

# Twin City Iris Society

## NEWS & VIEWS

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NOTICE: The April meeting of the Twin City Iris Society meeting has been changed from Thursday, April 15 (Maundy Thursday) to Friday, April 23. The Board decided on this change because of the many people who would be unable to attend on the former date because of Holy Week activities. The meeting room was not available for a later Thursday so the Friday, April 23 date was decided upon. Remember this change! ! The meeting place will be the same--Guaranty State Bank of Robbinsdale, 3700 West Broadway.

There will be a most interesting program. Our own Glenn Hanson will give a program on Aril Iris, those exotic beauties that are so challenging and unusual. There will also be short talks on spring care of your iris gardens.

Our pot luck dinner and Come As An Iris meeting in March was quite a success! ! The costumes were many and varied and challenged the guessing abilities of all of us.

Maybelle Wright took the prize for naming the most entrants correctly. Prizes were awarded in the following categories: (the judges let it be known they had a very difficult task in narrowing it down as there were so many good ones in each classification.)

Most Unusual: Greta Kessenich as Emerald.

Donald Rudser as High Note Fountain.

Most Elaborate: David Goddard - Solid Gold.

Mrs. Glenn Hanson - Iman Onco.

Most Humorous: Walter Carlock - Countryside.

Mary Ann Mutterer - Witch Doctor.

Most Original: G. B. Gable - Eleanor's Pride.

Mrs. Annette Cox - Comanche.

Honorable Mention went to Maybelle Wright and Millie Stover who came as a duo as Wine and Roses.

Every year this turns out to be one of the really fun meetings of the year, we missed those of you who were unable to attend and hope you will make plans now to join us next year.

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### THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The calendar indicates we are in the spring season and how anxious we are to spend days in the garden. At this writing, all iris beds are buried under thirty inches of snow. A warming trend is moving in gradually and before too long we will be able to peek under the snow and leaf covering to see the tiny spears of green showing through.

When the air, sun and soil beckons you to throw off the winter doldrums, many things are to be done. As you work and greet neighbors and friends, remember that  
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they too, might enjoy gardening. It is a pleasurable hobby, there are many things to recommend, sunshine and fresh air, exercise, (aching muscles) planting a seed and watching it grow. Abundance of beautiful flowers and "One is nearer God's Heart in a garden than anywhere on earth."

The Twin City Iris Society is a community asset. We are interested in gardening in a broad sense and specializing in a field of growing better and more beautiful iris. To belong to such a society stimulates interest and better understanding of individual problems in gardening. We have an exchange of members' ideas, discussion of new iris and introductions, hybridizing, plant disease, how to combat them and good fellowship. We need a sizable increase in new memberships. We need you. We need active workers among our own present members.

Every member is an equal part of this Society. What this Society means to you personally is largely determined by your own activities in the progress of this organization. Will you begin now, talk membership, talk iris, talk gardening, talk plant life, talk flowers, talk Twin City Iris Society. Bring in new members. We welcome them. When you turn in new memberships to the membership secretary, make it known where the credit is due.

You already know there is a contest in conjunction with this membership drive. Just a little competition adds some spice. Your efforts will be rewarded.

Greta M. Kessenich  
President

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March can roar and roar--it did on the 27th of March, the Saturday of the special meeting. Eleven inches of snow came down throughout the day, when hardy irisarians were watching slides of "New introductions and better iris," 104 of them, sent to us from the American Iris Society.

They were beautiful, the new introductions are something to see. Improvement each year, in color, size, and form. The ruffling and laces were superior. The tailored flowers were lovely.

Mr. W. G. Sindt conducted a study on Iris Color Classification after the slide showing.

Our thanks to Mrs. E. Muttterer, the Social Chairman, for hot coffee and cake served after the meeting.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: I received a wonderful article on Dwarf Iris from David Sindt, and because of its length I couldn't use it all this month. But he ends with an invitation to view his dwarfs so I am printing that part of his article, as it would be too late in May. Thanks, David!

If you are interested in obtaining these lists (Top Award Winners) yourself annually, in voting on the symposiums and in articles on other aspects of dwarf irises (a total of 74 pages, 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 11" this year), one of the best investments you could make is to join the Dwarf Iris Society. Dues are \$2.00 for an individual, \$3.00 for a family--not much when you think of how much most flower societies charge--and include the annual DIS Portfolio. This year, as a bonus, a beginner's manual is being offered to new members for no extra cost. Be sure to mention that you'd like a copy when you send in your membership fee. The treasurer's address is: Mrs. Adda Ayres, North Spencer Street, Redkey, Indiana 47373. And if you

want to try that #1 method for choosing iris varieties, you are welcome to visit my garden. Check with my dad (Gus Sindt) for the best time this year. The first blooms open for me some time between April 25 and May 10 and continue almost until the first tall bearded bloom.

