

The Group for Beardless Irises of the British Iris Society

Newsletter No.42 - May 1998



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AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE GROUP:

To foster communication between members in Great Britain and overseas by the exchange of ideas, seeds and plants; to help newcomers with their interests and problems, and to report on new work in hybridisation.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

One of the most agreeable things that I have to report is that we are recruiting members slowly but surely; and I extend a welcome to all those who have joined us recently. However, I would hope that all these new members and the older members will feel free to express an opinion about any aspect of iris growing. But even more importantly I urge you to voice suggestions to improve the work of the Group. Even criticism of the Chairman would not go unwelcomed.

At the time of writing the whole country has experienced a winter that we normally associate with the balmy south west areas in Cornwall and the western seaboard generally. For instance in my own garden I have *Magnolia cylindrica* which has produced perfect white flowers without the hint of browning usually associated with our normal winters. This is almost unprecedented here in the Midlands. We cannot be complacent when we think of the horrible damage suffered by every kind of iris in the southern counties last spring. A late frost completely devastated and ruined whole flowering stems. Fortunately the further north we gardened the lesser the effect of those April frosts. We must now keep our fingers crossed for this year. (As I type this in it's snowing! 10.4.Ed.) The last few mild winters have contributed to some degree to the very slow germination of many iris seeds. I feel sure that a sharp cold spell accelerates the changes needed to secure a good germination. With this proviso I urge members to persevere and not to discard unpromising seed pots. Provided that they never dry out completely there is always hope for germination in the following season. Members' hints and experience are always welcome in this area and would be another good subject for some of you to write about.

Preliminary plans are being prepared for the West and Midlands Iris Group to host the 2002 B.I.S. Convention. It would be encouraging if our Group members could help even in the smallest way. For instance something as simple as growing a specimen iris in a pot for display would be appreciated. Please consider this seriously. Yet again, fresh ideas would be welcome. Taking this suggestion one step further; some members for instance might have influence over the planting of local authority gardens. Some might be capable of cajoling owners of large gardens to consider growing a larger range of irises. The persistent among you might be capable of opening a few garden gates! The rest then depend upon the West Midlands members supplying the plants.

Let me reiterate that your newsletter depends on your enthusiasm and input. Best wishes for the coming season.

Ray Bomford

SECRETARIAL SECTION

Yet again, a nice peaceful half year. That there are delays in sending out newsletters is only to be expected in an outfit such as ours and you did finally get it. I just hope it arrived for a wet weekend when gardening was definitely out of the question and that you enjoyed it the more in consequence. Nothing shattering has happened in the world of beardless irises since then, but there does seem to be a really good chance that everything will flower madly this year and that you will have no excuse for not either exhibiting at any of the various BIS shows or inviting your local Hort. Soc. members to come and see what a really good iris looks like. Maybe one or two would even like to join us after that.

Anne Blanco White

REPORT OF THE HON. TREASURER AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Finances - The Group's accounts for the year ended 31st December last have been audited, and a balance sheet, with notes, is annexed at the end of this newsletter. Many thanks are due to our Auditor, Lucy Wilkins, for a thorough audit, despite the inconvenience and pain of a broken ankle. We send our good wishes for complete recovery.

Balances at 1st January, 1998 appear to be quite adequate but are in fact sufficient only to meet this year's expenditure, with the cost of three newsletters to meet. Current income, including donations, is satisfactory so I will wait until the Autumn newsletter before recommending any increase in the level of subscriptions. Annual subscriptions alone are now insufficient to fund the cost of the newsletters.

Unexpected delays in printing and posting the last newsletter caused larger than usual sums to be held by the Newsletter Editor and me at 31st December last. These balances have now been reduced substantially. When examining the accounts the Auditor recommended that fixed floats should be set and replenished as necessary. This would follow the practice adopted by the main Society. The Chairman has accepted the Auditor's recommendation and agreed floats of £150, £10 and £100 for the Newsletter Editor, Secretary and me, respectively. Mine will facilitate inter-officer funding and overseas purchases.

Arrears are less of a problem than they were following the introduction of a memorandum giving personal details of membership subscription payments sent with the last newsletter. Several members found it useful. The membership cut-off point was then advanced by several months where subscriptions were not paid, thus reducing risk of arrears accumulating.

Over £200 was received in donations and the Group's sincere thanks are due to Norma Harris, Jennifer Hewitt, Olga Wells, Evelyn White, our Chairman Raymond Bomford, Norman Bennett, John Carter, Norman Payne, Dr. Steven Ruffles, and David Trevithick for their generous donations, both specific and general. Reports on the use of specific donations will be presented from time to time.

Plant and seed sales continue to be an important source of income, and in this respect the Group is particularly fortunate in having such a dedicated core of members who send donations from plant sales. Last year we were indebted to Anne Blanco White, Jennifer Hewitt and Sue Pierce, who together donated £58.00. Our Seed Distribution Officer Gary Lewis raised £41.40; an outstanding achievement when the limited response from members is taken into account. Gary had also faced another problem in that several of our very generous seed donors were unsure to whom to send seed knowing that it was being distributed by the main Society and at least three of the Society's Regional or Specialist Groups. After consultation with the Chairman and Gary it was decided to accept the generous offer made by Mrs. Margaret Criddle, B.I.S. Seed Distribution Officer, to include seed distribution for this Group with her present duties, subject to satisfactory financial arrangements being made with the B.I.S. Treasurer. This has been done. We are indebted to all concerned for this arrangement and express our sincere thanks to Gary for his help over the past three and a half years. Gary will now hand over all seed stocks to Margaret Criddle to whom all future enquiries and seed parcels should be addressed. Margaret's address is given on the front page.

This part of my report would not be complete without a word of thanks to those who make the seed distribution possible. During the past year we received seed from Margaret Criddle, Norma Harris, Jennifer Hewitt and Sue Pierce, in addition to several overseas members, Tony Huber of Canada; Charles Jenkins of Scottsdale, Arizona; Dr. Currier McEwen of Maine and David Niswonger of Cape Girardeau, Montana. Many thanks to you all. A final word of thanks goes to Dr. Currier McEwen for donating a copy of his excellent new book "The Siberian Iris" to the Group Library. In my last report I mentioned an unusual gift of a metal "Rotadex" cabinet. The donor, my dentist, whose records are computerised, has gifted another to our stock, which is to be used as a membership index. The main newsletter author/subject indices have now been housed in a larger "Rotadex" cabinet which, with the Chairman's approval, I purchased recently at a much reduced price. It will be handed over to Sue once its

contents have been brought up to date. This uses up the bequest of £200 from the late Miss E.M. Sharland. Back copies of the newsletters can be purchased for £1. 00 including postage, except for the December, 1997 issue which in view of its content will be £1. 50 inclusive. This payment will now be standard and covers the average costs of photocopying and postage.

To those who have responded to my plea for advance payments, many thanks for making my work easier. Receipts will be attached to your membership subscription statement which I hope to send with your next newsletter, when subscriptions for 1999 will be announced. Please avoid disappointment to both parties by sending me your subscriptions as soon as possible. I am wholly occupied on work for the Group and the main Society, to the detriment of my garden and other pursuits, so can ill afford time spent chasing up arrears. Eventually the despatch of newsletters will depend on the pre-payment of subscriptions, for in this manner arrears will be avoided altogether. My thanks to you all for the friendly and supportive notes I receive from time to time, which are very encouraging.

1998 has seen a continuation of the financial support which is so vital to the Group. Thanks are due to Norma Harris; and to Mrs. J.L. Haywood and Ian Smith for including donations with their advance payments. Jennifer Hewitt and Sue Pierce have also sent me generous donations from early season plant sales.

Membership - With 50+ U.K. members and 30+ from overseas at the start of 1997, membership fluctuated slightly but at year end it edged towards 100 in total. During the year we welcomed to membership Mrs. Ann Butler of Cannock, Staffs; Mrs. Janet King of Reading, Berks.; Mrs. Christine Wharton Nebbett of Dawlish, Devon; Mrs. Sue Whittall of Bredwardine, Herefordshire; Norman Bennett of Weymouth, Dorset; Derek Carver of Oxshott, Surrey; Mr. & Mrs. K. Edmondson of Bewdley, Worcs.; Revd. Fr. Philip Jones of Erdington Abbey, Birmingham; Crispin Mason of Macerata, Italy; Ralph Medcalf of Romford, Essex; and Laurence Ransom of Laroque Timbaut, France. We hope they have all enjoyed the newsletters and now look forward to news from them and from other members. Comments on the newsletter content are invited. Please remember that the ultimate success of the newsletter will be achieved when all members make a personal contribution to it, letting us know their problems and successes; plans and achievements. Let us all share your fun and frustrations with irises.

Years do not pass without the loss of valued members. We remember our Pacificas Specialist, Ray Wilson, who resigned on health grounds; and the late Jack Ashford and Bob Wise for whom obituaries were included in the December, 1997 newsletter. Paul Richardson, past President of the New Zealand Iris Society and a past member of this Group has passed away. We send our condolences to his relatives and friends.

So far during 1998 we have welcomed to renewed membership Dr. Marion Wood of Hollacombe, Devon; and to membership Miss Clare Dodsworth of Darlington, Co. Durham; Mrs. S.A. Ecklin, Hon. Secretary to the B.I.S., of Great Bookham, Surrey; Mrs. Alison Foster of Gatehouse of Fleet, Castle Douglas; Mrs. Loveday Humphries of Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh, Hants; Miss L.E. Hurrell, Nr. South Brent, Devon; Mr. Chris. Chesney of Morpeth; Mr. & Mrs. Ken MacLeod of Bucknell, Shropshire; and Mr. Greg. McCullough of Iris City Gardens, Nashville, Tennessee. Some have been good enough to write introductory articles which appear later in this newsletter. We hope others will follow suit. Membership at 20th May is listed on the penultimate pages. P.S. We welcome from the Malvern Show the membership of Mr. Martin Maule of Pen yr Odyn, Arthog, Dolgellau, Gwynedd, whose application reached me as I concluded this report.

In January this year, and in the absence of any other volunteer I took over the duties of Hon. Literature Secretary to the British Iris Society. This takes up quite a lot of my spare time and I consider it undesirable for any one member to hold more than one post. Would any member like to take over the duties of Treasurer and/or Membership Secretary, (the post could be split), or offer to assist me in this work with a view to taking over next year, when I shall be approaching my 79th birthday! New blood is urgently needed!

Philip Allery

OBITUARY: Paul Richardson

Paul Richardson, whose death in November 1997 saddened us all, was a Group member for a number of years and though far distant, took a keen interest in matters raised in the newsletter and contributed several interesting items - he was always trying new ideas which seemed worth investigation and reporting on what worked, notably the 'Hotter Rotter' for compost making. His and Mary's garden in Upper Hutt showed a variety of plant life, all well grown and obviously thriving. It was the sort of garden that takes ages to go round although just half an acre in extent, as there was so much to see. Beardless irises predominated though he grew some shorter bearded ones too. A vivid memory of the trip I made with them in 1990, the length of South Island, in order to attend the NZIS Convention at Invercargill, is the careful carrying by one or other of us of a vase with two stems of *Iris speculatrix*. This rare little iris from Hong Kong and south China is not easy to grow, let alone flower, and when a bloom opened there was an immediate stop for photography - I think it was the first time it had ever bloomed for Paul. Luckily the second flower waited for the Convention. Paul also worked hard over a long period for the Wellington Group and then as Secretary and Treasurer (at the same time) of the NZIS. Then, getting into computer activities with as much enthusiasm as he did everything else, he produced publicity material for irises and collected articles from past issues of the NZIS 'Bulletin' which he published to raise funds for NZIS and to make articles by George Cross, for example, better known. All of us who knew him felt ourselves very fortunate in his friendship and the help he gave unstintingly, and our sympathy goes to Mary and all his family.

Jennifer Hewitt

EDITORIAL

The first thing to say is that my husband and I are intending to move, either this year or the next, depending on how soon I can finish the necessary work on the house. We have always wanted to live in a backwater, especially since we tend to go to bed at around 8.30pm. At present we live on the High Street of a village with pubs that close around 2am, shops and take-away's that stay open until 10 or 11pm, and estates of young lads with after-market exhausts and pulverising sound systems who frequent these, as well as the increased traffic flows that Measham's being between two junctions of the M42 has cursed us with, which draws folk from elsewhere through the village. These have led my husband to stipulate that he wants none of the above in our new site. Therefore, producing the 'Newsletter' may become problematical. Even should there be a bus (a rare animal since privatisation, at least in rural areas, if the open-cast and rampantly developed 'New National Forest' that we inhabit can be classed as such) to take me to somewhere with a printer/copier and Post Office, the prospect of boxes of newsletters in all weathers doesn't appeal and having to bus any significant distance would make sorting out problems a headache. Here the Post Office is 100 yds away and is rather more capable than that with which

many villages are blessed - if they have one at all, the photocopiers are almost opposite, and the printers three miles away on an hourly bus, which is ideal. Therefore, can you all ruminant thoroughly about where the editing of the 'Newsletter' might go. Also, in the shorter term, I'm enrolling in a part time course covering the next four years, as of January '99, so it would be as well to have someone prepared to take it on should I not have the time. Our existing officers all wear other hats as well, sometimes in great heaps, so are unable to take on more work, even if it's the nexus of the

Group. Fresh blood is always most welcome, I'd done nothing along this line prior to taking this on, as I'm sure those of you with production experience can tell. Neither am I knowledgeable about irises compared to so many folk, as those of you who are will have spotted long ago, yet I've kept the 'Newsletter' going, after such a fashion as I'm able to, which was what was required. There is no onus to continue it along the lines that I have been doing and if the new incumbent were to plump for original material only, and be less inclined to waffle, that would lessen the work-load considerably. Since I've never got around to teaching myself to type, so the work-load that I perceive may not even exist in the eyes of someone with those skills. I'll from now on be producing around 12 sheets per issue, as I've switched to having the photocopying done at the printer's rather than the 'copy shop across the road, and, apart from the reducing the workload to myself and postmen around the globe, it means that the prices won't fluctuate with each issue, making cash-flow simpler for Philip and Mrs. Wilkins. There isn't even much letter writing to be done, with the Group being so small, and it's such a pleasure due to the correspondents that it can't be regarded as a chore. Anyone who reads my biennial waffle will be well aware of how friendly and helpful the other officers are. Another major perk is of course being in a position to wheedle plants out of kindly and amenable folk! I am, of course, most willing to advise whoever comes forward as to the ropes.

Do remember that those of you geared up in that direction can send me floppys, so there's no end to the amount of copy you can send in. What a marvellous thought! I am producing this in Microsoft Word version 6.0, but a Rich Text File would do nicely if that's what you've got. Do bear in mind that I'm not computer literate, depending on my husband's kind offices to sort out problems, so shall be quite clueless about how to deal with any format other than those mentioned, apart from Microsoft Works, but that needs converting, which doesn't always succeed anyway. Receiving floppys would of course mean that I had only to adjust such articles, instead of having to type them all in with my assortment of clumsy digits. Whatever suits contributors best, suits me too, any copy is **always** welcome. If there's anything you're cogitating on, don't wonder about when to send it, I've a nice fat box file just waiting for such contributions, and whenever they come, unless they obviously need to be held until a particular season's issue, as for example I tend to do with seed related articles for the autumnal issues, they'll be put into the next NI. Copy can never appear too early since, if there are any problems, like my misreading of handwriting, or, in my editorial fashion, wanting a clarification, or needing to accost Jennifer over registration and introduction information that I can't track down, then having lots of time to sort such things out in is a welcome bonus.

Irises wise, everything seems to have survived last year's late splitting, no doubt due to the mild weather, and is looking happy. As a small and undoubtedly statistically irrelevant experiment, I kept one bucket of the pseudacorus hybrid 'Phil Edinger' out of water over the winter, as I had split the original plant into equal pieces. Both sections flowered on the same day, having the same number of flowers per stem, but the plant kept out of water, although having slightly fewer leaves per fan than the plant overwintered in water, threw up two stems to its one, albeit rather snaky. However, I suppose that since bearded forms the flower stems the year before they appear, so do apogons, but at least it showed me that this particular pseudacorus variant doesn't demand water year round. Mind you, considering the summers we now suffer, I've lacked the courage to plant this out in the garden, which really ought to be the next test when I came to split this again. A bucketful of *I. fulvata* which I rended in March to give a rhizome away, promptly collapsed with dear old bacterial soft rot as soon as I put in into a water bucket, having looked fine prior to that. I took it out of water again as soon as I noticed this, and scraped the rot off, and it now looks fine (3.5). I've been feeding all the buckets and pots, first with hoof, horn and dried blood, as that was needing to be finished off, and now with Wilko's 'Phostrogen' equivalent, as it shakes out more evenly -having larger granules- and doesn't cake so irrevocably on the surface if I don't get around to watering it in. As even the pseudacorus' young leaves are floppy, and everything else looks distantly related to Medusa, or on the plant equivalent of illegal substances, I gather that I've managed to overfeed them, which must be the first time! So far nothing's rotted though, just slightly permed, so I've not apparently done anything too awful. Will all this food mean that the Louisianas will flower next year? I can but dream. I had them ranged along the kitchen wall, except one that wouldn't fit, for some winter protection, with their buckets wrapped in newspapers, as you may recall. They have all come through unscathed so far, and the one that was elsewhere had one fan frosted stiff in our cold snap in January, but subsequently thawed out with no ill effects, which amazed me. Apparently, it's not so much the formation of ice-crystals inside the cells that causes the damage, but the loss of water from the cells whilst they're frozen, and the subsequent movement of water back in once thawing occurs. Rapid cycles cause more disruption than slow ones, so plants adapt where they can to lower the temperature at which freezing commences, and slow down the movement of the water between cells. The hardening off process that you will all be familiar with, apparently achieves the second effect, and also improves the water holding capacity of the cellular materials. Now that it's warmly May the Louisianas are all in water buckets and need splitting already.

