

Twin City Iris Society

NEWS & VIEWS

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Minneapolis, Minnesota

October, 1966

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#                                     #
#               ANNUAL DINNER MEETING               #
#                                     #
#   October 20, 1966           6:30 p.m.           $1.85 #
#               Jolly Troll                         #
#               5418 Wayzata Boulevard              #
#               (Just West of Highway 100 on Highway 12) #
#                                     #
#   Guest Speaker - Professor W. H. Alderman        #
#                                     #
#               Election of Officers                 #
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Hello again!

At our September meeting we were entertained with a very humorous and comprehensive program of slides and narration by Glenn Hanson on the subject, "What Every Iris Grower Should Know." As this program showed all the basic information every beginning grower should know, I would suggest that it be shown again at a later date.

October is upon us and so is another season, the season of chrysanthemums, those gems of the garden that keep blooming long after all the other flowers have frozen down. There are so many good early mums now that it is well worth putting in a few clumps to brighten the garden.

This is also the season of "clean up." The more you do now, the less you have to do in the spring. Care should be taken when bringing in the house plants that have summered in the garden. Earthworms sometimes become a problem and can be controlled by watering a few times with a weak solution of Lindane or Malathion; repotting is also important, as a rootbound plant does very poorly.

It is also the time for our Annual Dinner. It is our privilege to have as our speaker Professor W. H. Alderman, retired Chief of the Department of Horticulture, University of Minnesota. "Prof" Alderman is our oldest living president of the Minnesota Hort. This being the centennial year of the Hort, I am sure you will be interested in some of its history and activity.

There will also be election of officers. We are assured of a wide selection of foods at a very nominal price at the delightful Jolly Troll. All this plus good fellowship should make up a very memorable evening. See you all then.

Charlotte Schoene

WHAT EVERY IRIS GROWER SHOULD KNOW

By G. F. Hanson, Regional Vice President, American Iris Society

After I spoke to the Society in September, the Editor asked for the text of my talk to be printed in the News and Views. This posed two problems. In the first place, there wasn't any text, just notes. In the second place, I spoke (as usual) much too long to get it into a reasonable amount of space. But here are a few excerpts as I recall them.

WHAT IS AN IRIS? That's easy. It's a flower about three feet tall, and it has three petals that point up and three that point down, and it blooms in early June, and it's beautiful. That's perfect--if you want to limit your interests to just one branch of the iris tribe, the tall bearded. But why do you want to limit your interests? Why not broaden your horizons and multiply your fun? What about all the dwarfs and medians and borders and tables? What about all the Japs and Siberians and spurias? What about all the arilbreds and pure arils? What about the wealth of material available on the species? Do you know about the little blue *I. cristata*, about four inches high, that blooms in the spring with the wildflowers? And at the other end of the line, do you know about the vesper iris, *I. dichotoma*, that starts in midsummer and blooms almost until frost with hundreds of little orchid butterflies on plants as tall as I am? You say, "I can't grow all those things." Maybe not, but you can grow some of them, and you can have some kind of an iris in bloom almost constantly from early spring until late fall. We do!

PLANTING: You can read some pretty elaborate instructions for planting an iris. First you dig a big hole and then you build up a cone in the center of it. Then you set the rhizome on top of the cone and carefully arrange the roots around the outside of it. I call this the "classic hole" and it's just fine if you don't have over a half-dozen irises to plant, particularly if you enjoy building pretty sand castles in the garden. But if you have to plant several thousand, as we did this year, something has to give. So I say, just dig a hole, get the feeder roots down deep and the rhizome shallow, and don't worry. Your iris will grow.

WINTER PROTECTION: After your irises are planted, but before you are going to get any flowers out of them, you have to get over the next hurdle--winter protection. Oh, I know; some of our people don't bother with protection, and if we get enough snow, and if it comes early enough and stays late enough, and if other conditions are favorable, you can get away with it. But I guarantee this: winter covering is a must, and if you continue to ignore it, sooner or later you are going to get educated--the hard way!

Here is how we go about it. In the late fall after growth has stopped we go through the gardens and cut the leaves down to six inch stubs. And right here I can get an argument from some growers, so I'll tell you why we do it. If you leave the leaves on, they will still be there in the spring and will probably still be green. But if you watch those old leaves, you will find that all they do is dry up. New leaves come up to take their place, and then you have to clean up the old ones anyway. We prefer to simplify the spring clean-up by doing it in the fall. But much more important, when we take those leaves out of the gardens in the fall we take a lot of insect eggs and fungus spores right along with them. We don't want them there during warm periods in the winter, and we don't want them there in the spring. Finally, the short leaf stubs provide good anchors to help hold the covering on. So--we cut off the leaves.

Next we put on a strong spray of an insecticide and a fungicide. We want it there during warm periods in the winter, and we want it there the first thing in the

spring. Finally we cover with hay or straw, applied to a sufficient depth to allow for settling after rain and snow. Some growers use leaves with good results, but I would suggest that you avoid the softwood type of leaves that pack down and get soggy.

