dance' I knew I had not made a mistake, I had grown it for years and there is nothing else that looks anything like it. However, after seeing a copy of the 1962 Marx catalog in which there is a full color page of a white background iris with dark purple stripes labelled 'Peacock Dance', I had to admit something wasn't quite correct. It was the same thing that Ensata Gardens has pictures in their catalog. So...which is the real 'Peacock Dance'? The early registration descriptions are not conclusive. Walter Marx planted his irises in alphabetical order, so the two varieties which have been mixed may have started with 'P'. Neither Lorena Reid nor I have listed this variety for sale in the last couple of years so as not to

spread the confusion. However, both of us have sold it in the past. The variety which I grow is certainly deserving of a proper name but the problem comes in what to call it. As George Bush said the last time I talked to him about the situation, "It certainly isn't settled". Could we call one 'Peacock'? The picture in the

Marx catalog certainly must be correct. I ordered a start of the 'Peacock Dance' from Ensata Gardens last year so I could compare the two plants. Lorena said she was willing to accept a new name for our plant but she would definitely not eliminate it from her hybridizing program. This article is a starting point to settle the controversy. Hopefully there will be some input from others as to the correct procedure to follow to separate the two 'Peacock Dance' specimens.

Carol Warner, *The Review* Vol.34.No.1. Spring 1997

How about 'Peacock Incognita'?! Just kidding...Ed.

An Adaptation of: 'ROSE ADAGIO' -POPULAR IRIS

Arlie Payne began hybridising in 1932 with just a handful of Edo varieties from Japan. Through meticulous line breeding of selected seedlings he proclaimed that he had produced a superior American strain from purely Edo varieties at much the same time as Walter Marx was claiming the same for his purely Higo hybrids. Whilst being very appreciative of the plants received via generous exchanges between himself and Dr.Hirao, and admitting their high quality, he didn't think that he'd use them in his strict line-breeding programme. In 1958 Mr.Payne crossed his 'Fiery Steed' with his 'Debonair Prince' and got 'Windswept Beauty' with 9-12 falls. In 1963 he crossed that with 'Yuki-Dohro' (sic) (Yukidoro is listed as Hirao 1958 and plate 226 in 'The Japanese Iris' by Hirao and Kuribayashi shows it to be a 9= fall white.). This gave sdlg 1342 which he noted as being a 'Nine petal medium colored flower. White ground stippled and very lightly veined Mathew's purple blending heavier at edges of petals. 30". No branches. Lovely light rose color.' This was registered in 1968 as 'Rose Adagio' and the height description amended to 39".

Mr.Payne sent all 170 of his introductions to Japan via Dr.Hirao. Mr.Marx didn't correspond with other hybridisers or exchange any of his 150 introductions. Neither of them grew any of each others varieties.

John Coble, *The Review* Vol 34. No.1. Spring 1997

An Adaptation of: PURSUING IMPROVEMENTS IN JAPANESE IRISES

Way back in the '70's, I started thinking about making interspecies crosses. In each case, I envisioned an improvement to the existing iris. At an AIS Convention in CA where Bob Brown was a bus captain (and let me sit with him), I spouted long and hard about all the crosses I would make and the improvements the hybrids would make. I wish I had written them down; there may have been a good idea in that discussion. I have long wanted to improve JI's. I know, if they were easier to grow, everyone would grow them and they would be as popular as TB's. I worked for many years in high pH soils trying to get them to grow in soil with calcium. It was very discouraging because the garden looked awful most of the time. When I got a good foliage plant, indicating that it was calcium tolerant, the flowers were junk. Now we have a yard with low pH. I envisioned a cross of *I.pseudacorus* x *I.ensata* producing very large prolific plants (the way *pseudacorus* grows in water) with many branched and budded stalks (16-21 buds of *I.pseudacorus*) and with JI flowers. Wouldn't that be something? Oh yes, yellow flowers would also be nice, but that was not my main goal.

The problem with doing an *I.pseudacorus* x *I.ensata* cross is that in our location *I.pseudacorus* is through blooming before the first JI's start, or maybe a 1 to 2 day overlap. That doesn't leave many opportunities to make crosses. I could save pollen, but apparently it can't grow long enough tubes to reach the ovary of the larger JI flower. I tried it anyway and no pods formed. I saved JI pollen for eleven months, but it wasn't any good and wouldn't set pods even with other JI's. *I.pseudacorus* seems to time its bloom with the length of the day rather than with the temperature. JI's bloom in response to the temperature, so that the very hot springs bring them forward. We had a record hot spring and summer in 1988 and *I.pseudacorus* and JI's bloomed together for almost two weeks.

