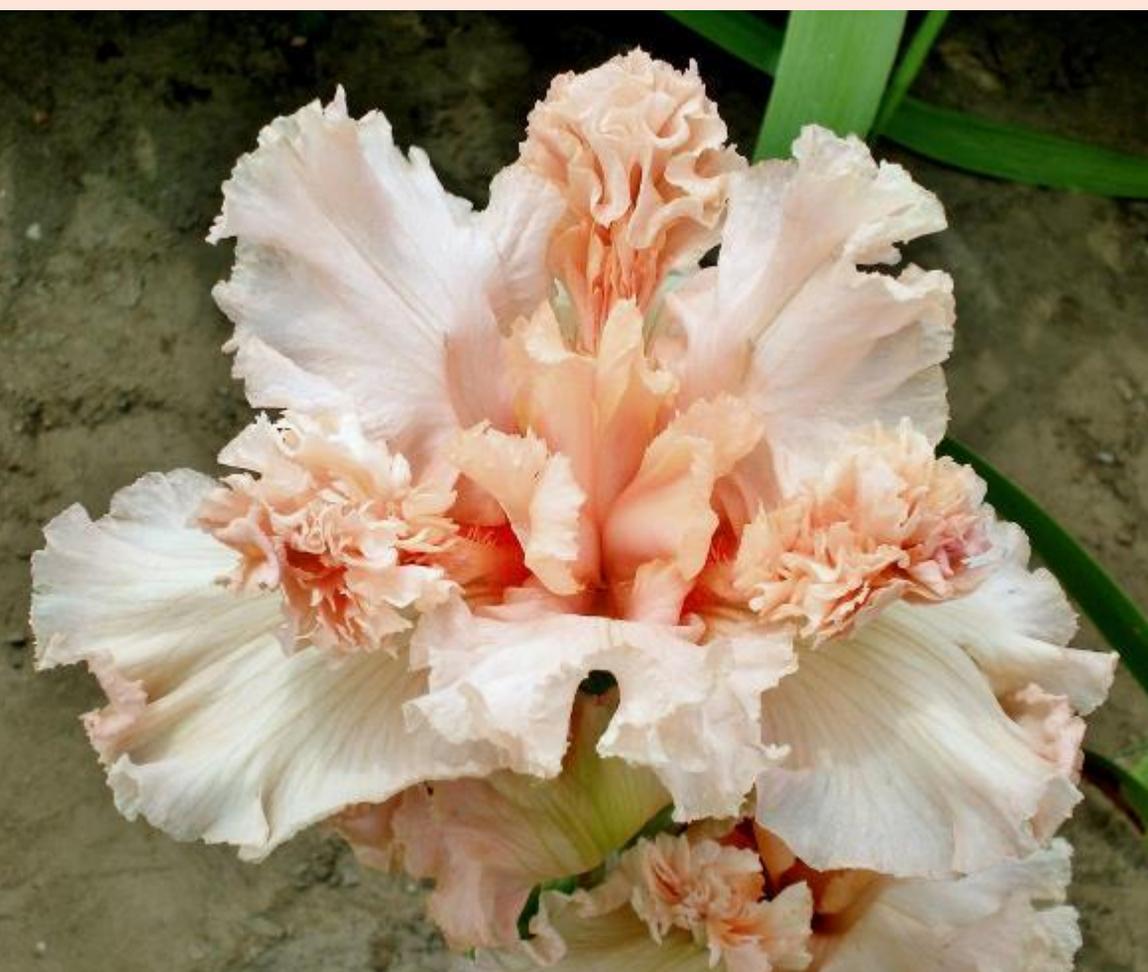


# New Zealand Iris Society

Bulletin 213 – March 2021





## Working Wisely with Garden Tools:

### Iris Digging Device

American irisarian, nurseryman and hybridiser Leonard Jedlicka found that digging dozens of irises in his nursery was a considerable strain.

To make life easier, he devised an addition to his digging fork using a very thick plastic pipe and six strong irrigation clamps placed on each side of the main handle.

By having them on both sides, he can use either foot to lever the rhizomes out of the ground and save both constant bending and back strain.

Be garden safe: dig wisely.



## Membership Subscription Reminder

Members' subscriptions are due for renewal on 1 July. Payment is made to the: **Membership Secretary, Alison Simpson, 4 Balmoral Street, Oamaru North 9400**  
Groups who send in subscriptions by 1 August, together with any notifications of members resigning or new members, receive a 10% rebate on subscriptions paid.

Please note: You must have accounted for all of your members.

Any changes of address should also be sent to the Membership Secretary.



**Front cover:** Space age iris 'Giant Pink Pompoms' created by Kathryn and Leonard Jedlicka of Nebraska, USA, features amazing pompom flounces on its beards. Leonard has said that one day he would love to see a 'flattie' iris with pompoms.

Read more about the Jedlicka irises on pp. 9-12. As well, see on p. 8 how one of Nelson irisarian David Nicoll's latest tall bearded space ace hybrids is exhibiting the makings of a pompom.



# New Zealand Iris Society Inc.

A society existing for the benefit of the members only and not for the profit of any individual.

Website: <https://www.nziris.org.nz>

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**Life Member of the NZIS: Marion Ball.**

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## President's Patch



Hello Everyone,

Welcome to 2021. I sincerely hope that it is a better year for all of us. Please remember COVID-19 is still out there, so take care. It would seem a lot of New Zealanders are taking advantage of seeing and enjoying their own country this summer because the campervans are out and about in large numbers.

The 2020 season for irises was quite different in the South with a dump of snow on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> of October which at first slowed down the growth and then later the bearded iris and Siberian irises all bloomed together.

As I write this on Boxing Day, I am with family in Te Anau but still have Japanese irises flowering and making a great show.

The newly-planted gardens at Queens Park in Invercargill have also flowered very well for the first year. We are now only growing species, Siberians, Spuria and Japanese. This is much easier for the staff at the park to maintain.

Looking on Facebook, I have enjoyed seeing everyone's irises. I am glad that I do not have to make the decisions about my imported seed, about what to register or send to the Trial Gardens as there are some really beautiful irises out there.

I have had the pleasure to have judged with Kate McLachlan at the South Canterbury Iris Show in Waimate. It was quite a challenge, but it was great to be out and about again and to see old friends.

We are deeply grateful to the South Canterbury Iris Group which has very generously donated \$2500 to the NZIS for the production and postage of an issue of the *Bulletin*.

We have two awards that were to be presented this past year: Beth Conrad for the Jean Stevens Writer's Award for her piece in the September issue, *A Salute to Kiwi Hybrid-isers*. May I also congratulate Alison Nicoll for winning the Jean Stevens Memorial Award for imported seed for her tall bearded iris 'Keith's Gift' ('Lotus Land' X 'Fogbound').

The NZIS rules will not be reviewed until the new year, so hopefully by the time you receive this *Bulletin*, I will be well on the way to having the rules and the Working Handbook in the Members' section of the website.

Sadly, we have lost some highly respected members: Anne Blanco White, Brian Harris and Bob MacFarlane (their obituaries appear later in this *Bulletin*).

Please note that the Society no longer accepts cheques. Please see p. 38 for banking information.

Your Life is your garden  
Your thoughts are the seeds.  
If your life isn't awesome,  
You just haven't been watering the weeds.

Happy gardening everyone,

*Marilyn*

## Space Age Iris of the Early 21st Century by Jean Richter, Alameda, California

The turn of the century has brought new hybridizers experimenting with space age iris, and these irises are enjoying unprecedented popularity. Following are some of the most recent space age iris to grace our gardens.

Riley Probst began his hybridizing career in Missouri, but now calls California his home. Above right is his space age introduction from 2013, 'Power Lines'.



Power Lines (Probst 2013)

photo by Hilby Probst

Nebraska hybridizer LeRoy Meininger has created a number of lovely space agers. Left is one from 2005, 'Beneath My Wings'.



Beneath My Wings (Meininger 2005) - photo by Jean Richter

California hybridizer Robert Annand also introduced several space age irises. Although he

passed away in 2013, some of his seedlings have been selected and introduced posthumously. Right is 'Bob's Pride' from 2015.



Bob's Pride (Annand by Marshall 2015) - photo by Jean Richter

Mississippi hybridizer Truman

Scarborough introduced stately 'Emma's Plume' (pictured left) in 2012. One of its parents, 'Thornbird', lends its unique color.



Emma's Plume (Scarborough 2012)

photo by Jean Richter

Another pair of Nebraska hybridizers, Leonard and Kathie Jedlicka, are also introducing space

age iris. Here is their pink confection 'Isadora Belle' from 2009. Its parentage is

Jeda 2-1C3 ['Coral Point' x 'White Extra'] X Jeda 2-14A2 ['Jester' x 'White Extra']. See more about Jedlicka irises on pp. 9-12 below.



Isadora Belle (Jedlicka 2009)

photo by Jean Richter

## Space Age Irises

(so called because their beards have extensions of either a horn, spoon or flounce):

- ◆ **horn** (long, pointy extension from beard which can also be feathered)
- ◆ **spoon** (flat, wide end on extension from beard)
- ◆ **flounce** (ruffled, wide end on extension from beard which can also be feathered)
- ◆ **pompom** (very ruffled flounce).



The Suttons were a fixture in the southern San Joachin valley in California for many years, but have recently relocated to Idaho. George Sutton introduced many space age iris before his passing in 2013. His son, Mike, is carrying on the space age tradition, as can be seen (above right) in his 2011 introduction 'Point of No Return'.