One loss which came as quite a surprise was the old tetraploid Cal-sib 'Margot Holmes' (Perry 1927), of which I had two foot wide clumps of several years standing that just faded away at the end of last summer, despite waterings. I can only conjecture that they thought it just too hot to support continued life, as did I! More likely, I suppose, they should have been split a while back and even my watering of them wasn't enough due to the competition for nutrients within the clump. There may be a few fans left in one area, so I've another chance to get it right. Although they are irresistibly beautiful, the only chrysographes hybrids that I've seen thrive here for any length of time, are those on my allotment. Maybe neglect really *is* the answer! No, sorry, those of you with back troubles, just kidding. Such talented folk as Jane Cole have no trouble, and the chrysographes 'Mandarin Purple' kindly swapped by her a couple of years ago is still looking most content in a 3l pot of JI No.3 this spring (9.5.), and has just gone into a bucket so that I can keep it moist. I pin my hopes on that. Now, if I can cross that with my hybrid swarm on the allotment, I may get something exciting... maybe I'll just let Derek move on his own.

Due to our proposed move, I may well have to leave large amounts of everything behind, so if anyone wants to either come over in whichever season is appropriate to their desires I'll dig stuff up, or write and I'll send it by post. Profits to the Group of course, see the plant sales section.

Sue Pierce

SOUTH OF WATFORD

As far as this spring has gone it seems clear that the iris population in general has appreciated the autumn and winter rain. The Unguicularis group have been flowering like weeds which just goes to show that they do appreciate being watered in dry autumns. After all, they are designed to flower when rain comes to their parched homelands. Even the Reticulatas have done well out of doors. For some years on my Weald clay I have had a clump of 'Harmony' alongside a spread of snowdrops. If it is left unprotected before beginning to grow the rabbits chew the leaves along with the grass before they realise that aren't supposed to like irises. So we put wire netting around both lots of plants. What usually happens is that I never remember quite where the irises will appear from and as sure as fate they turn up just outside the wire which hasn't really

mattered as it seems to have been enough to keep the rabbits away and the bulb managed to grow to flowering size. This year the wire was duly put in place and for some reason which seemed good to them two clumps of 'Harmony' flowered with mutual satisfaction; one on each side of the snow drops. In fact, bulbs in general seem to be flowering very well. Sibiricas are coming along, but the spurias seem still to be suffering from the previous dry winter and hot summer for all that there was some rain during the flowering season last year.

The time has now come to mulch like mad and make sure that the water doesn't evaporate too soon. On the whole, the soil is saturated, but the aquifers certainly aren't. The spring in the London garden is dripping half-heartedly, but it ought to be running properly; still I daresay that it will keep the water-bed irises going through the summer.

What I need to see now is some of the plants I set out last spring doing a bit of flowering.

Anne Blanco White

WEST & MIDLANDS REGION REPORT

For those who enjoy meeting members with like-minded iris interests I thoroughly recommend membership of the main Society and one of the regional groups, of which I can only speak of the benefits and friendships I have gained from membership of the West and Midlands Iris Group. With meetings and garden visits during the year; advice and plants are readily available. If you are interested contact the Secretary, Peter Hewitt, husband of Jennifer, whose address is given on the front page. A report on activities in the West Midlands region will appear in the Autumn newsletter.

Philip Allery

NEW REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES REQUIRED-URGENTLY

Philip cannot cover adequately the south-west of the region, i.e. from the Hampshire border west to Cornwall, and so a volunteer is needed. The north-east and north-west also require representatives, do take part - after all, it is your Group.

IRIS INFORMATION

Please note- The GBI's Seed Distribution has Changed Hands

In case you missed the mention Philip made of this, I'm noting it again so that you really have no excuse for accosting Gary. Mrs. Margaret Criddle and her packer, Dr. Marion Wood, have agreed, out of the kindness of their hearts, to take over our Seed Bank, as they are already so well versed in these intricacies due to their exemplary work for the B.I.S. Can you therefore send your seed to Margaret when you collect it, and your cheques, made payable to the B.I.S., and the proceeds will be forwarded to Philip at the end of the season. This means that when you are ordering either solely G.B.I. seed, or both B.I.S. and G.B.I. seed, you will need to state which are which so that the monies can be apportioned to the respective parties. Now that B.I.S. seed as well as Species Group seed is now 40p per packet including postage, we are falling into line to make juggling the finances easier, and are now asking 40p too instead of 25p.

As an addendum to this, will those of you who have bought my sibirica 'Red Flare' seed previously, please note that this should be corrected to 'Towanda Redflare', as the name that I had it under is a synonym.

Ed

New Zealand Iris Society's Convention 1998

This is to be held in Oamaru from the 20th until the 24th of November and they have a programme of informational, scenic and garden tours, the National Iris Show, interesting and entertaining speakers, a special Convention Dinner and an auction for Dykes' 'the Genus Iris', all this and penguins too, how can you resist? The Convention Convenor is Brian Harris, 4 Durham Street, Waimate, South Canterbury, New Zealand.

New Date for the NZIS's Convention 2000

Their original date for this clashed with the HIPS Convention, so it has been changed to the first weekend in June. Guest irises are arriving from as far afield as Japan and the USA and there will be public and private gardens on the tours, including several not devoted to irises.

The A.I.S. Awards for Siberian Irises 1997

Morgan Wood Medal: 'Coronation Anthem' (R.Hollingworth) 85 votes.

Runners up: 'Reprise' (Bee Warburton) 41 votes.

Award of Merit: 'Roaring Jelly' (Marty Schafer/Jan Sacks) 148 votes

Runners up: 'Cheery Lyn' (Anna Mae Miller) 70 votes. 'Devil's Dream' (Schafer/Sacks) 57 votes

Honorable Mention: 'Strawberry Fair' (R.Hollingworth) 138 votes. 'Lake Keuka' (D.Borglum) 95 votes. 'Mesa Pearl' (Bauer/Coble) 76 votes. 'Golden Edge' (C.McEwen) 34 votes.

The Siberian Iris Fall 1997

Revision of the Awards System for Siberians by the AIS

Bob Hollingworth, SSI's President, has written to Roy Epperson, Chairman of the AIS' Revisions Committee about the bottleneck in the new system. As only 10% of eligible Siberians receive Honorable Mentions, this impedes the advent of new hybridisers into the system. As so few Siberians win HMs, there are only a few competing for Awards of Merit, and as many as 50% of the eligible irises may win. Obviously, it should be more difficult to win an AM than an HM, and it would be more reasonable and equitable to have double the present amount of HMs awarded. Interested persons are advised to write to Roy Epperson.

I have condensed the above from SSI Secretary Ada Godfrey's minutes of TSI's Board Meeting of 3.6.1997.

Ed

The Society for Japanese Irises 1997 Awards

W.A.Payne Medal: 'Electric Rays' (T.Aitken) 31 votes. 'Iapetus' (S.Innerst) 31 votes.

Runners up: 'Pink Dimity' (L.Reid) 27 vote; 'Jocasta' (S.Innerst) 19 votes; 'Oriental Classic' (C.McEwen) 19 votes.

Award of Merit: 'Diomedes' (S.Innerst) 35 votes; 'Picotee Princess' (L.Reid) 32 votes.

Runners up: 'Electric Glow' (T.Aitken) 24 votes; 'Amethyst Wings' (W.Akerman) 20 votes.

Honorable Mention (4): 'Raspberry Glow' (Aitken) 27 votes; 'Ink on Ice' (Aitken) 23 votes; 'Abraco' (Innerst) 21 votes; 'Blue Embers' (Bauer/Coble) 17 votes.

Melody Wilhoit, *The Review*, Vol 34, No.2, Fall 1997

New 1997 J.I. Checklist

Nearly 200 confusing, unapproved names have been dropped and about 250 new entries have been added since 1992, including about 170 Japanese imports registered by Clarence Mahan for SJI. No more searching through 'Review's for annual registrations. Get the correct spellings for the JI imports in your garden.. Contact the SJI Sales Chairman, John Coble, at 9823 E. Michigan Ave. Galesburg, MI 49053, USA. \$5.00 post-paid US. \$6.00 Canada, \$10.00 Overseas Air. US\$ only please, cheques payable to the Society for Japanese Irises. This information is also available on disk, so write for details if that suits you better.

J.I. Information Requested

The president of The Society for Japanese Irises, Terry Aitken, would like you all to study your JI's and tell him about the following topics and anything else of similar import that is dear to your heart:

Are there any irises resistant to borers, and why does this pest only thrive in the eastern US.

What different control methods work for the various pests.

Which poisons, retardants or mulches work with JIs.

John Coble, at the SJI's 1997 Convention, mentioned ground up crab or some species of Japanese beetle incorporated into the soil to diminish the nematode population so that it can support JI's for longer. Sounds tough on the providers, but there's a start for you.

Write to Terry at 608 NW 119th St., Vancouver, WA 98685, USA.

'The Review' Requires A Masterly Indexer

Terry is considering a master index for 'The Review' and would therefore dearly love someone to come forward to undertake this sterling effort. address as above.

BIS Year Books and R&I Booklets Required

I have been for some while in need of rather more of both of these than I have, and as you'll be aware, I do need the education! If anyone does have any of these available, would they please contact me? I'm perfectly willing to pay the postage.

Ed

1998 Iris Calendars

The AIS are offering these for you poor souls who want irises indoors all year round, as well as out. Single copies are \$5 + \$1 shipping, packets of ten are \$30 + \$3 shipping per packet. Send your orders to Nancy Pocklington, 609 Harrington Street, Carlinville, IL 62626-1320, USA. If you have a \$ account, make your cheques payable to the AIS. Those of you without \$ accounts will be able to fund this through Philip's kind offices.

'Spectrum's Pillars a Riot of Colour Down Under

The Species Section of the N.Z.I.S. puffed off some of their laevigatas in a double page photographic spread in a major New Zealand gardening magazine which looks like the sort of bright idea that the GBI could appropriate. What with that and having had the weather bless their National Convention briefly before it blew all the irises to bits, it looks as though their timing's pretty spot on. Long may it continue to be so! 'Spectrum', their newsletter, is now in new editorial hands and we trust will enjoy as much success under the new team as it did in the hands of Eddie Johns.

Iris Stencils

There are three of these available at present, a TB, a Sibirica and a Spuria, although it's quite possible that other species can be supplied should demand warrant. Margaret Criddle has arranged their production and will anyone interested please phone her on 01754 811175.

Seedling Denominations

It might well be interesting to gather some information on the different methods used by breeders to designate their seedlings whilst trialling them. I have a lovely bearded of Cy Bartlett's, PCxTOB1, which is easily translated into 'Pacific Coast' x 'Touch of Bronze' No.1. Not all systems are as readily understood by the lay-person (assuming I've got it right!), and being able to have an educated guess at what was written on that illegible label can save the day. So, anyone wishing to spread a little enlightenment around to us ignorami/uses, please tell us what your system is and why you chose it. All replies received in time will go into the next issue. Alternatively, if there's been an article on this already somewhere, can someone give me the details so that I can write off for permission to reprint it.

Ed

The Variably Petalled Plant

Pseudacorus 'Roy Davidson' sported an abnormal amount last year, although I've mostly seen this on Medians (e.g. 'Pony') and TBs (e.g. what's probably 'Somerset Girl') previously. Some plant families go in for varying quantities, but Wisley would like to hear about irises doing this, and have samples to study. Details from Anne Blanco White.

Does Polyploidy Give Plants The Edge?

Polyploidy, i.e. duplication or multiplication of whole sets of chromosomes, giving counts of thirties, forties or even hundreds, may mean that with fewer genes being linked, more variation is possible within each species, possibly enhancing the speed of adaptation to environmental changes. Chromosomes numbers may therefore, in plants, be related to success, which isn't the case with animals.

Plants for Sale

I have John Beal's newly registered spuria 'Ashleigh Lemonlime' to sell for the Group as well as 'Redwood Supreme' (Niswonger 1976), 'Betty Cooper' (McCown 1981), another that came from Primrose Warburg's garden and a couple of other spuria varieties that might now be mostly seedlings. The *L.fulvata* so kindly sent to me by John Smith which is thriving, although I would like some flower. The only stem I've seen to date

caught my eye as it's remains were a neat white circle 3" off the ground. The spurias are in the ground so simply write to me at the appropriate time. If anyone would like sibiricas, I have 'Red Flare', which the Checklist tells me is a synonym for 'Towanda Redflare' (Scheffy 1949) a rosy wine red blend, about 2 1/2' tall with me; 'Caesar' (Morgan 1924), very vertical flower shape, deep purple-blue, about 3'; 'Purpeller' (Tamberg 1980), more modern mid blue-purple, massive flowers; 'Showdown' (Varner 1975), lightly ruffled wine red, good all-rounder; 'Lady of Quality' (McEwen 1992), mid blue-violet; 'Hubbard' (McEwen 1982), wine, modern, hasn't flowered for me, although it has for Jennifer, it needs a hot summer to do so, and even then doesn't tend to be an annual event. Anyone so equipped, it looks like it'd be amazing, the foliage is so strong and healthy that I've not had the heart to throw it out. I've a forest, or at least a copse of chrysographes x delavayi 'Didcot' seedlings on the allotment, probably tetraploids, as delavayi itself is, not apparently needing watering, as they thrive without it, various heights, all along the theme of nearly black, speckled over white or cream in the throat which may or may not dribble down the fall in the time-honoured 'golden' fashion. I lost their delavayi parent a few years back, doubtless due to insufficient waterings, so maybe it's hybrid vigour that's given these their robustness. I've also some marvellously stippled and spotted chrysographes seedlings that Dr. Tamberg thinks -from a photo- are probably 40 chromosome. Although daintily built, these are largely far too 'species' shaped, but anyone who likes plicatas is most welcome to try their hand at improvement as these will be abandoned, except for the only one Anne thought worth persevering with, providing it wasn't accidentally dug and binned last autumn. A small amount of *graminea pseudocyperus* will be available from the plant kindly sent to me by Bill Killens of the Species Group a few years back, which is a very lovely and easy thing, vastly more so with me than *graminea* itself, which I don't tend to be able to keep, but then I can't smell it anyway. As I mentioned previously, the Louisianas need splitting, so 'Dixie Deb' (Chowning 1950), 'Ellene Rockwell' (C.Arny 1973, light blue self, orange line beard), 'Scarlet Lady' (Mertzweiller 1980), 'Shrimp Louis' (Hagar 1978, stds shrimp pink, falls blend of catsup and mayonnaise, deep yellow signal) and 'Voodoo Song' (H.Rowlan 1988, spectrum violet) are up for grabs too, I've described them from the (few!) R&I booklets that I have, and hope they're correct although I have yet to see them flower. Prices are negotiable and anyone who can collect will get bigger lumps of whatever, otherwise everything's plus postage at cost, payment on arrival. Remember, the vast majority of everything will be abandoned when we move, and as there's rather more than is mentioned here, don't wait if you think you might be interested. My mother last had to move in the dead of winter, with the result that her collection of double Primulas was abandoned and didn't survive. Not that what I'm offering is as interesting, but I do need to start finding homes.

Ed

IRISES AND IRIDACEAE: BIODIVERSITY AND SYSTEMATICS

This was the title of a small, but very select international conference held under the auspices of the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' in conjunction with the Linnean Society, the Systematics Association and the Italian Iris Society at the Botanic Garden in Rome, and organised by Prof.M.A.Colasante. There were about a couple of dozen of us from countries as far flung as Brazil and Israel, Russia and South Africa. It was extremely hard work and great fun. Two days were devoted to illustrated lectures, one to a visit to the International Iris Garden in Florence and Innocenti's iris nursery and one to a field trip to look for *Isabina* on its home ground. It isn't really possible to do justice to all the material so soon after the event, but much of the information produced was fascinating and, with luck, the proceedings will be published early next year.

Meantime, the irises have been moved from the Liliales order to the Asparagales. Furthermore, *Belemcanda chinensis*, *Hermodactylus tuberosus*, and *Pardanthopsis dichotoma* have been readmitted to the Genus *Iris* and there is no real doubt that the Scorpirises are plain irises rather than a genus in their own right. Well, I have always said that our Guide to Species Irises would be out of date as soon as it was sent to the printers. It is also clear that the 28 chromosome sibiricas can be discriminated from the 40 chromosome group. And to add to the fun, molecular work at Kew may lead to a good deal of re-arrangement in the current classification since it demonstrates the evolutionary relationships of many of the species by showing the order of development and throwing some light on the reluctance of some species to cross with others. So there is going to be a lot to think about over the next few years.

Anne Blanco White

ATTENTION ALL LAEVI-GATA LOVERS

Mr. Norman Bennett, of Rose Farm, 19 Putton Lane, Chickerell, Weymouth, Dorset DT3 4AF has only recently joined the Group but even so has most kindly agreed to become our resident laevigata specialist. His grand passion is waterlilies and as you can see in *Nl* No.40, he is an extremely experienced nurseryman. He has grown laevigatas for many years on his nursery at Weymouth and has some knowledge of other irises that grow in water in the wild -i.e. excluding *I.ensata*- as these naturally associate with waterlilies in gardens.

If those of you with questions regarding laevigatas that you'd like answered will write to Mr. Bennett, his replies will appear in the issue of the 'Newsletter' subsequent to your enquiry. This saves Mr. Bennett, a busy man, from -we hope!- endless correspondence and enables me to put a wodge of information in each issue, so please do make use of his generously proffered experience. He has kindly written an article to warm you up.