To make the crosses, I looked for loose buds (that would open the next day) on *I.pseudacorus* in the early evening. I opened them and removed the falls and the anthers to prevent bees from interfering. At this time, the style arms stick straight up and the stigmatic lip is tight to the style. I picked fresh JI pollen and brought it into the house to keep it dry. The next day when the styles were arching and the stigmatic lip was loose, I pollinated and tagged them. I made 97 crosses that year, got 8 seed pods to form and germinated 7 (all from only one pod) over a two year period. The cross that germinated was from a white *pseudacorus* (they seem to bloom later) and a purple 6 fall JI seedling. When we moved in '93, I threw out the rest of the unsprouted seeds. All seven plants had short yellow foliage, but only one ever bloomed. When this first one bloomed, I let out such a holler that the dog thought I was hurt. I called everyone in the Southwestern Michigan Iris Society to come see it. With blooms at 12" (for me) to 18" (at Ensata Gardens), this plant was about as far from my expectations as possible. The flower itself is a little larger than those on *I.pseudacorus* with 3 violet falls and 3 short rounded violet standards. The signals are yellow with a very dark violet thin edge all around them. The style arms are creamy and give a bi-color effect. The flower is of JI form. Even though none of its siblings has ever bloomed, this one blooms every year. It is being introduced this year as 'Pixie Won' by Ensata Gardens. (It looks very lovely in the photo on the *Review's* cover. Ed) 'Pixie Won' and like crosses are sterile. Tetraploid forms of this cross are reported to be fertile, but the leaves are still yellow and the plant and bloom stalks are short.

Jill Copeland *The Review* Vol.34. No.1.Spring 1997

An adaptation of: 3 FALL - 6 FALL GENETICS

Some questions came up in the JI hybridizers robin about 3-fall JI's that make 4-fall and 5-fall blooms; standards that try to make falls 'twixt and tween' form. Another statement was made; "I crossed two 3 fall and got a 6-fall". The 3-fall species form is dominant, 6-falls are recessive. If we designate the dominant gene as (F) and the recessive as (f), then the pure 3-fall will be (FF) genome and the 6-fall recessive (ff). If one crosses a homozygous 3-fall (FF) with a 6-fall (ff), 100% of seedlings will be heterozygous 3-fall (Ff) with one gene from each parent. If one crosses two of those seedlings, (Ff) x (Ff), 75% will be 3-fall, of which 25% will be homozygous 3-fall (FF) and 50% heterozygous 3-fall (Ff), and the remaining 25% will be 6-fall (ff). Both (FF) 3-fall and (Ff) 3-fall usually look the same, so to decide which is which, **test cross** your selected 3-fall plant onto a 6-fall one.

FF x ff = 100% 3-fall seedlings (all Ff). Ff x ff = 50% 3-fall (all Ff), 50% 6-fall (ff).

The (FF) 3-fall are quite stable. The (Ff) 3-fall can produce blooms that go 'twixt and tween', which is a serious fault in JI's. This is the main reason for not crossing 3 fall with 6 fall -one is sure to get the best color pattern on a (Ff) seedling that isn't stable -Murphy's hybridising law! But if one had such a seedling, a few generations of selective hybridizing may segregate the desired trait onto a stable form (FF) or (ff). Most 3-fall cultivars are (Ff) and yet they remain stable. There must be a 'dosage effect' or other gene(s) that influences size of standards and or their conversion to falls with signals. We do recognize that there are 3-fall singles with short standards, some with medium size and some with rather tall ones. The species *ensata* have rather tall, narrow standards, yet they are (FF) genome. There is still much to learn. The only 3-fall cultivar that I know of at this time that is FF, from 12 test crosses, is 'Chitose Hime', and it has the short, cupped standards form! I would appreciate receiving other people's test cross reports and will be glad to share the list with any hybridizer. The above notes are for diploids only. Tetraploid genetics are four times as complicated. For example, a 3-fall tet. could be (FFFF) or (FFFf) or (FfFf) or (ffff)! In a test cross of just the (FFFF) with a 6-fall tet. (ffff), only 1 out of 36 seedlings would be 6-fall. Hundreds of seedlings would have to be raised to determine the genome of a 3-fall tetraploid.