California hybridizer Rick Tasco of Superstition Iris Gardens has introduced a number of space age iris. Left is his uniquely colored 'Solar Fire' from 2003.



Rick also works at introducing space age characteristics into median iris.

Right is his 2017 intermediate bearded introduction 'Visual Pleasure'.



One of the most prolific hybridizers of space age iris since 2000 is Texas hybridizer Tom Burseen. Left, see his 2006 beauty 'Cry Me a River'. He is as well known for his quirky iris names as he is for the iris themselves. Here are some of his



Air Hog (Burseen 2009) photo by Jean Richter



Just Musta (Burseen 2016) photo by Jean Richter

**Above left:** 'Air Hog' and right 'Justa Musta' both by Tom Burseen. (Photos by Jean Richter)

space age introductions: (above left) 'Air Hog' from 2009 and 'Justa Musta' from 2016. As you can see, space age iris are more popular than ever, and have certainly come a long way from Lloyd Austin's first space agers of 60 years ago. What are your favorite 21st century space age iris?

Reprinted with kind permission from American Iris Society Blogspot 2017.



**Have you thought about trying to hybridise a space age iris?**

**David Nicoll of Nelson has some**

**world-class hybrids that could be an excellent starting point. Just compare his high quality with those seen in the above article.**

**Above left**, see David's 'White Out'. Note the huge, ruffled flounces that are about two-thirds the size of the standards and falls. You could try crossing a space ager with a horn, such as 'Thornbird' onto it or 'Conjuration'. Why not experiment and have a go? There is suitable pollen in NZ. **Above right** is 'Cosmic Rumble' showing the beginnings of a pompom flounce.



**Above:** Leonard Jedlicka in his garden.

## Hybridizing Space Age Irises by Leonard Jedlicka

I first came to Alliance, Western Nebraska, in 1972 and began working at Western Potatoes harvesting potatoes and stayed for 48 years.

Many years later, I became interested in iris and attended the AIS Region 21 Convention in Scottsbluff. When we stopped at LeRoy Meinger's Iris Garden, I asked him how to hybridize iris and so began my breeding program. At

the time, I bought the flounced space age TB 'White Extra' (- see right) and various others from LeRoy.

As I grew 4000 irises on seven acres in Alliance, Nebraska, I bred tall bearded irises from about 2003 to maybe 2013, but now that I am 76 years old, I no longer hybridize. Our daughter, Sheri Arevalo, manages Blue J Iris Nursery in New Mexico which has about 5000 varieties of iris including plantings of new, trial varieties that are to be judged at the April 2022 AIS Convention.



LeRoy Meinger was raising irises and teaching in California for many years. He lived close to Keith Keppel in California, so when Keith was coming to Omaha, LeRoy asked him to give a talk at our Iris Club in Scottsbluff. After the talk, LeRoy brought Keith Keppel to my large garden. My first big pompom was blooming that day. Keith saw it and said that although he didn't breed space agers, he does get horns on the style

arms now and then. So when I was at the Oregon National Iris Convention, the bus stopped at his property to see his lovely irises. It had rained a lot and they gave us grocery bags to cover our shoes when getting into the bus because the sticky clay soil ended up over 1 inch (2cm) thick on the soles of our shoes.

My wife, Kathie, was the one who came up with the 'pompom' term. Although I have introduced many TBs, including space age irises, I have only introduced one pompom: border bearded 'Big Bang Theory', 2009: ('Thor's Lightning Bolt' X Jeda 2-1C3 ['Coral Point' x 'White Extra']) **pictured left**. It has been only one pompom introduction because the American Iris Society rules at the time





**Above:** Locating the anther on the pollen parent on 'Fruitsation' (Jedlicka, 2006).



**Above:** Pollinating the moist stigmatic lip of the pod parent. Gently press the lips shut to aid fertilisation.

We do not have an exact definition for pompoms yet. My best creations had five or six layers within each spoon, sitting upright rather like pages in a book. They had



most of the layers fused together and you could not normally



**Above:** 'Hyperspace', (Jedlicka, 2010: 'Coral Pincushion' X Jeda 2-2A6 ['Coral Point' x Meiningen sdlg 'White Extra']) has feathered, horned appendages.

**Left:** 'High-Kicking Rockettes' (Jedlicka, 2010: 'Glorioso' X 'Peach Fantasy') has mazing upright horned beards.

required seven buds with a strong, tall stalks, good branching, a healthy plant, good substance, rounded falls and closed standards to help keep the rain and wind from blowing over the tall stalks over. It has made it difficult for hybridising. They also want space agers that are consistent and that means no variations on each stalk. For pompoms to be acceptable, the Judges at the time wanted three pompoms on all falls with seven flowers per stalk.

About eight years ago, after I had stopped breeding irises, the American Iris Society created a new Section in their Society called Novelty Iris, so now it means that we do not have to follow the Tall Bearded rules and requirements and there is more latitude for variation. The falls and standards do not have to be rounded. So far mine are most often narrow with open standards, and all three flounces or all three pompoms are different or just slightly different.

Some of my early hybrids only had one pompom on each flower: one spoon, one flounce plus one pompom thus making them unacceptable for registration. But of course, they had potential as steppingstones for breeding.

As far as I know only two other breeders have introduced pompoms: Tom Burseen and Mike Sutton.



**Above:** TB 'Isadora Belle' (Jedlicka, 2009: (Jeda 2-1C3 ['Coral Point' x Meininger sdlg 'White Extra'] X Jeda 2-14A2 ['Jester' x Meininger sdlg 'White Extra']) displays feathered horns. **Below right:** Large white flounced spoons on this unnamed seedling.

**Below:** Another unnamed seedling with huge flounces. This one has the garden name of Full Moon Iris.



**Right:** Unnamed 6-3-05 Jeda sdlg, 230, called Elephant Ears in the garden. It is important to consider other people's unnamed irises in order to evaluate your own hybrids. Not everything should be named until improved with further hybridizing. Perfection and quality are very important, so please be critical and allow others to assess your seedlings as well as yourself without taking offence at their assessments.

One of my very pretty pompom seedlings had five or six buds, but had poor branching and was cluster budded. The branches were all high up, too crowded and too short.

separate the layers. The iris appendages almost look like small carnations. The bigger ones can be one inch wide (2cm) and 1¼ inches (3cm) long. The flowers can last for three days but the pompom forms can last four days.

The true pompom has five or six layers starting with the bottom spoon being almost flat. The second layer spoon will have the edges turned upward, and each subsequent layer will turn upward further from the edges. See what I am talking about in the pictures below.





**Left:** Space age seedling with a feathery flounce as large as the fall.  
**Below and below left:** The garden name is My Feathered Friend. Note that this is a tri-coloured pompom (with peach, lilac and cream). This 'first' feature is a significant step for a hybridizer. To gain pompoms, use both parents that show the pompom features to obtain the genes that you want and then to enhance and develop them into different colored forms.



**Right:** Some of the rows of irises bursting with spring bloom on Leonard and Kathie's acreage.  
**Below:** A sister to Leonard's 'Big Bang Theory' that was neither named nor registered.  
**Below right:** This lovely photo by Craig Edwards of Leonard's 2014 'Giant Pink Pompoms' (Seedling 11-6-14) shows well-formed falls and standards as well as consistent pompom appendages that stand at a sharp angle.



## A French Pioneer: Philippe De Vilmorin by Sylvain Ruaud, France

### The Origins:

The French Lévêque de Vilmorin family had long been interested in iris hybridisation, when Henry de Vilmorin (then President of the family business) acquired in 1895 the tall bearded iris variety called 'Amas', whose exceptional flower size was likely to please not only iris collectors but also all other garden owners.

'Amas' was introduced to Great Britain around 1885 by Sir Michael Foster, but it was in fact a species iris, called *I. mesopotamica*, *I. trojana* or *I. cypriana*, depending on the region where it was harvested. By attempting hybridisations

with this iris, Henry de Vilmorin was convinced that he would achieve an improvement of the species, just as he had previously done with wheat or as his father had done with sugarbeet.

It was very much an inspiration because, at the time, there was still no knowledge of plant genetics and the notion of diploidy or tetraploidy did not exist. 'Amas', like the other irises of the Near East, was tetraploid (having 4N chromosomes; 2N being the base number), whereas the irises of Europe were only diploid. Therefore, they only had half as many chromosomes, but nobody knew this in 1895.

For this procedure, Henry de Vilmorin was assisted by his son, Philippe (full name Joseph Marie Philippe Lévêque), who was born in 1872 and died in 1917. This horticultural enthusiast was also the father of a prestigious family, with six children, including two daughters who achieved fame in the years before and after the Second World War: Marie-Pierre, known as Mapie de Toulouse-Lautrec<sup>1</sup>, and Louise<sup>2</sup>, who made a name for herself in writing because of her affair with the writer André Malraux, at the end of their respective lives.

However, the place taken by the Vilmorins in the world of irises could not have been achieved without the intervention of their chief gardener Séraphin Mottet. Séraphin Mottet was born in 1861 and, after scientific studies, joined Vilmorin-Andrieux in 1880. Most of his professional life took place within this major company to which he always remained faithful and devoted. Afterwards, the man who had for so long remained in the shadow of Henri, Philippe and then Jacques de Vilmorin, flew on his own wings and devoted his time to teaching and writing.