Iris laevigata are described as true water irises and this often puts people off growing them. Many imagine that they must have a pond to grow them. They succeed best in wet soil or water up to 3" deep over the soil in which they are growing. Those of you who have been lucky enough to visit the Water Gardens at Longstock, Stockbridge, Hampshire, in June will have admired their wonderful show of laevigata. Years ago when I was admiring them I remember the staff telling me that if they planted them in the shallow water at the edge of the natural ponds they often failed to grow. If they planted them in the damp soil at the edge of the pond they thrived and over the years gradually crawled into water perhaps 5" deep. We have learnt from this and only stand the containers in an inch of water when newly split up. This results in the soil only being damp, not wet. We make no attempt to bring the water level above the level of the soil in which they are growing until they are very well rooted and growing away.

Garden Centres and 'cheap shops' offer a good range of plastic troughs and other containers which hold water. These make excellent homes in which to stand containers to grow laevigata. They can be very decorative and find a place on a patio or in a sunny back yard if you have no garden.

I quote now from my article on page 58 in the B.I.S. Year Book of 1976: 'We have grown Iris laevigata by the thousand in rows on a field. The soil was a heavy loam and the plants were watered from time to time when very dry. They prospered most of the year without watering.' A trouble free and cheap way to grow *I. laevigata* is to excavate an area of garden 9" deep, line the excavation with sheet polythene and refill. You then have an area of poor drainage which when well watered will remain wet for some time. Iris laevigata thrive best in a good garden loam which is not excessively chalky. It is desirable to add organic material and general fertiliser in moderation.

Norman Bennett

SSSHH, YOU KNOW WHAT...THE ART OF SILENCE

No, not a fizzy drink, a silent auction. Not that it's actually silent; bids are not made by thought transference, and conversation goes on merrily. But you don't shout your bids either. Assuming my own experience is typical, plants or promises of them are laid out on a table, each with a sheet of paper attached. You decide what you'd like to bid for and write your name and the amount. Then someone else, willing to pay more, writes their bid below yours. You can then put down a higher bid, or give up on that plant. And so it goes on until the closing hour approaches, when things get fast and furious as bids are scribbled one after another until the bell (whistle, whatever) goes. Then the highest bid gets the prize and the bidder hands over the money -I think; my resources ran out early in the process!

Jennifer Hewitt

IT WASN'T LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT!

Almost sixty years ago, as a very small boy, I can clearly remember a large clump of irises -bluish purple, very vigorous and almost as tall as myself. They occupied a sunny corner of our garden behind a terraced house in the Cheshire village where I was born. I remember my father taking a spade and chopping the clump down in size to curtail its advances into other parts of our garden. Clearly, it seemed to me, irises had to be controlled rather than carefully tended like other plants. The clump had probably been planted by my great grandfather in the late 1850's when he gave up the life of a crofter in the Isle of Skye and bought the then new house with small garden where he actually kept a milking cow! Obviously he didn't give up crofting easily, but I digress, back to irises. My other childhood memory of irises is of the wild yellow flag irises which grew around the edges of local ponds where I regularly fished for sticklebacks or 'Jackies' as we called them. I can remember picking some of these irises to take home for my mother which would rightly be considered to be very environmentally insensitive nowadays. However, those were the days when p.c. meant the village bobby to me, not Pacific Coast, personal computer or politically correct. My next brief encounter with the genus *Iris* was around twenty years ago when my wife Beryl bought a book entitled 'Irises' from our public library for just 50p, attracted by the cover illustration of TB 'Rippling Waters'(Fay 1961). Although we had been keen gardeners since we were sixteen and were given permission to cultivate a patch of ground behind the village church in exchange for bell ringing services, we had never grown irises and the book was put aside for later consideration.

In December 1985 I took early retirement from I.C.I. Our three children all had homes of their own and we came to live in South Shropshire. We bought 25 acres of hillside with a tiny cottage, reminiscent of Elizabeth West's 'Hovel in the Hills'. It is named 'Honeyhole', presumably because it nestles in a hollow 750' above sea level and has wild Shropshire bees living in a mighty oak tree in the orchard. We intended to spend our retirement building an extension to the cottage and creating a garden, but in spring 1986, the grass started to grow and we bought some pedigree Suffolk sheep to keep it under control. We soon realised that there was much more to keeping sheep than just watching them eat the grass! We became very involved with various scientific breeding schemes and had some success at local and county shows. Not surprisingly, progress on the extension was very slow and the garden was not even started until we dispersed our flock at the end of last year. Meanwhile our 50p iris book had survived the pre-removal sort out and had been stored in an old caravan which came with the cottage. It would still be there but for the fact that about a year ago I visited a small nursery in search of hemerocallis plants. For some reason I picked up a 2l pot containing the remains of the previous years' growth and a few new shoots of an iris. It was the only one available and the label read 'Susan Bliss' (Bliss 1922). I remembered our iris book and on arriving home Beryl unearthed it from the caravan. It was somewhat musty but otherwise unspoilt. The author was Harry Randall and it was published in 1969. Would there be a reference to 'Susan Bliss' or was this not the name of a recognised variety? I was pleasantly surprised to discover that A.J.Bliss, on his retirement, was persuaded by W.R.Dykes to take up breeding irises, giving him plants of *I.pallida* and *I.variegata* which he had collected from the wild in Italy and Hungary respectively. By crossing these plants Bliss produced seedlings of many colours, one of which was the TB 'Dominion' (Bliss 1917) which gave rise to the 'Dominion Race' of irises. However, at least a hundred of the other seedlings produced by Bliss were named and introduced in Britain and America in the 1920's, one of which was 'Susan Bliss'. Randall, in 1969, suggested that all except 'Dominion' would have been long forgotten by then, let alone now. How fascinating that contrary to his prediction, 'Susan Bliss' was alive and well and living in a pot in our garden. I read Harry Randall's book from cover to cover and was well on the way to becoming hooked on irises, sixty years after my first acquaintance with the genus. I have since noticed 'Susan Bliss' several times in catalogues, firstly in Kelways' of 1997 where I was surprised to see that it was listed as 'origin unknown' although this has been rectified in their 1998 catalogue where 'Susan Bliss' has been promoted to 'an historically important iris'. We had a catalogue from David Austin's which also lists 'Susan Bliss' and while looking through their irises I noticed that they would be having an Iris Weekend on 14th and 15th June 1997. We turned up full of enthusiasm despite the dreadful weather only to learn that the season had been early and that most of the irises were over. We did persevere and spent some time paddling round the iris fields in a heavy downpour to see the few remaining blooms. On our way back to the car with soggy notebooks, damp feet and spirits to match, we passed the open door of a building through which we saw a display of irises. It was the Annual Show of the West & Midlands Group of the B.I.S. Having been welcomed in and urged to look around we were stopped in our tracks by a stunning iris exhibited by Marilyn Fairbairn which had won the award of Best Spike in Show. We talked to Marilyn and her mother Jean Bull and Jean persuaded us that we should join the Group despite our protests that we knew next to nothing about irises. Jean introduced us to Peter Farrell who enrolled us as members of the Group and gave us the forms to fill in to become members of the B.I.S. He also recommended the book 'Growing Irises' by Cassidy and Linnegar - our second iris book, soon to be followed by others as our interest and enthusiasm grew. Our first Group meeting was at Philip Allery's where we were warmly welcomed and enjoyed a lovely day in Philip's garden. We were very impressed with the slide presentations given by Cy Bartlett and Jennifer Hewitt, after which we purchased plants to add to our growing collection. Like most newcomers we have mainly bearded irises but with Jennifer's help via the B.I.S. Plant Sales Scheme, we hope to include some Siberians this autumn. Our irises are presently housed in pots awaiting more work on preparing the beds in our garden. Philip has since introduced us to the G.B.I. whose newsletter has already aroused our interest in Japanese and Pacific Coast Irises.

I have two sisters, one living in New Zealand and the other in Australia, who have been to visit us several times since they emigrated and are always urging us to go and visit them. We now have the added incentive of seeking out Antipodean iris gardens during the U.K.'s dormant season. We must begin planning for the 'trip of a lifetime'. Watch this space!

Ken MacLeod

FIRST STEPS ALONG THE GLORY TRAIL

As a new member of the G.B.I. I have been asked to write a letter of introduction. I am 21 years old and am just at the beginning of what I hope will be a successful iris career, so at present there isn't much to tell really. Last June I completed my degree in Chemistry, Life Systems and Pharmaceuticals at York University. I now have a job as a trainee computer programmer but I don't really like it, so my interest in irises is all the more intense.

In January I started an R.H.S. course in General Horticulture for one night a week which I am finding informative and very enjoyable. I live with my parents and my 24 year old brother, in Darlington, Co. Durham, and help with the family garden. It is virtually solid clay which makes it very difficult to do gardening of any sort -but the irises seem to manage, without too much assistance, to produce a lovely splash of colour every year. I have been interested in irises for many years now, but up until a few years ago I had been told that irises only grew in ponds. When I found out that it would be possible to grow them in our garden I bought my first one, sibirica 'Tropic Night' (F.C.Morgan 1931), which so far is still my favourite. I have since tried several bearded irises but I don't feel that they can better the graceful siberian irises, in which I have a particular interest. This is just as well because the slugs in our garden love eating the bearded irises but seem to leave my siberians alone. This year I have brought seeds through the B.I.S. scheme and hope to grow my first from seed, and eventually go on hybridising my own irises. I am not related to Mr.Bryan Dodsworth -however I hope one day to be as successful as he is.

Clare Dodsworth

FROM 'MIDDEN' TO EDEN: A JOCK'S JOURNEY

On the last day of June 1979 we moved to Iona House in Warkworth, Northumberland, from London. We bought the house from a member of the B.I.S. (irises being those plants that looked a bit like leeks only you could not make a decent pot of broth with them). The garden was, as far as I was concerned, huge, about 1/4 acre which was a stark contrast to my formative years in a Glasgow tenement that had a back court and a brick built 'Midden' for keeping the dustbins in. The highlight of the gardening year way back when consisted of all the kids waiting eagerly for Dick McTaggart, Commonwealth and Olympic medal winner at boxing, coming round to execute his duties. Nowadays he would probably be given the grandiose title of Environmental Executive, but alas, in the early 60's this proud gladiator was merely the rat catcher.

I digress, not only was the garden big, but we had viewed the house in February and decided it was for us. The garden of course at that time of year was asleep, and the previous owner had been posted overseas. This meant that by the time all the messing about by the legal profession was done and we actually moved in, the slumbering giant had awakened. Oh Bob! Brambles, thistles, nettles, giant hogweed, wild garlic and a plant my wife described as little miniature Christmas trees. I should point out to the reader that this is the same lady who made a lamb casserole with a pound of 'Baby sweet green peppers' which turned out to be chillies! Realising that botanical identification was not Sarah's strong point and returning to my description of irises I decided to seek out one of the local green welly brigade and ask them what these mini Christmas trees were. "Oh, that's equisetum, old chap, you poor soul." was the answer. Now, eighteen years down, the line I know all about mare's tail and that the next time I buy a house I will view the garden in late June and if it's got mare's tail I will run as fast as I can in the opposite direction. The garden at Warkworth was on a hellish slope with sort of terraces going down to the river Coquet and it faces due east. By 2pm all but the bottom 1/4 of the garden is shaded by the shadow of the house. We decided to start clearing the ground and reinforcing the terrace walls, got rid of all the diseased fruit trees and sorted out a vegetable patch. Veg growing was something I knew a little about as my grandfather had been an allotment gardener in Scotland. We kept finding irises. Irises, irises, everywhere, and not a one to eat! This guy must have been obsessed! Well, we dug them all up and plunged the roots into buckets of tepid water and disentangles all the mare's tail roots and garlic bulbuls from them and set them in rows in the bit of ground we had cleared and double dug. Just as well I was young and had been eating my porridge as the soil varied so much at the various terrace levels; some were good loam, some sandy and some the most horrible clay and by the time one had walked down to the bottom of the hill and back three or four times -having forgotten a different piece of equipment each time- well, I'm sure you know what I mean.

After a few years the irises were moved into different beds to suit their requirements and I decided that it might be nice to cut down on the quantity of certain plants but increase the variety of irises. I was now beginning to get smitten by the iris disease 'Got some- want some more'. The mare's tail was not helping our progress, in fact I believe it is the most intelligent weed in the world. It grows up through the rhizomes of irises, but not between them where you can get it out. Where the mare's tail was at it's worst desperation set in until we got turned on to the organic idea in the mid 80's. No, we weren't going to try Thermo-nuclear cleansing on it - we were going to cover it up with polythene sheeting then black butyl and water. Hallelujah! It works. The blessed stuff doesn't get through it and now I've got somewhere to grow laevigatas and ensatas. Another pond followed and plans are afoot for a third which will link up to one of the others with a twee waterfall just to brass off the chromosome counters who find these things bad taste. I even contemplated a Dick McTaggart Gnome, but Sarah decided that that was going just a bit too far. I must confess that I now most definitely have iritis and have even managed to get flowers from my sowings of B.I.S. Aril seed. Of course these, a few Junos, Moreas and a large clump of Ungicularis for cut flowers in winter are kept in one of the greenhouses, without heat I might add. We are only about a mile (as the R.A.F. Tornado flies) from the sea and tend to be luckier than gardeners a couple of miles further inland as far as frost is concerned, plus we only seem to get snow every five years and serious snow every twenty. The growing season is short, but better than I recall my time in Glasgow being, when summer was on a Thursday, but it can be very dry and the east wind and my slope make things dry out unless they are watched. These conditions have proved ideal for the bearded irises, almost all saved from the garden's original stock, which are now taking up a bed of their own on the sunniest part of my veg. patch. Sibiricas, Pacific Coasts, Chrysographes, Versicolors and Spurias all seem to like the more shaded areas although these get the sun from 4am until about 2pm in the summer. Although I still haven't figured out how to get a decent pan of broth out of them, we now have about 100 different varieties of irises in the garden included in our collection of nearly 1000 varieties of perennial plants, bulbs and shrubs, comprising many things that are not supposed to be able to grow in the north, and some wonderful Meconopsis that you Sassenachs cannot grow down south, plus of course our organic veg patch. Definitely the nearest to Eden I will ever get!

Chris Chesney

Only having a Scottish grandmother, I was beaten by the equisetum on my first allotment, and gave it up after losing about 1/3 of my irises due to it's habit of becoming a low level rain/dewforest over winter. The old rubber glove and thick weedkiller trick hardly discommoded it at all and it broke off into little pieces under a weeding regime and simply popped happily up elsewhere, or rather everywhere, like a very pretty sort of

green ground-mist once it had opened out. I can well believe that it's prehistoric, due to its exhibited tenacity, but what I really can't imagine is why members of the British Pteridological Society should wish to cultivate it in their gardens. Given the chance, I'd rather have a *ginkgo biloba*, or a *metasequoia glyptostroboides*, or even a crocodilian! Horse-shoe crabs in the pond, now there's an idea...

Ed

DREAMS AND DEVON'S WINTER DEVILS

I must rejoin the Group as I have given up growing TB's here as I am very near the sea and get all the gales that the devil sends -it blew gusts of 85mph in early January, felling two 50' conifers two doors away and taking off half a huge sycamore in the wood at the bottom of the garden. It shreds TB's and the moist salty air in the winter tends to rot the rhizomes. I bought a collection of MTB's, all remontan in the USA, from Clarence Mahan a few years ago and although they flower each year they do not remontan and get steadily fewer. Jennifer (Hewitt) gave me 28 Sibiricas, including 'Soft Blue' and 'Exuberant Encore' some time ago and 'Soft Blue' has a very extended production of flowering spikes. 'Exuberant Encore' is useless in its first flowering -spikes only 1' tall if that- then it throws good tall spikes a couple of weeks later. I don't think that makes it useful in my garden! At present I am still trying to get tetraploid Sino-sibs from diploid ones, which is very difficult. I have managed to breed some tet Calsibes as they seem to react more easily to colchicine. I have also tried the pseudacorus tet x ensata tet but haven't managed to get any seed to set but will continue trying. I've started trying to make a tet nerine bowdenii! I fall over pots of seedlings on all my paths and the fridge is full of jars of things soaking, prior to cutting and then colchicining. It makes life really hazardous! Also I am running out of room in the greenhouse and garden for more young plants. I have one area round a sunken cast iron bath (too heavy to move and beloved of toads and frogs) that I am treating with peat and sulphur. The soil is alkaline as a dozen huge macrocarpus were felled and burnt there before I moved in, but is getting more workable and acid now. A bed of 40's grow well there on a bit of it and should flower (and be rogued) next year, and all last year's seedlings should go out into it next spring. The wet, warm winter doesn't seem to have suited my new 28 and 40 chr. siberians from the USA. Slugs or possibly a wet rot have taken out the growing points and two 40's that I especially wanted have had to be dug up and given TLC in the greenhouse. They came with long, rather sappy white roots that rotted completely and only now (10.4.) are starting to emit some hard white ones that look healthy. So I shan't lose anything except a year's flowering and that will spread the pleasure of 'seeing for the first time'. The tet Calsibe bed got overshadowed by a holly that liked the liberal feeding so I cut it down from 15' to 5' and supplied all the neighbours with Xmas greenery. It should allow the Calsibes and PCI's to grow better next year with less blankets of moss and 'weed' ferns. I had a disaster with my Onco's this autumn but Geoff Wilson's arilbreeds are still going strong outside under an overhang so they're dry.

Devon has quite different problems to Essex! The temperature rarely goes below 0 degrees Centigrade but this means that snowdrops and primroses etc. are out in January -and then last year we got two nights of -2 degrees C in March and one of -5 degrees C in April that clobbered everything. With this wet, mild winter the snails now abound in their thousands and thrushes don't seem to live here any more. Makes for an interesting life!

Dr. Marion Wood

Whilst Geoff Wilson's Arils survived a period of enforced neglect better than he expected, to some extent due to the mild winter, as Marion writes, it hasn't been beneficial to everyone. She has helpfully suggested that I invite you all to write in with your experiences, to see what's likely to be going on in the future as these peculiar winters continue. We might as well prepare for what we can, and bow to the rest.

