

# *Twin City Iris Society*

## News and Views

Vol. X, No. 4

April, 1962

Spring is here! I think I can safely make that statement at last, though that 8 inch snowfall a few days ago made one wonder. Very soon now the warm days will breathe vigor into all growing things and we will be busy in our gardens. Already the show committee is at work making plans for another Twin City Iris Show. We hope that each of you is looking forward to the show and that everyone will bring their choice irises to make it a bigger and better show than ever.

There are a few minor changes in the rules that will be made, copies of the show schedule will be available for those who are planning to exhibit either specimens or arrangements. One change that will be made should be called to your attention at this time: in order to receive awards other than ribbons (i.e. silver awards and rhizomes) we are requesting that all members have their memberships renewed by the last meeting in May — (in subsequent years it will be earlier, probably April 1st.) Those who have never been members may still join at any time. This was thought advisable because of the increasing tendency for some members to put off paying their dues until show time, and this puts a hardship on the officers of the Society because membership lists must be constantly renewed. It is especially time-consuming for your editor because once the master copy for the addressograph is made, all subsequent names must be written by hand which is quite time-consuming. We would appreciate your cooperation.

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The April meeting will be held April 26th at 8:00 o'clock at the regular meeting place, the Y.W.C.A. in Minneapolis. I am sure this will prove to be a most interesting meeting and we hope to have a large attendance.

From the program chairman...

I want to offer my most abject apologies again to everyone who came to our meeting last month and especially to those who brought slides for our contest. I still can't imagine why the projector jammed because I ran all of the trays through during the business meeting and everything seemed in perfect order. We will have two projectors on hand next month so I think we can guarantee to finish the contest at that time. If anyone else has slides that were not entered, there is still time; just bring them with you to the meeting. (Please put your name or initials on each one and count them.) We have no entries in the arrangement class so if you have some, there is a good chance of winning.

After the slides are run through we will have our regularly scheduled program; "An Open Forum on Hybridizing", moderated by our own Carol Lankow, who is sure to liven up the proceedings with her happy personality. If you care to bring a list of the irises you grow, some of us with a bit more experience will try to help you plan the crosses that will be most apt to produce good results for you. I have learned the hard way over a number of years that it takes just as much time and work to grow

seedlings from a poor cross as those from a good one.

Be sure to come April 26, at 8:00 o'clock, and bring your garden-loving friends who are tired of snow and mud and hungry for the sight of beautiful flowers. After previewing the slides, I can promise you just that!

MayBelle Wright

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### PRESIDENT'S LETTER

At the time when this is written some of my early spring bulbs are in bloom, although they do look a little surprised after last night's temperature dropped to 18 degrees. Preliminary reports from some of our members indicate that our irises have come through the winter in the best condition ever, and if the weather gives us a little cooperation from now on, we should have a wonderful iris year.

The show rules committee that was appointed at the March meeting has come up with some very good recommendations. Their objective was to encourage the best possible show within the framework of rules providing the greatest degree of fairness to all exhibitors. I hope we can arrange an impromptu meeting of the directors at our regular April meeting in order to secure official approval of these recommendations and permit them to be announced to the membership.

### Membership Contest:

Everyone is reminded that our membership contest this year closes July 31, and the award is still a Butterscotch Kiss. I set that date in order to permit the winner to collect the rhizome in time to get it planted in his (or her) garden this summer.

But I have been thinking a lot lately that our job goes beyond just bringing in new members — we also have to assimilate them into the society and help them become really active. When we come to meetings our natural tendency is to seek out and team up with our old friends, and certainly that is one of the most enjoyable aspects of membership in a society like ours. But all of us, with the possible exception of the charter members, went through the process of cracking the inner circle at one time. I recall very well the first meeting I attended, and I also recall the first member who went out of her way to make me feel welcome — it was Betty Ipsen. So let's get our new folks beyond the uncomfortable stage as fast as possible. And you new folks — don't hold back. Push your way right into our inner circle and make us know you're there. We're really a friendly bunch, and we want you on the inside looking out, not vice versa.

### Constitutional Amendments:

The copy of our constitution that you received with last month's News and Views was as originally adopted. The amendments listed below have since been adopted, and your copy should be corrected accordingly. Any member who wishes to propose additional amendments should present them to me. I will serve as a clearing house during the year so that all proposed changes can be presented to the society at one time.

Article III, Section 3 was amended to read: "The immediate past president shall automatically be a member of the board of directors with full voting power of such member."

Article IV, Paragraph (b) was amended by deleting the last sentence stating the amount of dues at the time of adoption.

Article IV, Paragraph (c) was amended by changing the fee for life membership from \$50.00 to \$25.00 and adding the words: "plus the fee for life membership in the Minnesota State Horticultural Society."



Article VII, Section 2 was amended by deleting the last sentence and substituting the following: "The nominating committee shall present a slate of one candidate for each elective office of the society, presentation to be made as provided in the constitution. Nominations may also be made from the floor."

Article X was amended to read: "The constitution of the Twin City Iris Society may be amended at any meeting provided that such amendment be read to the Society at two (2) previous meetings and that the membership of the Society receive written notice of same at least fifteen (15) days prior to the meeting at which the vote is held."