UNCOVERING: Just as important as covering is uncovering. Get at it as early as possible in the spring, even before you think it's quite safe. By the time the snow has melted and run down through the mulch, but the ground is still frozen and can't absorb it. So there are your plants sitting in a wet, soggy mess with the sun warming up the surface of the mulch, and you have ideal conditions for fungus development. A lot of supposed winter losses occur right at that time, and the principal culprit is a very nasty fungus known as botrytis.

How do you recognize botrytis? Well, if you have some dead or sickly looking plants, pull away the soil and look at the rhizome. If you find some little black things that look like cabbage seeds or caviar clustered around the rhizome, you have botrytis, and you had better get to work fast. Dig out all the affected rhizomes, and be sure to get all the cabbage seeds and the soil they may be mixed in. Get all of this out of the garden; preferably burn it. Then mix up a strong solution of Terra-Chlor and pour it over the plants so that it soaks into the soil around them. If you don't have Terra-Chlor handy, ordinary household bleach of the chlorine type works very well. Dilute it four or five to one and pour it over the plants. We have used it full strength without any damage.

BORERS: Everybody knows about the borer, and everybody has his own pet method of fighting him. I am convinced the best way to fix his wagon is with a thorough clean-up in the fall. Consider the life cycle of the beast. The eggs are laid in late summer and fall by a night flying moth. They are placed on leaves or on nearby weeds and vegetation. In the spring they hatch out, and the borer eats his way into a leaf, down through the leaf, and into the rhizome. Obviously he's pretty hard to get at when he once gets inside the leaf, so the time to discourage him is before he gets in. Remember what I said about our leaf cutting and spraying activities before we put on the winter covering? When we put our gardens to bed they're as clean as a whistle, and borers are almost unknown at our place. The few that escape can be killed with a DDT spray if it goes on early enough. Lately DDT has had some bad publicity because it accumulates in the soil. If this bothers you, the newer insecticide Sevin has been reported to be effective, but it costs a lot more and you may have to put it on several times.

THE AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY: There seems to be an impression that the American Iris Society is for the big names in the iris world. And certainly all of the big names are members. But these people have already arrived. The folks who can profit the most from membership are the rank and file of the iris growers. There is a constant flow of information through the publications of the AIS that just can't be obtained anywhere else. I have said before and I repeat--the AIS has been working for everybody who grows a clump of modern irises, members and non-members alike. If you aren't already a member, I invite you to join us. You need the AIS, and the AIS needs you!

SPECIAL REQUEST

It will soon be time to print our new yearbook. Please help us to make it accurate by giving us any changes of address or telephone number you may have had since the last printing. Starting January 1st, zip codes are necessary for our mailings. Please bring these changes to the October dinner meeting or mail to Mrs. Walter Carlock, 3039 Colfax Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408.

Name _____
 Address _____ Phone _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

MUMS

By Alice Bakke

Prairie Sun (new 1965), a large yellow mum, has been one of the finest this year; cuttings root easily and have vigorous growth.

In early July, before hot weather, we put all our compost between the mums. It keeps the ground cool and moist, and watering is not necessary. New shoots form early. We think this compost helps mums to winter over.

Methods to winter over mums:

1. Cold frame. Screen ventilators to keep out field mice.
2. Potting. I pot about 40 varieties, spray well with Malathion, place on a shelf in the garage where it is cold but not freezing. Water once a week. If the temperature goes to -20° outdoors, I add a little heat in the garage. In February I place them on our south porch, and in a week there is enough growth for cuttings.
3. Outdoor covering. Put 1 inch of ground in the heart of each plant. Water in the crown is fatal. The east side of the house is choice. Cover with oak leaves, marsh hay, or oat straw. Be sure to break off all old plants and burn them. Never use the old plants in the compost.

WHO'S WHO IN T.C.I.S.

This column will be devoted to introducing a few members of the Twin City Iris Society each month--some new, some old.

New Members: JULIUS WADEKAMPER teaches biology at Coon Rapids High School. He has recently returned from ten years in South America, where he taught chemistry. Mr. Wadekamper has about 100 varieties of iris on his 30 acres in Anoka.

GERALD COUGHTRY is a sophomore at St. Cloud State College and has about 25 or 30 varieties of iris in his St. Cloud garden. He is also a rock hound.

Familiar Faces: GLENN HANSON, whose article is in this month's "News and Views" has been a member of T.C.I.S. nine or ten years, but an iris grower about 20 years. In 1965 he and his wife, Zula, turned their acre of iris commercial and sell under the name Riverdale Iris Gardens. Glenn has served the Iris Society in an official capacity as president, first vice president, and a member of the board of directors, as well as his recent service as the Society's tax consultant. Presently Regional Vice President, Region 8, American Iris Society, Glenn says, "God created me with the potential of a corporation tax specialist, but the inclinations of a farmer," making it unnecessary to mention that he has a well developed sense of humor.

MRS. O. A. (ALICE) BAKKE (Mums, this issue) has been a member of T.C.I.S. almost since the society began. She reminisces: "Alice Stenoien brought me to every meeting when I didn't know anything. I learned to label the varieties and cover for winter. Everything I learned in gardening I learned in the Iris Society. The fine folks were so enthusiastic! I love them all!" Alice is an enthusiastic hybridizer and has been a member of the board of directors several times and on the telephone committee.
