

Twin City Iris Society

-News and Views-

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There is snow on the ground--but it is spring! Believe it or not, and soon we will be seeing the miracle of earth's awakening again. It hardly seems possible but in two short months we will be in the throes of another Twin City Iris Show--the next two months will be filled with frantic activity and the longer warm weather eludes us the more frantic will be the activity.

The next meeting of the T.C.I.S. will be held on Thursday April 16th at the usual meeting place--the Y.W.C.A., at Twelfth and Nicollet, 8:00 p.m. This will be a program devoted to the Iris. Gus Sindt, one of our most faithful members and also President of the Minnesota Horticultural Society--will be the speaker on The Iris Year. There will also be answers to your questions, so this should prove to be an interesting program for everyone interested in iris.

As you go about getting ready for your spring planting, if any of you find you have excess bulbs or roots to be planted in the spring such as glads or dahlias, etc., why not bring them to the meetings in April or May to be used as door-prizes? Someone will be very happy to have those that are extras to you, and how much fun it is to share, it seems a garden shared is a happier, lovelier garden.

* * * * * *President's Letter* * * * * *

Recently, it was my pleasure to hear Dr. Snyder, head of the Department of Horticulture, University of Minnesota, talk on the Arboretum. Here are a few notes that were taken which will be of interest to all gardeners.

In the last six years, since the beginning of the landscape Arboretum, which belongs to the people of Minnesota. Two thousand different plants have been planted. Many consisting of woody ornamentals. A collection of hemerocallis was given by Mr. E. C. Lehman, Fairbault, Minnesota. There are 75 varieties of peonies, many lillies, Hosta Collection, 30 different kind of Maples, 85 flowering crab apples, 150 shrub and old fashioned roses, 1500 individual plants of azaleas, 130 various kinds. They will begin to bloom the first week in May and continue blooming to July 1st.

There are the hardy Minnesota Forsythia, mock orange, weigelia and lilac. A very large collection of clemetis are to be planted this spring--a gift from Mr. Lehman.

No iris was mentioned. Minnesota does have nature irises that grow in wild, wooded areas and swamps. The fibrous-rooted Siberian is moisture loving with narrow grass like leaves. They do well growing near streams or in open meadows and have dainty graceful flowers. Pseudacorus Iris, noted for the height and beauty of foliage with its gleaming yellow flowers, grows along streams, in bogs or in well-drained soils. This iris needs little attention.

We are a state-wide organization and have one of the most beautiful flowers grown. Once, the iris was known as the Poor Man's Orchid but not any more. The price of one rhizome often is worth, in dollars, several times that of one orchid. So much has been done in the hybridizing field that we now have flared, ruffled, tailored, laced and domed beauties of all colors, with large flowers that measure from seven to eight inches across.

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We are all civic minded citizens and are very proud that last month Minneapolis was named an All American City, other cities in the state have received such awards. Visitors come to this area for big league ball games, theaters, opera, music, art displays, and to enjoy the beautiful parks and lakes. Are we doing all we can to give our flower "The Iris" the recognition it so richly deserves? We grow it in our yards and enjoy its beauty but do we, as a group, have plantings where visitors and all Minnesotans can see and appreciate this flower! This has been given much thought and plans are underway for the fulfillment of such a project. At the April 16th meeting this program will be announced.

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With the coming of spring--comes new hope, new flowers and hopefully new members for the Twin City Iris Society. Someone will be the lucky person to receive one of the three awards being given for the most new memberships. Contest closes at auction time. Remember the grand first prize: The beautiful Burning Brand. 1961 Introduction (Whiting). Second prize--Amethyst Flame, 1963 Dykes Medal Winner. Third prize--Kessen Kin, H. M. 1962.

N O T I C E

Out-of-town members--we look forward to new members from your area.

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On April 16th you will want to hear and see the "The Iris Year" by Mr. Gus Sindt. This program is of interest to all of us. Many of our friends have asked questions about the cultivation of Iris. Do bring them. This educational meeting will be enjoyed by all.