G. F. Hanson, President

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Here is the promised report on Mr. Orville Fay's visit to our society in February. We wish to extend our thanks to MayBelle Wright for compiling this report. It will be invaluable to those who were unable to hear him and it will help the rest of us to remember the important points of his talk:

#### MR. FAY VISITS THE TWIN CITY IRIS SOCIETY

On February 22, 1962, I had the great privilege of spending almost the entire day with Mr. Orville Fay. In the evening he spoke to our society, illustrating his talk with some of the loveliest slides I have ever seen. Among other color shots, he showed Mary Randall, Cashmere, a lovely cream out of Irish Linen whose name is Dancing Bride, by Nate Rudolph, and Rippling Waters, a much ruffled dream in blue orchid with a tangerine beard. Of special interest were the slides of the new orange irises with which he is working, one of which will be introduced this year as "Chinese Coral". It is a soft tint of orange with a coral beard. It is a truly beautiful flower. Be sure to watch for it. His formula for obtaining true orange color is: Mary Randall or Cashmere crossed with a yellow from pink breeding, such as Techny Chimes. If I hadn't already chosen a couple of goals, I would be tempted to try it. He has 1,100 new seedlings to bloom this year, 800 of which are crosses for orange color and the rest for blue orchid. He feels 2,000 seedlings should be the top for one year because it is impossible to properly evaluate more than that during the short blooming season.

Although he also breeds daffodils, Mr. Fay's main interest right now is breeding improved daylilies. Until he started changing them, they were all diploids (24 Chromosomes) but he has used colchicine to turn them into tetraploids (48 chromosomes). This is sheer wizardry. It must be done at just the right moment and is a very delicate procedure. The petals of tetraploid daylilies are twice as thick, the stamens and pistil are twice as large and the whole flower is greatly improved. Having four sets of chromosomes instead of two gives them much greater variability and makes it possible to change their form and create many new colors. He has shortened the stems so the flowers bloom just above the foliage, giving the plant much more pleasing proportions.

Occasionally, when using colchicine, the entire plant is not changed to a tetraploid, resulting in a chimera. In this case, half of the plant is tetraploid and the other half is diploid. When this happens, he divides it and lines it out separately. It is impossible to divide it perfectly, so he grows it for three years, segregating the tetraploids each year. After this length of time he can be sure he has just tetras. He saves some of the diploids from the cross so he can show what a difference it makes.

The word "Crestwood" in the name of a daylily is your guarantee that a chromosome count has been run on it to prove it is tetraploid and that it has been proven fertile. Mr. Fay feels that daylilies will become as popular in the garden as irises, once

the new ones are widely circulated. Hybridizing them is still a wide open field.

One of Mr. Fay's newer diploid daylilies he calls "Cartwheels". He said it was originally named "Wagonwheels" but was changed because "C" comes before "W" in the alphabet and as he said (tongue-in-cheek) by the time the judges get as far as "W" they have given out all the awards! He thinks the name you give a seedling is of utmost importance. Many a fine flower has been lost by the wayside because of a poor name. The name must appeal to the public and be easy to pronounce.

Some of his other beautiful slides were taken in England while he was visiting Mr. Harry Randall (Mr. Iris of Great Britain) two years ago. The English gardens were almost unbelievable, with flowering trees from all over the world, including camelias, one of which appeared to have rose pink blossoms which were very striking against the shiny dark varnished green of its leaves. Azaleas, rhododendron, and forsythia bloomed in profusion along with other flowers and shrubs one would not expect to find in a latitude farther north than Winnipeg. The English told him a fairly good garden can be achieved in one hundred years but it takes two hundred to produce a really fine one.

I asked Mr. Fay many questions during the day and the members of the society asked many more after the program. The following are some of his answers although not in his own words:

Pollen should be picked the day before using if possible.

Fluffy pollen means the pollen grains have burst and are no longer viable.

It is not necessary to do anything to protect your crosses from contamination. Only twice in thirty years has a bee spoiled a cross for him. In each case the seedlings were such that they couldn't have come from the planned cross. On the basis of this he feels the odds are not great enough to worry about. Only a bumble bee can pollinate a modern iris because the style-arm is so far above the fall that pollen on the back of any lesser insect wouldn't rub off on the stigmatic lip. He said we shouldn't even remove the anthers because even this might damage the flower.

You should study the pedigree of each parent for at least five generations back before making a cross. Then you know what genes you have to work with.

No one should hope to introduce an iris until he has served a ten year apprenticeship in hybridizing. (Please don't let this discourage you if you are just starting. You can have a lot of fun anyway and remember, accidents do happen!)

Dry your seeds in mesh bags after removing from the pod. Mold is injurious to them if it penetrates the outer coating.

You should get 90% germination if you plant your seeds in September (soak first if you like) and keep the seed bed WET until the ground freezes. It takes this much soaking plus freezing up wet to break dormancy. If a few come up in the fall, the straw you use to cover them (to protect against frost heaving) will keep them alive. It seems they can stand more cold than mature plants.

Almost all of your seedlings will bloom the year after germination if they are transplanted while very tiny (about 1 inch tall). At this time the little plant has only one temporary root. Dig carefully, so as not to break the embryo cord connecting the small plant and the seed. There is still much stored food in the seed which the small plant can use. Later when the permanent



roots develop, transplanting can set the plant back three weeks or more. If they do not bloom the first year, Mr. Fay pulls them out. He has never found anything worth keeping in seedlings held over.

Seedlings should be transplanted into rows 18 inches apart with the plants 9 inches apart in the row. If they are closer than this the plants may be damaged.

Use natural fertilizers. Chemical fertilizers are injurious because they give the plants too much push all at once.

Get a notebook and keep a record of all the seedlings you number. Having the parentage is especially valuable.

If you have an interesting seedling, take an extreme close-up of it, then when shown on the screen, 3 or 4 feet in diameter, you see many things about it you could not see in the garden.

I have never talked to anyone with such a vast knowledge of genetics and cytology as Mr. Fay. He is a warm, genuinely friendly person with a fine sense of humor and the gift of making you feel completely at ease with him. Even though he is an expert and I have hardly scratched the surface of hybridizing, he seemed like a kindly teacher who was more than willing to share his knowledge with an eager pupil. I shall never forget February 22, 1962!

MayBelle Wright