Loyalty is surely the major quality of Séraphin Mottet: if the House of Vilmorin, at the beginning of the 20th century, was the reference in iris matters, it owes it to this man. But there is no variety that bears the name of Mottet in brackets. Yet irises such as 'Ambassadeur' (1920 – see above) and 'Alliès' (1922 – see right) are most certainly the work of this man.

**Right:** TB 'Alliès'. Photo from [www.irisparadise.com](http://www.irisparadise.com)



American Iris Society Past President, Clarence Mahan, in his book *Classic Irises and the Men and Women who created them*, describes him as a small person, always well dressed, with a somewhat very pronounced elegance. According to Mahan, Mottet could have served as a model for Agatha Christie's famous detective Hercule Poirot, but with a beard always impeccably trimmed, which the detective does not wear! Beneath this peculiar appearance was a cultivated character, speaking perfect English to the point of translating botanical and horticultural works. However, irises were not his only field of interest.

As early as 1892, Mottet wrote, alone or in the company of other botanists, many didactic works on roses, potatoes, carnations and conifers. However, it was to irises that he devoted a major part of his work, while remaining in the shadow of his employer.

So, it was Henry de Vilmorin, his son Philippe and Séraphin Mottet who gave a new direction to the company and made it one of the world leaders in iris hybridisation. However, this association was short-lived when Henry de Vilmorin died in 1899. It was Philippe de Vilmorin who then took over the family business. He was obviously extremely interested in iris cultivation and hybridisation. Therefore in 1903, when his colleague Verdier died, Philippe bought his collection of botanical irises and old cultivars.

This rich collection, certainly the most beautiful at the time, was, along with the Middle Eastern tetraploid irises, the basis of the hybridisation work of the Vilmorin-Andrieux firm, which consisted of combining the qualities of large irises such as 'Amas' (unfortunately monochrome) and the varied shades of the European varieties.

The first irises in the Vilmorin catalogue were registered as early as 1904. Clarence Mahan specifies that, among the new products, there were four large irises resulting from crossbreeding from the famous 'Amas'. These were 'Tamerlan', 'Isoline', 'Miriam' and 'Loute'. All four mark the beginning of a new era in the field of large garden irises, an era that continues to this day. In this, Philippe de Vilmorin was a true forerunner to whom all iris lovers should pay tribute.

#### **A glance at these new irises is necessary:**

'Tamerlan' (- see above) has large flowers with purplish-red petals and darker purplish-blue sepals, marked with bronze on the shoulders and decorated with orange beards. This is a real improvement over irises from the uniformly purple *I. trojana* or *I. cypriana* species alone. 'Tamerlan' was found to be a tetraploid iris.

The other three varieties introduced that year were triploid irises, i.e. having only three lots of chromosomes, one lot coming from the old variety used in the crossing; the other two brought by the use of modern iris. Unfortunately, triploid plants were most often sterile, and this is the case for at least two of the three irises involved.



**Above:** TB 'Tamerlan'. Photo by Rick Tasco.



**Above:** TB 'Magnifica'. Photo by Mike Lowe.

'Isoline' had pinkish beige petals ringed with cinnamon brown, and purple sepals veined with red near the orange beards. It is still found in some collectors' gardens. It should be noted that in certain circumstances, despite its triploidy, 'Isoline' proved to be fertile and that at least two of its descendants are known: 'Magnifica' (Vilmorin, 1919 – see left) and 'Rhea' (EB Williamson, 1928).

It seems that 'Miriam' disappeared a long time ago. It is described as having lilac-veined, white petals and sepals in the same tones but with wider and darker veins.

As for 'Loute', it was an iris of two shades of violet infused and veined with bronze, named after the dog of a painter friend of Marcel Proust, and well known in artistic circles of the Belle Époque – a dog whose death had deeply troubled its owner. This triploid iris has, it seems, sometimes shown itself to be fertile because they believe the pink variety

'Coralie' (Ayres, 1931) is a descendant of it.

All this information was collected by Clarence Mahan and is found in his book.

### **The Peak Years:**

The following years saw the Vilmorin-Andrieux iris catalogue being enriched with new varieties obtained by the Vilmorin-Mottet work. We cannot mention them all, but one, 'Oriflamme' (1907), became emblematic of the work of Vilmorin. It does indeed have the qualities of size and robustness of its parent 'Amas' and bright and attractive colours, in shades of blue with a white area under the beards. It is one of the basic varieties of modern hybridisation.

At the beginning of 1914, Philippe de Vilmorin had already had the idea of organising a major international iris conference in Paris, but the events that would take place in the following weeks would postpone the realisation of this conference for several years. In the meantime, alas, Philippe de Vilmorin died in 1917 and it was his cousin, Jacques de Vilmorin, who took over the reins of the company.

Jacques de Vilmorin, a dynamic and enterprising young man, certainly did not have Philippe's passion for irises, but he was well aware of the importance of this flower for the reputation and prestige of the House of Vilmorin-Andrieux. He continued the project initiated by Philippe and Mottet but placed it under the leadership of the Société Nationale d'Horticulture de France (SNHF).

The conference finally took place from 27 May 1922. It brought together about 60 delegates from France, Great Britain, Switzerland and the United States who met in the SNHF premises. The Société, Vilmorin-Andrieux and Jacques de Vilmorin, personally, provided most of the financing.

On 29 May, the participants went to the Vilmorin property where they were welcomed by the entire staff of the company. Séraphin Mottet was also there, although he had recently left his job to become a teacher in a horticultural school a

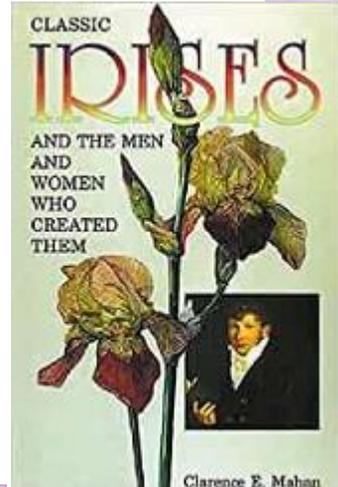
few kilometres away. They visited all the installations, all the garden beds and were particularly amazed by the iris fields where most of the ancient and modern irises produced all over the world were located, as well as all the cultivars introduced by Vilmorin-Andrieux. Also seen were those from 1920, which was the richest year, with such remarkable flowers as TBs 'Ambassadeur', 'Ballerine', 'Chasseur', 'Magnifica' or IB 'Fra Angelico' (- see below).

This 1922 conference marked the peak of the Vilmorin family in the field of irises. It was also the swan song. Indeed, with the premature death of Philippe de Vilmorin and the departure of Séraphin Mottet, the great company Vilmorin-Andrieux et Compagnie lost its passion for irises and no one resumed the hybridisation activity.

To quote Clarence Mahan one last time, here is how he talks about the end of the role of the Vilmorin family:

*Vilmorin-Andrieux et Cie was like a great shooting star in the world of irises during the first three decades of the 20th century. The firm appeared in the iris scene suddenly. It enchanted the horticultural world with its splendid large-flowered irises ... It changed the world of irises forever, and then it was gone. ... But the name Vilmorin is and will ever be incandescent in the hearts of men and women who love irises.*

1. Mapie de Toulouse-Lautrec was a journalist, specialist in gastronomy and creator of many recipes.
2. Louise de Vilmorin was a writer, screenwriter and friend of artists and jet-set personalities.



**Below from left:** TB 'Ballerine' (photo by Rick Tasco); TB 'Chasseur'; intermediate bearded 'Fra Angelico'. Photos from AIS Wiki.





## Historic Irises – Where are we now? by Marilyn Fleming

I have been updating the *Policies and Procedures (The Working Handbook)* and as I was reviewing the Historic Iris Section, I thought back to when I joined the Society in 1980. It was acceptable then that all irises over 30 years old were classed as Historic Iris, ones such as ‘Summit’ (1948), ‘Wabash’ (1937), ‘Pinnacle’ (1945), ‘Gracchus’ (1884), ‘Mary Randall’ (1950), ‘Love Story’ (1948), ‘Alcazar’ (1910) and ‘Starshine’ (1947) to name a few. These irises are easily recognisable as they are more narrow in the falls and not as large and full-bloomed as modern-day irises.

**Above:** Historic TB ‘Alcazar’ (1910). (Photo Calif\_Sue)  
**Right:** ‘Gracchus’ (Ware, 1884).

Now we are in the year 2021



and, as things stand right now, all irises registered before 1991 are considered ‘Historic’. I believe that the time has come to find another term for the irises of the 70s and 80s and up until the 1990s. These are the irises that our New Zealand hybridisers have used to make crosses which I believe are our heritage.

All iris prior to 1970 today are considered to be Historic even though the wider falls have crept in and a little bit of frill along with more plicatas. But the irises from the 80s, and up until the 1990s, often have hybridising advances such as horns, spoons, broken colour, ruffles, stitching and more colourways. Examples of these irises are: ‘Momentum’ (1984), ‘Mesmerizer’ (1990), ‘Best Bet’ (1988), ‘Before the Storm’ (1989), ‘Edith Wolford’ (1984), ‘Circus Stripes’ (1974), ‘Anna Belle Babson’ (1984), ‘Horns and Blues’ (1991), and ‘Mary Frances’ (1974). You could go on forever naming such irises, but I would like to think that these irises are **Heritage Irises** rather than ‘Historic’.