Greta M. Kessenich

IRIS IN APRIL By David B. Sindt

When I saw the first crocuses and scillas pushing through the soil a couple of weeks ago, I knew Spring had arrived. The fact that they have been snowed on twice (so far) and are still in there trying merely confirms the fact. And, to any real iris lover, Spring means that iris season is just around the corner. I always feel sorry for those irisarians who have to wait until the last week in May to see their first iris in bloom. Two months is too long to have to wait. It seems that even the most single-minded tall-bearded iris fan would appreciate being able to cut this time by a month.

"Oh, I know what you're going to say now," you say. "You're going to try to convince me that I should grow those miserable little dwarf iris. My grandmother grew them, and I didn't like them any better than I do now. Those aren't real iris!" It is a shame that some of the most sophisticated irisarians that wouldn't think of comparing modern tall-bearded iris with the ones grandma grew should think that they could do this with modern dwarf iris. Fifteen years ago this would have been possible, but not today! And who would want a three or four foot iris plant with flowers six inches across blooming the first week in May with the narcissus and species tulips and other early spring bulbs, only to be knocked down by a late frost?

Let us begin with the very earliest of the dwarfs. These will bloom in the Twin Cities as early as the last week in April or the first of May, depending

on the year. This is a group that used to be limited to the old *Atrorosea* and perhaps *Azurea*, but not much else. Some of the finest new varieties are in this early-blooming group. The best ones are still blues, violets, and whites, but the color range grows every year. Among those in my garden I have White Mite (pure white), Wee Blue (deep blue), Blue Spot (two-tone blue), Spring Joy (two-tone lavender), Sulina (violet), and Hanselmayer (light yellow). My new catalogs include varieties such as Jasper Gem (two-tone red), Orchid Sheen (orchid-pink), Atomic Blue (pale blue), Greenie (two-tone green), and Flashlight (bright yellow). This earliest blooming group is appropriately tiny in size, few of these reaching six inches in height. Unlike the older varieties in this group, however, these newer ones make-up for their diminutive size by heavy bloom; several stems may come from one tiny rhizome, and the rate of increase is phenomenal. With these, as with most other dwarfs, they quickly form a thick mat of early color, so that division every two years might not be out of place.

Even showier than these earliest varieties are the later ones which begin while the earliest ones are at their peak and continue right up to the tall-bearded season. Because the dwarf iris conventions, etc. are held when these later ones are at their peak, the earlier ones seldom win awards for the simple reason that the judges either don't get to see the best ones in bloom or they have forgotten their charms by the time they vote in June. It is the same reason that certain very early and late blooming tall-bearded iris seldom win prizes at the Iris Show.

Among these later bloomers there is as wide a range of colors as with the tall-bearded iris. I have in my garden such varieties as Bright White (pure white), Ablaze (brilliant variegata), Fashion Lady (yellow), Gay Lassie (white standards, yellow falls), Cherry Spot (white standards, red falls), Grandma's Hat (two-tone purple), Heart's Content (white standards, purple falls), Knick Knack (blue and white plicata), Dirty Face (clean green), Little Mohee (two-tone brown), Blue Frost (pale blue), Perky (purple), Little Joe (near black), Red Gem (red), and Mumbo (violet). In the new catalogs I see such things as Cream Supreme (cream), So Fair (white standards, orchid pink falls), and Fortissimo (orange). Although the varieties I list here are selected to give an idea of the wide range of colors available, there are many others which are very fine. As with the tall-bearded iris, the subtle differences between many varieties are not evident in the brief catalog description. This is why I recommend, where possible, seeing the flowers in bloom; they will really capture your heart, as can be testified by those who saw the ones I brought to the TCIS meeting last year. If you would like to see them in my garden, call my father to see when they will be at their peak this year. But whatever happens, order a few this year from a dwarf iris specialist or someone else who lists them by variety names (not colors). There are perhaps half a dozen of these specialists in this country who grow hundreds of the best of dwarf iris; if you would like, I can send you a list of their names. Three to five dollars can provide you with a fine assortment that will stretch your iris season by a month in 1965.