John Coble, *The Review* Vol.34. No.1. Spring 1997

Barking up a slightly different tree, are there people out there with theories as to why some cultivars throw flowers with rearranged or multiplied parts occasionally? If so, do write in. Is this perhaps to do with the season when the flower is formed? *Pseudacorus* 'Phil Edinger' had extra everything this summer, just about. It was it's first year of flower here, so could splitting induce these aberrations, or was it it's experience of our postal service?

Ed

LEXINGTON'S METEOROLOGICAL MISFITS

This has been another odd weather year. After a winter with above average temperatures and very little snowfall, spring was a disaster. The weather turned much colder than average in mid to late March, and stayed that way until the middle of June. March saw over 22" of rain with 13.45" of it coming on the first. April was somewhat drier than usual, but was very cold, the average for the month was 10 degrees F below normal. We had thirteen freezes in April. May was very cloudy and wet, with over 10" of rain for the month and the temperature averaging between 12 degrees F below normal. We saw the sun only four or five times the whole month. As for June, the first half was sunless, and the second half was average. Rainfall for the month was a little over 20".

I guess you know what this did to the iris bloom here. Most of the SDB's were frozen in bud. Only 'Little Showoff' (Hall 1989) did well in that class. That is a hardy little thing and it is also a rebloomer. 'Carolyn Rose' (Dunderman 1970) was the only MTB that really did anything. In the IB class, 'Blue Eyed Blonde' (Ensminger 1989) did well. The TB season saw bloom less than 30% of what it should have been. The beardless irises did fare a little better. Most of the Siberians bloomed, but most had short stalks. They did not really have a peak bloom, instead they dragged on for several weeks. The Louisianas did fine, as did the Spurias, while the *I.pseudacorus* (and types of) bloomed much later than usual, some of these bloomed up through the first week of July. Sadly, the Japanese Iris season was a total disaster. Only three plants bloomed, and most of the blossoms were deformed. *I.ectorum* and *I.ectorum alba* bloomed well. 'Gerald Darby' (1968) was spectacular, especially considering that the plant had only been there one year. Today (14th July) I have no irises blooming, but the Daylilies are spectacular, as are the Echinaceas and Monardas.

This has continued to be a very odd year. Many plants have been blooming out of season, and the weather has stayed messed up. Except for a few weeks in midsummer, it has continued to be somewhat cooler than normal and has been mostly cloudy. It has often been cloudy even during a dry spell. Lexington is one of the cloudier cities in the U.S., but this year has been crazy. It is also windier than Chicago, which is called 'windy city'. On the iris front, I have had two to rebloom: 'Buckwheat' (Byers 1988) and 'Immortality' (Zurbrigg 1982). 'Immortality' is blooming today (Sept.16). 'Queen Dorothy' (Hall 1984) and 'Polar King'(Donahue 1939) have buds. Many of the plants have suffered this year because they have not gotten enough sunlight. The dogwoods and maples are already getting their fall colors. A couple of nights have dropped to 5 degrees C.

I think the weather has gone crazy worldwide. Droughts in Australia, a warm winter in New Zealand, record floods in Kentucky, floods and tornadoes in Arizona (USA), record floods in Germany and the Czech Republic, as well as Poland, and massive storm outbreaks in Finland.

Mark A Cook

Mark has ruined my alliterative title for his most welcome and regular bulletins by moving to Florida where we trust that he will thrive along with his irises. It seems that everything survived the move ok, just about, and I hope that the more salubrious location will inspire him to grow wonderful things in more profusion so that he can then tell us about them while he introduces us to the details of the Florida climate. Watch this space!

