

Twin City Iris Society

NEWS & VIEWS

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"FLOWERS THAT DON'T BLOOM IN THE SPRING"

by

Fred Korotkin

April 18, 1968

8:00 P.M.

Guaranty State Bank
3700 West Broadway

Fred Korotkin, speaker at our next meeting, is national president of the American Topical Association, local author, and critic for the Minneapolis Star and Tribune. He has had magazine articles in such periodicals as Natural History, American Forests, Popular Gardening, Ford Times, and about forty-five others. He laughingly included Organic Gardener and Farmer because they paid him for an article which they never printed. Some of his writings have been reprinted in Great Britain and India. You may remember his story on the Duluth mongoose that was popular a few years ago.

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COMING ATTRACTION The May 16th meeting will include American Iris Society slides of new tall bearded iris and dwarf iris, a little Iris Show (dwarf iris), and discussion of selecting and transporting iris to the show.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

From all the signs I see, this promises to be a long hot summer. I looked to the sky quite often in February, March, and the first few days of April to see dust high in the sky quite like the storms of the early 1930's. In checking our records, I find we have had about eight inches of rainfall less than normal. Since June 1967 when the heavy rains caught up for the previous fall and winter supply, we have consistently had less than normal rainfall.

There are some gardening practices we can put into use to help conserve moisture, such as keep weeds down so that there are fewer leaves (transpiration surfaces) available to the hot winds; mulch the ground with a fairly deep layer of mulch to keep soil cool and hold the rains we do get and to prevent runoff; irrigate as necessary, trying not to be hoggish, as others will need water too. Here one must look at the whole scene and sift values. Like beautiful music, beautiful lawns and flower gardens are an esthetic necessity, yet a vegetable garden or crop land should have first dibs on the water supply even before business uses, because preservation of life is more important than enjoying life.

Since the water table is quite low, the extra water held by the mulch would benefit others and would not be any hindrance should we get a sudden down-pour as we had in June 1967. Irrigation water is going to become more of a

problem because we are increasing our population and therefore have need of more water if we are to keep the standard of civilization (?) that we have grown accustomed to. Unless engineers, perhaps weather experts (seeding clouds), and government representatives find new methods of supplying water, we could have a lack of water even when we get our normal rainfall. It still becomes our duty to be conservative of that which we have and use our water wisely, filter it adequately so that it can be reused. I seem to recall that our Minneapolis supply has already been used seven times before the rivers bring it to us. With population growth doubling as rapidly as it does, we may see the day when our water has been used twelve or fourteen times. Benjamin Franklin's admonition to "Waste not, want not" is something we ought to remember. . . . and practice.

- Walter Carlock

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HOW TO SNAP AN IRIS

Almost a year has elapsed since we last photographed iris, so this discussion will have to rely on memory rather more than I would like. Intentions are always to make some notes while I have my camera out, but you know how it is in the garden--you always see something to do first, before you go back inside, and good intentions remain just that--intentions.

My camera is a single lens reflex, which I find excellent for close photography. I had a tendency to ignore parallax and chop the heads off my subjects. By viewing directly through the lens this fault is corrected for you. However, if you are to take good pictures of iris, you will need a camera capable of taking clear pictures at close range. Most cameras with fixed focus (such as the Instamatic) can be equipped with close-up lenses. You will need a 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ and a 3 $\frac{1}{2}$, probably with an adapter ring. Consult your camera shop for this equipment. If you have a Kodak camera, write to Consumer Markets Division, Eastman Kodak, Rochester, N.Y. 14650, and ask for Kodak Pamphlet No. AB-11, Close-up Pictures of Flowers. It explains in great detail how to use a fixed focus camera for close-ups.

Assuming you can move in, you will need a few more things to take interesting pictures. Personally, I prefer portraits to group pictures. If all you are seeking is general color, then a shot of the overall garden, or even of a large clump can be taken without any added equipment. For better records and study, it is well to move in close and photograph just one stalk, or even one blossom.

If you can select and cut a stalk of bloom and take it into the house, or into a sheltered area with ideal light conditions, you have practically won the battle. If you want to photograph in the garden, it is usually necessary to improve on the existing conditions. Usually the background is too busy--other blooms, foliages, the compost pile--none of which add to the picture.

One of the simplest backgrounds I have used is a bath towel--pale blue, light green, soft yellow, or deep green. These are easy to tote along, as they do not wrinkle quickly, and take minimum space. Of course, you need either an assistant to hold it back of the subject, or a portable screen to set it on.

I use a double fold cardboard. It is a niche used in flower shows--about 36" tall by 28" wide, with sides that fold in to support it. (If you are planting very close, you may not have room for all this, and will still need that assistant.) You may also need to improve the light conditions. Without using flash, it is possible to increase the light intensity on your subject by having that handy assistant hold a piece of white cardboard or crumpled and resmoothed aluminum foil to one side of the subject to reflect light on its dark side.