AZALEAS AND RHODODENDRUM

By Dr. Reuben David

Looking for a new idea for early blooms? Azaleas offer an early-blooming unusual flower. They like a site with dappled shade and prefer acid soil.
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Make planting holes twice as wide and deep as the original root balls and make sure of good drainage. We use a soil of two parts black dirt and one part peat, and maintain acidity with the use of powdered sulfur or aluminum sulfate. Be sure to avoid clay soil. Azaleas may be wintered in a manner similar to roses--leaves, sawdust, or buckwheat hulls may be used to cover plants. We have the following varieties: Azalea mucronulatum--the earliest blooming variety, rosy lavender in color, grows to six feet in height and looks well planted with Forsythia. Azalea schlippenbachii--a soft rose-pink, producing clusters of flowers, grows three to five feet. Azalea mollis--colors range from coppery flame to yellow. Koster's brilliant--probably the nearest red of the mollis azaleas and does well in full sunlight. Nancy waterer--light yellow, Coccinea speciosa--orange, and Fanny--rose pink are other mollis that have done well for us.

Rhodeodendrum Catowbiense--lavender pink, hardy in this area. Definitely must have acid soil but aluminum sulfate may prove toxic. Only protection needed is shade during winter from bright sun--burlap sack may be sufficient. Evergreens make an excellent background setting for Azaleas and Rhododendrum.

MORE ABOUT HERBS

By Adah E. M. Anderson

Have you hear what I heard?

When planting nasturtiums was mentioned at the last Herb Society meeting and someone remarked, "There'll be plenty of aphids there!", a highly educated European woman, now a farmer's wife in our country, replied, "That's no problem. Just boil up a good big pan of onions and pour the water they were cooked in upon the ground where the nasturtiums are to be planted. There will be no aphids. It's even a good plan to plant some form of onions between other plants subject to aphids."

If this will eliminate spraying, I'm trying it. Less hard work!

And speaking of onions, Chives are very delicate and useful members of the onion family. If you like a bit of onion flavor in food, a planting of Chives helps during the heat of the summer when onions are very difficult to keep. Also, it is the herb ready for you earliest in the spring. If it is handy to beg a start from a friend's garden, do it. Otherwise, the grocery stores should be selling little pots of Chives by the time the newsletter reaches you. Unless you plan to be an unusually heavy user, one pot should be enough. Chives multiply. And when they blossom, if a few flowers are left to ripen and the seed is scattered around your planting, there will be a lot of little plants come up which will grow large and strong and tender for next year's use. When you use Chives, cut the leaves close to the ground. It encourages growth. Mince or chop fine to use for mild fresh onion flavor or as a garnish.

A close cousin of the onion is Garlic. When you buy a package of fresh Garlic, after using what you want at the moment, break up the other bulbs into sections or "cloves." Plant the cloves as you would onion sets. The leaves they send up are flat instead of cylindrical as with onions. When you want more Garlic, take up just what you want. I have had it live through the winter nicely.

Entirely different is Borage. Seed may be sown as soon as the ground can be worked. This herb is said to be very good with fish. It has a mild cucumber flavor. I cut up small tender leaves very fine to use in potato or vegetable salad if there is no cucumber at hand. But the star-shaped blue flowers with black centers are the real fun. Float them in finger bowls, freeze them in the center of ice cubes to float in glamour in cold beverages, or candy them as you do mint leaves. The blossoms reappear all summer and the seeds drop for next year's plants.