Ed

MY EARLY OCTOBER GARDEN

This spring in Wanganui is a vast improvement on the past three years, weather wise. We have had some lovely warm days in spite of the gloom shown on the television weather map. Although we have had a lot of rain, which is a problem for the Tall Bearded, the species seem to have enjoyed it all. Over the last couple of years I have obtained a small collection of species Dwarf Bearded; *lutescens*, *reichenbachii*, *aphylla* and *suaveolens* (var. *I. mellita*) really extend my iris flowering season. They have all done better as this year I stopped feeding them my usual iris mix and instead only a little lime in winter, (as suggested in a 'Bulletin' article) and shelter from the cold South Westerlies. Of my small collection of species Tall Bearded, *pallida dalmatica* is well into bloom. *Mesopotamica* (syn. *I. ricardii*) which I grow with the hope of getting seed, is looking very healthy, but has only flowered twice in four years and the only seed obtained has been by hand pollination. Although there is no sign yet of a bloom, I am always hopeful. Last flowering season siberians and Japanese hybrids thrived, but due to overcrowding and a wiry rooted weed growing through them, I have had to break up the Sibiricas and some of the smaller pieces have not recovered well. Some of the better pieces of sibirica have early buds, but what have done really well are the spare pieces I put into planter bags of sawdust fertilised with liquid manure (a special brew from Charles' vegetable garden made from weeds rotted in water) ready to transfer to my daughter-in-law's pond garden at Tutaenui. Some years ago I obtained from the Seed Pool *I. lactea moorcroftiana biglumis*, I had seen these delightful little iris when attending conventions, and was thrilled when every little seed seemed to grow. Then I waited, and waited, and waited. My readings told me three to four years, but still nothing. So more compost and more of Charles' liquid manure. Odd flowers started to appear over the next two years, and this season, success at last, lots of delicate little mauve blooms. The evansias have been a real delight, heralding in the season for the rest of the irises. Once again I seem to be losing *I. wattii*. It grows well in other parts of this area, but I do not seem to have the right situation. I have lost it several times but always managed to replenish stocks. *I. christata*, which doesn't normally do well in my garden, has managed to live through the winter and has actually flowered. I also had a lovely clump of *I. gracilipes*, doing well over a number of years, but did not come up last year. The replacement I managed to find in New Plymouth has survived and is in bloom. Louisiana 'Clyde Redmond' flowered on the 6th October, the earliest in my records and a real delight. One or two more of the family have buds showing colour. *I. douglasiana*, Pacific Coast hybrids, white and blue tectorum, *pseudacorus variegata*, 'Holden Clough' (Patton 1971), a small blue setosa, some Dwarf, Intermediate and Tall Bearded irises are all in flower now, making a walk around my garden a real pleasure for me.

Shirley Spicer. 'Spectrum' No.31, June 1997

IRISES AS HERBS; THE HAMLYN GUIDE TO EDIBLE & MEDICINAL PLANTS OF BRITAIN AND NORTHERN EUROPE

Iris germanica L. Iridaceae

Garden Iris (Sept.-Oct) A robust perennial with a thick (up to 6cm in diameter) branching rhizome. The leaves are sword-shaped, 2-5.5cm broad, never exceeding the inflorescence, sheathing at the base. The flowers are hermaphrodite, regular, 8-11cm in diameter, fragrant, at the base enveloped by a spathe which is scarious above. The perianth segments are in two series; the outer ones are ovate-oblong, deflexed, purple, with yellowish-white and purple-brown basal venation, bearded yellow, the inner of same size, bent inwards, pale purple. The styles have paddle shaped, petal-like branches. The fruit is an ovoid capsule. **Habitat** usually in waste places when found outside cultivation. **Distribution** native in the Mediterranean area but naturalized in many parts of the British Isles. Widely and extensively cultivated for ornament and for perfumery purposes. **Active ingredients** starch, mucilage, traces of essential oil, fatty oil, sugar, the glycoside iridin. **Effect** mildly expectorant, mildly diuretic, mildly purgative. **Parts used** the dried rhizome; dig up in second or third year, best after rain, peel and dry in sun. Only completely dried material yields scent. **Application (Medicinal):** an infusion (1-2 teaspoons percup water, allow to stand for 8-12 minutes) is taken 2-3 times a day as diuretic and purgative but there are more effective remedies available. In the past the dried rhizome was given to teething babies for chewing but this practise is now discontinued for hygienic reasons.

Iris pseudacorus L. the Yellow Flag, is also occasionally used for medicinal purposes but the rhizome is poisonous and the plant should therefore not be used in the home. It differs from *I. germanica* by having longer outer perianth-segments and a tube which is as long or usually shorter than the ovary.