I am *most* grateful to those four above who've put pen to paper for the 'Newsletter' as new, or in Dr. Wood's case, resurgent members. Any news from anyone as to how their garden's doing is always fallen upon with glee by me, and I do wish that all you 'wee, sleekit, cow'rin tim'rous beasties' out there who managed to side-step your introductory pieces, would make supplying them your belated New Year Resolution! Oh, yes, my humble apologies to Robbie Burns as I've undoubtedly misquoted him, and as yet haven't found a reference.

MANAGING THE MOBILE GARDEN

I moved house rather suddenly in mid-September, but only four miles down into the village. My youngest son and family are in the old house and I was still moving the garden down the hill last December. I've got the Sibiricas here, half the TBs most of the dwarfs and only a few of the species and miscellaneous. The garden's 45' by 65' and there won't be much lawn left by the time I've planted all I want! The SDB's were moved in November and the TB's were dug in February with a lot of soil kept around each one and shifted in carrier bags. Most things seem to have survived the move except some Sibiricas which didn't settle in well enough to weather the frosts. I moved these and three PCIs by digging them up in great lumps so that their roots suffered minimal disturbance. The Sibiricas that have survived, and the PCIs, are all looking very good this May, the latter even showing flower buds!

Jane Cole

THE BACKGROUND OF 'CORONATION ANTHEM'

When 'Jewelled Crown' first appeared in 1983, and its conversion to tetraploidy resulting from colchicine treatment turned out to be stable, it seemed like a dream come true. But, dreams can sometimes be short-lived. One other thing was essential to make the whole thing perfect - 'Jewelled Crown' had to be fertile so that I could build on its several novel qualities. There was no guarantee. It is not at all uncommon for such converted tetraploids to be very reluctant parents. I can think of several occasions when the initial "Eureka!" was followed by a long period of disappointment when no pods or viable seeds ever arrived and the breakthrough never happened. Fortunately 'Jewelled Crown' did not play coy when it came to iris romance. It rapidly proved to be a willing pod and pollen parent. One of the resulting seedlings from a cross made in 1985 was 'Coronation Anthem' (seedling 871B6). The other parent of 'Coronation Anthem' (seedling 82J3B1) was one of those seedlings that is good enough to get a number, but not great enough to introduce. Coming from a sibling of 'Windwood Spring', it was a mid-to-light-blue tetraploid with good vigor and bud count, but a color that in the last resort was not different enough to make the final cut. Fortunately, the vigor and bud count carried through to its progeny. At first, 'Coronation Anthem' was neglected. It was the clear second choice for introduction from among its group of

siblings. A sister seedling actually was the apple of my eye -a tall, clear, light blue with a strong white signal patch and perfect form. However, this lovely sister turned out to have a character flaw. She had lazy stems. Reluctantly I had to admit that her flower stalks were top heavy and too often ended up in a faint on the floor after wind or rain. 'Coronation Anthem' had a more upright and workmanlike character and never lounged around. The other thing that eventually brought 'Coronation Anthem' to the fore was its vigor and floriferousness. It grows and blooms like crazy! This is one iris we never have to worry about keeping in stock. Maybe this is why, of all the irises we have introduced so far, 'Coronation Anthem' comes closest to deserving the 'repeat bloom' label. Close, but not close enough. We get frequent reports of people having a strong second bloom period a few weeks after the first. I have seen this here too, but for us it is never predictable -some years, some clumps, yes; other years, other clumps, no. I have never been able to identify any climatic or cultural reason for this on and off behaviour. But, if anyone out there is interested in trying to tame this repeat bloom character in Siberians, 'Coronation Anthem' would be as good a place to start as any I know.

Finally, 'Coronation Anthem' is proving to be an outstanding source of robust, strongly ruffled tetraploids. It is one of the parents of 'Blueberry Fair' that we introduced this year (1997.Ed) and it is the progenitor of a series of tetraploids with very extensive white signals in which the color on the falls is limited to an outer rim. I think these are exciting -look out for the first of them coming as an introduction next year!

Bob Hollingworth, *'The Siberian Iris'* Fall 1997

My mother-in-law has just been put onto colchicine for an intractable gout problem following her gall-bladder removal. I'll let you know if she converts into anything!

Ed

An Adaptation of: MORGAN AND WOOD, THE MEN BEHIND THE MEDAL

F.Cleveland Morgan was a prominent citizen of Montreal, Quebec, and his family owned Henry Morgan & Co. Ltd., a Canadian department store chain, of which he was a director. He was a patron of the arts, serving as president of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts for eight years of his forty-five year association with them, during which he donated a vast selection of fine arts. He had world famous rock gardens at his country estate in Senneville which were frequently opened to the public and to local garden societies. This estate is now The Morgan Arboretum, covering 245 hectares of forest, but no irises. He was a life member of the A.I.S. Region 19 and the Canadian Iris Society, hybridising several TBs in the 1920's and '30's before switching to Siberians. He originated 'Caesar' in 1930, 'Hadrian' and 'Quebec' in 1931, 'Caesar's Brother' in 1932 (Morgan 1935) and 'Tropic Night' in 1937. 'Caesar' won an Award of Merit in 1928 from our R.H.S. while 'Caesar's Brother' won the award named after its hybridiser in 1953, and 'Tropic Night' followed suit in 1954. He was awarded the American Hybridiser's Medal in 1950 along with Isabella Preston, a fellow Canadian who bred 'Gatineau'(Preston 1930). In this year, ten years before the Society for Siberian Irises was formed, Mr.Robert Allan proposed in the A.I.S.' Board of Director's meeting that they present an annual award at their discretion to the best Siberian variety of each year, and name this after F.C.Morgan in recognition of his special contributions in hybridising. The award, equivalent to an A.M., was first given in 1952 (Mrs. Francis Cleveland's 'Tycoon', a violet-blue diploid of unknown parentage.) in the form of a certificate, and was then awarded annually to the officially registered and introduced Siberian receiving the greatest vote, seven votes being the minimum required. Varieties had to already have an A.M., and voting was carried out by A.I.S. Judges, on the official ballot. (*TSI* Vol.1, No.5, March 1963.) He died on October 3rd, 1962, at the grand age of eighty.

Ira Wood was born in Redlands, California, in 1903. An electrical engineer, he worked on circuitry design for many years at the Bell Telephone Laboratories. In 1929, when taking the job there, and being told that he could travel east to the site by any route he chose, at company expense, he went by boat via the Panama canal. During World War Two he worked on circuitry for gun directors and guided missiles, even though unhappy with working on weapons and glad to return to telephones. He and his wife Betty moved into a garden apartment in Summit, New Jersey in 1948 and, outgrowing the available garden, bought an acre and built a house. Again, after starting with TBs, he decided that Siberians offered more scope and started making very carefully controlled crosses. A perfectionist, as his career implied, he had only chosen one of his seedlings for introduction by his 74th birthday. This was 'Ong's Hat', (1976) a warm white self out of 'White Swirl' (Cassebeer 1957), introduced by Tranquil Lake Nursery in 1981. Currier McEwen selected one of his favourite seedlings for introduction after his death and named it 'Ira Wood'. Seaways Garden introduced this in 1982. Ira Wood served three terms on the A.I.S.'s Board of Directors and received their Distinguished Service Medal. He and his wife attended every A.I.S. Convention between 1954 and 1977. He was a director of the Siberian Iris Society at the time of his death. After his death, it was decided to honour him by presenting a medal named for him to the winner of the Morgan Award, which was at this time, the highest award possible for Siberians. 'White Swirl' was chosen as the centrepiece of the bronze due to its distinctive shape, and because it he had used it extensively as a parent. Twenty five medals were struck, the cost of \$2000 being shared by his wife and Region 19 of the A.I.S. The first presentations were in 1980 to Bill McGarvey for 'Augury', and to all living hybridisers for each Morgan Award they had won. In 1985, the SSI's proposal to the AIS's Board of Directors that their top award be upgraded to a medal, was accepted. Two AM's would now be awarded to Siberians annually, and the Morgan Award and the Ira Wood Medal were amalgamated at medal status. Dr.McEwen's 'Butter and Sugar' receiving the first one in 1986. These medals were used from 1986 until 1996 and Mrs Wood, in 1997, again gave a generous donation towards casting a new supply.

Judy Hollingworth, *'The Siberian Iris'* Fall 1997

An Adaptation of: FURTHER THOUGHTS ON PLANTING SIBERIANS

I live in Canada and in the past few years have imported hundreds of beardless irises from American suppliers. I have planted Siberians almost anytime from the beginning of May until mid October. As the Canadian Customs' inspection system is slow and inefficient, and orders were generally delivered within 11-16 days, I had to look for alternative methods to speed up the process. From these stressful experiences, I remember receiving some Siberians that had remained healthy despite 16 days in the mail, while others that arrived within two days had already started to rot. After losing many plants I began to identify factors influencing the success rate of Siberian planting. Once the plants are dug, they will deteriorate more or less rapidly, depending on their initial health, any packaging and shipping delays, and the care given to them on arrival.

Grower's stock: Foliage must be green and clean, the crown (between the leaves and the rhizome) must be firm and the roots healthy. Healthy roots are whitish and firm, with no slimy or soft areas, and if they're all brown and dead, new white ones should be present. If there are

none, you'll need some luck! Siberians must be free of borer eggs and thrips. If they had to endure weeks of drought before shipping, they may be weak, and if this is the case, the supplier should make it known. All plants should be freshly dug, which term certainly does not apply to plants that have been sitting in a bucket of water for five days before being shipped. Unlike bulbs and perennials with substantial rhizomes, Siberians deteriorate rapidly, and each day out of the ground reduces the chances of successful planting.

How long will it travel?: Would anyone eat green onions -wrapped in plastic bags- that had spent two weeks packed on top of each other in virtually air-tight, non refrigerated box? Siberians are no different, and shouldn't be in the mail for more than a week. Two to three days is ideal, but not always possible. For trips of five days or more, the roots must be packaged to remain moist, without this reaching the crown or leaves, and rotting them. Dampness inside the box stimulates fungal growth on the leaves, which will quickly spread to the crown and even if the roots still look healthy, the plant may well be lost. Therefore sufficient air circulation must be provided for by using e.g. wood chips, Styrofoam peanuts or crumpled paper between well spaced plants, and punching small holes in the sides of the box. Higher shipping fees are well worth it to ensure that large orders get a big enough box.

Customer's responsibility: Ensure that a proper planting place has been prepared in advance and soak the plants for a maximum of a day before planting, remembering that they are not water plants. If you've not provided a space, pot them or heel them in. If their roots are undisturbed, potted plants can be planted almost any time, but don't move them once planted for a year, as they take time to adjust. A few leaves might brown, particularly if they're in full sun in hot weather, so some mid-day shade will be appreciated. They must never be allowed to dry out, but being moist is quite enough, and a mulch around them will retain coolness and moisture. I do not think that they should be fertilised on planting as they're merely trying to recover for the first two or three weeks. Their metabolism may not yet be active enough to assimilate fertilisers, and the chemicals may burn their roots. After a few weeks a balanced liquid fertiliser -e.g.20-20-20- will be beneficial if they seem to be doing well.

According to my experience, time is the most important factor. When healthy plants are dug a day before shipping, soaked for no more than 24 hours and planted, they will easily survive in less than perfect weather conditions.

Jean-Marc Boileau, *'The Siberian Iris'* Fall 1997

Gwenda Harris writes from New Zealand that as a nurseryperson, quite new to retailing sibiricas, she follows the advice of Francis Love when it comes to her autumnal planting, i.e. in April. This is to line them out in the ground in pieces that have a minimum of three fans and then pot them up in early spring. She uses quite large pots for this, and found that last year they did exceptionally well, most flowered and they looked good all season. She hasn't -despite various efforts- managed to import any PCIs, but as 'an impulsive importer of seed' has many species and hybrid seedlings, so let's hope she can soon be naming her own cultivars.

Ed

SIBROB CHIRPS

The following, flying by Internet or e-mail under the wing of the AIS, are on companion planting: Artemisia 'Silver King' makes a good backdrop to sibs for R.Dennis Hager of Millington, MD -Zone 7a, provided it can be kept in hand; Sedum spectabile 'Autumn Joy' helps make a trouble free spot for Bob Dickow in Moscow, Idaho -Zone 5, once he'd got the spacing right. The contrasting textures are especially effective, and all the stems help keep weeds down; Hostas and sibs are good at covering old daffodil foliage for Bill Dougherty of Fridley MN -Zone 4, with hemerocallis providing the inter-season flower. The hosta 'Invincible' is his recommendation; Edmundas Kondratas of Lithuania has to rely on imports to increase his range of hosta cultivars, using sun loving varieties with his Sibiricas. It seems that we must lead the world for molluscs, but if anyone nearer home has tried this combination with success, do let me know; Ginny Prins of Canada, Zone 4b, reckons that red coral bells are the prettiest companions she's seen for Sibiricas. These will, I think, be heucheras, but if anyone knows differently, please correct me.

Condensed from *'The Siberian Iris'* Fall 1997

PACIFIC COAST IRIS SPECIES

Dr. Nelson D. Young of America has written a paper which may worry some of you if you come across a rumour of it. In fact he hasn't come to any earth shaking conclusions leading to a major rearrangement of these irises. The only serious change is that he considers that *I. thompsonii* is not a true species in its own right, but is a hybrid between *I. innominata* and *I. douglasiana*. After various forms of DNA analysis it seemed clear that *I. thompsonii* showed characteristics of both the parent species while being distinguishable from each. The author was specifically concerned with two problems: are the Pacificae an isolated group in their own right and are the individual 'species' within the Pacificae rightly to be considered separate species. When you come to consider the arguments about 'lumping' and 'splitting' this is a matter of some importance. The question of precisely where a species begins and ends will probably never be finally settled, but there is no harm in trying as botanists have been doing for a very long time. Three levels of species definition are suggested by Dr. Young: similarity in isolated plants, or a group which can be recognised by one uniting characteristic, or a group which are their own closest relatives. Initially then, the Pacificae were compared with *I. chrysographes*, *I. prismatica* and *I. lensata* which are fairly close relatives on the basis of a botanical key to species. Crosses at the diploid level, however, appear always to be sterile. Research showed that any direct connection between the Pacificae and the other groups was extremely tenuous and it was concluded that all four were free-standing in this connection. That left the members of the Pacificae as their own closest relatives: no other group equally close. As time progressed, variations set in and finally the individual species as we know them today became established. The fact that they interbreed to give fertile stock shows that they are still fairly closely related. That it is still possible to find pure stock in isolated areas has made it possible to say that under another definition, the plants we know individually from Vic Cohen's original Guide to the Pacific Coast Irises can be considered as individual species. Finally when it comes to molecular analysis of the DNA of the plants there are characteristics which again confirm their relationships and underpin the species status even if they are not apparent to the naked eye. Dr. Young finally concludes that his researches make it possible to accept the Californicae as a single biological and genealogical species while the individual forms are phylogenetic species. So there is at present no need to worry that the scientists are going to disrupt your breeding genealogies.

Ref: Pacific Coast Iris species delimitation using three species definitions: biological, phylogenetic and genealogical. Nelson D.Young. Biological Journal of the Linnean Society (1998) 63: 99/120 with 7 figures.

Anne Blanco White

An Adaptation of: PACIFIC COAST WORKSHOP

The general consensus is that it's not possible to acquire and retain pure strains of PCI species in New Zealand. In, for example, Britain, the problem isn't so acute as bee set pods don't occur in such quantities. You may recall our Chairman trying to find new homes for his pure *I. chrysographes* where it could seed true without the influences of other Siberians. Therefore, the Species Group of the NZIS propose to lump such irises under the title of 'Pacific Coasters' and cultivate good forms. One proposal is to select for two distinct forms, one with small, slender foliage and stems with one or two dainty flowers with falls which meet, and another taller and more robust form with a sequential flowering season.

A few tips from them: PCIs love crowding and germinate more easily when grown together (Bearded do to, apparently, can anyone tell us why? Ed.); summer watering can be the cause of seedlings dying before they attain 12" as in their natural habitat water occurs in the summer and not when they're young; transplanting mature plants may be more successful if a heel is taken off the parent rhizome when splitting. I may have misunderstood that bit. However, my one large clump, that I was to split and pot up last year, was most helpfully split by my mother before I got around to it, so I've still no experience myself! Less than 50% are looking good, so there may well be a difficulty here. However, I've had PCI's come in with no roots at all, and survive. That was into the garden though, so some care was undoubtedly given, like watering! Anyone who's got it off pat, please write in; roots can be induced if the plant is placed in a plastic bag which is fastened 2" above the roots, below the fan. Exhale into this daily for its carbon dioxide lunches until the roots appear, and plant it out. Beer drinkers ought to be safe here, but I'd recommend going easy on the curries.

Iris Bulletin No.90 March 1980, reprinted in 'Spectrum' No.32

DISEASES OF PACIFIC COAST IRISES

Iris growers in most parts of New Zealand have been plagued for many years by a mysterious disease which affects mainly the Pacific Coast irises. It first becomes apparent when a few leaves turn reddish brown spreading quite rapidly to part or all the clump. Removal of the rotting portion of the plant can halt the spread of the disease but usually the whole plant dies. Various ideas have been put forward, such as not watering in the hot weather and others which may help, but do not cure. Now it seems as if some help is at hand thanks to the intensive research done by Lewis and Adele Lawyer (Hurrah!Ed) who work on plant disease at the University of California. They also share a love for the native irises of the Pacific Coast and worried about the disease which was killing so many, embarked on a programme to identify and treat the disease.