Of course, it does not stop there because species, spuria, Siberian, Louisiana and Japanese all come under this title too.

I have given you all something to think about and if you have any thoughts on this, you can email me and we can determine an appropriate term.

**Left:** Heritage tall bearded ‘Circus Stripes’ (1974). (Photo by Beth Conrad)



## Spuria Hybridizing Notes by Nancy Price, Molalla, Washington, USA

The little I know about hybridizing any iris I've learned from experience and from information I read. Much to do about hybridizing from articles is still too complex for me to grasp at this time. Below is a conglomerate of notes about hybridizing spuria iris.

First is to define carotenes and anthocyanidin pigments (anthocyanin). Carotene pigments are oil soluble. Carotene is a group of carotenoid pigments that are responsible for yellow, orange and pink (the warm colors). Anthocyanidin pigments are water soluble and are responsible for scarlet, purple to red-violet, blue to deep violet and crimson (the cool colors).



**Right:** Spuria 'Buttered Chocolate' by Dave Niswonger (Photo by Barry Blyth) shows the warm tones of carotene pigments. **Below:** 'Kristi's Chorus' by L. Johnsen (Darol Jurn photo) has blue-purple anthocyanidin pigments.



Since one type is oil-soluble and the other water soluble, they do not truly mix well. When a blue iris is crossed with a yellow iris, the resultant colors do not mix well together and the iris may look "muddy" or gaudy. Or since oil and water do not mix, some parts of the flower may contain carotene pigments and other may contain anthocyanin pigments. Where the different pigments blend (appear together), the anthocyanin appears as brown or red-brown. However, even though they appear together in the same area of the petal, the anthocyanin pigments remain in the cell sap, and the carotene pigments remain in the plastids. Each occupies a different part of the same area but do not mix together.

Another guideline is that "likes beget likes," meaning that if you cross a blue iris with a blue iris, you will probably get a blue iris. This is not always true in the Spuria family of iris at this time, according to Dave Niswonger (Missouri, USA). I assume it is because of the genotype that might be present.

A couple of genetic terms are genotype and phenotype. Genotype refers to the whole genetic makeup of the individual (or iris plant). Phenotype refers to what is able to be seen with the naked eye when looking at the individual (or iris plant). For example, a person who has brown eyes could phenotype as brown eyed, but genotype as a blue eyed also because of hidden genes. This is due to two genes responsible for the color of eyes, not just one gene.

Brown is dominant in eyes, blue is recessive. If you pair up  $Br + Br$  for two genes for brown, you will always get brown eyes (dominantly). If you pair up  $Br + Bl$  for one gene



**Left:** Brown-toned Spuria 'Cinnamon Stick' by Dave Niswonger. (Donald Evans photo).

for brown plus one gene for blue, you will always get brown eyes phenotypically. If you pair up BI + BI, you will get blue eyes (recessively). If you go further and cross a Br + BI plus a Br + BI, you have a 25 percent chance of getting blue eyes (genotypically and phenotypically).

There are many other things that could be considered such as genetic modifier, dosage effects, inhibitors of pigments, the dilution and concentration of pigments, and the blending of different types of pigments that make up

the vast majority of different colors and patterns expressed in today's iris. I especially get lost when reading about "blocking genes". I studied genes in reference to human cells and I have no idea how to correlate "blocking genes" into my brain.

One other important consideration is the number of chromosomes. In the MTB class of iris, there are tetraploids and diploids and more often than not the hybridizer will cross the tetraploids with another tetraploid and the diploid with the diploid.

It is almost like mating dogs with dogs and cats with cats only, with exceptions. Each species of iris has a set number of chromosomes. When hybridizing, you need to match up the chromosomes evenly to make the next progeny. An uneven mating of chromosomes may never happen or if it does happen, a "mule" or sterility will probably be the end product.

There is also the use of colchicine, *Treflan*, and *Surflan* treatments to double the number of chromosomes. If we can zap a cell just as the nucleus is splitting but before two cells are formed with these compounds, we can cause the cell to regroup, and the chromosomes are doubled. This is the way to bring new genes into the gene pool and is used quite often by daylily breeders. These are dangerous carcinogenic chemicals and should be used only by experienced and knowledgeable persons.

In the world of spuria iris, there are about 12 primary different species. Of these species, *I. orientalis* (which used to be called *I. ochroleuca*) (pictured below right) was the species most used in the beginning. *I. orientalis* has 40 chromosomes.

Next in line of usage is *I. halophila* with 44 chromosomes which gives earliness to the spuria family of iris. Next is *I. carthalinae* with 44 chromosomes which gives rise to the summer green foliage. Then comes *I. notha* with 38 chromosomes which tends to not be very fertile, but with patience may turn into a good line of parentages for the future.

Things have moved along rapidly in the tall bearded iris world, but the spuria world has lagged behind. The tall bearded folks are into the 25th plus crosses from the original species in its class; whereas, the spuria are only 2 to 3 crosses from the original species.

Things can move slowly in the spuria world. Years ago, accord-



**Right:** Spuria 'Adriatic Blue' by Dave Niswonger, 1996. (Darol Jurn photo)



ing to the new *Spuria Checklist*, there were about 90 or more hybridizers working on spuria alone or with other irises also. Today there is only a small handful of hybridizers.

Just like anything else in life, there is more than one way to do things. When it comes to spuria hybridizing, the following are a few tips to make crossing spuria more successful:

First, there is the bee who loves to land on the spuria fall.

Then it climbs from the fall onto the claw of the spuria. From there, it finds its way into the sweet sugary sap of the spuria iris. During this process, the hairy back of the bee will brush against the stamen, the pollen and the edges of the stigmatic lip of the flower. The pollen will adhere to the hairs. Then the bee will fly from one flower to the next. At the next flower, the pollen on the hairs will brush up against the stigmatic lip and be left hybridizing this second flower. Then the process continues to the next flower and the next. One solution to give the human hybridizer a chance at pollination of the flower is to remove the bee's landing strip. Yep, get right in there and remove the falls from potential flowers that you want to breed. Do this on Day One.



**Left:** Spuria 'Cosmic Impact' by Anna and David Cadd, 2006. (Cadd photo)

On Day Two, the pollen is at its best for pollination. It will be light and fluffy. You can remove the anther from the pollen parent and very gently wipe it across the stigmatic lip of the pod parent. This is not quite as easy as it sounds. The stigmatic lip is very small and lies very tight against the style arm of the flower. For practice at dabbing pollen onto a stigmatic lip, try crossing tall bearded iris first. Then, if you have the opportunity, try dabbing pollen onto the lips of the miniature tall bearded iris. You will notice how much different these flowers are. The

spuria flower is even a little more challenging than the MTB. The stamen breaks easier than the bearded iris.

Keep at your attempts and you will become an expert. Another idea is to try using a camel hair brush to transfer the pollen from the stamen to the lip of the flower. Make sure to clean the brush between each cross. Blowing firmly onto the brush may be sufficient at times.

Don't forget to label your cross. The pod parent is listed first, and the pollen parent second when writing your cross into your stud book. For example, 'Remembering Vic' X 'Ross Island': the iris 'Remembering Vic' is the pod parent which provided the stigmatic lip and 'Ross Island' provided the pollen.

**Right:** Spuria 'Missouri Boon' by Dave Niswonger. (Wilhoit photo)



After the cross attempts, comes a long wait before you know that you were successful and a pod begins to grow. In about 6 to 8 weeks, the pod will begin to brown. Then it will begin to crack open at the top of the shell. This is the time you will need to take the next indicated step. You can either plant the seeds "green" or store them.

Carefully open the seed pod and remove the seeds. To plant the seeds "green", place the seeds into potting soil right away. You can plant the pot into the ground. Keep the soil moist until winter comes. You might get growth sprouts before winter. You can add a mulch to the pot if you want. The next spring, you might have additional germination. But wait again until next spring and you might have 20+ sprouts depending on the original seed count.

If you did not plant your seeds green, open the seed pod and collect the seeds into something similar to an empty coffee filter. Let the seeds dry and go dormant. Transfer the seeds to a paper envelope and carefully label it. In the later part of the fall months and before winter sets in, rehydrate your seeds in something similar to medicine vials. Change the water daily using a strainer to catch the seeds and return them to the vial.

Repeat this for about five days. Then place the hydrated seeds into potting soil similar to the steps in the paragraph above. It is important to leave the pot for the second season since all the seeds will not germinate at the same time.

Dave Niswonger says the small sprouts can be lined out when the tall bearded irises are in bloom. We have lined out the sprouts in the fall also. I've not had enough experience to know which works best: a spring or fall line out.

Then comes another long wait. It may take three years for the first bloom, but it is well worth the wait. During your wait time, you will be making other crosses, potting up other seeds, lining out other seedlings, and enjoying the anticipation. It is probably a good idea to have purchased a judge's training manual by now for information about the qualities of a good spuria.