Essential oils

These substances, which are known as volatile oils, are produced in special glandular cells or cell-groups, secretory ducts, surface glands or glandular hairs which are situated in various organs (leaf, flower or part of it, fruit, bud, stem or bark, root, seed, etc.). One usually finds that they only occur in one (e.g. rose petals, iris rhizome) or in a few morphologically related organs (e.g. flower and fruit). If they are contained throughout the plant they are often of different quality and of different chemical composition for each organ. This is known to the producer of perfume, for example; the bitter orange yields three different essential oils: the flower contains the expensive orange flower absolute (as well as the less costly neroli oil), the peel of the fruit yields the ordinary oil of orange, and the leaves and twigs what is known as 'petit grain'. This fact is of great importance for medicinal plants, and one should therefore only use the part of the plant which is indicated in each individual description. The essential oil is usually contained within the plant cell in the form of globules. Out of a number of about 250,000 known flowering plants only around 2,000 contain essential oil; these species belong to between 55 and 60 not necessarily related families. The most notable and important in respect to medicinal plants are the Labiatae, Rutaceae, Lauraceae, Myrtaceae, Umbelliferae, Compositae, some Coniferae and a few others. The reasons for the formation of essential oils in plants are not yet explained by science. They are possibly waste-products or essential stages in certain life processes. Essential oils have the following physical properties in common: they are volatile, soluble in alcohol and other organic solvents, are colourless when fresh and, unlike fixed or fatty oils, do not leave a permanent mark on paper. Chemically they form a rather heterogenous group (so far the number of analyzed compounds exceeds 600). They generally constitute hydrocarbon mixtures or oxygenated derivatives of hydrocarbons. The most important groups are: terpenes or sesquiterpenes, alcohols and esters, aldehydes, ketones, phenols, ethers and peroxides. Essential oils are in their effect bacteriostatic, anti-inflammatory, anti-

spasmodic, sedative, carminative, appetizing, rubefacient and, sometimes, expectorant. Often associated with essential oils are the so-called gums and resins. They are of complicated chemical nature. They are solid in the cold state but soften and finally melt when heated. Like essential oils they are produced by special plant cells and secreted into cavities or contained in glandular ducts. In medicine they are mostly used as irritants.

Flavones and Flavonoids

The pharmacological action of these substances is not yet fully understood. Flavones and their derivatives the flavonoids are substances which occur either free within the organism or in glycoside compounds. Chemically they belong to the phenols. Some of the more important compounds are the coumarins and the anthocyanins; the latter substance is responsible for the blue and red colour of many flowers. The flavones proper and most of their derivatives are mostly yellow (Latin *flavus* = yellow). Both the flavones and the anthocyanins are soluble in the cell sap; otherwise they are not easily soluble and are therefore difficult to isolate, and this is one of the reasons why they have not been sufficiently tested for their medicinal properties in animal experiments. Flavones occur in abundance in some plant families such as the Compositae, Papilionacea, Rutaceae and others. The two best researched flavones are hesperidin and rutin. The latter is found in *Fagopyrum* and the former in citrus fruits, their main effect is to decrease the blood flow in the capillaries and they are therefore used for hypertension and certain coronary conditions. Some flavonoids have a diuretic effect. A plant which has been used widely in the past for ailments of the liver (*silybum marianum*) on the Continent contains the flavonoids silybin and silymarin. The yellow colour of Liquorice is caused by several flavonoids; this ancient remedy has recently come into prominence again in the treatment of various conditions such as peptic ulcers, arthritis and various inflammatory disorders.

The above information has come to us courtesy of Jackie Newman, the Permissions Officer at Reed Consumer Books. The book was published by The Hamlyn Publishing Group Ltd., and all rights are reserved.

Glossary: rubefacient; scariou; thin dry and membranous.

A TRITERPENE FROM *IRIS MISSOURIENSIS*

Iris missouriensis Nutt. is indigenous to North America and widely distributed along the west coast. The whole plant has been widely used by American Indians for medicinal purposes. Other iris species having been found to contain potential anti-tumour compounds (e.g. irisquinone), missourinsis having already been investigated and its roots having been found to contain quinones, a novel triterpene and two cytotoxic triterpenes. A more recent study (in the early '80's) at the University of Illinois has discovered other potentially useful compounds, including a novel triterpene and betulinic acid. Cytotoxic activity was assessed according to the protocols of the National Cancer Institute.

