

Twin City Iris Society

-News and Views-

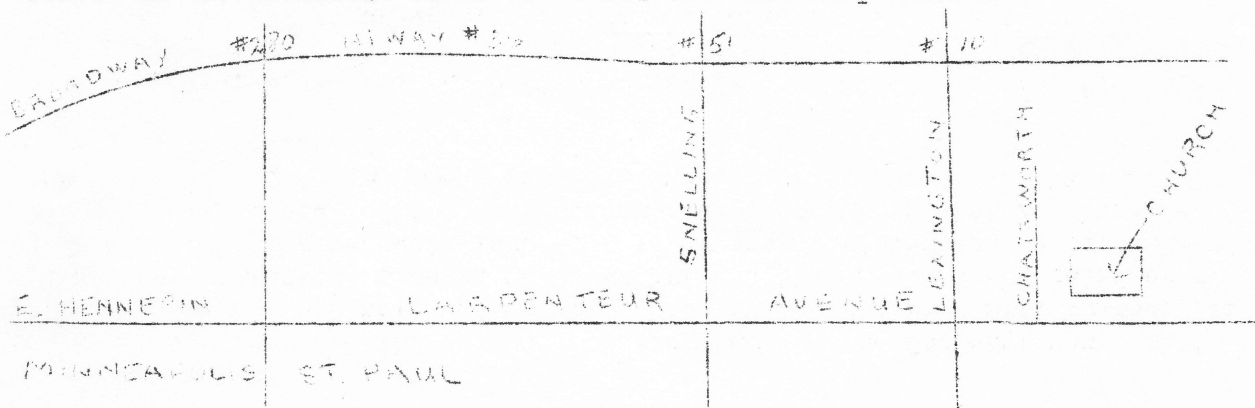
Volume XII, No. 3

March, 1964

To the uninitiated, March may mean a variety of things; coming in like a lion, going out like a lamb, March winds, snow, blustery weather or even the mad March hare; but to T.C.I.S. members March means Pot Luck Supper time! And this year, we are again asking each one to Come As An Iris. Get your thinking caps on, look over your iris catalogues, think of those gems in your garden and come up with a costume to depict the name of one of those beauties. The costume can be complete or merely an addition, something carried or worn with your regular clothes, but let's everyone get into the spirit of the thing and make this the best we've ever had. Some of those last year were priceless, and I'm sure no one who attended will ever forget how much fun it was. This is one night when dignity and stuffiness are left at home and fun and foolishness reign supreme.

Let's not forget, the best part of the whole evening is the wonderful food furnished by the lady members of the society and it makes for the best eating in the Twin Cities.

The time--Thursday, March 19, 1964 at 6:30 p.m. The place, the same as in previous years, North Como Presbyterian Church in Roseville. The church is located on the northeast corner of Chatsworth and Larpenteur.



Anyone coming from the north can come off Highway #100 on either #51, Snelling Avenue or on #10 Lexington. From the south or southeast Snelling or Lexington. I hope the map will enable all to find it without trouble. The parking lot is off Chatsworth.

You ladies who were at the February meeting have signed for what you wish to bring, those who were not, will be contacted by the chairman Mrs. Sutton. If you are not contacted, come anyway, and bring either a hot dish, salad or pie. This is one meeting we would love to have everyone present and we particularly want to invite those of you who live outside of the Twin Cities. This is a "good food," "good fun," and "good fellowship" meeting and one where it's very easy to get acquainted.

Prizes will be given for the best costumes in the following categories--(one for the men and one for the women): Most humorous, most elaborate, best representation, most unusual. A prize will also be given to the man and woman who guesses the iris represented by the costumes the greatest number of times. So sharpen up on your iris names, get your imaginations working and join in the fun.

Remember--THURSDAY MARCH 19, 6:30 p.m.--Come As An Iris--Ladies bring food, gentlemen \$1.00--Fun, frolic, food, and fantasy!

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

What an interesting February meeting on the Growing of Iris! It was a real pleasure to hear Carol Lankow talk on leaf spot and its control by using a good fungicide. Also Urban Ipsen telling us to go after the Iris borer at spring clean up time. To plan a spray program continuing until the flower bud and stalk begins to show, using Isotox or D.D.T. Dr. Halleck made it plain that bacteria in the soil can be controlled thereby saving all Iris growers many problems concerning the dreaded Iris rot. Virginia Messer explained the crosses necessary for the beautiful laces acquired in hybridizing.

Now comes garden clean up, the end of March and first of April. Iris and flower beds have been covered to some depth with leaves, straw or hay. If you do not have a "compost pile" start one now. No matter how small a yard, there is space. Use all discarded vegetation, with the exception of diseased plants or foliage. Put it in an enclosed area of chicken wire, wire fencing, snow fence or even a wooden slat bin. As this refuse is piled in the enclosure, sprinkle generously with a fertilizer high in nitrogen; 10-10-10 is excellent. Should you have excess sod (small pieces from enlarging your border garden each spring), or soil, put it in the compost heap, sun, rain and wind will do the rest. At various intervals turn over portions with a spading fork. In a year the compost will be of a crumbly soil-like consistency that can be used for the garden. Even though all of it is not completely decomposed it can be used as a mulch. This gradually will work in the soil, which is humus. It lightens a too heavy soil, improves texture, is a soil conditioner, increases water holding and adds nutrients. For the small garden, rake the leaves, where they are hidden by your flowering bushes and they will decompose without further attention.