They found that on the whole the PCIs are a relatively healthy breed and that this particular disease which they call iris crown rot is the main killer. Sometimes irises affected with the disease will get a secondary infection of mustard seed fungus -we know it here in bearded irises- but it is not common. The only other disease apparent in America, but fortunately not here, is rust, especially in plants with *I. munzii* blood. By concentrating on the crown rot the Lawyers isolated several water mould fungi such as *Phytophthora* which causes damping off of seedlings, and also, I am told, was the cause of thousands of gum trees dying all over Australia. They set to work and spent years growing thousands of seedlings under various conditions and using all sorts of different fungicides to try to find the right answer. Many were partially successful and the one which proved to be practically 100% so was 'Ridomil'. This is available in New Zealand but from enquiries I have made it seems it is sold only in very large and expensive commercial packs, used by plant nurseries and propagating houses. One of the important findings of the Lawyers' was that it pays to fumigate the soil before planting, even for a plot that has never been used for PCIs before. Use 'Basamid' here.

To treat with 'Ridomil', dip the plants for ten minutes in a solution of 7.5g to 1 litre of water -oversoaking does no harm- then drench the ground with the same solution. I would think that the same treatment might be an excellent idea for bearded irises, especially expensive imported ones. During the tests it was never proven that watering in hot weather was harmful, but it is better to avoid it. The healthiest planting of PCIs the Lawyer's have is an area where they planted among the Rhododendrons which has a sprinkler system putting on 1/4" of water every night for the last ten years. In the wild these irises seldom grow in full sun and prefer the morning to afternoon sun. Another important finding was that is not when the watering is done, but how it is applied. Run-off of water from one plant to another can carry the disease, spores can also be carried on shoes and tools. Therefore strict hygiene practices are necessary. If rust is found on plants 'Benlate' (now banned here except to the nurseryman. Ed) may be used but great care must be taken never to use more than the recommended amount because it retards growth.

Results of some of the tests:

1. Seedlings planted where no PCIs had been grown before -a lot showed disease.
2. Seedlings planted in infected soils -all died.
3. Seedlings planted after fumigation -all grew.
4. Seedlings treated with 'Ridomil' and planted in unfumigated soil -most grew.
5. Seedlings treated with 'Ridomil' and planted in infected soil -some grew.

One bed with some infected plants was drenched with 'Ridomil' once a month for three months. Even plants which showed 90% infection improved somewhat.

The Lawyer's own garden is sloping, very gravelly and well drained. When preparing his beds Mr. Lawyer incorporates 4" of well rotted compost and 3" of peat. When planting out they suggest never allowing the plants to dry out and make very deep holes so that the roots can go straight down. Water in well and water each day for ten days, then as need and never let the plants dry out until after bloom the following year.

They are experimenting now, trying to perfect a disease-free strain. I'm sure everyone will be wishing them success.

Hilmary Catton, Iris Bulletin autumn 1990. Reprinted in 'Spectrum' No.32

Can anyone tell me if this rot is a problem here and if so, is 'Ridomil' marketed, under whatever name, or are other fungicides used?

Ed

An Adaptation of: SUCCESS WITH PACIFIC COASTERS?

In the Iris Bulletin of autumn 1990 Hilmary Catton wrote an article on disease in PCIs (which I assume is the one above) including news of the fungicide 'Ridomil' that was proving very successful in Canada. To test its efficacy, a bed was drenched that had never contained irises of any species with the correct solution and the seedlings to go into this soil were soaked in the same solution for ten minutes. This bed was then drenched at three monthly intervals and water was only given in the evening when required due to hot weather. This bed is shaded from the afternoon sun which will lessen the stressful effects of a surfeit of sun, and has been a notable success.

Iris Bulletin No. 1991. No.125. Reprinted in 'Spectrum' No.32

An Adaptation of: HOW DO YOUR IRIS GROW, PART 2

Since the response to the title question was so good, Lewis and Adele had to split the replies between two issues, so here's the second instalment.

Southern California Area

Duncan Eader is in Arcadia, at just under 1000' in the northeast area of the San Gabriel Valley, which is more favourable to PCI culture than its neighbouring San Fernando Valley which was discussed in the last instalment. Winters are ideal, and the summers can be tempered by sea breezes, although they're sometimes hotter than the plants would like. Water in some areas is alkaline, but soil sulphur can remedy that. Normal rainfall is about 14-15" and temperatures rarely get over 100 degrees F in the summer and down to 32 F only two or three times in the winter. Oranges, lemons and avocados do well there and the sprawl of building over the previously unsheltered expanse has moderated the colder temperatures.

Duncan has prepared some of his beds with compost and camellia/azalea fertiliser, and these receive some shade from trees or buildings. With the exception of 'Novia del Mar' (Foster 1976) he has had very sad results with attempts to grow PCIs in full sun. He writes that Lee Lenz grows many of his hybrids in full sun at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden in Claremont, but although some seedlings have survived for a time with him under like conditions, he doesn't recommend it. When he first receives plants he keeps them for a year in plastic pots under shade cloth, only planting them out when they're growing actively, in partial shade the next spring. He waters regularly, keeping the plants moist all year. Planting new arrivals straight into the ground resulted in unacceptable losses. He uses a 'high humus' potting mix which requires immersion to wet once it's dried out, so has lost some plants that way. I know that peat has this fault, which is one reason why I don't use it, the other being my green tinge, of course.

He has grouped his plants into three categories for evaluation;

Good growth and bloom: 'Amiguita' (Nies 1947), 1966 to present, one of the best. 'Arana' (Ghio 1980), 1985 - 1994, good but poor increase. 'Campaigner' (Ghio 1984) 1985 to present, reliable bloomer. 'Camp Capitola' (Ghio 1982) 1984 to present, ditto. 'Canyon Orchid' (Denney 1982) 1972 to present, reliable bloomer, good foliage. 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974), 1982 to present, reliable, erect bloom. 'Carole Cabeen' (Nies 1949), 1969 to present, good bloomer, species type. 'Chimes' (McCaskill/Foster 1972), 1973 to present, earliest to bloom, prolific. 'Deepening Shadows' (Ghio 1984), 1985 to present, fair bloom, slow increase. 'Drive You Wild' (Ghio 1985), 1986 to present, did well for nineteen years, then died. 'Flamenco Queen' (McCaskill 1976), 1997 to present, reliable bloomer. 'Mayor' (Ghio 1976), 1986 to present, slow increase. 'Novia del Mar' (Foster 1976), 1976 to present, faithful bloomer. 'Ojai' (Walker 1959), 1973 to present, little increase. 'Orchid Sprite' (?), 1973 to present, extremely hardy. 'Ripple Rock' (Lenz 1963), 1972-1977, poor increase, bloom-out. 'Simply Wild' (Ghio 1980), 1981-1988, bloomed well. 'Solid Citizen' (Ghio 1986), 1982 to present, slow increase. 'Stage Whisper' (Denney 1981), 1983 to present, good plant.

Mediocre plant stamina: 'Big Wheel' (Ghio 1981), 1984-1990. 'Chief Sequoia' (Weiler 1990), 1992-1995, bloomed two years and died. 'Cupertino' (Ghio 1985) 1986 to present, moderate growth and bloom. 'Del Rey' (Ghio 1978), 1980 to 1991, fair while it lasted. 'Doctor Pauline Thompson' (Ghio 1981), 1972-1980, excellent flower, untimely demise. 'Pescadero' (Ghio 1980), 1982-1985, poor performance. 'Sierra Dell' (Lawyer 1987), 1990 to present, slow increase. 'Western Bluebird' (Weiler 1990), 1992-1997, poor increase.

Poor performance: 'Big Money' (Ghio 1982). 'California Mystique' (1981), 1984, never flowered. 'Grand Design' (Ghio 1983), 1985-1987. 'Native Land' (Ghio 1986), 1988, did not grow. 'Reflecting Pool' (Ghio 1985), 1986-1988. 'Refugio' (Ghio 1986), 1987-1989. 'Rincon' (Ghio 1984), 1986-1989. 'Rio del Mar' (Ghio 1979), 1986-1989. 'Running Wild' (Ghio), 1985-1987, bloomed well. 'Spring Daze' (Ghio 1982), 1986, didn't survive. 'Stroke of Midnight' (Ghio 1988), 1989, didn't grow. 'Tunitas' (Ghio 1985), 1986-1988, never bloomed. 'Wild Time' (Ghio), 1987-1988, bloomed and died. 'Western World' (Ghio 1986), 1987-1988, never bloomed. 'Wish Fulfilment' (Ghio 1983), 1986-1987, didn't grow.

Duncan is now only growing PCI hybrids as the species that he tried didn't do well. In the Lawyer's 1991 survey, 'Canyon Snow' was his nominee, and still is, but 'Canyon Orchid' and 'Amiguita' are on its heels due to their foliage qualities as well as reliable and beautiful flowers. 'Orchid Sprite' has the best foliage out of all those mentioned, and flowers well, but it's 'certainly not spectacular'. He reckons to get around 80% germination with his seeds, which he plants in 4" square plastic pots, 16 seeds per pot, after bathing them for 10-15 minutes in a 10% 'Purex' bleach solution. His substrate is moist 'Supersoil', as this will later knock very easily and cleanly off their roots, and he covers the seeds with 1/4" of this, pressed down well. The pots then go into a shallow tray of water to absorb this until saturated and are put into plastic bags in a fairly warm but shaded area until the seedlings touched the plastic. Once they have four leaves, he transfers them into individual 2 1/2" or 3" pots of 'Supersoil' or another suitable medium, and pots them on as required, leaving them in 6" or gallon cans until they flower. Seedlings must never be allowed to dry out.

1997 brought a different weather pattern to Arcadia, with 'substantial early rain, then extremely warm weather, and then some cool weather'. This confused many irises, especially TBs, which bloomed sporadically from late February to mid May. Three PCIs came into flower on May 18th, 'Orchid Sprite', 'Canyon Snow' and a seedling descended from the latter.

Northern California

Santa Clara and Palo Alto represent the mostly flat lands immediately south and west of San Francisco Bay. Climate is almost ideal for PCIs, and the soils can easily be amended to suit the fussiest plants where they're too heavy for perfect drainage.

Steve Taniguchi in Santa Clara grows mostly Joe Ghio's introductions, bought from Bayview Gardens. Having bought from elsewhere too, he reckons that the survival of his purchases is 'inversely proportional to the amount of time the plants have been out of the soil.' His best results have been with plants from Portable Acres, when he only lost 'Native Warrior' (Phillips 1970) with no explanation. He admits to having killed off 'Boom Town' (Wood 1991) and 'Pink Cupid' (Wood 1993) himself. His comments below refer to cultivars he's grown for three years or more, so excludes 'Eagle Eyes' (Ghio 1992) and 'Fault Zone' (Ghio 1990), although they're two of his favourites for colour. The first seven listed are his especial favourites. He lost all his *I. douglasiana* and all but one of his *I. tenax* seedlings to crown rot last year.

'Amiquita' (Probably 'Amiguita', if so, Nies 1947) is 'a very nice' light blue violet, which apparently may in Steve's case owe its 'long and snaky stems' to too much shade.

'Augie' (Phillips 1974) This is a classically shaped red with dark and narrow leaves which has been doing well in a pot.

'Big Wheel' (Ghio 1982) is 'a nice raspberry red.' Although the stems and leaves tend to grow out sideways on the clump, instead of straight, it's handsome when in full flower.

'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974) is white with a yellow signal and has made a nice big clump which stays green even if Steve forgets to water it.

'In the Money' (Ghio 1987) is 'an amazing sight when in full bloom', being a very bright yellow, even though the flower is rather floppy in form. The pods set over 100 each when he crossed onto it in 1996.

'La Selva Beach' (Ghio 1993) is either maroon with a yellow rim, or yellow with a huge maroon spot!

'Mission Santa Clara' (Ghio 1992) is a smaller plants all round, brownish-red with a lighter edge to the falls and a dark signal.

'Napa Valley' (Ghio 1985) is 'an interesting color combination' as its a velvety purple with a yellow and white signal. Sadly it's not a good increaser.

'Ojai' (Walker 1959) won the first Mitchell Award (in 1973), but he was disappointed.

'Old Monterey' (Ghio 1992) is a deep ruby with a lighter edge, 'a really nice color', and is a smaller type. Unfortunately, the lighter rim is thicker on one side of the fall than the other, and this is inherited.

'Pacific High' (Belardi 1986) is a 'lovely' lavender blue bordered blue-violet around the signal. 'Even the unopened flowers are a nice color.' The stems often have a branch and it carries the best looking seeds. It has a rather open habit and forms its new leaves at a different time to his other cultivars.

'Rare Reward' (Ghio 1988) he thinks is a 'wonderful color!' having white standards with reddish veins and rich, reddish-purple falls with a light rim and a dark signal. It clumps nicely with straight and sturdy stems.

Four other cultivars that Steve's seen and fancied are 'Pacific Rim' (B. Jones 1990), a plicata; 'Banbury Gnome' (Brummitt 1974), a 'species shape', but nice dark magenta-red bitone; 'Cupertino' (Ghio 1985), a red-purple with a lighter rim, and 'National Anthem' (Ghio 1989), 'a really nice dark purple.' On crosses made from 1993 to 1996 the number of seeds per pod ranged from 12 to 127 with an average of 48, although 'In the Money' averaged 112 over its four pods. Steve made thirteen crosses in 1996. His fastest germination was 'Rare Reward' x 'Night Editor' (Ghio 1986) which came up after 63 days, but 'Rare Reward' crossed with his seedling 93-02A took the longest to emerge at 88 days, the average time being 72.

Robert Kraus is in Palo Alto and has mostly only been growing PCIs for two to three years. He lost a few in their first winter but the survivors have thrived. He has a varying amount of shade and has amended his adobe clay soil. He has listed those that do best with him.

'Wilder than Ever' (Ghio 1992) is the best for everything.

'El Nino' (Ghio 1991) is small but a prolific flowerer over a long season.

'Wildman' (Ghio 1987) has nice flowers and is a steady flowerer.

'San Lorenzo Valley' (Ghio 1992) is pretty but has poorer substance.

'San Felipe' (Ghio 1989) is 'ok', but 'not as eye-catching.'

'Hands On' (Ghio 1993) is 'also OK.'

'Escalona' (Ghio 1993) is still young but has 'gorgeous flowers.'

'It's Wild' (Ghio 1989) is 'also gorgeous.'

'Bat Boy' (Ghio 1995) and 'Ultimate Suntan' (Ghio 1996) are in their first year. Robert also grows the cultivars 'School Boy' (Ghio 1992), 'See the Light' (Ghio 1991) and 'Earthquake' (Ghio 1990), but they're 'not as showy'. His species are *I. douglasiana*, a pale blue-white veined purple, gold signal; a tenax seedling (95125) which is a small plant but threw a stem of blue flowers last year; an innominata seedling (95114), ditto but yellow and a munzii seedling (95120) which has yet to flower. Robert has had four munzii hybrids from the Lawyers, two of which have produced two stems apiece with large blue flowers that fade to lavender. His chrysophylla (95103) and macrosiphon (95119) didn't survive their first year.

Whilst in Point Lobos in April 1997 Robert saw dark blue-purple douglasiana, and he's identified what he sees at Bass Lake as *I. hartwegii* with the help of the Lenz and Cohen guides, the latter are light blue and abundant in that area.

Westbay and Santa Cruz Area.

These hills between San Francisco and the Pacific are ideal for PCIs and are home to many natives. Margery Edgren is an authority on germination, propagation and sales at Strybing Arboretum in Golden Gate Park, and includes some observations from there.

The most popular cultivars at the arboretum are 'Idylwild' (Ghio 1987) -especially so; 'Amiguita' (Nies 1947); 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974); 'Monterey Gold' (?) and 'Pegasus' (Isles?). They are working up enough stock of other cultivars such as 'Foothill Banner' (Lawyer 1990) and 'Del Rey' (Ghio 1978) to be able to sell those too. Margery's personal favourites are; 'Fairy Chimes' (McCaskill-Foster 1972); 'Foothill Banner', 'Sierra Dell' (Lawyer 1987); 'Canyon Snow'; 'Banbury Festival' (Brummitt 1975); 'Moonlad' (Davidson 1972) and 'Pegasus'.

They have two nice seedling swarms from their own crosses grown by the nurseryman at the arboretum; 'Pacific Rim' x 'Sierra Dell' has given them seedlings with consistently large white flowers veined blue, and 'Idlywild'(Ghio 1987) x 'Mendocino Banner'(Grant 1992) has thrown white or cream seedlings with purple veins and often purple stigmas too. Both of these sell well.

Lois Belardi is in Santa Cruz and grows over fifty cvs in her favourable spots, hoiking out TBs to do so where necessary. She is getting more 'very blue' seedlings which are two or three generation descendants from 'Sierra Dell'. The PCIs that Lois likes that do best for her are: 'Bat Boy' (Ghio 1995), 'Battle Alert' (Ghio 1995), 'Fault Zone' (Ghio 1990), 'Mantra' (Ghio 1992), 'School Boy' (Ghio 1992), 'Sea Gal' (Belardi 1993), 'Skylash' (Belardi 1993) and 'Upper Echelon' (Ghio 1988).

North Bay Area.

This is a flatland with a nearly ideal climate for PCIs. Soils tend to heaviness, but are excellent when they're amended for drainage.