I am indebted to Professor Dr. El Emary for the article from which I have extracted what I could understand sufficiently to hazard passing on to you. Ed

THE LURGI FILE: STARS AND STRIPES

Well, no, not really. One of the things we know about virus infections is that the leaves of the plants tend to be 'spotted' in a rather distinctive way. The trouble is that young snails in particular can achieve the same results. Long term, though, the snail marks tend to go brown round the edges as the plant forms a sort of scab to seal off the area that has been damaged. Something rather similar happens where a snail has settled down on a leaf for a nice nap if it is caught aloft in a sudden hot, dry spell. Both these sets of marks can develop into something very like blackspot. All the same, it is odd that in spite of quite intensive work by molluscs some irises never seem to develop virus even when they become displeasingly unsightly.

This year we seem to have an outbreak of striped leaves which look almost as if the plant had decided to mutate into a variegated form. My impression is that this is a stress effect resulting from a shortage of water in the autumn at a time when the plant has decided to put in a little advance work on the next year's growth. I think it is confined to the beardless irises and that may be because the bearded are designed by nature to live in very dry zones in the mid-year. Given a severe drought, they just don't try to grow until things cool down and dampen.

I have frequently had the leaves of potted Evansias develop these streaks and it is usually in the bigger plants which can rapidly exhaust the available water in a pot just after replanting - especially if I have to go away and leave them to their own devices without any rain. And this year I have found the same thing in a number of wet-land irises which were replanted last year. There was quite a lot of rain in the autumn shortly after I did the work and I thought that all would be well. Since the plants have grown quite nicely though not as well as I had hoped, I think they spread their early roots quite well, but the winter/spring drought meant that the spring roots did not take off adequately. Not all plants of a species are affected: two varieties of species pseudacorus are side by side and were replanted at the same time, but only one has the markings and that is the one which flowered. And since the stripes were evident before the frost they cannot be a result of that. They won't be around next year, either. And remember that the Evansias in question are evergreen and do their serious growing in the autumn.

It is a rather confusing situation which could do with sorting out and if any one has an alternative suggestion about the causes, I would be very interested to hear it.

Anne Blanco White

Bacteriophages in Russia

Apparently, for every bacterium there is a predator, a phage, and the U.S.S.R. cured vast numbers of deadly bacteria with these which were studied and produced in their centralised Institute. I wonder if there's one for *ewebankia carotiana*, good old bacterial soft rot in irises? Yes, I know it's mostly bearded that are affected, but honestly, by the smell I've had it in my bucketed moisture-lovers. Insufficient waterings I think.

Ed.

COMPOST HEAPS

Gwenda Harris writes that 'My favourite compost is a mix of macrocarpa, leaves and grass clippings. Macrocarpa is often used for shelter belts and hedges in New Zealand so there is usually a good supply. I use the smaller branches and of course the woody bits don't break down quickly, but they provide aeration and are easily fished out to provide the basis for the next brew. Macrocarpa duff is a wonderful ingredient and light to carry and clear. I usually add a bit of blood and bone or lime between layers, and use fruit and vegetable peelings in the heap next the cottage -but notice that it makes a heavier mix. Animal manure and sea-weed also go in when available, -but not weeds. Too many nasty ones here and I'm too impatient, I need lots of mulch -yesterday.'

The following very useful comments have been passed on to me via a circumlocutory route from Paul Richardson regarding the 'Hotter Rotter' which he used, and quote him as saying that " I have installed a rotary composter that has a good recommendation but is really designed for very quick composting with mainly grass clippings...not as efficient as I hoped but to be fair its first load consisted of half-rotted material that didn't suit it...(Then I got a) 'Hotter Rotter'. It is an Australian idea I think based on a small corset-like box of polystyrene lined with plastic and with a loose lid of the same material. It heats up at a great rate with all the insulation and can be unlaced and removed from the heap when full...it's the quickest and after a few months can be removed from the small compact heap of rough compost for time to finish off. On current experience these small heaps tend to remain (or become) a little too wet which makes early use an unsatisfactory business. The rotary model too tends to become too wet (the main ingredient is grass clippings) but can be dried out somewhat by adding sawdust which slows the whole process down."

Many thanks to Mr. Richardson in the first place, and also to my informant, for sharing it with us. Those of you out there with experience of composting machinery, *please* write in.