We always look forward with great anticipation to the March meeting. Everyone coming dressed as an Iris! A pot luck dinner too! No one can put on such a bountiful array of food as the ladies of the Iris Society. Truly a gourmet's delight!

A very interesting program has been arranged. Mr. Bakke will show slides of Iris, Chrysanthemums and members gardens. Our favorite flower extends Gay Greetings in their own name. This is our Spring Festival. You will find it Delightful, Fabulous and Glamorous. Also have Mohr Fun. The Hindu Wand will send up Green Smoke and the Finest Hour will be Allaglow. All of you will be in the Limelight.

You may have Mixed Emotions about portraying one of us but take this Step Forward and have a Gay Adventure.

Greta M. Kessenich

UNCOVERING AND SPRING CLEAN UP

April first, is the time to commence removing the hay covering from the Iris. Just a word of caution at this time. If Iris have been too heavily covered

with leaves or too much hay, we may discover plants that are bleached out until almost white and if so we will give those plants time to start growing and a chance to turn green before all of the hay covering is removed. We learned the hard way and had very few bloom stalks in one section of the display garden when we were too eager to clean up. Those of you who grow mums should also exercise the same caution.

Leave a protective cover of litter over your mums and wait until the young shoots turn dark green and are almost two inches high before removing the litter. More mums are killed by the sun in the spring after gardens are raked clean than are lost by cold weather.

Some of the hay will be frozen down but remove all that will let go. Leaving the hay on Iris too long causes mildew after warm days. I believe a lot of the rot starts at this time.

After a few days the garden will be sufficiently dry to start the final clean up. Look for winter injury to rhizomes. If soft spots are found we immediately scrape out the soft spots and treat with Terrachlor solution. We then give the plants a good drenching with Terrachlor solution applied with a sprinkling can. Peonies, daylilies and phlox get the same treatment. The Garden Encyclopedia advises a weak solution of Bordeaux mixture applied to phlox and peonies as soon as they start coming up. Parzate or fermate are also very good but then I would add Malathion to the solution to destroy red spider mites which hatch out very early in spring.

Iris borer eggs start hatching during the warm days in spring and that is the time to start the spray program. A three way solution can be mixed using DDT for Iris borers, Parzate or fermate for leaf spot and Malathion for red spider. Red spider mites are getting to be quite a problem and by using DDT we are upsetting the balance of nature, killing off the other insects and permitting red spiders to increase so be sure to use some miticide to destroy the red spider when you use DDT.

G. B. Gable

ADDED GARDEN JOY

Some herbs are as common as an old shoe and yet as elegant as royalty. In fact, herbs are in most royal gardens. The most luxurious place to have an herb-planting is near the kitchen door. It's so easy when you in a hurry, or when it's dark or chilly or rainy, to quickly bring in whatever you need for glamour of flavor or form or color.

Parsley is for garnish, for salads and soups, for meats and vegetables. It is the most used herb. Plant the seed as early as you can. It germinates slowly. Keeping the ground moist helps. It is pretty in any garden. And think of how its wealth of A and C vitamins will help an Iris grower!

A horseradish start may be had from almost anyone who raises this herb. Plant it where you want it to take over. The leaves are a flower-arranger's delight. To use for food, dig up some roots in the spring. Peel and grind them out-of-doors. Save the root ends and the tops for planting again. Soon you will have more beautiful leaves--and the next spring more roots to grind. Freshly ground horseradish is far tastier in a sauce than what one can buy. (over)

Mint is another herb almost any friend who grows it will be glad to share. There are many varieties. If you buy a plant, be sure it is the kind you like. See that it gets plenty of water and at least some sun. Its charm blesses confections, vegetables, meats, jellies, beverages and almost every sort of food. It also has decorative uses.

Dill is an annual that will self-sow and may be planted early. The stalk, leaves, blossom buds and seeds all are used in food. It improves the flavor of many vegetables, meats, fish, soups, sauces and salads, as well as pickles.

The history of herbs goes back to antiquity. Herbs have not changed--except basil. A lovelier plant is the newly highly honored hybridized Opal Basil. For two years, we have delighted in purchasing plants which give beautiful color to the garden as well as piquancy to the food. This year, we can buy seeds. Wait until the ground is warm and danger of frost is over before planting out-of-doors. The lovely purple foliage and its pinky purple flowers are beautiful and, if you like the flavor of bay leaf, you'll especially enjoy basil.

There are many more herbs and there is much to learn about the ones mentioned and their uses. To many of us, they are interesting, useful and intriguing and lots of fun to raise along with IRIS.

