

Twin City Iris Society

NEWS and VIEWS

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The mild, sunny early spring-like days of the past week or two have made me feel that perhaps spring isn't really very far away. I expect we'll get some more cold weather but it will more than likely be short-lived and less severe than we had earlier. So now is a very good time to start planning next summer's garden, deciding which iris we want to obtain, which crosses will likely bring those beauties we want--and in many cases--where we can borrow that extra garden space needed to plant more of our favorites iris.

The next meeting of the Twin City Iris Society will be held at the downtown Y.W.C.A., Minneapolis, Twelfth and Nicollet, on Thursday, February 20, 1964 at 8:00 p.m. There is another outstanding program for this meeting so don't miss it! ! Further details will be found in the President's letter. We had a wonderful crowd for the January meeting with Mr. Dick Lehman, let's have another one this month.

During the first month of program planning arranging for committee chairman and numerous other business that goes into the preparation for a new regime, a phone call came one afternoon that struck a deep cord within. It made such an impression that I am going to relate it here, although it would take a qualified author and writer to adequately and eloquently express my personal feelings.

A rich, mellow voice full of vigor and enthusiasm said: "Tell me truthfully--don't you think old timber like me should resign and drop out of the society, we cannot do things like the young ones, you are just carrying dead weight?"

I do not know the author but the following expresses far more than any words I could write: Age is a quality of mine--

If you have left your dreams behind,
If hope is lost,
If you no longer look ahead,
If your ambitions' fires are dead--
Then you are old.
But if from life you take your best,
And if in life you keep the jest,
if love you hold--
No matter how the years go by,
No matter how the birthdays fly,
You are not too old!

This applies to all of us--not just "Old Timber." We need good old solid seasoned wood on which to build, for an organization is as strong as its members. To have Seniors in any society is the greatest compliment paid to the younger folks trying to go forward--with interesting programs of gardening and flowers. We sometimes feel so inadequate to talk on gardening and some of its problems, for these understanding and tolerant people in their golden years already know from

actual experience, what we are learning from day-to-day.

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Gardening is a rewarding hobby for all ages. It beautifies surroundings--it is invigorating, healthful, and pleasurable. It makes new friends in the exchange of plants and slips. It is such a satisfaction although at times one finds it hard to garden with the four C's: "Children, Chickens, Cats, and Canines!"

It was so gratifying to see so many present at the January 16 meeting. We thank all of you for the effort put forth in getting so many to attend. The individual phoning kept it so much alive. Also our very efficient publicity chairman, Mrs. Glen Hanson went all out in her coverage of the meeting. Nine papers carried the news article.

Mr. Lehman has written that he received the "Red Carpet" treatment by our Society. That we are a live organization and a wonderful group. He enjoyed being with us and extended "Thanks" for the invitation. Also he was "speechless" in receiving a Birthday Cake. It was appreciated. He enjoyed seeing his old friends and making new ones.

On February 20, we will again have another interesting program. A representative from Northrop King and Company, in the seed department, will talk to us on "New Annuals and Flowers of the Future." The questions and answers will be about the growing of iris diseases and how to combat them.

We want just as many and more gardeners to attend. Do it all over again--call on the telephone, talk to your neighbors, we will have newspaper coverage--invite and invite--. Everyone grows annuals, everyone is interested in cutting flowers. It is time to start slow germinating seedlings for spring planting.

Last but not least, we want new members. The drive is on. Let us see just how many friends we can bring into this already progressive Iris Society.

May all your days be healthful, happy ones.

Greta Kessenich

A big vote of thanks to Adah Anderson for the time and work spent in writing all the names on the identification tags.

Dr. Frank E. Halleck one of our outstanding new members has written a much needed and timely article on Preservation of Flower and Foliage Life. He spoke on this subject briefly at our January meeting. This written account will help those of us who like to have written accounts we can refer to and all those who did not hear him.