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**Right:** Spuria 'Banned in Boston' Kevin Vaughn, 2012, has broad standards and falls which show red-violet anthocyanidin pigments with a white, veined centre on the falls that gives a crispness and freshness to the bloom. (Darol Jurn photo)



**Left:** Spuria 'Cast of Green' by Terry Aitken, 2010, shows some of the more advanced colour tones now being achieved with standards that are semi flared in a deep gunmetal purple. Style arms are a similar gunmetal tone with a pale yellow wash at the midribs. 'Missouri Iron Ore' X unknown. (Aitken photo)



## Siberian Iris Companion Plants

The graceful, tall *Iris sibirica* are among the most trouble-free and low maintenance perennials in the garden. Their slim, architectural, lanceolate (sword-like) foliage creates structure in a garden and gives a distinct contrast to the more rounded leaves of most other cottage garden perennials. Their delicate, exquisite flowers rise like butterflies over the foliage in tones of white, blue, lavender, claret rust, pink and yellow.

Siberian irises make perfect partners with other perennials. Try layering your plantings for maximum effect and drama. Ensure that you select companion plants with toning or contrasting colours and also ones that suit full sun or light shade in average medium to damp soil.

### ***Alchemilla mollis* (Lady's Mantle)**

- see right where it tones well with Siberian 'Summer Revels'.

Lady's Mantle forms leafy mounds of scalloped-edged, toothed, dense light green leaves that form a lovely finish to a border or path edge.



### ***Aquilegia* (Columbine or Granny's Bonnet)**

- see right where it contrasts with Siberian 'Roaring Jelly'; and yellow or blue forms below tone well with Siberian 'Lights of Paris'.

Aquilegia are biennial plants with clouds of bell-shaped blooms with lovely, lacy foliage that is dormant in winter, like your iris, but emerges in late winter. Profuse bloom for 4-6 weeks from mid-spring. Tones in whites, pinks, blues, yellows, purples, etc.



**Campanula**  
varieties  
(Bellflower,  
e.g., purple  
*C. glomerata* or  
Clustered  
Bellflower) -  
here shown  
with  
Siberian  
'Swans in  
Flight'.

Violet-blue, pink  
or white bell-  
shaped flowers  
held in dense  
clusters of 12-15  
blooms that last  
for two weeks in a  
vase. Vigorous.  
Basal rosettes of  
heart-shaped to  
oval green leaves.  
Blooms late  
spring to early  
summer. Suits  
moister soil.



**Cranesbill  
Geranium**  
- see right  
with blue  
Siberian  
'Silver Edge'  
and Ger.  
'Biokovo'  
with  
Siberian  
'Fourfold  
Lavender'.

Many hybrids in  
tones of blue,  
pink, burgundy or  
white add lush  
foliage and  
texture to the  
garden. They are  
tough, pest and  
disease resistant,  
needing little  
care.



**Heuchera**  
(Coral Bells)  
At right, see  
golden/reds to  
tone with  
Siberian  
'Ginger  
Twist'; and  
below right  
Siberian  
'Careless  
Sally' with  
*H.* 'Midnight  
Rose'.

*Heuchera* is a  
genus of largely  
evergreen peren-  
nial plants in the  
family Saxifraga-  
ceae. Mounds of  
attractive  
scalloped foliage  
in many tones  
and shades with  
clusters of small,  
coral pink bells in  
spring and  
summer. They are  
ideal for borders.



|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p><b><i>Papaver orientale</i></b><br/>(Oriental Poppy)<br/>Blue-toned Siberians, such as 'Fresh Notes' (top) or 'Emma Ripeka' make a lovely contrast.</p>  | <p>Silky-satin, eye-catching blooms in tones of red, orange, white or pink. Black centres make them a dramatic feature from late spring to early summer. Dried seed pods are excellent for dried arrangements.</p>  |
| <p><b><i>Salvia nemorosa</i></b><br/>- see right where <i>Salvia nemorosa</i> 'Blue Hills' tones closely with Siberian 'Castle Grace'.</p>                  | <p>Architecturally striking, <i>Salvia nemorosa</i> hybrids form vertical, densely packed spikes ranging from indigo to shades of violet. Hardy perennial for summer colour.</p>  |
| <p><b><i>Tanacetum coccineum</i></b><br/>(‘Robinson’s Pink’ or ‘Robinson’s Red’, Painted Daisy)<br/>contrast well with white Siberian ‘Crystal Bright’.</p> | <p>Showy 3–7cm daisy flowers in shades of white, red, purple or pink with a large central golden disc. Long-lasting blooms rise above a strongly-aromatic foliage which forms mounds of soft, fern-like leaves. Good cut flowers with straight stems.</p> |



## *Iris hippolyti* by Tony Hall, England

*Iris hippolyti* (Vved.) Kamelin (syn. *Juno hippolyti* Vved.)

*Iris hippolyti* was named by A. I. Vvedensky (1898–1972) in 1941 for Ippolit Ivanovich Granitov (1900–1981), one of the two Russian botanists who first discovered the *juno* in 1938.

The species epithet is derived from the Latinized form of his first name – Ippolit. *Iris hippolyti* is one of the 3 members of the

*Maracandica* subgroup, all with the same chromosome count (the 2 other species being *Iris maracandica* itself and *I. svetlanae*), a subgroup most closely related to *Iris magnifica* (in its own subgroup and with a different chromosome count). All 4 species make up the *Maracandica* group, consisting of small to robust species with widely winged falls, a prominently raised but undissected crest, seeds without an aril, and storage roots that are swollen in the upper half at least, and are native to the western and northern Pamir-Alai of central Asia.

Although initially known only from a single population on Mount Koktcha (in the southern Kyzyl-Kum Desert of central Uzbekistan), *Iris hippolyti* has since also been found below the Karakarga Pass in the Karatau Mountains (part of the Nuratau Range of Uzbekistan). It is possible that its full range is even wider than this. At one stage *Iris hippolyti* was included in the list of Rare and Vanishing Plants of the USSR to be protected (1981) but was not included in the later Red Data Book of the USSR (1985). In the Karatau Mountains, *Iris hippolyti* and *I. maracandica* are sympatric and it is possible that introgression has occurred.

*Iris hippolyti* is from (5–) 10–18 cm tall at flowering time, with at least the lower internodes visible. The bulb is (1.3–) 1.7–1.9 cm diam. and 3.5–4 cm long, narrowly ovoid to ovoid with a slightly elongated neck; few offsets are produced. Bulb tunics are pale biscuit-brown, papery to membranous and obscurely ribbed longitudinally. Storage roots are markedly swollen above, 0.6–0.9 cm diam. towards the top, tapering fairly abruptly to a more wiry portion below.

There are 4–5 well developed leaves, the lower ones strongly falcate, at this stage 10–12.5 (–17.5) cm long, 1–1.5 (–2.2) cm broad towards the base, later 15–18 x 1.5–2.3 cm; the upper leaf is unusually long and only slightly arching. Foliage is lanceolate, gradually narrowing to a point, very slightly undulate towards the base, glossy green above, grey-green beneath, with prominent silvery smooth margins and silvery main veins – more so than in the other two species of this subgroup; the lowest leaf, at least, is often shortly sheathing.

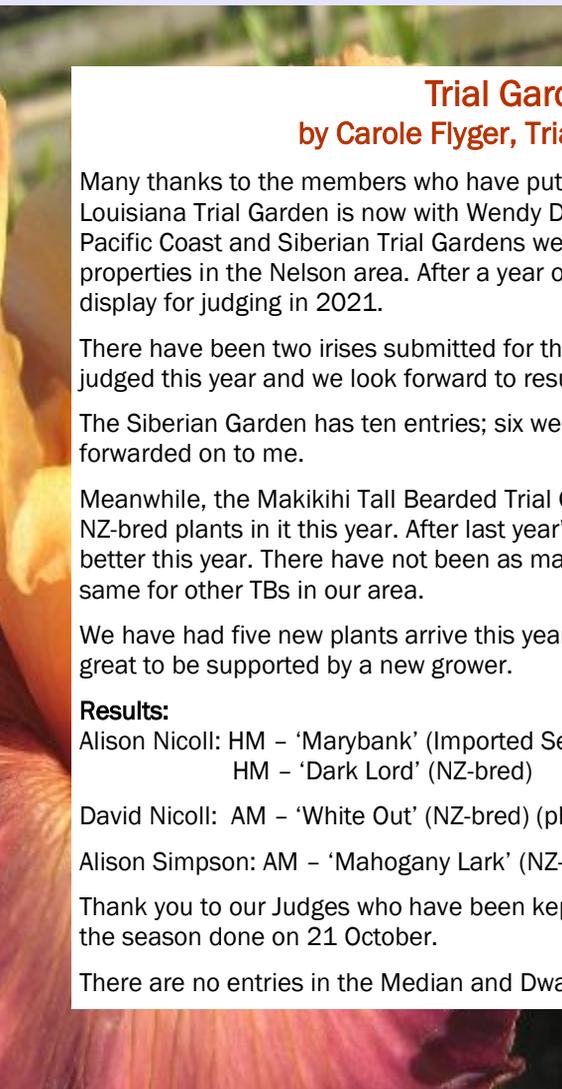
The paired bracts are subequal, slightly inflated, grey-green, scarious at the tip and attenuate, with the outer bract 7–7.5 cm long, the inner one 6–6.5 cm long. The flower tube is 4–4.5 cm long. There are 1–3 (–4) unscented flowers, 4.5–6 cm diam., smoky pale grey-violet, blue-violet, richer lavender-blue or translucent to smoky greenish-blue,



Above: *Iris hippolyti*. Photo courtesy of Tony Hall.

sometimes with turquoise or blue staining to the blade of falls and style lobes, and pale violet staining to the wings (there is also a very pale – almost white – variant with a greenish tinge, especially to its style branches). A large white zone and a more narrow pale yellow to deep lemon-yellow strip surround the upper end of the crest to the falls, and that portion of the crest is often also yellow, but the lower part of the crest and mid-rib below are both white to creamy-yellow although occasionally the entire crest is pale creamy-yellow; the midrib has a fine ink-blue parallel line either side and is overlaid with 3 parallel blackish lines, extending from the base of the crest to the base of the haft.

