



# IRIS AUSTIN

A Monthly Newsletter of the Iris Society of Austin



Nelda Moore, Ken Fuchs, Editors

April/May 2020 — Vol. 29 #4-5

ISA Website: [http://www.kenfuchs42.net/isa\\_index.html](http://www.kenfuchs42.net/isa_index.html)

## Next Scheduled Meeting:

**Tuesday, May 12, 2020**

**IF ZILKER IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

6:30 P.M.

Zilker Botanical Garden Auditorium  
2220 Barton Springs Road  
Austin, TX 78746



## IN TRACEY'S GARDEN



'Class Ring' Keppel 2010 (3-30-2020)



'Ginny Mitchell' Kerr 2013 (3-14-2020)

## “ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS” CANCELED DUE TO COVID 19

Bearded irises in Central Texas began blooming in February and March, but by April 9 those that were almost open were being eaten by worms, bugs, and grasshoppers. The iris world was still; the harvest moon was big and bright since it was closer to earth. Storms rampaged and danced across Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Georgia, and Alabama, where tornadoes leveled homes, buildings, and trees killing about 30 people.

Some bearded irises were still blooming, but on the show date of April 11, the Louisiana irises were at their finest. If the weather enables good bloom early next year among the bearded irises—from tall to border bearded—the irises that will make the April show will be the native wildflowers from Louisiana and the hybrids developed from them. Usually the Iris Society of Austin will display several Louisiana rhizomes in September during the sale. Each rhizome is wrapped in a damp newspaper or paper towel and then inserted in a plastic bag bound by a rubber band. These irises must be kept moist or they will not bloom properly. Once you purchase these beautiful tall beardless irises you must decide whether you want them in buckets, at the edge of your pond, or in a bog. If you plant them in a separate bed, then you want to prepare the ground by using a tiller to dig down at least 9-15 inches. To make the soil pliable add some shredded oak

leaves, pine needles, manures, and compost. Then make an indentation about 4 inches deep, plant the rhizome and mulch around the fleshy root to protect it from heat and cold as well as a way to conserve moisture to these water irises. During the heat of summer you may raise the mulch to check the cultivar for dampness. These irises are heavy feeders. Feed them in February after the first rain by using acid fertilizer or 10-20-20 or 8-24-24.

Spurias bloomed as well as the other irises this season. Their rhizomes are wirey and wrapped in wet paper like Louisiana rhizomes. These are very tall, but they can be planted in a separate garden in ordinary soil amended with rose fertilizer. They are heavy feeders so feed them in September when you plant them about two inches deep. Then give them a light feeding in February. After these plants bloom, the foliage will become brown so they look like this in dormancy. (Do not allow anyone to pull them out of the ground and throw them away!) In July you can cut the stalks down so that you can see them become green when the weather is cool. Water them then, but in summer these plants need rain water when it comes. Otherwise, wait for the early autumn before watering and feeding.

Enjoy irises all year long!

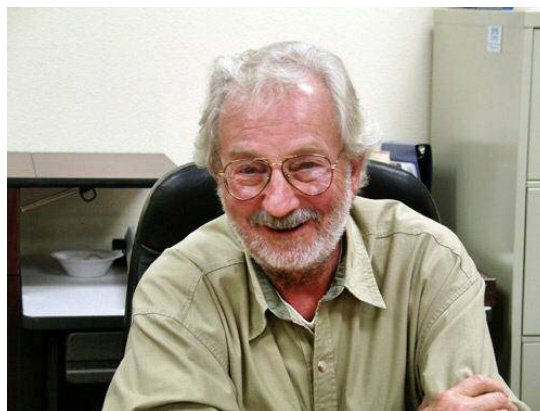
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## LEAP DAY IN THE GARDEN



On Saturday, February 29, ISA members Dara Smith, Martha & Victor Mueck, Tracey Rogers, Kathy Petheram, and Nelda Moore spent several hours working in the Zilker iris garden. Tracey reports, "We cleaned the original bed of clover. There were a lot of increases coming up. Victor and Martha are weeding whizzes. They made quick work of the clover. 'Braggin' Rights' was at the end of its bloom but some new buds were getting ready to open."