Vernon Wood is in Pinole and can only recommend growing those cvs that he has had experience of that satisfy the following requirements: 'They must transplant, grow and increase well, possess and retain attractive foliage and clumps after two years of growth, upright growth and absence of brown leaf tips, (and) they should have good form and substance, -Pizzazz!' 'Pacific Rim'(B.Jones 1990) and 'Sea Admiral' (Wood 1995) are 'outstanding' by these criteria, and others that qualify are; 'Air Show' (Belardi 1995), 'Comet Trails' (Wood 1995), 'Gordola' (Ghio 1996), 'Heaven Knows' (Ghio 1991), 'High Splendour' (Wood 1994), 'Idlywild' (Ghio 1987), 'Los Californio' (Ghio 1988), 'National Anthem' (Ghio 1989), 'Osocales' (Ghio 1995), 'Raspberry Dazzler' (Wood 1995), 'Regal Classic' (Wood 1995), 'Sierra Dell' (Lawyer 1987), 'Sky Cover' (Wood 1995), 'Tidy White' (Hager 1988), 'Valet' (Ghio 1991), 'Westerlies' (Ghio 1991) and 'Wilder Than Ever' (Ghio 1992).

Sacramento Area.

This is in the centre of the Sacramento - San Joaquin Valley where summer is too hot for most PCIs unless they're shaded.

George Prue is in Sacramento and his PCIs get about half a day of sun due to trees. He planted out his cvs in 1994 and lost 'Carmel Mission'(Ghio 1993) in the first year. Those that survived were 'Sea Gal' (Belardi 1993), 'Upper Echelon' (Ghio 1988), 'Hands On' (Ghio 1993) and 'Twin Lakes' (Ghio 1992) which is the slowest to increase. George also has several unnamed hybrids from his local nursery, all his PCIs are doing well, and he'd grow more irises if he had the space.

Marin County.

Here, just north of San Francisco Bay, PCIs are thriving natives, so it must be close to ideal climatologically.

Judith Hinman is in Bayside where she can grow *I. douglasiana* with great success, but *Linnominata* only just survives. She has lost 'Broadleigh Sybil' (Broadleigh 1993), 'Doctor Pauline Thompson' (Ghio 1981), 'Fort Point' (Wood 1987) and 'Sea Gal', while 'Califia' (Ghio 1970), 'El Centro' (Ghio 1976) and 'Simply Wild' (Ghio 1980) are weak. Two that survive are 'Honta Yo' (Rigby 1985) and 'Smoky Wine' (Hubley 1971), but the strongest are 'Agnes James' (Starker 1939), 'Amiguita' (Nies 1947) and 'Big Money' (Ghio 1982).

Daisy Mah is in Marin where she wrestles with cats and dogs for the delights of the Seed Exchange. 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974) and *I. douglasiana* both do well with her.

North Coast.

Jay Hudson is in Fort Bragg, an ideal PCI area on California's northern coast, surrounded by native irises except for the seaboard. He grows 147 cultivars on his Iris Gallery Nursery, and has 107 that he rates as 'excellent' (i.e.73%) from which he's listed fourteen favourites here. This means that they have beautiful foliage, good flowering and satisfactory increase: 'Agnes James' (Starker 1939), 'Easter Egg Hunt' (Ghio 1996), 'Foothill Banner' (Lawyer 1990), 'Half Time' (Ghio 1978), 'Jean Erickson' (Rigby 1993), 'Junipero' (Ghio 1988), 'Mimsey' (Wood 1988), 'Night Editor' (Ghio 1986), 'Orchid Resprite' (Hubley 1971), 'Raspberry Dazzler' (Wood 1995), 'Ruth Hardy' (Ward 1977), 'Silver Circle' (Jenkins 1992), 'Sombriel' (Wood 1986) and 'Ultimate Suntan' (Ghio 1996). A 'good' rating (25% of his stock) indicates average growth and increases, with some flowers, whilst a 'poor' rating (2% of his stock) indicates a plant that is very slow to grow and flower, but has survived. Plants that died were not evaluated.

The irises are grown in a display area where more care is lavished, and a field. Originally Jay used a Camellia-Azalea food supplemented by 'Miracle Grow', but he now sprinkles alfalfa pellets on in autumn and feeds regularly with 'Turf Royal', a granular lawn feed which is 21% nitrogen (of which 11% is ammoniacal & 10% nitrate), 7% phosphate, 14% potash and 5% sulphur, with supplements of 'Miracle Grow' about fortnightly. Jay swapped to the lawn feed after seeing the results on plants accidentally fed by the lawn sprayer. 'Agnes James' had died in the field and looked to do so in the display area until given that feeding regime, on which it thrived. Although the high nitrogen gives taller foliage, the flowers stay above it. Rust is controlled with 'Daconil Weatherstick', which was apparently better than 'Rally' on the TBs too.

Oregon, Washington and British Columbia

Five PCI species are native to Oregon, which is nearly ideal for them from the Pacific coast eastward to the lower Cascade Mountains. Washington gets too cold for everything except *I. tenax* in the wild and in northern Washington and British Columbia there are no native species.

William Plotner is in Molalla, Oregon, about 35 miles south of Portland, where it can get nippy on winter mornings, but that doesn't deter him from his species hybridising. His listings start off with the best cultivars in each.

Best: 'Blue Moment' (Meek 1992), 'Pacific Rim' (B.Jones 1990), 'Carrot Top' (Meek 1992), 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974), 'Junipero' (Ghio 1988).

Good: 'Billy Blue Jay' (Meek 1992), 'Big Wheel' (Ghio 1981), 'Big Money' (Ghio 1982), 'Western Queen' (Stambach 1967), 'Munras' (Ghio 1987).

Medium: 'Garden Delight' (Ghio 1983), 'Native Jewel' (Weaver 1971), 'Susie Knapp' (Phillips 1970) and 'Ami Royal' (?).

The best performing species with William are: *Itenax* -both dark and light varieties are thriving; *tenax* subsp. *gormanii* which grew very well from seed after a slow start; *I. missouriensis* -this was voted Queen of Show at the Greater Portland Iris Society in 1997; *I. pseudacorus* - Dr. Waddick collected this seed in China and it's given 'beautiful, small, slender flowers with about 9 buds per stem'. *I. douglasiana* is 'the old standby for any breeding programme.'

Debby Cole is in Mercer Island, Washington and grows at least forty cvs and at least twice that number from seed. Her favourites for 'performance and attitude' are 'Upper Echelon' (Ghio 1988), 'Western Queen' (Stambach 1967), 'Ripple Rock' (Lenz 1963) and 'Tulum' (Ghio 1996), with 'Philosophy' (Ghio 1995) and 'Deep Blue Sea' (Ghio 1991) as possibles after further consideration. 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974) and 'Idylwild' (Ghio 1987) let themselves down in Debby's eyes by their reclining habit, and she got rid of 'Amiguita' (Nies 1947) due to this fault. The species that Debby's grown are *chrysophylla*, *innominata* and *fernaldii* from SPCNI seed. These were planted out with garden hybrid seedlings in a terraced east facing bed under a cherry and all did well. However, ten years on, the *chrysophylla* has apparently been out-competed and the *fernaldii* and *innominata* aren't flourishing as they were. The garden hybrids, whilst being 'grossly overcrowded' haven't diminished. *Tenax* is one species that *is* doing well, bought in and happy in moist shade or hot and dry sites, as seedlings and the original plant.

Debby reckons that the success of transplanted hybrids depends to some extent on the health of the soil they were dug from, and on the preparation of their new home. Her PCIs are quite sheltered, none being in broad, flat open areas as favoured by beardeds, and she doesn't think that she's ever lost an established plant to the cold, even during a cold snap to 9 degrees F, although she reckons that a late freeze catching new growth would be a threat. Winter temperatures average from 25-35 degrees F at night, 35-50F in the day from Thanksgiving until Easter. Ten years ago, she ordered seven or eight cvs from Joe Ghio and planted them in a carefully prepared site on a north-facing slope receiving mostly mid-morning sun. These got a thick bark mulch over winter, and thrive. The next lot went into the same slope, but closer to a pine and with less preparation. Half were lost. The next year, she ordered from John Weiler, and his earlier despatch caught her unprepared and they ended up in too shady a spot, only two surviving, 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974) is the only flowerer, while 'Chief Sequoia' (Weiler 1990) survives without doing so. The next year Debby returned to SPCNI seed, but these, on a pretty east-facing flat spot between a concrete patio and a rock wall, are now no longer increasing. In 1993 Debby ordered a dozen from Joe Ghio again. She prepared the soil, soaked and watered the plants in 'Subdue' and planted them in a flat area with 2/3 shade near, but not under, 25 year old firs. In 1997, four had survived, two barely doing so. She thinks that as the foliage was 'mostly gray and scrunchy' on arrival, that disease may have come with the plants due to the monoculture that they grew in. As she mulches deeply against the winter cold, she doesn't reckon it's that, although the site may have been inhospitable, or the autumn to spring period too wet. She reports having lost 'a couple of last fall's (1996) imports ...for reasons unknown', which if I've interpreted correctly, Lewis thought might be spider mites. Seed ordered from Joe Ghio in 1995 gave Debby twelve plants from two packets and she's looking forward to having the seedlings flower. In 1996 she experimented a bit with her SPCNI seed, setting two identical sets of seed into peat pots. One set was left outside for a week just before the Christmas snowstorms, whilst the other set went into the fridge. After their respective weeks, they all went into a greenhouse tray on a south-facing windowsill in her semi-shaded plant room. Two sets, Gigi's garden hybrids and some of Clarice Richards that were also from the 'outdoor' section, sprouted in February, and in March, when they were 1 1/2" tall and touching the propagator's cover, these went out onto the patio in their peat pots. They were all almost lost to dehydration before they got planted out, but then thrive. There was no germination in the seed remaining in the propagator, even after they were moved out into a shady spot in May. Debby reckons that in future 'I think I'll just stick to leaving seeds outdoors over winter in watered, punctured milk-jug bottoms filled with composted steer manure. That works for me! Such total failure is too frustrating, a waste of materials and time. ...a whole year with so few new PCI seedlings.'

Roland Kenitzer, is at Valley Haven, about two miles south of Highway 101 at around 600' in Port Angeles, Washington. His land slopes to the south, getting mid-day sun, but being sheltered by surrounding trees from the north-west winds, although winter storms do bring him south-easterlies. He has about 20" of rain annually, mostly between October and May. Sporadic snowfalls of about an inch or so usually melt in a day or two, but freezing and thawing cycles due to frosts are a problem. Summer temperatures get into the 80's, but the lack of breezes makes that feel hotter.

1997 was the start of their second season at Valley haven, after four years in 'a similar configuration' in Sequim. None of the PCIs were lost in the late autumn shift of 1995, but those that were small in clump and rhizome -i.e. 'Fort Point' (Wood 1987), 'Small Town' (Ghio 1986) and 'Chimes' (McCaskill-Foster 1972), didn't flower the next year. Both clumps of 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974) were 'spectacular' in 1996, with 'Native Blush' (Hager 1988) and 'Rhett's Memory' (Jenkins 1988) flowering too and all clumps growing well. Roland has raised mounds to plant his irises on since his natural drainage is poor, and has amended the soil to enhance its manageability. He grows mainly TBs, but has six PCIs, and plans for expansion. He has two clumps of 'Canyon Snow', one planted on a mound in full sun along with 'Fort Point', 'Small Town' and 'Chimes'. These are watered as needs be in summer. The second 'Canyon Snow', and 'Rhett's Memory' are in topsoil under trees, so get some mid-day shade in summer. Roland doesn't cover the irises in winter, although he's considering a light layer of straw to combat the freeze-thaw cycle, and hasn't lost any PCIs in the two heavy snowfalls that they've experienced. A granular, slow-release fertiliser is applied in spring when growth starts, 1/3 to 1 cup around each clump, depending on its size. This is either an 8 nitrogen, 16 phosphorus and 16 potassium mix, or a 10-10-10. The clumps are fed again as the stems start appearing if Roland isn't too hard pressed, and again after flowering.

Elaine Bassette, in Tacoma, Washington State, finds that due to so much hybridising being done in California, many cvs don't do well in her wet climate, and she's therefore growing those that will survive 'without withholding water'. Her garden is on a city lot, and has a sprinkler system, so there's a problem with siting plants where they'll get exactly the right amount of water, and her PCIs tend to get too much. Elaine selects her seedlings with the wet climate in mind to ensure that they'll thrive.

The named cultivars that have done well there are 'Endless' (Ghio 1984), 'Idylwild' (Ghio 1987), 'Junipero' (Ghio 1988), 'Las Flores' (Ghio 1979), 'Los Californio' (Ghio 1988), 'National Anthem' (Ghio 1989), 'Native Warrior' (Phillips 1970), 'Night Editor' (Ghio 1986), 'Pacific Rim' (B. Jones 1990), 'Rio del Mar' (Ghio 1979), 'Santa Rita' (Ghio 1976), 'Tunitas' (Ghio 1985) and 'Western Queen' (Stambach 1967). 'Pacific Rim' 'can't be beat' for garden impact, as 'it has an eye-catching color, distinctive pattern, and it clumps and blooms beautifully.' Newer varieties

that are flourishing are 'Battle Alert' (Ghio 1995), 'Carmel Mission' (Ghio 1993), 'Eye Patch' (Ghio 1995), 'Marine Magic' (Belardi 1974), 'Mocha Melody' (Lind 1992) - these two having especial impact in the garden- and 'Lunar Eclipse' (Aitken 1993). Elaine reckons on getting about 75% germination or more by using the 2-3 day tea soaking method on thoroughly dried seed, and setting seed in pots that over-winter outside with protection. Species and their hybrids have died off after two years or so, with those having the most douglasiana influence faring the best. Those with narrow leaves fare the worst, as do seedlings without signals, which are outperformed by the older forms. Transplanting is most successful in this region when done in spring rather than autumn.

Paul Ikeda is in Seattle, Washington, and had a very good year for flower in 1997, along with several other people he knows. The flowering season started later due to extra rain keeping things cool and although he didn't remove old leaves or spray for fungal infections, his plants did well. However, when he once let nature take its course entirely, he lost almost all the plants in one bed, so he never actually neglects them. In 1994 he bought some of Joe Ghio's introductions, and planted them all in one bed. His clump of 'La Selva Beach' (Ghio 1993) is as big as any other, but is turning yellow and brown, and Paul reckons that it'll die. This is in the middle of the bed, and is the only clump affected, although he's worried that it may pass on whatever its problem is. Paul's favourite and most vigorous cultivar is 'Pacific Rim' (B.Jones 1990) which has been in situ for five years and flowers well each year, having 'beautiful bloom stalks that stand upright.' Clumps that have prospered over the years include 'Seabright Cove' (Ghio 1992), 'Wilder Than Ever' (Ghio 1992), 'See The Light' (Ghio 1991), 'Earthquake' (Ghio 1990) and 'On The Edge' (Ghio 1989).

Jean Witt is in north Seattle, and finds that species and near species grow better than named varieties. She is sure that her glacial soil accounts for this difference, and her sparingness with fertiliser. The great outdoors apparently supplies ideal conditions for germination, so Jean has no problems with that. One of her two big beds of PCI s was revamped in the autumn of 1996, and she added 'commercial yard-waste compost, alfalfa pellets, and 5-10-10 fertiliser before replanting.' A mulch of pine-needles went on afterwards, and everything over-wintered well, the extra-wet spring of 1997 producing 'green and lush plants' as of August. There wasn't much bloom in '97, 'Councilman' (Ghio 1975) being the first to do so, and 'Valley Banner' (Hardy 1958) made a welcome reappearance after its supposed loss.

Jean has more tenax and innominata types than those of larger species, and has her eye on 'a plain lavender with the wide foliage of *I.douglasiana* that does not water-burn.' She now has a new *I.purdyi* to replace the 'Memoria Elwood that she lost to rot several years ago and wonders if anyone still has it, since her plant, 'although it appears to be true to name...is quite a bit smaller...and has pink veins on a white ground instead of cream.' 'Creamy Custard' (Logan/Pierce County Iris Soc. 1995) is an attractive pale yellow that is still doing well, as does an ivory and raspberry innominata that Jean inherited from Leona Mahood, which makes large clumps. Jean grows many 'innominata things' which are smaller than most named PCIs and therefore suitable for rookery's. Their colours include white over violet, rose, pale yellow, lavender-blue, brick-red and cantaloupe over raspberry bicolours. 'Mini Ma'(Davidson 1972) flowered for Jean for the first time in 1997, and was very different to her two collected violet dwarfs, which may 'possibly classify as *x thompsonii*; one has leaves half an inch wide.' 'Agnes James' (Starker 1939), recovered from friends after an accidental selling off, is increasing well and flowered last year. 'It's flowers may not be as wide as newer things, but it is a very good grower and a good parent.'

Helen Kennedy is in Surrey, British Columbia, Canada, and is wrestling with ideal planting depths and soil structure, the latter as an aid to drainage in winter. She had tried very friable soil with lots of humus, but reckoned that this allowed cold to penetrate to the roots. At the Portland Convention, she discovered that the Oregon growers have quite dense soil. Borers are a major headache in her garden, arriving with a TB she was given and almost destroying all the others. She thinks that it reappeared again due to a JI from a Michigan nursery and has since lost all her *I.tenax* and is down to one douglasiana. They have even lost 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974) and are down to seven named cultivars. Spraying with 'Orthere' helped, but as she reacts badly to it herself, she used with 'Malathion' granules in 1997. However, either March was too late to apply this and too little was used, or plants didn't take it up well enough as readily as 'pot plants' do.

In British Columbia, either nearly or full sun is required for flowering, although 'Age of Chivalry' (Ghio 1991) has done well, flowering 'in considerable shade.' Such shade doesn't suit 'Drive you Wild' (Ghio 1985), although it has grown and increased very well. Helen would recommend these two highly, along with 'Big Money' (Ghio 1982). A consistent flowerer is 'Westerlies'(Ghio 1991), but it's not as vigorous as those above, while 'Night Editor' (Ghio 1986) and 'Black Eye' (Ghio 1989) although in the same bed as the others -among rhododendrons and lilies, but as yet borer free- haven't flowered. In a sunnier but borer infested bed Helen has 'Big Money', 'Los Californio (Ghio 1988) and *I.douglasiana*, although all the *I.tenax* were lost there. When this bed was newly dug, PCIs nearly lost in a former TB bed were moved into it, probably bringing the borer with them.