In its blue-violet or lavender-blue phase, *Iris hippolyti* is a very handsome iris. Despite a restricted distribution in nature, this rarity has proven to be a relatively easy species to maintain at R.B.G. Kew, increasing readily from seed which is plentifully produced. However, it is only grown in pots under Kew's famous All-weather Frame, so hardiness in the open garden has not been tested.



## Trial Garden Report

by Carole Flyger, Trial Garden Coordinator

Many thanks to the members who have put up their hands to support Trial Gardens. The Louisiana Trial Garden is now with Wendy Davies but there are no entries. Both the Pacific Coast and Siberian Trial Gardens were relocated last year and are at two different properties in the Nelson area. After a year of settling in, they should be ready for a good display for judging in 2021.

There have been two irises submitted for the Pacific Coast Garden. These were not judged this year and we look forward to results in 2021.

The Siberian Garden has ten entries; six were judged. Results are still waiting to be forwarded on to me.

Meanwhile, the Makikihi Tall Bearded Trial Garden has one imported seed and sixteen NZ-bred plants in it this year. After last year's tough run, they have performed a little better this year. There have not been as many flower stalks this season, which is also the same for other TBs in our area.

We have had five new plants arrive this year, three Imported Seed and two NZ-bred. It's great to be supported by a new grower.

### Results:

Alison Nicoll: HM – 'Marybank' (Imported Seed)  
HM – 'Dark Lord' (NZ-bred)

David Nicoll: AM – 'White Out' (NZ-bred) (photo p.8)

Alison Simpson: AM – 'Mahogany Lark' (NZ-bred)

Thank you to our Judges who have been kept busy for a month with the first judging for the season done on 21 October.

There are no entries in the Median and Dwarf, Japanese or Spuria Trial Gardens.

## Ways to Recruit New Members to Your Group

Maintaining and building membership is essential for any club of any kind. So that an iris Group remains vibrant and successful, here are some suggestions that you might consider for promoting your Group and encouraging new members to both join and retain their membership:

1. Invite each Group member to bring a guest to a meeting.
2. Advertise in local newspapers and on local TV.
3. Have a clear Group goal and a strategic plan.
4. Letters to or personal contact with local businesses can stimulate someone to sponsor your Group or to encourage staff members and clients to join.
5. Contact your local council and ask that they promote your Group or offer a grant to fund a new member 'drive'.
6. After seeking permission from the Librarian, place bookmarks customised about your Group in each of the library books in the gardening section.
7. Have public Group meetings in parks, outdoors, etc.
8. Have a Group booth at shopping malls, fairs, festivals, etc.
9. Ask permission to place pamphlets in doctors' offices, hospital waiting rooms, cafeterias, libraries, cafes.
10. Host an Open Garden in iris bloom season for the local community to view.
11. Put together guest information packages ready for new members of your Group (include a packet of seeds, list of Committee contact details, list of coming events with the date and venue address, history of the Group, etc.).
12. Work with projects that serve a need in the community, such as planting a garden at a bus stop or in the park. Could the bowling club or RSL club do with improving their garden beds with irises?
13. Invite family members to join, especially those of school age, but ensure that there is more than just one youngster there.
14. Invite the botanical/horticultural experts at a university or your local horticultural teachers who live near you to visit or join your Group.
15. Send letters to people in the news with an invitation to visit the Group. A journalist might feature your Group's activities once a month. Is there a section in your local newspaper for community notices? If so, appoint a Group member to maintain regular updates.
16. Print Group business cards with the Group meeting location and time for all members to distribute to possible new members.
17. Distribute extra copies of your newsletter that relate to your Group in doctors' or dentists', etc. waiting rooms.
18. Hold high-profile meetings and invite someone significant to speak or just attend.

19. Hold wine and cheese receptions for prospective members.
20. Keep records and perhaps have a large poster that lists all the members who have sponsored a new member in the past year.
21. Practise promoting your Group at meetings — ask each member to have a one minute ‘elevator speech’ ready about the good points and benefits of being a member of your Group.
22. The Group President could ask three Group members as a personal favour to each recruit one new member.
23. Make direct contact with women’s business associations and invite people to be involved either at meetings or with your digital communications.
24. Bring your co-workers to a Group meeting.
25. Assign every member to a five-person recruitment team where each team brings in a visitor every six months.
26. Develop a strategic plan where membership is a year-round priority and needs to be planned.
27. Have incentives for recruitment when a member joins up a new member.
28. Display a thermometer chart showing progress towards a Group goal.
29. Develop a welcome letter from the President that is sent to all new members.
30. Contact all members who have resigned in the past three years and invite them to return.
31. Recognise and introduce new members in newsletters.
32. Pass out M & M lollies to remind members that “Membership Matters” and that we need “More Members”.
33. Organise a Soup, Sourdough and Spouse event where you just enjoy one another’s company and strengthen the social bonding within the Group.
34. Organise a meeting at 2pm on a Sunday (after church and after children’s sporting commitments) and have a wine and cheese tasting in someone’s garden or a park. Or have a Coffee and Cake and Children meeting.
35. Organise a Member of the Month award.
36. Design a Group brochure to distribute or be available at community events.
37. Create more fun in your meetings (e.g., run a competition, organise activities during meetings, prizes for a quick quiz, etc.).
38. Circulate the Group newsletter wider than just to members.
39. Ask corporations, nurseries and employers to sponsor or subsidise membership.
40. Advertise at sporting events, in the local tennis, bowling or golf club.
41. Hold joint friendship meetings with other community groups or clubs.
42. Promote your Group by mentioning it at meetings of other organisations during the announcements segment.



## South Canterbury Group Report by Marilyn Rathgen

We met in Timaru recently: our first meeting since lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic and it felt like our family was back together again. Our learning session was a slide presentation by Stephanie Boot on species iris. Some of the species shown are available in New Zealand but others we just have to admire their photos. What an extraordinary genus of plants! Several iris flowers were on display and pots of *reticulata* iris were auctioned off.

**Above:** Convenor Michael Midgley, Brian Harris, with Judges Marilyn Fleming and Kate McLachlan.

After lunch we visited Gill Inkersell's small, sunny, town garden where many of her small alpiners were coming into flower. Waimate was the venue for our September meeting. With another month passing on, a good display of irises was in show including *Iris lazica*, *unguicularis* and Pacific Coast irises. This month we focussed on Pacific Coast iris (often referred to as PC's, PCNI or Californians). These come from about eleven different species which can cross readily. Some are hardier than others and, because of cross pollination, we cannot be sure of what we are getting unless it is a specie itself. They have a reputation of sudden death syndrome, but I think it is more to do with the breeding and placement within the garden.

Marilyn Rathgen led this discussion and with examples of three seedling blooms, all from the same seed pod yet all different. Also on display were three Junos. Now, books tell us they are normally blue, but Lynda Crossen's two *willmottiana* X *magnifica* and Marilyn Rathgen's *magnifica* X self were white with yellow signals. There were slight variations in the flowers and also in the heights. After lunch it was off to Rhonda and Phil's garden in Waimate which had lots of colour from fritillaries, daffodils, hellebores to name but a few of the plants. As these die down, the roses, peonies, irises and daylilies will be centre stage. They had created archways and garden art with some featuring mosaic work.

October saw the dwarf and median irises as our discussion subject led by Alison Simpson. We learnt of their cultural needs, height differences and flowering times. There were a good number of irises on display. Some members had hoped to have some of their irises identified which was successful for a small number. This showed the importance of naming your plants. Following lunch, we visited our member Elizabeth Prattley's garden. She has done a lot of work since our last visit with many types of iris growing now – a real irisarian's garden and an absolute credit to her.

November meeting was at Makikihi with discussions on the upcoming show and the different classes and colour patterns in the iris. We then went to the Makikihi Trial Garden to see what classes certain irises should fit into. Stephanie Boot also talked to us on staging irises for showing. The show at the end of November had a good display of irises despite the inclement weather earlier in the week. Stephanie Boot was awarded Supreme Champion iris with her *I. setosa* 'Kirigamine' and Champion Beardless Iris.



**Left:** Michael Midgley and Judith Neilson welcoming people to the iris show. **Below left:** Helen Knowles and Sharon Wilkins discussing the merits of various irises on the showbench.

Lynda Crossen received the Champion Bearded for a Jim Geditz seedling 11-11-F X 'Power Point' and Alison Simpson the Champion Species with a *prismatica* iris.

November: we had a special visit to Mary Brosnahan's beautiful garden as this will be last time before she moves to a smaller house and garden. This move will be a sad day as she loves her garden so much. She has such a way with plants. What a legacy for someone to take on!



**Above:** Mary Brosnahan in her garden with her trusty companion.

The Christmas gathering was at Lake Tekapo. This beautiful day saw us exchanging plants for Christmas, visiting two crevice gardens and having a lovely meal at a local hotel. After lunch, it was a trip along the lake to visit Karoline Rieder's garden at Richmond Station which we had visited earlier in the year. This time her irises were in flower with many of them being historic. Michael Midgley gave a demonstration on transferring pollen from one iris to another – not always easy especially with spring winds.