I have been sent an old report stating that garden compost could suppress some plant diseases, and sometimes eliminate them, according to the biological sciences dept. of one of our universities. Obviously the team has been working on economically significant diseases, but these do include those of the roots of commercially grown flowers. Cultures of the disease organisms were mixed into soil in the laboratory and the effects of different types of compost on the resultant crops were studied. This project was in collaboration with a company specialising in green waste and was prompted by farmers reporting the beneficial effects of compost. 80% and 90% reductions of disease were observed in wheat and strawberry crops whilst cabbage club root was eliminated. The company planned field trials on brown rot on potatoes and tomatoes in Egypt, where the disease is not notifiable, after laboratory trials were promising. If successful, they will then work with local developers to produce an appropriate compost. The university scientist maintains that the organisms in compost act in several different ways to help suppress the growth of target bacteria and fungi, some are predacious, others competitive or producers of antibiotics. A senior pathologist at the Government's Central Sciences Laboratory is apparently impressed and hopeful.

What amazes me most about this is that farmers actually use garden compost at all. Here in the post industrial soils of the Midlands, they use slurry, very sparingly, or cow muck and straw lumps ditto, or the ex sewage treatment works' sludge. The latter would surely kill anything! It's reassuring to know that farmers elsewhere are using more complex brews, although the article carefully avoided any speculation as to these. Anyone out there, scientist or otherwise, who's experimented with composts, do write in. All I know is that elephant muck is wonderful, but that's not from experience!

I have Anne to thank for this piece, any more such offerings from any quarter are more than welcome.

Ed

SEED DISTRIBUTION - Gary Lewis.

SIBIRICAF:

lactea -(ex B.I.S.)

No:194 chrysographes var rubella (ex B.I.S.)

'Arabian Princess'- dark blue diploid. JH

'Dreaming Yellow' x typhifolia. JH

'My Love'- Mid-blue diploid. Remontant.

'Red Flare'- rosy purple blend. SP

'Soft Blue'- pale blue diploid. Remontant. JH

(x robusta) 'Nutfield Blue'. JH

Sibiricas from Currier McEwen;

89/108E -(Silver Illusion x a pink) Lavender, diploid.

M90/151 -(nana alba x seedling) Diploid for breeding minatures.

'Floating Island' -diploid parent of 'Butter and Sugar', yellow falls.

'Kenabee' -lovely blue diploid.

'Lavender Bounty' -his best lavender pink diploid.

'Lavender Light' -diploid, his earliest flowerer.

'Orville Fay' -his first tet., medium blue.

'Pink Haze' -diploid McGarvey pink.

Old Sibirica Seed from the B.I.S.;

'Annick'

'Berlin Bluebird'

'Caesar' -SP

'Flight of Butterflies' -SP

'King of Kings'

'Laurenbuhl'

'Perry's Blue'

'Pleasures of May'

'Purple Sand'

'Silver Edge'

'Snow Bounty'

'Snow Prince'

'White Swirl'

'Welfen Hersog' x yell. dip.

Mixed diploids

'Canonbury Belle'	'Mabel Coday'	'Red Flare' -SP	'Summer Sky'	Mixed tetraploids
'Carrie Lee'	'Maggie Smith'	'Reddy Maid'	'Summer Wine'	
'Chartreuse Bounty'	'Marilyn Holmes'	'Rejoice Always'	'Swank'	
'Contrast in Styles'	'Niklassce'	'Rikugi Sakura'	'Temper Tantrum'	
'Elinor Hewitt'	'Orville Fay'	'Sea Shadows'	'Welfenprinz'	
'Fanny Heidt'	'Outset'	'Showdown'	'White Lance'	

1996/1997 Setosa Seed from the B.I.S.

94 -purple	98 -tall blue-violet	104 -Alaskan 16"	114 -nana	117 -nana 18"
95 -blue-purple	100 -Purple Turkey strain	105 -Alaskan 16-18"	115 -nana 8"	
97 -ssp.canadensis	103 -Alaskan form	106 -Arctic 18-24"	116 -nana 10"	

1997/1998 Seed from the B.I.S.

crocea (syn aurea)	lactea	spuria 'Shelford Giant'
danica	setosas in variety	spuria hybrids

Ancient Odds & Ends from the B.I.S.

