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October 2012 — vol 21 #10



Nelda Moore, Editor

A Monthly Newsletter of the Iris Society of Austin

# IRIS AUSTIN



## next ISA meeting >>>

Iris Society of Austin Meeting  
**Tuesday October 9, 2012**  
**6:45 pm** (gates close at 7:00)

**Late? call 477-8672 ext 13**

Zilker Garden Center  
2220 Barton Springs Rd  
Austin TX 78746

- Potluck Supper
- Report from September Sale

## next AAGC meeting >>>

Austin Area Garden Council Meeting  
**Tuesday October 9, 2012**  
**10:00 am**  
Zilker Garden Center  
Nelda Moore – ISA representative

## upcoming events >>>

Nov 13 – ISA Meeting and  
Thanksgiving Potluck

**Dec 2012 – No ISA Meeting**

Jan 8, 2013 – ISA Meeting

Feb 12, 2013 – ISA Meeting

Mar 12, 2013 – ISA Meeting

Mar 30, 2013 – Annual Iris Show

Apr 15-20, 2013 – AIS Nat'l Conv,  
Dallas

## Zilker Garden Future from September AAGC Meeting

Nelda Moore reports from the September AAGC meeting that thanks to AAGC contributions throughout the years, and a strong presence at the May 21 meeting, plans for the “commercialization” of Zilker Botanical Gardens have been tabled indefinitely. The Grow Green Program has pledged \$10,000 in support of the Rose Garden and Carmax has donated \$2,500 for education programs.

TBG Partners Earl Brouard, a landscape architect, and Evan Taniguchi will work on a Master Plan for the gardens, review any building changes, and any new construction in the botanical gardens.

Margaret Russell is the new Director for Parks and Recreation of Zilker Botanical Gardens. Melissa Bartling has been reassigned to DoughertyArts Center.

## Iris Diseases

### Things to keep out of the garden...

One of the awful things happening in the garden now is SOFT ROT, a smelly, soft, mushy bacterial rot that affects the rhizome. The fan tips over and the fleshy rhizome turns golden and smelly. This bacteria enters the injured rhizome from the soil during warm moist conditions. Sometimes you can scrape away the rotted tissue, allow the rhizome to dry in the sun, and replant in another location after disinfecting the tools. Use a bleach solution for soaking the infected rhizome or use antibacterial

soap mixed in water. Wash the rhizome and then replant.

FUNGAL LEAF SPOT is also visible. It is the small, watery ovals on the leaves that have a reddish border. This disease causes weak leaves and blooms. To delay this disease, clean the garden. Spray with Daconil, Benlate, or Zineb 75 at 3 week intervals, but be careful with any poison. Follow directions and spray on a still, early morning.

*continued on page 3*

# Meet Tom Burseen

## A favorite Texas hybridizer

Tom Burseen, one of our favorite hybridizers, lives in Grand Prairie, Texas, where he has an iris farm known as the crown jewel of the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. According to Bonnie Nichols his immaculate garden will be on tour April 18-20, during the 2013 American Iris Society Convention headquartered in Addison.

Tom refers to himself as the mad scientist working in "The Lab", his garden, in extreme temperatures and weather conditions on the prairie that is not a utopia since it is a part of Texas. Tom's radical treatment of the plants and his experiments with nutrient programs are extraordinary. Tom usually orders irises from Barry

Blyth's Tempo Two Iris Garden in Australia. It is April here and fall in Barry's hometown. These plants experienced two summers of hot and dry conditions - Mother Nature's Kiss of Death to most of the irises. Then Tom decided to pot half of the plants and place them in shade, which reduced mortality rates to around 40%. Next, Tom left half of the order in the shipment box and waited to plant them in August. By October the temperature changed and some rain awakened the "dead" irises. Only two plants of this batch failed to sprout new growth. And this new treatment of holding these rhizomes throughout May, June, July, and part of August is now the usual procedure leading to a field of



beautiful irises that bloom and enable Tom to make crosses that he names with unusual phrases such as 'Comengetit' or 'Haveagoodun.'

Tom believes in drying the most luscious rhizomes and then planting them when he digs up everything and plants yearly. He will never pot any rhizome ever again. He does not water "The Lab" either unless it is a 2011 type of year. When he was asked why his plants bloomed right away after purchasing them like rebloomers, he simply replied, "They are so happy to be in heaven after leaving this Texas hell that they celebrate by blooming!"

*Continued on page 3*

## more AAGC news >>>

Zilker Botanical Gardens is an official butterfly garden Monarch way station. Detailed financial statement shows year-to-date profit of \$19331.01. April, May, and June indicate increase in sales at the Gift Shop. Two new employees, Alice Choate and Kathy Wood, have worked on displays for the Gift Shop merchandise since Marcus Jones left due to ill health. Rosemary is now the manager.

Velia has purchased silverware for the kitchen. She has asked for donations of slightly used cup towels and any knives, forks, & spoons.

Ed Parken and Don Freeman discussed grants that were given to Zilker Botanical Gardens for the Fern Bed, extended by the Garden Club of Austin, and \$7,000 given for the Rose Pond repairs, sealing, and work on the sidewalks.



*above: Sheila Senghas and Lori Anderson staff the welcome table recruiting new members.*

*below: TB 'Grain Exchange' was a very popular variety at the 2012 sale.*



## rhizomes available? >>>

Tracey Rogers may have a few rebloomers left that were some extras provided in the order sent by Mike Lockatell.