Along with our monthly meetings, there is the Makikihi Iris Garden to maintain which is done on a roster system. We had open days during the main flowering season where

our members were on hand to answer any questions from the members of the public and to take in any orders. With it being very dry in December, a watering roster was set up; then it rained!! We now have a bigger water tank installed to help when watering is again required. Denise Sanders does an excellent job of the spraying regime.



**Left:** Judith Neilson, Lynda Crossen and Stephanie Boot judging at Makikihi.

# Rangitikei Iris Group: The Year That Was 2020

by Carole Flyger

2020 will be remembered for varied reasons. The biggest influence was the outbreak of COVID-19, taking everyone by surprise. At first, my reaction was that it was like SARS and would be contained, especially if we washed our hands and kept a distance from others – how wrong I was!

Both viruses belong to the coronavirus family, with COVID-19 having the biggest impact on the human population. SARS first was reported in November 2002 and, in July 2003, was declared as having been contained, the final case reported in May 2004. During this time, 8000 people were reported as infected and 774 died – one non-fatal case was reported in New Zealand. Most cases were from mainland China and Hong Kong.

COVID-19 became a reality in New Zealand when the government announced a four-tier system on 21 March, and we were already at Level 2. Just two days later, on 23 March we were at Level 3 and in 48 hours we would move to Level 4. We were isolated at home and learning to cope with new phrases such as 'stay in your bubble' and not being able to shop except for the supermarket, staying 2m apart and queuing to be let in to make purchases.

Amid all this turmoil, the Rangitikei Iris Group took everything in their stride. The year started for us on 16 February with a BBQ at John and Annette Marple's home. The club provided the meat and members salads, dessert and refreshments. A very relaxing time was spent under their verandah and on the porch on a hot Sunday afternoon and was a relaxing time to get ready for the year with time to wander around the garden and admire the varied plantings.

Mid-March was an 'Iris Swap': members bringing along an iris plant and explaining why the particular iris was selected. Members can then choose an iris they would like. Mostly bearded irises are brought along but Julie Warren chose to bring along a slip of the Siberian iris 'Welfenschatz' (Marlene Ahlburg, R. 1990) from a plant that she won in a raffle at the 2012 Bay of Plenty Convention. To my surprise, a certain member who is very one-eyed about tall bearded irises, picked this as his choice. I am pleased to say it is flourishing and we look forward to it flowering this year.

The planned AGM in April had to be postponed but we were able to hold a meeting mid-June where we were able to keep distance from each other. Discussion was held on the NZIS Seed Pool List and some of the smaller irises that may be available from the list.

Finally, we were able hold our AGM in July. No change in Officers; concern and discussion about getting new members was aired. The Whanganui Heritage Trust were holding a Heritage Month in October and John Vickers offered his home and gardens in Marton as a setting to highlight irises growing in gardens. This was enthusiastically accepted. The event held on 31 October was well received and many people attended and purchased irises. We were pleased to have one new member join the Group. The word on irises was spread around with attendees coming from as far south as Taranaki

**Right:** A six-petalled ensata in Sue and Lindsay Davies' garden.





**Left:** A six-petalled ensata with fringed style arms in Sue and Lindsay Davies' superb garden in Palmerston North.

and Wanganui – many were impressed with the flowers that they were able to see growing in the garden.

Mid-August was the time to discuss the species Louisiana irises which were well researched and illustrated by Sandy Bartle. The dwarf spuria irises were the chosen topic for September, with Lindsay Davies giving a thorough account of this much-overlooked group.

14 November had been the date set for our Annual Show. Judge organised, hall booked, everyone with their set tasks. Alas the irises decided to bloom very early in 2020, their peak blooming was just after

Labour Weekend. With some members having nothing to show, there was concern that there would not be much for the public to peruse. Somehow a good selection was able to be exhibited and a good attendance resulted in a satisfying Show. So much effort was put into this event for the set up, staging, judging and then the opening to the public. All organised by fifteen people, some who were able to contribute a valuable few hours, resulted in the presence of irises being showcased to the gardening fraternity.

The final event for the year was held at Sue and Lindsay Davies' home. Their extensive garden was resplendent with *Iris ensata* in full bloom. Most of the ensatas have been grown from seed and crosses that had been made by Sue. The tour was part of the garden where Japanese irises were flourishing. Despite wind and rain the previous few days, there were many interesting blooms to discuss and evaluate the features and merits of each seedling.

### Test Garden

Lastly, Sue and Lindsay are now hosting the Test Garden, where irises that have gained an Award of Merit (AM) in their respective Trial Gardens are sent to be assessed over three years for consideration for a Dykes Medal. There were three entries consisting of a tall bearded, a spuria and a sibtosa. Each type is growing in an area that is suited to its requirements. The first planting we saw were two rhizomes of a tall bearded that was received on 20 August 2020. It was astounding to see, despite this late planting, one

rhizome was flowering and the other in bud just sixteen weeks after being planted. Next was the spuria iris that was received on 28 August but sulked after plant-



**Left:** Part of the ensata seedling patch.  
**Right:** A six-petalled ensata in Sue and Lindsay's garden.



ing at the end of winter. While this is a young plant, it was looking in good stead and should increase in vigour before its judging this year. Finally, the sibtosia that was received on 31 August was looking lush and obviously liking the situation it was in.

With 2021 ahead of us, it would be great to have a buoyant year and a further appreciation of the varied irises that are around.



**Left:** Tall bearded iris in the NZIS Test Garden.

**Right:** The lush Sibtosia in the Test Garden.



## Obituary: Robert (Bob) MacFarlane

Bob was a member of the Otago Group and joined the New Zealand Iris Society in 1967 when the subscription fee was £2.

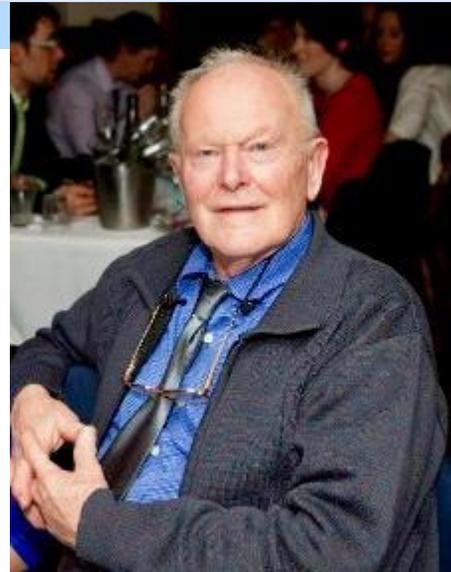
For many years, Bob was a National Delegate for the Otago Group when we had a member from Groups attend Committee meetings. He always treated others with a quiet, genteel dignity. Bob held the office of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer of the Otago Group, and was awarded Life Membership of that Group in 2019.

Bob worked for Parks and Reserves in the Botanical Gardens for 40 years and had a love of growing iris and was avidly interested in the many forms of other plants.

He was an eager attendee at our Conventions and a Senior Judge, and it was special to be teamed up with him as he was very good at judging irises.

by Marilyn Fleming

**Left:** Bob attends a NZIS Convention accompanied by his lovely wife, Elva, and Bev Lapham.





## Obituary: Brian Harris

Brian always had a love of gardening and, when he retired in 1990, he was inspired by his two sisters, Gwenda and Judith, to not only grow but immerse himself in irises, and so the Waimate Iris Gardens nursery started. Brian soon began importing irises from Barry Blyth (Australia) as well as from Keith Keppel, Paul Black, Terry Aitken and other American breeders. This act afforded other New Zealand irisarians the opportunity to purchase these new introductions and to develop the stock of hybridising material in NZ. To see Brian's three gardens at bloom time was wonderful; however, it wasn't long before space was a problem and, by 1997, Brian had three sections in Waimate full of Iris.

Brian's 1994 catalogue listed 50 new imports and his 1996 catalogue presented 80 new imports. His visits to growers in America resulted in many gift rhizomes arriving in NZ which Brian grew on for fundraising auctions.

At the 1996 Dunedin Convention, Brian assisted Hec Collins in an Iris Auction and his ability to extract money from members in a quick and humorous manner became evident. Being a former stock firm auctioneer, Brian had exceptional skills and raised over \$30,000 at auctions over the years for the NZIS.

In 2004 Brian organised an American Tour for a group of NZ Iris Society members to attend an AIS Convention and visit many iris breeders' nurseries where they were able to purchase irises to import into NZ. This was probably the last main importation of bearded iris into NZ as regulations were then tightened. In following years, Brian imported seed that had been hybridised by Barry Blyth and Keith Keppel and so new stock continued to be available to avid iris growers.

Brian actively promoted the Society. He donated the Waimate Challenge Trophy which is awarded to the Group presenting the best report of their activities. For several years, he was instrumental in the South Canterbury Iris Group conducting educational and social Winter Seminars for members throughout the South Island.

In 2007 Brian received the Anne Blanco White Festival Crown Plate at the Dunedin Convention for his valuable contributions to the Society and in 2010 was conferred as a Life Member of the Society.

In 2009, after closing his iris nursery, Brian, with the help of South Canterbury Iris Group, developed a Trial Garden at Makikihi for NZ breeders to enter tall bearded iris, together with a large display garden of many different species and hybrids of many forms of iris.