When you buy your dwarfs, you are most likely to find a good selection that includes newer varieties in the price lists of dwarf iris specialists, of which there are perhaps a half dozen. They include:

Walter Welch  
Middlebury, Indiana

Buena Vista Gardens  
113 North University Street  
Vermillion, South Dakota

Brown's Iris Gardens  
14920 Highway 99  
Lynwood, Washington

Old Brook Gardens  
19 Mary Lane  
Greenvale, New York 11548

Raleigh Hills Gardens  
5635 S.W. Boundary Street  
Portland 1, Oregon

Some of these growers list only dwarf iris and others list other types as well; some issue a limited list of carefully-selected varieties of high quality, others specialize in varieties of only one or two breeders, while still others list virtually all the varieties presently available. All, however, list the quality of varieties that is today winning awards and symposium ratings. Why not set aside a corner of your garden for a few this year? You will be as surprised and delighted as the fellow who used to grow "flags like Grandma had" that planted Happy Birthday in a corner of his garden!

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#### CABLE IRIS GARDENING

This is March 24th and there is at least two feet of snow covering the entire iris garden. For several nights the temperature has dropped below zero setting new records for this time of year. Today the temperature got up to 17 degrees above zero. March has only seven more days left.

For many years I commenced removing the hay covering the iris April 1st. Two years ago I started a couple days before April 1st. I have no idea when the weather will permit removal this year. It will be necessary to remove the hay immediately when it is dry enough to burn. There will be no time to spare. Wouldn't it be something if we should get a week of April showers just about the time the snow is all gone?

Just think. In less than sixty days after April 1st the tall bearded iris usually commence to bloom. Two years ago the first dwarf iris bloomed April 23rd and tall bearded Confetti and Heritage started blooming May 24th. How about it; will the snow be gone by April 23rd this year or will warm weather come with a bang?

Another chore I usually do at this time is to apply a top dressing of mineralized 5-10-5 Loma on the lawn. A person shouldn't walk on the lawn soon after the frost has gone out of the ground so I try to get it done on a cold morning when the top soil is frozen.

Immediately after the hay has been removed is the time to clip off the dead portion of the leaves with grass shears, keeping a close watch for winter injury to rhizomes that may need treating. It is good practice to keep a sprinkle can filled with Terraclor 75% solution handy to drench the rhizomes and soil and not try to  
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remember the location to return later to do the job. I use a sharpened table spoon to cut and scrape the soft part of the rhizome away which I put in a bucket for removal before drenching with Terraclor 75% solution. That drop in temperature to 17 degrees below zero November 28th could have caused a lot of winter injury. I am expecting more than normal losses but hoping there was not a lot of tender growth at that time and that there were enough frosty nights to harden the plants off before it came.

Before I fertilize I cultivate the soil working the hoe as close as possible to the rhizomes but trying to avoid cutting or digging the roots loose. A side dressing of mineralized 5-10-5 Loma is then applied to the newly cultivated soil keeping it at least four to six inches away from the rhizomes and sprinkle bone meal between the rhizomes where it is dangerous to use a commercial fertilizer with 5% nitrogen. It is then raked or worked into the loose soil with a hoe. The reason I don't apply the fertilizer first and then cultivate is because it is almost impossible to keep the fertilizer away from the rhizomes.

Soon as the warm days come and the temperature gets above seventy degrees, the little borers will start to hatch out from the eggs laid by the moths last fall. There will be many windy or rainy days when spraying can't be done so that chore should not be put off when a nice day comes. I realize that the iris should be sprayed about three times before they bloom but some years I only sprayed once or twice and then some borers escaped and had to be squeezed or dug out.

I have read that detergent has been found injurious to plants so last year I changed to Fels Naptha soap for a spreader-sticker and it worked fine to make the spray stick to the leaves. I shaved a bar of Fels Naptha soap into a gallon of hot water and stirred making a soft soap. Then I used a cupful of the soft soap in ten gallons of spray solution. The spray solution I make is for three purposes. One heaping tablespoonful of 50% DDT in each gallon of water for the control of the iris borer, Kelthane (a miticide) for control of red spider mites and Fermate for control of leafspot and other diseases. I never put these powders directly into the sprayer for they will float on top of the water and not mix so I fill a glass jar half full of water and add the insecticide or fungicide powder and shake until mixed well, then it is ready to be poured into the sprayer. I wear rubber gloves while I am mixing and spraying. DDT builds up in our body system so it should be kept off our skin. A very serviceable breathing mask can be purchased at the paint stores more reasonable than the masks sold at drug stores. I have not used one while spraying but have thought about trying one this year. I used one while shoveling snow when the temperature was below zero and it worked very well.