Happy Herbing,
Adah Anderson

SUGGESTED PLANT FOOD FOR IRIS

Fertilizers are rated in terms of three numbers, always printed on the bag, as 5-10-5. They refer to the respective percentages of nitrogen, phosphorus, and potash, in that order. To oversimplify the functions of these elements, the nitrogen encourages leaf growth; phosphorus encourages flowers, fruits and seeds; potash encourages stems and roots. Of the three, nitrogen is the eager beaver. Most of its commercial forms become quickly available. The plant gobbles it up and its leaves grow like crazy. You can give a row of radishes a good dose of nitrogen and produce a perfectly glorious crop of leaves--without a single radish underneath. That result would be ideal on a lawn, but not so good in an ornamental plant. Phosphorus and potash, on the other hand, are not so enthusiastic. They don't insist on being gobbled up; they wait for the plant to need them.

With this background, we can begin to construct a fertilizer formula for Irises that will give us the results we want, namely sturdy plants, solid rhizomes, and lots of flowers. Here is my own pet formula. I take one part of any commercial 5-10-5 fertilizer and add one part each of superphosphate and muriate of potash. I dump the resulting mixture into twice its volume of gypsum and thoroughly mix the whole mess. Now my nitrogen is diluted down to slightly over 1/2 of 1 per cent, and I can safely spread this mixture rather liberally around my Iris plants (definitely not on the rhizomes) and hoe it into the soil without any fear of stimulating excessive soft growth, with resulting susceptibility to rhizome rot. Why not omit the nitrogen entirely? Because I want a moderate amount of leaf stimulation. The leaves manufacture the food that is

stored in the form of starch in the rhizomes.

Now what about that gypsum that cropped up in the last paragraph? Here we're getting out of the strict area of plant foods and into the related field of acidity and alkalinity. Gypsum is calcium sulfate. Its reaction in the soil is neutral or slightly acid. All of the other forms of calcium available to gardeners are alkaline in their reaction. Irises like calcium, but in a strongly alkaline medium certain plant foods, notably potash, become insoluble and hence unavailable to the plants. Gypsum supplies the calcium and at the same time makes the vital potash available.

Glenn F. Hanson

A most educational and instructive class on the judging of the Iris blossom, foliage and plant in general was given by Mr. Gus Sindt in February at the American Hardware Mutual Insurance Company. Color, size, substance, form, and style of the blossom was discussed as well as the stalk and growth habits. Cultural perfection and grooming was stressed, when judging.

Various patterns of Iris, and colors were explained. Onco, Regalas, Aril bred, Siberian, Spuria, and Seedlings were a part of the program. To go in our own garden and select a specimen bloom stalk is indeed one of the pleasures of the Irisarian.

Twenty-two attended these meetings under adverse weather conditions. We thank Mr. Sindt for the opportunity given us to hear these excellent lectures.

On March 3rd and 10th similar classes were held for members that were unable to attend in February.

From your hybridizing chairman:

Too often one finds that the beginner with irises is too diffident to join an iris society. 'I don't know enough; it would be running before I could walk, even if not impertinent,' they say. They are wrong, of course. The less they know, the easier it is to help them learn. Similarly, the newly-joined member all too often thinks that he knows too little about the business to start hybridizing. 'What ought I to do before I begin?' he asks. The answer is: 'Start now; it is the quickest way of learning.' The king in "Alice in Wonderland" gave some straightforward advice: 'Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end, then stop.'

Mind you, once we have started iris breeding, there will be no ending it; we will never voluntarily stop. However, the first part of the advice is fundamentally sound, we should make a start. Many present day breeders were to hesitant at the outset, and lost several years through diffidence, waiting for advice, and making sure that they were getting off on the right foot. It is much better to start now, "any old how" and gain experience, than to let years go by indecisively before plucking up courage to make a beginning. So all those who are tempted to breed irises should resolve to start in 1964 with whatever irises they then have in their garden--helped, of course, by the pollen they can "win" from friends.

(over)

The first question asked by most beginners is: "What coloured parents do I use in order to get irises that are blue?" (Or it may be yellow, or brown, or pink, or some other hue, that is required). The answer is, as a rough guide, that to get irises of a certain colour, you cross two irises of that hue, e.g., to get pale blues, cross two pale blues, to get variegatas, cross two variegatas, and so on. In some cases, depending on the varieties used, some of the progeny can be expected to be of a different hue, thus:

Two blues may give a few whites.

Two browns may give a few golden yellows.

Two pinks may give a few yellows, apricots, oranges, corals, orchids, or magentas.

Two amoenas (of the older kind, i.e., not of the Progenitor line) are likely to produce more neglectas than amoenas.

Two variegatas may produce some yellows, and brown bitones.

Then there are other ways of getting certain hues or tones. A deep blue crossed with a pale blue or a white is likely to give some mid to pale blues. A golden yellow, particularly if it has a brown iris in its pedigree, crossed with a brown is likely to give yellows and browns.

To sum up, be sure to make a start in 1964; make the best start you can, but do not wait until 1965 merely because you think that, by then, you will make a still better start. Remember Lord Byron's "My way is to begin with the beginning."

The above excerpt is from an article in the B.I.S. Year Book, 1963 by H. Senior Fothergill.