## REMEMBERING DAVID LEWIS STEED



Former Iris Society of Austin member David Lewis Steed, PhD, of Austin, passed away peacefully at his home Sunday February 16, 2020. He was 78. Dr. Steed was born on July 10th 1941 in Jackson, Tennessee. In the early 1960s, he joined the United States Navy and served his country as a Hospital Corpsman assigned to the *USS Piedmont* (AD17). He had always been interested in the Earth's flora and fauna, and after he completed his service, he attended the University of Texas where he earned a master's degree and PhD in Zoology.

A longtime resident of the Vista Grande subdivision in Hudson Bend, Dr. Steed was a professional environmental scientist and founder and principal of DLS Associates, a regional environmental consulting firm. He was a recognized authority on environmental issues confronting the utility, transportation, and land development industries in central Texas. As the local expert, Dr. Steed was repeatedly asked to do presentations on environmental issues for the Hudson Bend Garden Club, a venerable organization active since the 1950s for women only. He was extremely proud when the ladies finally relented and selected him as the first male to officially join their ranks.

Dr. Steed was passionate about the environment, and especially water quality and conservation. In 1987, he joined the Board of Directors of Travis County Water Control and Improvement District 17 where he would serve with distinction for 32 years. He served as the District's president from 1996 to 2014, providing steady leadership during a period of time when the District experienced unprecedented growth and development. He was known for his dedication to public service, and for his uncompromising determination to preserve and

protect the quality of water throughout the Lake Travis Area. His efforts ensured a safe water supply for generations to come.



In 2006 Dr. Steed joined the Iris Society of Austin and was very active in planning the events for the 2008 A.I.S. National Convention hosted by the ISA. He served on the Placement committee for the 2007, 2009, and 2010 ISA iris shows and continued his membership through 2011.

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### CARE OF IRISES

Despite the drought, freeze, and wind, the stillness after the storm brought plenty of iris blossoms for us to enjoy during “lock down” at home during this pandemic—a word that no one wants to associate with irises. With the calmness came the insects that enjoyed the iris blooms. Some congregated on the stalk.

During this time many of you escaped to the iris garden where you enjoyed the beauty of the landscape. It was time to cut the spent bloomstalks so that the plants would not produce seed pods that would sap some energy from the rhizome. That is, unless you want the seeds because the cross was made by you and you have some of the pod in a pair of hose to capture those seeds for planting in the seedling garden. The result after a couple of years could be your own iris to register.

Did you notice that the bud at the top had two flowers? One bud opened and then the other pushed the dead flower over to dry. This was the year for increase and movement of rhizomes. One iris cultivar could have 18 flowers that put on a mighty show. Some irises bloomed that did not bloom last year. ‘Thornbird’ bloomed last year, but not this time.

While irises grew, weeds also enjoyed the rain and sometimes overpowered the flowers. Chickweed, the thick mats of shiny leaves with white flowers with five petals, in Zilker had turned yellow with so many seeds for the fall. It is easy to pull, but it grows so fast and more tiny plants produce flowers. Then there was henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*) which resembles verbena with pale purple flowers on upright square stems with rounded serrated leaves. Spurge, that was a problem in the new garden, was sparse this year. It was eradicated with some type of herbicide. It was pulled out of the pots of spurias during the Work Day. It grows in dense mats and usually has reddish green to dark green leaves with purple splotches on top. It crawls on the ground where it resembles a doily.

All of these weeds that have produced flowers and seeds were taken to the trash. Never take them to the compost pile.