After the iris bloomed I discontinued the DDT in the spray solution and changed from Fermate to Parzate for the fungicide. Parzate is made from zinc and discolors the leaves leaving a gray-white residue. I like the way it washes off the leaves and runs down the stalks forming a hard ring of scale at the soil line around the rhizomes that seems to keep the rhizomes healthy.

Red spider mites can do much damage in hot, dry weather to iris and day lily foliage causing leaves to curl and twist and turn yellow. DDT upsets the balance of nature, killing the other insects and permitting the red spider mites to run wild. In April when the phlox plants were only one inch high I have seen the leaves mottled, twisted and bulged, infected with red spider mites. So I give the phlox the same treatment as the iris and in July when they start to bloom the foliage is nice, clear, dark green. I don't pass up the evergreens or roses but give them a swish as I go by. During the summer I change from Kelthane to Isotox



Malathion which not only destroys red spider but mosquitos and aphids too. Since I started keeping the green aphids off the iris, scorch has almost entirely disappeared from our iris garden. It is claimed that aphids spread iris plant diseases.

I read an article that claimed that a piece of Fels Naptha soap wired to the crotch of a lilac bush would wash down the trunk with the rain and keep the borers away. My mother used laundry soap when I was a boy and sprinkled the sweet peas and zinnias with the wash water and her flowers were never covered with bugs. It's a changing world we live in.

G. B. Gable

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#### MINIATURE TALL BEARDED IRIS

Of all the median groups, the MTB are easily the most frustrating. They abound in virtues eagerly sought by hybridizers in other groups, and in vices that are the despair of their most ardent fans.

According to the standards the MTB bloom in the TB season, range in height from 15" to 28". Must have good branding and plentiful bud count. The flowers must be small, ideally 3" x 3". The sum of the width and height of the bloom should not exceed 6". The stem must be slender and dainty, about as thick as a lead pencil at the base, and not at all stiff looking.

It does not take a great deal of imagination to see the advantages of such a graceful plant. Their appeal to arrangers is obvious and accounts for the common name "table iris." Without this appeal they would all have been relegated to the compost heap years ago and be nothing but a dim memory. But a few were salvaged. A few devoted souls continued to grow them, tried to improve the, and sang their praises in quiet, lady-like tones. Few noticed years could go by without a miniature being registered. This was usually followed the next year with a notation that the classification had been corrected, and it was really a puny border iris. Even knowledgeable hybridizers have only a vague notion of what a miniature should be. Few have received awards of any sort and precious few deserve awards. And yet the good ones will win your heart if given half a chance. Like married love, it may have more to do with their faults than their virtues. Some are endearing personalities.

I have a few, and I am looking for more. One looks like a bouquet of tiny white stars. Another reminds me of a cloud of butterflies. I know that sounds poetic but they can effect you that way.

I have not grown enough varieties long enough to prove it statistically, but I am reasonably convinced that the tables are superior to the tallis in winter hardiness. Some are horribly marred with leaf spot every year, but most of them are no worse in that respect than the big fellows. I am having a tough struggle trying to bloom an old variety called Bluet. (Naturally, I have filled notebook pages with breeding plans based on that one.) Soft rot seems to be its natural state, and I consider it a major mystery how it survived at all for sixty or more years, but most do very well in that respect. As a group the tables bloom prolifically, increase with gay abandon and the percentage of disease, at least so far, is running noticeably less than the tallis.

There is no doubt that all these plus factors are due to the fact that all the iris that fit the standard so far are diploids. Chromosome doubling has proved a not unmixed blessing. This is also the root of the difficulties. A really new  
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characteristic brought into the group will represent a major accomplishment. I have made miniature crosses for two years. Pods with 1, 2, or 3 seeds are the common result, when I am fortunate enough to have a take. Some do better, but good seed producers are the exception. From all I have heard, the percentage of germination is just as discouraging. Still, if you have a tiny corner available, you can have a seedling bed. The talls are not so considerate--a few well chosen crosses and they soon have the whole lot filled with their offspring.

Looking over my notes I see comments such as these: "plant in perfect proportion--flowers pinched and dog-eared--standards open." "Really pretty in every way. Too big in every way." "Complain with next order. Its 6" tall!" "Lovely flower--even ruffled. One branch." "Nice stalk, 4 branches and terminal. Lost count of buds, at least 6 in terminal. Two blossoms open at a time in each socket. Tangled mess." "No substance, ugly color."

I can remember looking down the row one day with a feeling of awe that there could be so many shades of purple, all unattractive. If you don't care for muddy purple, there is a good selection of yellow and red variegatas, and heavily marked plicatas, good clean selfs are hard to come by.