English iris	ochroleuca	spuria 'Destination'	pseud., 'Golden Showers'
versicolor 'Whodunnit'	sanguinea	spuria 'Elixir'	pseud., 'Golden Queen'
halophila Pall.	sanguinea var Kamayama	spuria 'Little Splash'	pseudacorus variegata
hexagona coll. Nth. Florida	spuria var danica	spuria 'Medaillon'	pseudacorus listed in the 1996/1997 list under
graminaea	spuria 'Betty Cooper'	pseud., cream bud, white fl.	the numbers 252, 253, 254

Spuria Seed from Charles Jenkins

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. 90 M#2C o.p. likely x? of <i>I.halophila</i> | 3. 'Clara Ellen' crosses (Jenkins 1993) |
| 2. 91 M 121 D o.p. - <i>I.orientalis</i> | 4. 'Dandilite' crosses (Jenkins 1994) |

LAEVIGATAE:

laevigata 'Elegant' - white drooping bloom, blue speckles. Mrs. Norma Harris.	Mixed ensatas JH
ensata 'Japanese Marble' x 'Dappled Dragon' -3 fall marbled diploid.	252: pseud.coll. Co.Cavan, Ireland.'96/'97 B.I.S.
ensata New Zealand Form. JH	253: pseud ex.N.B.G. Dublin. "
ensata 'Southern Son' x 'Hekium' -diploid, 3 falls, excellent blues.	254: pseud coll. Isle of Man, no markings. "
ensata 'White Parachute' x 'Chitose Hime' 3 fall violet diploid.	

Seed from Tony Huber. Remember, Versata = versicolor x ensata; Biversata = versicolor x ensata x versicolor. Enjoy!

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. <i>I.versicolor</i> -Ex.HA-48-x o.p. Dwarf purple-violet. | 13. Biversata 95-45-x o.p. Violet-purple. Late. |
| 2. " -BR-02-02-x o.p. Pink-purple. | 14. Biversata 94-78 x o.p. Pink, vig. Mid-season. |
| 3. V.'Anticosti' 05 x Biversata=95-53.Dk violet-blue & white.M. | 15. Versata x versicolor HA-48 = Dark purple. |
| 4. 91-507-V. 'Riopelle' x 'Wild Heart'. Pink | 16. Biversata x self. Purple-violet, brown sig. some dbls. |
| 5. 96-04-V. 'Anticosti' 05 x 'Anticosti' 12. Early, vig., purple & white. | 17. V. 'Wild Heart' x self, tender pure pink. |
| 6. Ex <i>I.versicolor</i> early white collected in Laurentian. | 18. Biversata x versic.white x self. Pure white, later, larger fls. |
| 7. <i>I.versicolor</i> red x red. Early wine red. | 19. Ex. <i>I.virginica</i> var <i>shrevei</i> (Nr.St.Lawrence river). |
| 8. <i>I.versicolor</i> 95-56 x o.p. Red. mid season. | 20. <i>I.virginica</i> var. <i>virginica</i> 89-1036 x self. |
| 9. V. 'Anticosti' x self. Very vig., large fls. Early-mid season. | 21. Biversata x o.p. Dark purple-violet. Vigorous. |
| 10. V.'Riopelle' x 'Anticosti'. Pinkish purple. Early. | 22. <i>I.hookeri</i> (<i>setosa canadense</i>) Ex.Point Riche Nfl. |
| 11. <i>I.versicolor</i> Ex.W.B.P.Nfl. Late, blue-violet. | 23. <i>I.setosa</i> hybrids; hookeri x setosa blue & white. |
| 12. <i>I.versicolor</i> Ex.HA-028 x o.p. Blue-white. | 24. <i>I.setosa</i> hybrids; hookeri x setosa West Coast. Pink, white, purple, blue, wine, violet and red. |

Margaret has been *extremely* kind in offering us seed as it's such a poor year for production and our list was minimal. Due to her consideration we have quite a selection on offer, so please order some, or even lots! As Gary told us all recently, it keeps viable for years, so why not give it a try. Please write to him (see front page for address) for any ex. B.I.S. seed that you'd like to order, **with a cheque made payable to the Group**, or stamps. Gary may well still have stocks of seed from previous lists, so do contact him if there's anything else that you fancy trying. The cost, a mere 25pence per packet! Contributions towards postage will be appreciated.

Ed

TRIBUTE TO CURRIER McEWEN: The Chairman has decided to defer this until next year, when he plans to seek wider publicity for his appreciation of and tribute to Currier.