EXTENDED FLOWER AND FOLIAGE LIFE

Cutting of foliage and flowers for indoor appreciation is an amputation process; and whenever you amputate, you obviously sever off some of the essential life processes to maintain the living thing from what it was in its natural state. Plants contain fluids which in many respects function like blood and contain essential elements for the existence of the living entity. The fluids in plants

are varied but essentially all of them contain dissolved salts and foods. Realizing the importance of each segment of a living plant, it is obvious that you are unable to retain this natural system when cuttings are made. At the point of severance, there will often be fluid exudations. These fluids flow out rapidly in the case of some kinds of plants and contain even milky and gummy materials. In others, there may be a limited amount of exudate. For those plants in which there is a very rapid loss of the fluids from the plant, attention must be given early to them because the loss of fluid will lead to subsequent wilting of the foliage, flowers, and even the stems. It is the fluid that retains the turgidity or crispness. To prevent the fluid loss, one should seal off these large vessels. In the case of animals, a clotting mechanism takes care of the situation in part. Most plants do not have this built in protective mechanism. To prevent wilting and fluid loss, the severed vessels should be immediately sealed off by heat which coagulates the cut ends. Two procedures can be used. One is plunging the cut stems into boiling water with the utmost care so that only a small portion of the cut stem is affected by the heat. The other is searing the cut edge with an open flame using either a lighted match or candle. These are drastic treatments and will not always be met with success in the first or second attempt because you have to be familiar with the particular plant itself in which you are dealing. Every plant has its certain characteristics associated with it, and some of them are much less tolerant to these drastic treatments.

Another problem associated with cut plants is that there is a time gap between the time of cutting and the time the plants are placed in water. This time gap leads to the uptake of bubbles of air into the vessels. These bubbles of air can lead to mechanical blockage of the vessels. To ward against this, the best method is to sever off more of the stem or foliage just before putting them into water. Of course, you are not always sure that the inch or more that you have cut off was adequate to remove all those trapped bubbles. Again, familiarity and experience play a role in how much you have to cut for a particular plant species. Woody plants require more drastic treatment such as stem crushing to provide more exposure of the vessels for fluid uptake.

Another important consideration for extending the life of foliage and flowers is the water in which they are placed. Water could be quite detrimental to many cut plants because if the vessel systems are still open, there is going to be an exchange of the plant fluids which contain salts and other dissolved materials and the water which has little of the important elements that plants require. To alleviate this problem, the water in which you place the cut plants should contain supplements for the fluid loss as well as life sustenance. Certain salts should be present in the water to maintain the proper turgidity. Sugars should be present for food. One more additive should be present in the water; that is a preservative. When you cut plants, like animals, you are exposing them to infection. The infection in the case of plants often is the beginning of deterioration and decomposition of the plant. This process is caused by microorganisms that are on the plant itself as well as on soil particles, and even in the water itself. To circumvent the growth of the microorganisms that will cause deterioration of the plant, special chemicals should be present in the water to inhibit or kill the microorganisms. The selection of one or more chemicals is not easy because they may be more toxic to the plants than to the microbes. The best reliance for the proper additives to water for cut foliage and flowers is to utilize a commercial preparation in which all these factors have been taken into account. There are available a few flower and foliage preservatives which contain all the elements that have been discussed. However, there is no one

preparation that is the answer to all the problems that you will encounter, and some of them are better than others. There are some, although sold commercially, which have no value at all. Testing and experience are the best means of judging which flower or foliage preservative that one should use.

In summary, whenever plants are cut for their enjoyment, take the time to look and see what happens when you make that first cut. If there is a large amount of fluid loss, make another cut and sear the ends. If there is very little that you can see, there is no real need for searing. Woody stems should be crushed. Above all, place these cut stems into a solution which contains a good preservative, and you will enjoy your flowers and foliage for a longer period of time and maintain them in almost a comparable state to that which you can find in your gardens.

Frank E. Halleck, Ph.D.

WHAT IS TERRACLOR? WHAT IS IT USED FOR?

Terraclor--75 per cent Wettable Powder is sold in five pound bags for about \$5.50 and Terraclor--20 per cent dust is sold in one pound containers for about 75 cents. By the percentage it seems to me that it will take almost four pounds of the dust to equal one pound of the wettable powder.