Southern United States, West to East

The next three respondents live where it's hard to grow PCIs. New Mexico, like Arizona, is too hot in the summer and too cold in the winter. Oklahoma has those problems too, as well as higher summer rainfall and humidity. Although North Carolina was apparently droughted in the summer of 1997, it's normally humid on hot summer days, which is something that PCIs haven't evolved to cope with. 'Nevertheless,' Lewis writes, 'the PCI have adapted to widely divergent microclimates where they now thrive, and it is the persistence of members like these three who can eventually make them adaptable to all but the most extreme environmental conditions.'

Audrey Roe is in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and has five 'very successful clumps of species hybrids' although she hasn't tried named varieties due to having heard so many reports of their loss. The clumps are seedlings from SIGNA's seed list in the 80's and from her hybridising of the resulting plants, and were split in the spring of 1997. Joe Ghio's seed germinates reluctantly for Audrey, and the seedlings then die off in a few months. One nice clump is SIGNA (91K086), listed as 'Creamy Custard' (tenax hybrid?) and has bitone lavender flowers with a central yellow line on the fall which are of a better size and form than the others. Audrey is trying *I.tenax* as she's keen on using its useful trait of hardiness. Some seeds are soaked and some sown straight into pots. Audrey's had success with both methods, although she can't say if one's best, not having kept notes. There are always some losses, some in the first six months or so, some the following spring.

Dorothy Hujak is in Tulsa, Oklahoma and reported that 1997 was a very peculiar year for weather. A freeze in late March left her with very little bloom and it was very cold until May 1st, shooting into the 80's later in the month. 'Last year it went to 14 and 10 degrees, and I lost several plants. I made the mistake of taking the mulch off too early because they looked so good, and then those low temperatures hit them. I am having very late bloom now.' Dorothy's best flowers are 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974), 'Soquel Cove' (Ghio 1976), 'Ojai' (Walker 1959), 'Fairy Chimes' (McCaskill-Poster 1972), 'Banbury Gnome' (Brummitt 1974) and her own seedlings. Germination is usually excellent, Dorothy having always started them off in her house in 'Styrofoam' cups with holes poked in the bottom. These sit in water when necessary and are fed this way too once they've germinated. Some are always lost to squirrels and the seedlings are covered with 'hardware cloth' once planted out. ASPM seed however, didn't germinate well. Seed from 'Pacific Rim' (B.Jones 1990), 'Cup of Tea' (Ghio 1987) and others received from her daughter in Friday Harbour, Washington, has done well.

Susan Lambris is in Raleigh, North Carolina and her PCIs suffered with the weather in 1997 too, a long, cool, wet spring preceding a hot, 'bone-dry' summer with that giving way to a wet, moderate autumn. If the worst happens, she still has seed from PCI x *I. lactea* crosses that she's made. The toughest named PCI hybrid with Susan is 'Idylwild' (Ghio 1987), which is the last survivor of her original 1990 planting. 'A happy camper it is not, but despite heavy competition from other plants and a site almost as shaded in winter as in summer, it bloomed and set seed twice and continues to produce new fans in a bed where all my other PCI's died from a soft rot long ago.' PCIs are being successful in two beds receiving dappled shade in summer and almost full sun in winter, one of almost pure sand, the other of a heavy 'claylike loam' which is domes to encourage run off of what water doesn't soak in. With Susan, 'soil type seems relatively unimportant providing there is no standing water.' Once established, her PCIs thrive if shaded in summer. Those spending most of each day in moderate to full sun being 'noticeably weaker.' The most vigorous named cultivar with Susan is 'Westerlies' (Ghio 1991), while last year 'Deep Blue Sea' (Ghio 1991), 'Clever Devil' (Ghio 1992), 'Herald' (Ghio 1989) and 'Big Money' (Ghio 1982) had two or three stems apiece. 'Ultimate Suntan' (Ghio 1996) and 'Villa Montalvo' (Ghio 1991) 'faded away almost at once.' Susan bought PCIs from Bay View Gardens in 1997 and, on keeping notes on these, found that plants 'with relatively few new fans, but copious new and established roots do better than plants with roots that are just emerging from the rhizome, but with many tiny fans.' 'Bat Boy' (Ghio 1995) is doing 'especially well', 'Eagle Eyes' (Ghio 1992) 'looks dead' and 'Heaven Knows' (Ghio 1991) is 'weak' while 'Santa Cruz Beach' (Ghio 1986), 'Fault Zone' (Ghio 1990) and 'Santa Rosalita' (Ghio 1996) are doing 'middling well.' All the plants 'were in excellent health when received.'

North Eastern United States

All the northerly states present a challenge to PCI growers and hybridisers as the summers are too wet and the winters too cold. Lewis writes 'Let's hope that with the help of some of Jean Witt's tenax genes and perhaps a large and tough-rhizomed douglasiana, John White will eventually find the hardy plant he is seeking.'

John White is hybridising in Minot, Maine, and lined out about 500 PCI seedlings in the spring of 1997. However, this was long, cold and rainy, and the summer was very hot and dry, he lost all but about fifty. A few douglasianas did well, as did 'mixed hybrids' from Jean Witt and five hybrids from 'Amiguita' (Nies 1947). Six seedlings that were lined out in 1996 survived the winter and one - a tenax in light shade - flowered in a rainy period and John almost missed it. 'It appeared to be on the white side with blue markings. I left the flower on the bloom stalk and it apparently selfed. It set a seed pod and I now have 12 good seeds. They have to be tenax as no other plant bloomed this year. Could I be lucky enough to have something develop from these seeds that is a little more hardy?'

Outside the United States and Canada

Lewis writes here that 'New Zealand, like Australia, has many areas nearly ideal for PCIs. Much valuable breeding work has been done there and exciting cultivars are available, but, because of opposite seasons, they are difficult to exchange... The note from Gwenda Harris, below, hints that she may help carry on the work of Fred Danks, Jean Stevens, Dan Hargrave, Dora Sparrow and Barry Blyth.'

Gwenda is in Herbert, North Otago, New Zealand, and doesn't grow any named varieties at all as they're so difficult to obtain. 'Commercial growers in America seem reluctant to export them, and rarely, if ever, does one see them offered for sale in New Zealand. Dora Sparrow has some; but you would know about these.' Gwenda has been on her nursery at Otepopo for two years, sowing PCI seed fervidly, and since both she and other Kiwi's think they're lovely things, and they thrive in that climate, things are looking good. Due to the prevailing practice there of circulating unnamed varieties, there may be question marks over some of the seed that's available, but Gwenda definitely has *I. munzii* and hopefully has *I. macrosiphon* and *I. purdyi*, although these have yet to flower. She would love to see PCI species in the wild, as a help to recognising what she's got for either those, or early hybrids, so let's hope Santa sends her a plane ticket. North Otago, where she moved from, is drought prone, and, having suffered from this, Gwenda immediately installed a new irrigation system on arrival, which, she writes, has been a source of amusement to the neighbours as the rainfall has ever since been either just about sufficient, or rather more than she'd like. Two large clumps of a nice lavender douglasiana hybrid that were in the garden when Gwenda moved in flowered happily through the first autumn, occasionally through that winter, voluptuously in the first spring, and hardly ever since, due to the extra rain induced in that locality by the sudden presence of an irrigation system.

Japan's climate in the north is influenced by harsh winds from Siberia and the cold Oyashio current which flows southwards into the Sea of Japan. Although southern winters are moderated by the warm Kuroshia current, the summers can exhibit 90% humidity and even higher temperatures.

Akira Horinaka is in Nishinomiya, in the Osaka Bay area, where the climate -achieving 35 degrees C (95F)- is rather hotter than PCIs experience in the wild. Although he has imported cultivars from Joe Ghio for many years, which always arrived in excellent condition, he hasn't been able to keep them alive. However, bowing to the exigencies of his southerly micro-climate, he sent some to a friend in a cooler location, who has kept 50% of what was sent to him going well, and is hybridising them. Akira would be very interested to hear from anyone who can supply him with a variegated *I. tenax* with 'close to deepest red flowers.'

Jean-Louis Latil is in Lazer, France, has been trying his hand over the last two years or so with, in the main, CA species. He only grows one hybrid, being a 'species specialist' and that is 'Tropezienne' (Peyrard 1995), a 'nice red-maroon colour.' This grows in full sun without protection, withstanding +30 degrees C in the summer, and -15 degrees C in the winter, the latter being, according to Lewis, 'well below those where PCIs are native.'

Lech Comarnicki is in Warsaw, Poland and is reporting on the spring of 1996, since the '96-'97 winter was so long that spring more-or-less disappeared. That winter was 'extremely harsh' and sent freezes of -10 degrees C when the ground was bare of any insulating snow and the soil froze to depths of 5-6', and yes, that's feet, not one of my typo's! Lech was therefore astonished to find on removing their protective coverings (bracken, if I remember correctly) that six plants had 'fresh green leaves.' Unfortunately, gradually most of these plants died in the week or so that he held sending his report to Lewis, to see what then happened, and he thinks that it was because their roots froze. The only survivor was a very narrow leafed plant, 'resembling *Linnominata* as far as I can see after reading descriptions in books.' This came from the BIS Seed Distribution in a packet of mixed species. Being a slow grower it didn't flower in 1996, but was increasing well and so hopefully did so in 1997. Whether it did or not, Lech is justifiably proud of his husbandry. He has been having some success with seed too, some from Joe Ghio germinating in its second year. 'Strangely enough, seeds did not germinate during cold weather, but only after two weeks of temperatures much above 80 degrees F in June! They were previously kept in a temperature around 50 degrees for three month without result. Plants were weak and only two survived the fall. From BIS seed I obtained only one seed which died after a few weeks. It should be said that we had periods of heat alternating with cold weather during the whole spring and summer.' He ordered lots more seed in 1997, and we wish him more success. He writes 'If a PCI plant could survive such a bad winter there is a reasonable hope that more should survive a normal one. This single plant gives me hope for further attempts. In addition, I shared the seed with a friend, and three other plants survived in her cold frame. If we have any bloom and seeds are produced, you will be informed of the results and perhaps we may succeed in finding more hardy clones.'

Summary and Discussion by Lewis and Adele

A much higher proportion of old PCI varieties 'are grown and appreciated over the years' than is the case with other types of iris, the TB variety being doubtless the most transient. This long-term interest is borne out in this survey, although, as a variety must be grown over several years for an evaluation of it to be pertinent, it's obvious that the survey will therefore be biased against newer cultivars. 'So remember that one of those just-introduced beauties could have more going for it than anything we have ever seen, and could very well be the star of tomorrow's survey.' The BIS Historian, Suz Winspear, researched an article for the 1991 BIS Year Book on the often stated fact that older TB varieties are more garden-worthy than newer ones, only to find that that opinion was just as contentious in the 40's and 50's.

The Lawyer's discovered a good correlation between this survey and the first one in 1991, 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974) and 'Big Money' (Ghio 1982) coming respectively first and second, as they did then. The one respondent out of 13 recommendations reporting 'Canyon Snow' to have the fault of a reclining habit may, according to Lewis, have been observing a plant set in too shady a location. 'Big Money' and 'Sierra Dell' (Lawyer '88) tied for second with six votes each, and three tied for this with five votes apiece. These were 'Big Wheel' (Ghio 1981), 'Idylwild' (Ghio 1987) and 'Pacific Rim' (B.Jones 1990). Six varieties tied for fourth place, all with four votes each, and these were 'Amiguita' (Nies 1947), 'Agnes James' (Starker 1939), 'Night Editor' (Ghio 1986), 'Western Queen' (Stambach 1967) and 'Wilder Than Ever' (Ghio 1992). Thirteen cultivars received three votes each, these being 'Canyon Orchid' (Denney 1982), 'Chimes' (McCaskill-Foster 1972), 'Deep Blue Sea' (Ghio 1991), 'Endless' (Ghio 1984), 'Fairy Chimes' (McCaskill-Foster 1972), 'Fault Zone' (Ghio 1990), 'Foothill Banner' (Lawyer 1990), 'In The Money' (Ghio 1987), 'Junipero' (Ghio 1988), 'Ojai' (Walker 1959), 'Sea Gal' (Belardi 1993) and 'Westerlies' (Ghio 1991). Twenty seven varieties were given two votes each, 'Age of Chivalry' (Ghio 1991), 'Banbury Gnome' (Brummitt 1974), 'Black Eye' (Ghio 1989), 'Califia' (Ghio 1970), 'Chief Sequoia' (Weiler 1990), 'Deepening Shadows' (Ghio 1984), 'Drive You Wild' (Ghio 1985), 'Earthquake' (Ghio 1990), 'Gordola' (Ghio 1996), 'Herald' (Ghio 1989), 'It's Wild' (Ghio 1989), 'Jean Erickson' (Rigby 1993), 'Los Californio' (Ghio 1988), 'Mantra' (Ghio 1992), 'Munras' (Ghio 1987), 'National Anthem' (Ghio 1989), 'Novia del Mar' (Foster 1976), 'Orchid Sprite' (Hubley 1971), 'Pacific High' (Belardi 1986), 'Pegasus' (Isles?), 'Raspberry Dazzler' (Wood 1995), 'San Lorenzo Valley' (Ghio 1992), 'Seabright Cove' (Ghio 1992), 'See The Light' (Ghio 1991), 'Simply Wild' (Ghio 1980), 'Solid Citizen' (Ghio 1986), 'Tidy White' (Hager 1988) and 'Tropezienne' (Peyrard 1995). There were 70 cultivars that received one vote apiece, and thankfully Adele and Lewis didn't list them, or I'd have been grey before this NI ever got posted. This one vote, as they pointed out, means that each of those performed excellently somewhere for someone. Ah, well, actually, they are all here, so all I want for Christmas is 'Grecian 2000', or perhaps a wig... In their usual thoughtful fashion, Adele and Lewis have grouped these varieties under the areas in which they grew well enough warrant selection.

Southern California

'Arana' (Ghio 1980), 'California Skies' (Sage 1994), 'Camp Capitola' (Ghio 1982), 'Campaigner' (Ghio 1984), 'Carole Cabeen' (Nies 1949), 'Flamenco Queen' (McCaskill 1976), 'Mayor' (Ghio 1976), 'Stage Whisper' (Denney 1981).

Northern California

Air Show' (Belardi 1995), 'Ami Royal' (?), 'Banbury Festival' (Brummitt 1975), 'Bat Boy' (Ghio 1995), 'Battle Alert' (Ghio 1995), 'Comet Trails' (Wood 1995), 'Creamy Custard' (Logan/Pierce County Iris Society 1995), 'Cup of Tea' (Ghio 1987), 'Easter Egg Hunt' (Ghio 1996), 'El Nino' (Ghio 1991), 'Escalona' (Ghio 1993), 'Fort Point' (Wood 1987), 'Gold Dusted' (Jenkins 1990), 'Greenan Gold' (Meek 1992), 'Half Time' (Ghio 1978), 'Hands On' (Ghio 1993), 'Heaven Knows' (Ghio 1991), 'High Splendor' (Wood 1994), 'Mimsey' (Wood 1988), 'Mission Santa Clara' (Ghio 1992), 'Monterey Gold' (Jenkins?), 'Moonlad' (Davidson 1972), 'Napa Valley' (Ghio 1985), 'Orchid Resprite' (Hubley 1971), 'Osocales' (Ghio 1995), 'Philosophy' (Ghio 1995), 'Rare Reward' (Ghio 1988), 'Regal Classic' (Wood 1995), 'Ruth Hardy' (Ward 1977), 'School Boy' (Ghio 1992), 'Sea Admiral' (Wood 1995), 'Silver Circle' (Jenkins 1992), 'Skylash' (Belardi 1993), 'Sombriel' (Wood 1986), 'Twin Lakes' (Ghio 1992), 'Ultimate Suntan' (Ghio 1996), 'Valet' (Ghio 1991), 'Wild Man' (Ghio 1987).

Oregon, Washington, British Columbia

'Billy Blue Jay' (Meek 1992), 'Blue Moment' (Meek 1992), 'Carrot Top' (Meek 1992), 'Del Rey' (Ghio 1978), 'Dorothy V' (Millar 1991), 'Las Flores' (Ghio 1979), 'Native Blush' (Hager 1988), 'Native Warrior' (Phillips 1970), 'On The Edge' (Ghio 1989), 'Poppy'

(Edinger/Patterson 1980), 'Rio del Mar' (), 'Ripple Rock' (Lenz 1963), Santa Rita' (Ghio 1976), 'Small Town' (Ghio 1986), 'Tulum' (Ghio 1996), 'Tunitas' (Ghio 1985), 'Vera Hays' (Millar 1990).

Central & Eastern U.S.

'Blue Sage' (Niew 1947), 'Clever Devil' (Ghio 1992), 'David Mark Ward' (Fabel-Ward 1989), 'Honta Yo' (Rigby 1985), 'Shamayim' (Fabel-Ward 1992), 'Soquel Cove' (Ghio 1976), 'Susie Knapp' (Phillips 1970), 'Wolkentanz' (Fabel-Ward 1992).

The Rest of the World

'Bottom Line' (Ghio 1984), 'California Mystique' (Ghio 1981), 'Grand Design' (Ghio 1983), 'Miramar' (Ghio 1984), 'Montara' (Ghio 1983), 'Quintana' (Corlew 1980), 'Wild Time' (Ghio 1986).

All 54% of respondents who grew their own seedlings reported that these out-performed any purchased clones. Moreover, the incentive for growing their own seedlings was, apparently, necessity rather than aesthetics. In the eminently suitable climate of northern California, only 22% had attempted to grow their own hybrids, whereas in the more challenging conditions of Washington and British Columbia, this percentage was 37%, rising to 87% in the even more difficult areas.