Pewee and widget are are two varieties that are commonly grown. Pewee has nice proportion, a slightly greyish-white color with fair form and smoothness. The plant is nice and clean, and it is quite satisfactory as a garden plant. It is the parent of several very nice dwarf iris! Widget is a white and violet plicata. Flower form is so-so, but again it is a nice little plant. It is something of a Snow Flurry in the MTB world since it is listed as the parent of five registered tables. Sylvia was a disappointment. The form is poor and it is too large for me, but it is a lovely clean smooth yellow. I have some numbered seedlings from other hybridizers and some species that are strange indeed. Earl Robert's 62R34 is a perfect little table iris, but the color is an odd sort of ochre with a violet wash that no one seems to love but me. His Parakeet has to be the champ in my garden to date. It won an HM in 1958 and deserves it. The haft is slightly rough and I am not fond of the color. It is an amber and violet bi-color and some people like it. Aside from that, I cannot fault it. Size, proportion, form, substance, stalk, branching, and beed count are all anyone could ask. The leaves are clean, and it is a real bear-cat for vigor. Last season a two year clump bloomed for four weeks, so help me.

Carol Lankow

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When people visit my garden at iris time, they are invariably attracted by my pet pink, Cherie. She won a Dykes Medal but has probably been surpassed by now by newer pinks with better substance, but with that bright tangerine beard even a small clump shows up well. Palomino was one of my first loves and it still delights me with its subtle shading of coppery-pink standards and bright tangerine beard contrasting with the clean ivory falls bordered in omber. I like it best close up in arrangements. Minnie Colquilt is an oldie, a big blue and white plicata that gave me my first blue ribbon at my first show. Need I say more? An iris that I will always find room for is Danube Wave. It is very hardy and multiplies fast and its tall strong flower stalks of deep blue send the most delicious fragrance wafting through my yard.

Minnesota varieties in Texas I just received a card from a fellow Robin member in Texas to whom I gave 12 plants of Earlimore strawberries two years ago this spring. "Sunny I never have enjoyed anything so much as I have the strawberry plants you sent me. They have multiplied so much that I have divided with lots

of people and I gathered 40 gallons last summer. I think of you everytime I see my strawberry patch. Temperature today was 71° and it has rained most every week since September." Mrs. Robert Talley, age 74 years, Denton, Texas, February 19.

Sunny Netko

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It is difficult to select three of your favorite iris, when there are so many favorites. My Honeycomb is a favorite plicata as it has good growing habits, excellent substance, branching, coloring and is hardy.

A lovely blue and I am sure a favorite of many is Allegiance. It has all the qualities of a fine iris.

A two-tone of fine quality, beautiful coloring and just enough ruffling to add to its beauty and fine branching is Melodrama. A beautiful iris alone in the garden or among many of your favorites.

Cecil L. Anderson  
St. Paul, Minnesota

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To write about three of my favorite iris is quite a difficult task, because I have so many favorites. As I think back to last summer's blooms, I remember Mixed Emotion most vividly. It is one of the shorter iris, white in color with a fluorescent lavender haft. The texture is very leathery and long lasting. I believe it lasted three days. Glittering Amber also stands out in my mind as a huge beautiful amber color and rather frilly that last several days. Then, of course, comes Blue Sapphire, the stocks are always so full of blooms the blue is a very clear lovely blue rather frilly. Of course, it was one of my 1st prize winners last year.

Mrs. Ernest Mutterer

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I have become entranced with the new Space Age iris. And impatiently await the results of my hybridizing.

Fabulous Fringes (Austin '61) is a beautiful yellow surprise, one time spooned, the next horned or flounced. Fertile both ways, 47 chromosomes. Straight stalks, good substance and a fast increaser.

Pink Unicorn (Austin '60) is horned, fertile both ways, covered with straight stalks bearing five to seven blossoms. It has a longer blooming period, also.

Butterscotch Kiss (Plough '57) is a golden butterscotch yellow sprinkled with gold dust. Heavily substandced, laced, fertile both ways, though not horned.

Mary Haertzen

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SEEDLINGS

MayPelle Wright

rib,

Oft when on my bed I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
My seedlings flash before my eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude.

Their standards closed and strong of  
Their beards so lush and bright of hue,  
Each one more perfect than its sib,  
Surely, to them is honor due!

With substance thick and flare so gay,  
With veinless haft and lacy edge,  
With colors clear as skies in May  
Their beauties flaunt beside the hedge.

Why is it that my "children" dear  
With well spaced buds so numerous  
When viewed by judges, it is clear,  
At once become quite humorous?

Their branching is beyond compare  
And blossoms of tremendous size  
Have ruffles, ruffles everywhere  
To add some lilt and glamorize.

Oh well, once more I realize  
These "children" I idealize  
Are really "dogs," as all must know;  
How could they have deceived me so?