With Zilker Botanical Garden closed the gardeners that worked might have continued to weed in that area. The begonia beds were supposed to be planted, and the entire area was to become a place for the children’s railroad and train. All club meetings, events, and plant sales have been cancelled due to the COVID-19 coronavirus that is worse than weeds in a garden. I need to work in my flower garden, where I have seen snakes including the coral that was covered with the weeds and the dirt that I pulled off him. Happy Safe Gardening to each of you!

Nelda Moore



‘Edna Claunch’ - Wolford 2004 LA (Jim Landers 3-26-2020)

## Minutes of the Iris Society of Austin March 10, 2020 Meeting

The meeting was called to order and presided over by Jaime Hadley.

The Minutes from February 11th, 2020 meeting were approved as published in the March 2020 Newsletter. The Treasurer's Report was also approved with review of the current balance of \$15,080.02. Recent transactions include membership dues and AIS membership renewals.

### AAGC:

There are many cancellations of large events that potentially affect ZBG. This is in compliance with the City of Austin's response to control the spread of the Corona Virus (COVID-19). SXSW and Kite Fest have already been canceled.

### ISA Business:

- We are uncertain at the time of this meeting whether we will be able to hold the show or the next meeting. Stay "tuned" for updates as dates and plans may change.
- Shirley has presented a book (gift) from Alice Ann for the Ikebana Study Group.
- Donna Little gave an update on the Norman & Betty Spellman Memorial Grove and says the irises look well established and are doing well.
- Update on hosting the Region 17 meeting in 2021 - There was no update on this action.
- Preparations for the Spring Show are all in order. Money was collected for a catered lunch. A signup sheet was passed around to bring breakfast items and lunch side dishes. The show theme is: "Anniversary Celebration". Tonight's program demonstrates how to prepare the entry tags / flower prep reminders / and follow the show schedule for all entries. An email will be sent a week prior to the show with all the entry times

that we can get access to the building for setup and show prep. (Items for the Day of the Show: Membership Forms, Future Sale Flyers, "Celebration of Iris" table with the extras!!)

Nominating Committee - Tracey Rogers has presented the following Nominees for the Slate of Officers to be voted on at the March 2020 meeting:

President - Ellen Singleton  
VP Programming - Nelda Moore  
VP Membership - Jaime Hadley  
Treasurer - Tracey Rogers  
Secretary - Dara E. Smith  
Historian - (open for nominations)

A motion to accept the slate of officers as presented by the Nominating Committee was made by David Kraemer and 2nd by Ken Fuchs. The motion passed.

### Important Dates:

- ISA Show Saturday April 11, 2020. (Updated status: canceled)
- Temple/Belton Iris Show Saturday April 18, 2020. (Updated status: canceled)
- American Iris Society Convention 2020 New York - "The Centennial Celebration of The American Iris Society" (Updated status: canceled)
- Region 17 Meeting - August 2020 Hosted by Iris Society of Dallas (TBD)

### Program:

To get everyone inspired for the Artistic Division entries Ken Fuchs presented an archive of some of his photos from Past Shows. This program was a testament to all of the past creative displays!

The meeting was adjourned.

Dara E. Smith, Secretary

Submitted for Approval on: (The next scheduled meeting in 2020)



'Bombay Eyes' Nichols 2007 R (Tracey - 2-29-2020)

# A TRIBUTE TO TOM BURSEEN

By Donna Little (April 15, 2020)

All these tall bearded irises are his creations, blooming in my Georgetown TX garden 2020. Thank you, Tom.



'Behavin Bad' 2010



'Hush Diana' 1996



'Church Lady' 2017



'Cow Palace' 2013



'Say Okay' 1991



'Cry Me A River' 2006



'Happy Eyes' 2013



'Prissy Christy' 2014



'Ice For Brice' 2003



'Tobacco Chew' 2008



'Nah' 2011



'Ty Blue' 2006

### Tom Burseen Irises in Tracey's Garden



'Western Ways' 2012 (3-19-2020)



'Hico Huggins' 2014 (3-30-2020)