Brian devoted much of his later life to irises, the South Canterbury Group (winning the Ethel Rogers Plate in 2015 and 2016) and the NZIS in growing, importing and promoting the genus Iris.

The Society is deeply grateful to Brian for his significant contributions.





**Before and after shots:** SDB 'Cat's Eye' before burning and below flowering in mid-October.



## Burning Dead Leaves on Bearded Irises

by Lynda Crossen

After having read about the burning of the dead foliage on bearded irises in the AIS publication *Irises*, I decided to give it a go in my garden. It was a nice dry day in June. Most of the fire was in the centre of the clump as that was where most of the leaves were, but there was some round the edges as well. Where needed, I teased up the leaves a little to get a better burn. As we had a relatively mild winter, they had not died down as much as I would have liked so those with lots of green leaves didn't get done.

The fire scorched the green leaves as well and they looked a bit sad for a short while. In mid-September, the plants are much tidier and the foliage is much cleaner than those clumps that didn't get done.

As this was a test run, I only did some of my larger clumps, I thought that it was better to play safe this

time round. The only tricky part I found was the labels. The odd one got a little smoke blackened, so I found it better to pull them out, do the burning and then put them back in again.

## NZIS Seed Pool

In 1996, Merv and Lyn Stockley kindly took over the NZIS Seed Pool. You will all agree that they have done an excellent job obtaining seed for members to grow and enjoy, along with the packaging and labelling them and then dealing with postage. Lynette would like to resign this position, so if there is anyone out there who would like this significant position, please look in the *Policies and Procedures (Working Handbook)* for a Job Description and get in touch with the President whose email address is on p. 4 of this *Bulletin*. This position will be effective from November at the NZIS National Convention in Tauranga 2021.

Marilyn Fleming



## Obituary: Anne Blanco White

It is with sadness that we recognise the death of Anne Blanco White on 25 December 2019. A very remarkable person and stalwart member of the iris world in general for decades, Anne was the first woman to become President of The British Iris Society (BIS), a post of three-year terms which she held on two occasions. She maintained an active involvement in the BIS and its various Groups. Most particularly, Anne was the Chair of the Group for Beardless Irises which she diligently held from 2007–2019, after having previously been Secretary.

Anne edited the book *A Guide to species Iris, their identification and cultivation* for the BIS and it has become one of the reference books for irisarians worldwide. Anne received the **Foster Memorial Plaque** (BIS) in 1997 and the **Warburton Medal** in 2000.

Anne's iris registrations/introductions are:

Ensata: 'Give-Me-Patience' and 'Mancunian' (- pictured right).

Species: *I. pseudacorus* 'Tiggah' and *I. evansia* 'Twiddle'.

Species-X: 'Blackleg'.

Anne's friendship, wise counsel and broad knowledge of all things iris-related will be greatly missed across the world, as will her gentle and self-deprecating sense of humour.



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Visitors welcome Oct–Dec. Please phone/email first.

# Membership Information

Annual Subscriptions are due on 1 July each year

|                      |      |                             |       |
|----------------------|------|-----------------------------|-------|
| Full membership      | \$30 | Overseas membership         | \$40  |
| Family member        | \$5  | Overseas family member      | \$5   |
| Student member       | \$5  | Overseas membership 3 years | \$100 |
| Half year membership | \$20 | Overseas family 3 years     | \$115 |

- New Zealand Group members are requested to pay Group Treasurers who will make one payment to the NZIS Membership Secretary:  
**New Zealand Iris Society Inc. bank account BNZ 02 1210 0001241 00 – please use your Name/Group and what the deposit is for as references.**
- Subscriptions from Groups go to the Membership Secretary so that the records and mailing lists can be kept updated. The Membership Secretary will then pass the information on to the Treasurer.
- Changes of address go to the Membership Secretary.

Family members receive all the privileges and benefits of the Society, except that each family receives only ONE *Bulletin*. Overseas members are requested to pay by bank draft. Banks no longer accept personal cheques from overseas. Persons joining after 1 January in any year need pay only \$20 (or Family rate @ \$25) to 30 June, thereafter full subscription rates will apply. Non-financial members will not receive *Bulletins*.

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| CD Registered NZ-Bred Irises  | \$15       |
| NZIS Checklists (2009 update)   | \$12       |
| NZIS judging handbook   | \$15       |
| NZIS badge  | \$5        |
| Jean Stevens Chronicles   | \$30       |
| <i>Iris Culture in New Zealand</i> by Hilmary Catton  | \$5        |
| Back numbers of the <i>Bulletin</i> available – nos. 136–138, 141, 143–154, 156–161, 163–179, 181–189, 191, 195–202 | Each @ \$2 |
| Index to <i>Bulletins</i> 1–140   | \$3        |

Prices are inclusive of postage and handling within NZ. Please send orders to the Treasurer (- see contact details on p. 4).

### Items for sale:

#### NZIS *Bulletin* advertising rates:

|                            |       |                                 |       |
|----------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|-------|
| Full page colour per issue | \$180 | Full page black/white per issue | \$150 |
| Half page colour per issue | \$90  | Half page black/white per issue | \$75  |
|                            |       | 1/5 page black/white per issue  | \$20  |

Until alternative advice is received, existing advertisements will continue to be published, although not necessarily in the same position.

|                                |                           |                 |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Deadlines for all copy:</b> | June <i>Bulletin</i>      | 20 April 2021   |
|                                | September <i>Bulletin</i> | 20 July 2021    |
|                                | March <i>Bulletin</i>     | 20 January 2022 |

## Groups Contact Information

**Mid North** Meetings held on the 3rd Monday of each month: Secretary Annette Sicely, 331 Brown Rd, RD 22, Kaiwaka 0573 email: djpranker@xtra.co.nz Ph. [09] 431 2852.

**Albany** In recess.

**Auckland** Meetings usually held on the fourth Sunday of each month:  
Secretary Dianne De Blois, 14 Poinsettia Place, Henderson, Auckland 0610  
Ph. [09] 838 6492. Email: dianned@actrix.co.nz

**Bay of Plenty** Meetings held on the last Sunday of each month: Secretary Christina Braybrook, 497E Joyce Road, RD3, Tauranga 3173 Ph. [07] 543 1128 or 021 243 1128.  
Email: blivue@xtra.co.nz

**Gisborne** Secretary/Treasurer Maggie Asplet, 1286 Matawai Rd, RD1, Gisborne 4071  
Ph. 021 1712 509. Email: maggieasplet@gmail.com

**Hawkes Bay** Secretary Joy Kennerley, 3/36 Napier Rd, Havelock North, 4723  
Ph. [06] 261 0177 Mob: 0221 523 831. Email: valeriekennerley@gmail.com

**Nth. Taranaki** Meetings held on the fourth Tuesday of each month:  
Secretary Mrs Nyla Chubb, Erin Street, RD24, Stratford, Taranaki 4394

**Rangitikei** Meetings held on Tuesday evenings or Sunday afternoon mid-month:  
Secretary Lindsay Davies, 115 Staces Road, RD1, Palmerston North 4471  
Ph. [06] 357 0159. Email: gardiner.davies@xtra.co.nz

**Waikato** Meetings held on the first Wednesday of each month: Secretary Mary Barrell, 45 The Oaks Drive, Cambridge 3432 Ph. [07] 827 0620. Email: marynclive@xtra.co.nz

**Wairarapa** Meetings usually held every second Tuesday of each month:  
Secretary Louise Kjestrup, 576 Te Whiti Road, RD4, Masterton 5884 Ph. [06] 377 0686.  
Email: louisekjestrup@gmail.com

**Wellington** Meetings by arrangement. Secretary Margaret Kuyper, 42 Waihao Terrace, Elsdon, Porirua 6006.

**Central Otago** Spontaneous meetings. Contact: Cathy Robertson, 319 Earnsclough Rd, Alexandra 9391 Ph. [03] 449 3223. Email: steverobertson@xtra.co.nz

**Christchurch** Secretary Emma O'Connell 47 Riselaw Street, Mairehau, Christchurch 8013. Ph. [03] 3861922 or 0276 974 904. Email: elmmills@yahoo.com.au

**Nelson** Meetings usually held on the last Wednesday afternoon of most months.  
Contact: Beth Conrad, 14 Rutland Street, Stoke, Nelson 7011 Ph. 0220 483 322.  
Email: bethconrad.nz@gmail.com

**Otago** Meetings held on the second Saturday of the month, except for recess in January and July. Acting Secretary Dr Robert Fisk, 13 Armadale St, Mosgiel 9024  
Ph: [03] 552 3825. Email: robertwfisk@gmail.com  
Website: www.groupspaces.com/otagoirisgroup

**South Canterbury** Meetings held on the first Wednesday of February to December.  
Secretary Lynda Crossen Lynda Crossen, 109 Cairds Road, Southburn, 2 RD, Timaru 7972 Ph: [03] 686 4813. Email: crossen@xtra.co.nz

**Southland** Spontaneous meetings: Secretary Bev Lapham, PO Box 96, Mossburn 9747  
Ph. [03] 248 6373. Email: laphams11@kinect.co.nz



Photos by Beth Conrad of Nelson. **Above** (from left to right): Species-X *Evansia* 'Bourne Graceful'; Species-X 'Revie's Legacy'. **Below**: Strongly veined Pacific Coast iris seedlings grown from donated seed to the Seed Pool from '*Karapiro Ripples*' (Mary Barrell, 2009) by Beth Conrad.