Parsley's rival as the favorite American herb is Sage. You can plant seeds, but one or two plants are all that most people want. Sage plants are handsome and about 16 inches across. They last as long as 6 years but begin to grow coarse and woody after 3 years. Layer or cut slips to start new plants to replace the old. During the first year, only one harvest of a considerable number of leaves for drying should take place. After that, 2 or 3 crops may be had. Never cut down an entire plant but carefully gather some of the leaves. Of course, you can always pick one leaf to use fresh. It is much finer flavored and also more pungent fresh than dry. Use with restraint. In addition to seasoning for poultry, try it on pork or veal. Also, with frugality, use it with cottage cheese and such vegetables as Brussels sprouts, carrots, eggplant, onions, tomatoes and zucchini. Always use fresh Sage sparingly and with care in order that you may have Happy Herbing!

MEXICAN SHRIMP PLANT

Origin Mexico. North of frost line use as house plant. South of frost line use as garden plant. New plants are started by cuttings. Prune back severely in late August. They are purely decorative not producing any sort of food or herb. It has a flower on the end which starts green and turns to red with a tongue hanging that is white. It needs a lot of water and a little plant food. Delights in full sunshine and considerable warmth.

Last summer I had one that had over 50 flowers. I plant mine in the ground in summer, but take them in the house in the fall. There is a Mexican Shrimp plant in the Como Conservatory that has between 500 and 1,000 flowers.

Mrs. Hallin

JAPANESE IRISES

One question which seems to crop up frequently is--can we raise Japanese Irises in this area? The answer is--definitely yes! There is no reason whatever to deny ourselves the exotic beauty of these huge, colorful, Japs, because they will come through our winters with no more protection than we customarily give our tall-bearded irises. However, they do have two definite requirements which can't be ignored, a moderately acid soil and an abundance of water up to their blooming time, which is a few weeks later than the tall-bearded. Neither of these requirements is difficult to meet.

Acid soil seldom occurs naturally in this part of the country, where most of our soil is of limestone origin. However, it presents no great problem. I prefer to disregard all of the usually recommended methods and do it the easy way--with evergreen needles. The rakings from under a single good-sized spruce, worked into the ground around the plants once a year, will keep a lot

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of Japs perfectly healthy and happy. The ideal solution to the water requirement is to plant them in a low, damp place where tall-beardededs won't survive, if you happen to have such a spot. If not, it is a simple matter to provide artificial watering until they bloom, and after that it won't matter. The spectacular size and coloring of the modern Japs, and the continuation of bloom after the tall-bearded season is over, more than repay the insignificant amount of fussing they require.

G. F. Hanson

PASSION FLOWER

At this time of the year it is most appropriate that we begin thinking of flowers for our garden.

One of the most fascinating and exotic flowers grown is the Passion Flower or Passiflora. The beautiful blossoms, at first glance, do not seem real. They are almost jewel like in appearance.

Last summer many visitors came to our garden and this particular vine full of waxy flowers was always a topic of conversation. The 15-foot branching vine covered a large part of a 6 foot in height fence, that was also used for the many clematis growing in a long row supported by this fence.

These vines are easily grown--plant in a sunny location, either in pots plunged in the soil to the rim, or directly in the earth. They are heavy feeders. Give them rich soil and compost. They will reward you handsomely.

They are not hardy in Minnesota. Cut them back and take in the house for the cold months.

The legend connected with this unusual flower comes from the Spanish Missionaries. When they discovered the flower here in America, they associated it with the Passion of Christ. It was thought that the fringes of the flower were symbolic of the crown of thorns. Some others thought it represented the halo around Christ's head. The ten petals represented the ten disciples present at the crucifixion, with Peter and Judas absent. The five anthers typified the five wounds. The division of the pistel represented the nails of the cross and the stamens, the hammer that drove them. The pointed leaves represented the spear that pierced his side and the tendrils represented whips and cords.

Greta Kessenich

In the show this year there will be a class devoted entirely to Dyke's Medal Winners. In order that each member would know which irises were eligible for competition in this class Dr. Halleck--co-chairman for the show, compiled--and had mimeographed the sheet pertaining to Dyke's Medal Winners in this News & Views. So keep this for future reference.