Terraclor is a fungicide used to destroy soil borne diseases. It will not kill iris borers or iris borer eggs. The chemical companies mix fungicides and insecticides to make all purpose dusts such as rose dust or garden dust that will destroy plant diseases and insects but Terraclor is only a fungicide.

During the summer, iris rhizomes can become infected with two different kinds of rots. One is the smelly bacterial Soft Rot that spreads so fast and the other is a fungus rot called Crown Rot or Mustard Seed Fungus. Both are soil borne diseases that develop during wet or humid, hot weather. Both are difficult to bring under control in rainy, wet weather as the rain dilutes the fungicide.

To treat these diseases the soil should be scraped away from the sides of the rhizomes until they are exposed to the sun. The rot should all be scraped out of the rhizomes down to solid flesh, the rot put in a bucket and removed from the garden. Then saturate the leaves, rhizomes and soil with a solution made with one tablespoonful of Terraclor--75 per cent Wettable Powder mixed in one gallon of water. This solution can also be used to sterilize rhizomes before planting. It may be necessary to treat more than once to bring the disease under control. At times I didn't bother to mix the solution and dusted the rhizomes with full strength 75 per cent Terraclor right out of the bag. That got better results than when I used the solution.

G. B. Gable

Dusting Terrachlor on the soil and working it in according to directions produces potatoes free of scab.

Gus Sindt

From the hybridizing chairman:

I hope each of you members will take the time to read the following quote. The

message it brings could add greatly to your enjoyment of our favorite flower:

It has long been a mystery to me how a person could love a flower as much as some do the iris and yet be content to never try their hand at hybridizing. I'm possibly being unfair to them, but I have concluded that they can't possibly love the iris as much as does the hybridizer. I believe that the best analogy that can be made to this is to compare iris seedlings to children. The normal person loves children and enjoys watching them grow. But if you are a parent yourself, you know that your love for children in general pales in comparison to your love for your own children.

The same is true with irises. Of course, I loved the iris before my first seedlings bloomed. But the joys, the thrills, yes and even the heartaches, which I have experienced since I began hybridizing makes me wish that I had begun this great hobby while yet a small boy.

The marvelous thing about this hobby is that it really doesn't matter how many or how few seedlings you grow, the fun is still there. What's your favorite iris color? Are the irises in this color group as perfect as you would like them to be? Probably not. Then stop a little while next spring when the irises are in bloom and give some thought to just what it is that keeps your favorite irises from being perfect. After you have done this, look around in your garden or in another garden having a collection of the latest introductions and see if there are irises, preferably in a color class close to that of your favorite iris, which have one or more qualities which your favorite iris lacks. If you find such irises, then by all means, make one or more crosses between your favorite iris and the irises having qualities your favorite iris lacks. By and large, this is all even the most advanced hybridizer does.

When the seeds from your cross are ripe, about two months later, collect them. Then in October or November, plant the seeds about three-fourths of an inch deep in a sandy soil. You may plant them in a seed bed with the seeds almost touching each other.

In any case, go ahead and plant at least one pod of seeds. Please don't plant seeds which result from a cross made by the bees. They are not worth your time and effort considering how easy it is to make crosses for yourself.

Sydney B. Mitchell told the 1949 AIS Iris Convention: 'NO IRIS GROWER WITH UNBLOOMED SEEDLINGS EVER COMMITS SUICIDE.' A person who commits suicide is a person without hope: 'THE IRIS HYBRIDIZER HAS A GARDEN FULL OF HOPE!'

I don't suspect any of you of harboring suicide intentions but there is nothing better for twentieth century "jitters" than a session with the tweezers. Won't you try it?

MayBelle Wright

The above excerpt is from an article in the Region 18 Iris Bulletin by Dr. Claude J. Davis, University of West Virginia, Morgantown, West Virginia.

Mrs. Bakke still has only one bloom stalk on the iris she brought into the house

for indoor blooming. She is convinced that the other rhizomes were not dormant when they were potted and that dormancy is a prerequisite of blooming. The one that has a bloom stalk is in bloom now with three blossoms open and one more bud. She hasn't given up on the others as the foliage is strong and healthy.

Dr. David has no bloom stalks as yet.

Remember the meeting--February 20, see you then! ! !