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A Monthly Newsletter of the Iris Society of Austin

IRIS AUSTIN



next ISA meeting >>>

Iris Society of Austin Meeting
Tuesday November 8, 2011
7:00 pm (gates open 6:30)

Zilker Garden Center
2220 Barton Springs Rd
Austin TX 78746

Special Thanksgiving Potluck Supper
(Club will provide ham and chicken.
Members bring an appropriate side dish.
A little birdie tells us that sweet potatoes
have already been spoken for!)

Business Meeting

Sheila Senghas has arranged for a special guest to entertain us after the business meeting. Don't miss this magical evening and our surprise performer.

next AAGC meeting >>>

Austin Area Garden Council Meeting
Tuesday November 8, 2011
10:00 am

Zilker Garden Center

Debora Boyle – ISA representative

upcoming events >>>

Dec 2011 – No ISA Meeting

Jan 10, 2011 – January ISA meeting

Apr 8, 2012 – Annual Iris Show

Local Judges Training

Learn from Bonnie & Hooker Nichols

Marney Abel, Program Chair, announces a Judges Training on bearded irises including space agers and broken color: **Sat., January 14**, Ross Hall at the Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church, 7127 Bee Caves Rd, Austin, TX, 78746. The 3-hour class will be held from **9am until Noon**, and she encourages every member to come to meet Bonnie and Hooker Nichols, award-winning hybridizers from Dallas.

According to the Reorganized and Clarified Region 17 Training and Accreditation Guidelines for Judges

based on American Iris Society requirements, a candidate must have 10 hours of classroom instruction and 8 hours of tutoring instruction. Ramona Howard, Region 17 Treasurer and Master Judge, who reviewed the guidelines, explained that the tutoring judges are where the candidates get their five required letters of recommendation.

Any person interested in irises will benefit from this special training. A test will be scored only for those working to acquire their judging credentials.

Weed Free

Volunteers clean iris beds at Zilker

The Iris Society of Austin sends a big “Thank You!” to volunteers who worked in the iris beds at Zilker Garden. Debora Boyle and Donna Little joined Nelda Moore a few days after the October meeting to trim up the irises in the front iris bed at Zilker and remove all (well, almost all) the weeds. They also trimmed

and cleaned the Louisiana Irises planted in containers at the back of the Rose Garden at Zilker, and they made sure they were staying wet.

Don Freeman has also been spotted working around the irises in Zilker Gardens in recent weeks.

Thank you all for your efforts!

Leakey ISD Gets Iris Education

With an abundance of rhizomes left after my fall digging and dividing, and with a few spares left over from the sale, I decided to contact the local high school's Horticulture Science Dept. to see what we might work out. The teacher was very excited about this opportunity to have his students learn about irises, and do some community service planting at the same time.

Mr. McMahon's class of twenty 11th and 12th grade students at Leakey High School were well behaved, respectful, and showed unusual interest in the iris and the potting process. We were set up outside of the agriculture building under a big oak tree. When I drove up, the kids mobbed me with offers to carry everything. I donated twenty 1-gallon pots and twenty 3-gallon pots to the class, and along with all the irises there was a lot to carry to

the planting area so I was happy for the help. I wore my region name tag and told the kids to call me Shelia so I became, 'Miss Shelia' which was OK with me. After talking to students about the iris culture, I had each student pick a 1-gallon pot and write on it their name and the name of their iris. They would be responsible for that particular iris until it could be planted in the ground. Mr. McMahon had the students empty huge bags of soil and compost into a wheelbarrow and mix it, then they all filled their buckets. I demonstrated how to plant the iris, and then went around the tables and checked their progress.

One girl with black finger nails did not want to put her hands in the dirt but after a little coaxing I plunged her hand in. Her frown turned into a smile and she said, "Oh this isn't so bad," as she picked up

the dirt and became fixated while letting it spill between her fingers. Another girl had her iris planted upside down with roots waving in the air. I couldn't figure out if it was a blonde thing, or a ploy, as all the boys rushed to her aid, while the other girls rolled their eyes and giggled.

Mr. McMahon called the group back to order, and after they were all finished with planting their pots they mixed a little bone meal into the dirt around their rhizome and then they carried their pots to a location close by. Now it was time to begin filling the 3-gallon buckets for the mass plantings of a yellow historical iris called Bellerive from the rhizome sale. They all worked together very well, yet, there was still an occasional, "Which end is the toe?" We just finished the planting when the bell rang for the class change. The kids sat these larger pots of irises next to the others, and Mr. McMahon assured me he would water the pots well. The students one-by-one came up to me as they left and thanked me. Some made comments like, "that was fun," or, "what do you call that thing we planted?" and "when did you say they will make a flower?"

I gave Mr. McMahon a recent AIS Bulletin and a complimentary ISA membership for the rest of 2011 to keep him interested. I think overall it was a very successful endeavor and the little kidlins' have a new word and concept to add to their lives, "Iris."



Bulb Irises

It is time to plant the dwarf reticulated iris bulbs for very early bloom in February or March in a mixture of sandy or gravelly soil in a rock garden or border. These bulbs are named for the netted coverings or tunics that cover their bulbs.

These small irises usually have two long basal leaves that appear with their tiny flowers about the same time that early crocuses bloom.