Speaking of light, we have found that late morning or early afternoon are good times to photograph flowers--high noon gives a harsh glare, and early and late day alter the color because of redness from the sun. Getting a good blue seems to be quite a trick--they usually photograph purple. Some of this can be overcome by choosing a day that is partly overcast. You will have to compensate in lens opening, but the blue seems to come more true under less intense light.

A word on film--and I hope I am not being commercial. We have found the truest flower color reproduction with Agfachrome. No doubt there will be a dozen arguments, but that is our preference. For a really good record of an iris, take a picture of a single stalk to show the branching, and then move in and take a close-up of an individual bloom on that stalk. You will then see the form, the color, any haft markings, lace, all the details which you may want to remember. These details are lost in a picture of a clump.

Close-up photography is very interesting, and very worthwhile for record keeping. You still have time to check your camera for equipment for flower portraits before the iris bloom.

- Marge Fisher

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BUILDERS SHOW REPORT

Thanks to those who helped organize, set up, watch over, and take down our Twin City Iris Society booth at the Builders Show. As a service to the gardeners in this area, we distributed about 1,150 sheets of iris culture information.

The management of the Builders Show suggested that the booth should be for the purpose of attempting to get new members. So the cardboard displays were slanted to that purpose. We used the cards that Maybelle Wright designed about "Extending the Iris Season", supplementing a card on hybridizing. These were the primary informative displays. On red cards we gave a number of reasons and benefits one gains by becoming a member. On three separate pedestal supported cards we urged people to come to our meetings to learn how to grow better iris, to come to our iris show at Southdale, and the iris auction in Robbinsdale.

To enhance the booth and attract attention we used four arrangements, a variety of plastic arrangements from dwarfs to rather poor imitations of tall bearded ones, and the crepe paper ones that Alice Stenoien furnished. It was fun to be there and watch people look startled for a second, then go closer and look. Invariably they would remark about the paper ones.

A card table on both sides completed our booth. On one table were the hand-out sheets, and a small chart listing our local growers. The other table had a small chart of rates of membership dues and paper slips for names of those interested in our organization.

All in all, I felt it was a successful exhibit. It might have been better to have had more people in the booth to answer questions. We gained one member who joined at the show, and have eighteen names of people who filled out slips expressing interest in joining or wanting some additional information. If we did nothing else, I'd guess that seven or eight thousand people looked at the exhibit and know the Twin City Iris Society exists.

Thanks again to those who helped.

- Walter Carlock

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NEW MEMBER who joined at the Builders Show:

Mrs. Harold Thomforde
841 Groveland
Crookston, Minnesota 56716

Welcome, Mrs. Thomforde! !

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YOUTHFUL MEMBER HONORED

Kevin Boyce, age 14, showed his display of iris embryo culture at the Twin Cities Regional Science Fair held in the 3M Building in St. Paul on Saturday, March 30th. There were 28 competitors in the biology classification in which Kevin's entry won second place. Congratulations to Kevin, whom Mr. Gable recruited as a TCIS member three years ago. Kevin has two teachers interested in iris who encouraged him on this project, but the person who has had the most influence on Kevin's lasting interest in iris is his grandmother, Mrs. M. C. Senne of Fairmont, who is also a TCIS member. She gave Kevin rhizomes which gave him his start towards a back yard filled with about a hundred varieties. Since his grandmother was doing some hybridizing, he learned from her and has a good number of his own. The next step was using embryo culture to speed the day of seeing the bloom from his crosses. In spite of the hundreds of test tubes and the sterilizing in the pressure cooker, the whole family has had a lot of fun seeing the project develop.

Kevin's scientific eye has noted that the iris he lost this winter to dry rot were mostly plicatas, including his prize, Ribbon Round. Mrs. Senne is a brave experimenter, too. She intentionally left her seedlings uncovered with the idea that an iris in Minnesota has to be hardy. We will be waiting to hear more of this experiment.

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Hummingbirds are attracted to certain flowers more than others. Why:

Probably the flower structure is more important than color. Nectar production also has some effect. Good hummingbird attracters are: columbine, coral bells, ajuga, monarda, salvia, sugar water feeders.

- Minnesota State Horticultural Soc.

MARCH BLOOMING CHAMPION IRIS

Winners for best costumes at the March "Come as an Iris" party were:

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|----------------|--|
| Most Unusual | Walter Carlock as <u>Jet Fire</u>
Ann Johnson as <u>Sandy Jean</u> |
| Most Typical | Warren Johnson as <u>Old Rose</u>
Alice Stenoien as <u>Christmas Time</u> |
| Most Humorous | Don Rudser as <u>Zulu Warrior</u>
Millie Stover & <u>Maybelle</u> Wright as <u>Morning Melody</u> |
| Most Elaborate | Glenn Hanson and
Zula Hanson as <u>Radiant Apogee</u> |

Maybelle Wright and Millie Stover tied for the prize of guessing the correct iris identify of the most costumes.

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AND THEN THE MAN SAID TO JACK,
" I'LL TRADE THIS MAGICAL
RHIZOME FOR THAT COW! "