If you are interested, check with Tracey to see which of these varieties she might still have left:

- Another Bridge
- Clarence
- Just Call Me
- Masterwork
- Matrix
- Over & Over
- Radiant Bliss
- Summer Radiance
- Total Recall

512-280-4856 or rogers89@earthlink.net

# Iris Diseases

SCORCH is a disease of unknown origin, but it makes the plant sick. Dig the plant out of the ground and check the root system to see if the roots have disintegrated. Scorch usually occurs after mild winters in cold climates. It seems to be the result of stress that occurs when plants grow when they should not.

PINEAPPLING is also something that happens, but the cause is unknown. The rhizome is enlarged with stunted leaves and short, distorted flowers if it blooms at all. One might cut off the stunted foliage and leave the rhizome to form increases that will be normal if one chooses to save the plant.

# Tom Burseen

Tom has his soil and well water tested and reveals this formula:

High pH - do not apply anything containing calcium

Low pH - No sulphate

Tom believes in using organic ammendments such as humus and compost, instead of chemical fertilizer. If there is an inadequate amount of nitrogen, he uses corn gluten, which is 9% nitrogen and a 6-1-4 alfalfa fertilizer.

Roundup applications are used to exterminate any iris plants that others would pull and toss on a compost heap. He then shreds the plants with a lawn mower and eventually tills them into the soil. In this way he believes that he does not remove essential nutrients in his soil.

Since Tom served as a golf course superintendent for 20 years, he believes that Mother Nature can take care of her own. Insecticides do not discriminate and eradicate good bugs as well as bad bugs. He also applies

the concept of "survival of the fittest" to a seedling with leaf spot.

Tom removes weeds with a hoe, but for spurge and purslane, instead of leaving their withered remains to drop thousands of seeds, he fills a garbage bag bound for the landfill.

Tom keeps detailed records on all seed pods. He gives them identifying numbers and plants no more than 20 seeds per concrete block. Most seeds germinate the following spring. Then the seedlings are planted in rows during June, July, and August.

It usually takes two years to grow before they bloom. If any do not produce, those seedlings are destroyed. For two to four years these survivors are evaluated. Then after several more years, the chosen ones are introduced to the iris world.

This whole process takes about 10 years!

Iris Society of Austin Meeting  
Tuesday September 4, 2012

The meeting was called to order by President Marney Abel. The minutes from the July meeting were read and approved. Introductions were made for new members Ellen Singleton and Cindy Fraiser.

There was no treasurer's report.

The Omni Hotel sent a very nice letter of thanks for hosting the Region Meeting. They look forward to having us reserve with them in the future if the opportunity arises.

Don Freeman shared that it is time to divide rhizome clumps and get ready to plant for Fall. Remember to wash rhizomes in diluted bleach solution (1 part bleach to 4 parts water) to minimize the chances for rot and disease contamination in new plantings. An organic gardening product called Bio-Zone was mentioned in the discussion for preparing new plantings.

The AAGC Council Report was given by Nelda Moore and is printed elsewhere in this newsletter.

Tracey Rogers shared the Annual Rhizome Sale dates and times with everyone.

Marney announced that the 2013 Iris Society of Austin Annual Show will be chaired by Jaime Hadley.

The remainder of the meeting was spent pricing rhizomes contributed by the members for the sale later in the week.

*submitted by Dara Smith, Secretary*

by Tracey Rogers

# 2012 Rhizome Sale

**THANKS** for all your hard work!



Once again we pulled off a successful rhizome sale. This year, we collected \$2,150.25 in cash and checks and \$1,317.50 in credit card sales for a total of \$3,467.60.

There were leftovers, but we also had around 30 more tall bearded varieties than we did last year. Last year we had around 107 compared to around 140 this year. Another difference which was a pleasant surprise was the 5 varieties of Spurias in addition to the Louisianas. As usual white was not that popular, but leftover blues outnumbered the white. Red, orange, yellow and purple were the popular colors. Fortunately, between my neighborhood garage sale and getting the word out to members and friends of members, an additional \$375 worth has been sold since the sale. As of September 28<sup>th</sup>, total sales now reach \$3842.60. Estimated expenses are

\$1,734.01. This does not include the charges for the credit card machine. Overall we made a profit of \$2,108.59. Some of us are still taking irises to other club meetings, so we will probably collect a few more dollars.

Thanks to all the volunteers who donated, priced and volunteered at the sale. We couldn't have done it without you. Thanks to the growers we purchased from—Mid America, Salem, OR; Blue J Iris, Alliance, NE and Nola's Garden, San Jose, CA. All of them were most generous with what they sent us. Special thanks to Nola's. They were kind enough to send us a \$50 donation towards our sale. We had to break down some of their rhizomes since they were so large. Mid America sent us 2010, 2011 and 2012 introductions. Blue J sent us extras which paid off since we quickly sold out of many of them.

## welcome new members >>

One of the great successes of the Iris Society of Austin's 2012 Annual Rhizome Sale, was the fact that several new members took the opportunity at the sale to join our Society.

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

Welcome new members...

- Ed & Leticia Fry

And new youth members...

- Tiffany Sheridan
- Nicolas Sadler

Below: New Youth Member Nicolas Sadler at the 2012 Rhizome Sale, with Audrey Baker and mom Dara Smith in the background.

Pat Freeman and David Kraemer review the bargains between customer check-outs