They were discovered in the geographical area from Israel through Turkey to central Asia. It has been thought possible that these irises were brought to Europe by Crusaders during the 12th to 14th centuries when Western Europeans hoped to capture the Holy Land. Even during the Crimean War in the mid-1850s soldiers probably took some of the iris bulbs home by hiding them in their pockets.

The long leaves are usually four-sided in cross section or sometimes cylindrical. They are either four-ribbed or eight-ribbed. During the summer they die back, but if the bulbs are planted about 4 to 5 inches deep, they are inclined to bloom the following year in this zone if the summers are not too wet.

The flowers are red-purple, blue-purple, blue, or yellow depending on whether they are *I. danfordiae*, yellow-flowered native of Turkey, or *I. histrioides*, a hardy native of Asia Minor with pale blue-purple flowers marked by yellow ridges that are

produced on the bloom stalks that appear even before the foliage emerges from the well-drained soil.



Sea Green (97-CQ-1) (www.reticulatas.com)
hybrid *I. histrioides* var. *sopenensis* x *I. danfordiae*

Other iris bulbs include the later-blooming Spanish irises that are called xiphium, or the English irises which are xiphoides or latifolia, the larger very colorful variety, but usually referred to as Dutch irises.

The Hoog brothers of the Dutch based firm Tubergen, took the seven species of the Xiphium sub-genus and, through selective breeding and hybridizing, they have produced some spectacular blooms from white to pale and dark blue, mauve and violet, yellow, orange and bronze, as well as bi-colors, with new cultivars continually coming on to the market.

Usually most of the Dutch irises are grown in greenhouses and forced to bloom at various times for the florists or markets since these irises are much in demand.

The bulbs are planted from 3" to 4" deep, and spaced 6" apart. They multiply naturally by division.

Iris Society of Austin Meeting Tuesday October 11, 2011

ISA President Nelda Moore called the meeting to order.

Minutes of the September meeting were approved.

Pat Byrne presented the treasurer's report. The ISA bank account has been moved to Prosperity Bank.

Deborah Boyle reported on the AAGC meeting.

Zilker Gardens will begin charging for admission in November (\$2/adults, \$1/children), but anyone who is coming to do volunteer work will not have to pay. Volunteers should make sure they report their hours worked.

The October 2011 issue of the AAGC online newsletter Down the Garden Path has an article about the ISA show. (see www.zilker garden.org)

Tickets to next spring's Zilker Garden Festival to be available in November.

Shelia Senghas announced that her nephew, a magician, has offered to perform at our November 8 meeting. This will be our annual holiday meal. The club will provide the meat, and members will bring side dishes and desserts.

We voted to create a new position in ISA, Technology Coordinator, to be appointed by the president. Nelda appointed James Hadley as our first Technology Coordinator.

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Plant Now

Plant bearded and Louisiana irises that you purchased this fall as soon as possible in well-drained soil amended with bone meal or super phosphate. Do not plant them too deeply before watering them well and then letting the raised bed dry before watering deeply again.

For those that are about twelve inches apart but seem to be very thick and covered with dead leaves

and other debris, clean them by gently pulling the dried foliage that is resting on the rhizomes. Water them well after placing a handful of fertilizer around the rhizomes. By leaving the mass of vegetation over the rhizome, the irises can rot when the rains come.

Louisiana irises can be cleaned, weeded, and fed with acid soil or azalea fertilizer.

Austin Hosted in 2004

When the Iris Society of Austin hosted the Region 17 Meeting in 2004 (it wasn't called a "Regional Convention" until 10/23/2010) George Sutton from Porterville, CA. Joe Moore met Sutton and wife Margaret at Bergstrom Airport and safely transported the couple to their hotel. Pat Byrne drove them to the Friday night dinner provided by ISA members in the auditorium of Zilker Gardens. All other activities of the Regional Meeting that year were held in the Omni Southpark.

George Sutton graduated in 1963 from the University of Redlands with a degree in Speech and Hearing Pathology. Afterward he served as a pitcher for a minor league team of the Los Angeles Dodgers, and worked in the public schools in Ukiah, California. He always had a keen interest in plants, especially the irises that he began to hybridize. His first introduction was the tall bearded 'Orange Popsicle' in

1987. But Sutton had been selling plants since 1983 from Sutton's Green Thumber, an area that later became the 80-acre Sutton's Iris Gardens. Wife Margaret and son Michael take an active part in the operation of the gardens as well as the annual Porterfield Iris Festival that attracts thousands of visitors.

Sutton's catalog includes award winners like 'Baby Bengal,' a 1990 border bearded which won HM in 1992, and 'Concertina,' a 2000 intermediate bearded rebloomer which won AM in 2006. The catalog also provides a useful Rebloom Reliability Chart by USDA Climate Zone for each reblooming iris listed.

George Sutton has served as Region 14 RVP, regional convention chairman three times, and guest iris chairman for the 2004 AIS National Convention. He has been on the AIS Board of Directors, and together with his wife, was an Editor of Advertising for the AIS Bulletin.

Ken Fuchs presented a program of photos from the AIS meeting in Victoria, B.C., with Canadian music.

submitted by Carolyn Wylie, Secretary

Please make sure to look for these folks at an upcoming meeting and welcome them to our club:

- Mike McMahon

Remember to set your clocks back one hour as Daylight Savings Time ends in the United States at 2:00am on Sunday, November 6, 2011.



above: Concertina (IB Re) - George Sutton, 2000
below: Baby Bengal (BB) - George Sutton, 1990



This issue of IRIS AUSTIN
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