Of those growing both hybrids and pure species, most found that apart from *I. douglasiana*, *I. tenax* and some clones of *I. innominata*, the pure species were the weakest and most problematical.

Hot Summers: PCIs are naturally found in partial shade. Occasionally they occur on road banks and recently clear-cut forest where they've been dormant for perhaps centuries in the deep shade. Although *I. douglasiana* grows in full sun along the Pacific coast, this is where it's within sight of the sea. In areas with hot summers, shade was found to be vital, and it was recommended by every respondent to who mentioned the subject.

Cold Winters: Although there are cold limits for all plants, it is well documented that tolerance or adaptability to all climatically controlled conditions can be modified by selection up to the genetic capacity of the species. John White in Minot, Maine, Jean Peyrard in Seyssinet, and Jean-Louis Latil in Lazer, France, Lech Comarnicki in Warsaw, Poland, and to a lesser extent, Kathy Millar of Duncan B.C., Audrey Roe in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Bob Ward in Little Rock Arkansas, Dorothy Hujak in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Susan Lambiris in Raleigh, North Carolina, are all breeding for freeze tolerance. Lewis reckons that once these folk start exchanging seed of their successful plants, each will acquire a broader genetic base from which to hybridise. He mentions having heard that rhizome size may well help a plant transplant successfully, and thinks that this may also be a factor in freeze tolerance too. One fact that appeared was that 'Creamy Custard' (Logan/Pierce County Iris Soc. 1995) and its descendants were notable performers in cold areas.

Transplanting: Loss during transplanting is the biggest deterrent to growing PCIs in areas where they will thrive once established. Failure is directly related to the time the plant spends out of soil. The most likely survivors will have long white roots, new sprouts with roots, and larger rhizomes.

Soil: Soils often require altering, which was usually achieved with additions of organic matter. The importance of good drainage was stressed, raised beds or mounds being created in extremis. Soil sulphur -flowers of sulphur in Britain- was dug in where the soil was alkaline.

Fertiliser: Since assessing the correct fertiliser for your garden depends entirely on the soils encountered within it, Adele and Lewis decided against including in the conclusion any of the regimes mentioned by their respondents. What they did mention was that as phosphorous stays wherever you've applied it and doesn't travel through water action or whatever, it's therefore best to dig in 'single super-phosphate' before planting, as it's then in the place where the roots can assimilate it.

Pots: In areas with cold winters it's best to start your transplants off in pots, planting them out in the spring after the deadly frosts. Some respondents considered this to be the best practice under all conditions, and the Lawyers recommend it as a quarantine against root diseases which you might otherwise introduce into your garden.

Adele & Lewis Lawyer. SPCNI 'Almanac' Vol. XXVI, No. 1, Fall 1997

Anything confusing or peculiar in the above condensation is mine, so if I've made a mess of it, your best recourse is to join the SPCNI. As Jennifer and I have yet to get around to the last issue's feet kissing session, we'll have to work out something special as my thanks to her.

Ed

An Adaptation of: IDEAS ON THE CULTURE OF PCIs

Dorothy Rucker, of Danville, California, which is an intercoastal valley, usually colder in winter and hotter in summer than the San Francisco Bay area, which is just west of her over the hills. Winter temperatures often descend to the 20's F, and regularly into the 30's, while summer temperatures are often over 100, but have little humidity. Fog is rare and when it does happen, it's as a ground fog in winter. Dorothy has been growing PCIs for about ten years. These are mostly hybrids rather than species, and mainly bred by Joe Ghio. Her bed was prepared with a lot of humus and some sand to ensure adequate drainage, and gets sun in the mornings, but is shaded by the house in the afternoons. Fertiliser is only occasionally used, but when it is, it's Joe Ghio's recommendation, i.e. one for azaleas, camellias and rhododendrons. Dorothy has never used an anti-fungal drench, and has had very little trouble with disease.

The varieties were originally selected for their colour, but now Dorothy includes the growth habit as an important criterion, and likes to see what the plants get up to in gardens before she buys them. 'Some plants with the most appealing blooms have terrible growth habits, with snaking stems or open centres.' She likes PCIs to be compact, have straight stems, and be vigorous -but not too aggressively so, which she finds 'Canyon Snow' (Philbrick/Emery 1974), 'Native Jewel' (Weaver 1971) and 'San Lorenzo Valley' (Ghio 1992) to be. Either that or they simply need

moving to more spacious accommodation. Dorothy is of the tentative opinion that plants with *I. munzii* in their ancestry are more tolerant of her fierce sun. 'Miramar' (Ghio 1984), 'San Lorenzo Valley', and 'Sierra Dell' (Lawyer 1987) are in sun for more of the day than the other 25-30 varieties, and seem to thrive. Although it's so cold there, Dorothy hasn't found any damage more severe than a little 'burn' on the foliage, but planting an order than arrived during a spell of low 20'sF meant that she lost the lot. Some new plants are lost occasionally, while others on either side survived, and Dorothy's puzzled, but thinks that this may be from a soil borne disease.

The whole garden gets watered all year round, except, of course, for when it's raining, and any foliage that arches into the wrong space is trimmed back, but as this is unsightly, she recommends that you make sure that you've set your plants out initially in big enough areas. Every fall Dorothy splits off offsets to put in her local society's raffle etc., making sure that 'at least one plant in a packet has good roots', as these new white roots 'indicate that the plant is ready to start its growth'. The plants are then wrapped in a paper towel, then a piece of newspaper, wetted, and put in a 'fold over sandwich bag', which I infer to be polythene, and have the necks fastened with masking tape, which then goes around the body of the package too. These can then be put into water if they need to sit for a few days, and she has packed over a hundred for auctions in this manner

Dorothy Rucker, SPCNI's 'Almanac' Vol XXVI, No.1, Fall 1997

1997-THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL JI SYMPOSIUM: PRESENTERS' AIMS

Terry Aitken's talk was entitled 'Universal Goals in Plant Breeding'. He started with the premise that people want more colour per square foot, and that it's therefore up to hybridisers to provide that with extensions to flowering season in both directions. Attractive colour in a plant isn't of course necessarily simply that of the flowers, and variegation is on its way in various sections of irises. Anyone with *I. pallida argentea*, *I. pallida aureovariegata* or, closer to our hearts, *laevigata*, *foetidissima* and *pseudacorus variegata* will be aware of how wonderful it would be to have such gorgeous foliage on other species, as long as they remained vigorous, unlike *pallida aureovariegata*, which is a sluggard.

Tony Huber spoke on 'Extended Inter-Specific Crosses with Japanese Irises'. You will have seen what he's up to in our 'Newsletter' No.40 as he very kindly sent us information, and has generously been sending seed of his wonders, which is still available from Mrs. Criddle who has another batch from him that somehow missed listing, as well as what remains of that in the seed bank listed in our last issue. His aim is also to extend the flowering season with his combinations.

Chad Harris is breeding for 'gardenability', which for him is bud count, reblooming, sequential rather than 'en masse' flowering, presence and structure of branching. His talk was entitled 'The Continuous Bloom' and he recommended that ruthless culling of seedlings is vital.

John Coble rounded off the day with 'Hybridising with Pure Recessive Whites', being his observations on recessive and hidden genes. He also postulated that colours in the JI petal are layered and that therefore, however hard you try, if you have red as the underlying pigment in your blue flower, that will always show through, especially in photography. He spoke on colour and pattern genetics and showed them some slides of JIs like orange pom-poms. That's what the article said, I kid you not! Leslie N. Cave's 'The Iris' has a good grounding in genetics for those of you considering dabbling your toes in such waters.

I've adapted this from Kathy Guest's report in 'The Review' Vol 34, No.2, Fall 1997

IRIS FUN IN FLORIDA

I am gradually becoming familiar with some of the new plant material that I am encountering here. Some things are familiar, but many things are new and interesting. One thing I have found is that there are at least eight species of iris native to Florida. They are: *I. hexagona*, *I. brevicaulis*, *I. fulva*, *I. nelsonii*, *I. giganteaerulea*, *I. tridentata*, *I. versicolor* and *I. verna*. A possible ninth species, *I. virginica*, exists, but it is not known if it is truly native or is one that has escaped from cultivation. *I. pseudacorus* is one that has naturalised in some areas. Of these species, the ones I do not have (yet) are *I. virginica*, *I. versicolor* and *I. verna*. I am trying to grow some TB irises, Siberians, Japanese and one Spuria, but at this time, I would consider this to be a big experiment. Some (or all) of these will most likely fail here, but since they're basically untried, I feel it is worth seeing what will happen. It appears that the problem with TB irises in Florida is that the wet season occurs when they want to bake. Thus, it appears that they tend to rot. This is why all but two of the TBs I am trying are rebloomers. Since those tend to keep on growing instead of going semi-dormant, I figure that they have a chance. Since Louisiana irises are known to do well here, (the first five above are the 'Louisiana species') I will be adding more. Also, I am becoming interested in some other members of the iris family. In this line I have Blackberry lilies (Belemcanda), purple/white Walking iris (*Neomarica northiana?*), yellow Walking Iris (*Trimezia floridana*) and Africa Iris (Diets). I may add more as I encounter them.

I like the way that Florida is protecting its natural treasures. That was something that Kentucky was sadly lacking in. Because of the LARGE number of tourists that visit Florida, it is illegal to dig wild plants except on your property or on private property with the owner's consent. Seed collecting is legal if it's done by a Florida resident (which I now am) and is done outside of preservation areas, which are clearly indicated. In this part of Florida, February is usually the beginning of spring. Already the grass is looking greener. Right now I have blooms on Camellias, Pansies, and Carolina Jasmine. That jasmine is so fragrant. I have come to love camellias, they sure make a show when little else is blooming. Here in Florida, summer is the rainy season, then, it rains almost every day, but it does not rain all day. Each day starts out bright and sunny, then during the heat of the day, thunderstorms erupt. After a couple of hours (at most) the skies clear off. Most evenings are great, mild, with a breeze. The infrequent all day rains are associated with direct hits by low pressure systems in the winter, or tropical systems in the summer. Because of El Nino, this has been a record wet winter here. Even with this, there have been more sunny days than cloudy days. El Nino has made a mess of things ranging from drought in Indonesia, an ice storm in the New England States and Canada, ice storms in Finland, and the recent tornado near Graham Spencer's Croftway Gardens. It is sort of interesting to sit here in sunny Florida and watch what happens up in cloudy Kentucky. So far in January here, the temperature has reached 70F or higher on 12 days, and has been 80F or higher for five out of those twelve. So far, the highest temperature this month has been 87F. Kentucky has had an odd season. Most of the time, they have had their usual cloudy, raw, and windy weather. Although they have had some snow and ice to stick to the ground, they had four days reach 70F, with one reaching 75F. They will most likely pay for it in March and April. The lowest temperature in Kentucky this season has been -2F according to what I have heard.

Mark. A. Cook

Clarence Mahan mentioned on a card to me written on the 8th of January that they too had had days of over 70F, at that point over a week's worth. He was anxiously anticipating damage once the cold resumed. In the Autumn 1997 volume of 'The Review', Carol Warner wrote that with her in Maryland she was losing her first year JI lineouts to drought and that after a month without rain, flowers were aborting. I do hope that for all of you suffering these aberrations, the losses weren't unbearable. Do write in to tell us what's happening to irises around the globe

With reference to Mark's mention of the naturalisation of *I.pseudacorus* in parts of Florida, Gwenda Harris wrote recently that both it and *I.foetidissima* are banned as imports in New Zealand and it's illegal to propagate or distribute them. Garden escapes are inevitable it seems, and with endemic and/or threatened flora to protect, it's an understandable stance for the authorities to take, but hard on iris enthusiasts! Maybe one could be licensed to grow them and be held responsible for their control? That would ensure that only those who really were keen would bother, and hybridisers could wend their merry ways in peace.

THE LURGI FILE

Last year a few plants in the garden, mostly moisture lovers, suddenly came up striped. Anne told me that these aberrations can occur if the water supply hasn't been what it ought at crucial times in the development of the plant, so I put it down to that, my husbandry is such that I can never guarantee such matters in retrospect. However, one plant in a 3l pot of JI No.3, *pseudacorus mandschurica*, was badly smitten and rather distorted, so was kept under my eye over winter by being sat on the rhizome mass of the cream *pseudacorus* with the 18 or so flowers per stem, which was suspended on a sheet of plastic trellis in a barrel on the path. Here I infer the presence of aphids, especially as the last winter was such a mild one here, as I've just binned the latter due to rampant stripes and distortion, and burnt the former as that at least was of a size to go into the fire. On notification, the gentleman who had so kindly supplied me with the *p.mandschurica* rushed out to his pond in an anxious fashion, to discover that his was stripy too, as was *pseudacorus x versicolor* 'Regal Surprise' (Ellis 1988). Both these were in his pool, and he's wondering whether that had any bearing on their susceptibility. While this is guesswork, all I can think of is that it might be that they receive less food, although I haven't discovered what his feeding regime is. This spring's feeding of my moisture lovers has had the side effect of vivid sheets of green bubbles on the top of the buckets containing submerged pots, i.e. *pseudacorus* and *laevigatas*, which I assume to be eutrophication. I flip this off now and then, and haven't discovered any of them to be rotting, but as I've yet to see anyone's pond doing this, obviously feeding is accomplished in a different fashion, or not at all. It seems reasonable that hunger could make the plants more disease prone, but then, if they're pierced by an aphid with infected material in its gut. I don't know that rampant health would make any difference to the likelihood of subsequent infection. Can those of you with ponds please tell us how you feed the irises in them?!

I lost my first 'Holden Clough' (Patton 1971) to virus many moons ago, although subsequent variants thrived, and have recently shifted out another actual 'Holden Clough' that was stripy, but growing well. It's time, I think, that I regarded these questionable plants with a more jaundiced eye, if they're going to infect the healthy ones, and rather than trying some TLC as a possible rescue, simply play safe and burn them. I've had *p.* 'Roy Davidson' (Hager 1987, an open pollinated seedling from 'Holden Clough') for about three years now, which has always been a stripy thing, apart from being my favourite *pseudacorus* cultivar so far, which was looking rather sad this spring, with not nearly as much growth as *p.* 'Phil Edinger' (Hager 1991) which is stonking away, and so I've burnt it, just in case. It flowered happily last year for the first time, and I shall just have to try to acquire it again. Different 'strengths' of viral infection I suppose. But then, all that's stripy isn't viral, so who knows? Whoever does, please write in!

I've been given a recommendation regarding my stripy but not advisedly burnable *I.foetidissima variegata*. This is to water on aspirin at the rate of one tablet in one pint to 6 square inches, in spring and autumn. I think that the active ingredient is salicylic acid from willows, but would any chemist amongst us please write in to say why and how it's potent.

Regarding sibiricas on my allotment, the newest acquisitions, bought very kindly by my mother in September 1996, were, due to my lack of weeding last summer-autumn, taking part in an ad hoc experiment regarding rot as they only had an inch or so of leaf growth above the buttercup canopy when I dug them on 9th May. The only one with a stem, as with last year too, was 'Lavender Bounty' (McEwen 1981), and that and 'Brynmawr' (Foster 1989) were the only ones that needed splitting to fit into 3l pots. The former was showing stripes of decay up the centres of its leaves, which I hope will dry up now that it's into normal humidity, but was big enough to split into three sections, despite having had half of it sent off earlier in the spring to Jane Cole. By far the poorest was 'Violet Joy' (McEwen 1980), which only had two fans, one of which of course got broken off at the base during the trip home. 'Ruffled Velvet' (McEwen 1973) was looking very healthy too, although it didn't quite warrant splitting. 'Shirley Pope' (McEwen 1979) had split itself into two sections of four or so slender fans apiece, while 'Temper Tantrum' (McGarvey 1969) and 'George Henry' (Bee Warburton 1982) were hanging on as best they might, no rot visible, but very slender fans. The Checklist in our library tells me that all these are diploids, except 'Brynmawr' and 'Violet Joy', which were more-or-less the best and the worst, so, once again, there's no clear split in characteristics between diploids and tetraploids, at least in this little bunch.

Ed

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Please check to see if your address is correct. Notification of address changes and corrections would be appreciated.

Philip Allery

GROUP FOR BEARDLESS IRISES - BRITISH IRIS SOCIETY.

BALANCE SHEET AT 1st JANUARY, 1998. (Based on Accounts for period 1.1. to 31.12. 1997. Bracketed figures refer to the footnotes.)

Building Society Deposit Account at 1st January, 1997. (1)	£733. 22		Reimbursement of Hon. Treasurer (3)	£73. 87
Cash in hand - Hon. Newsletter Editor	£7.92		Expenditure - Hon. Newsletter Editor	£45. 35
Cash in hand - Hon. Secretary	£10. 00		Hon. Secretary	£9. 10
Cash in hand - Hon. Treasurer (All at 1st January, 1997. (2))	£91. 00	£108. 92	Hon. Treasurer (4)	£398. 79
				£453. 24
Payments by members:				
Payment of arrears	£19. 50		Floats at	
1997 subscriptions	£94. 00		31.2.97 - Hon. Newsletter Editor (5)	£123. 20
Advance subscription payments	£88. 50		Hon. Secretary	£- 90
Donations	£118. 50		Hon. Treasurer	£111. 71
Plant sales	£58. 00		Valuations - Equipment (6)	£50. 00
Seed sales	£41. 40		Library	£65.00
Sale of Newsletters (back copies)	£3.00	£422. 90		£115. 00
Valuation of equipment	£50. 00		Building Society balance, including interest at 1st January, 1998.	£509. 43
Valuation of Group Library:- At 1st January, 1997	£50. 00		Cash in hand at 1st January, 1998.	£5. 00
Added during the year	£15. 00	£65.00		
		£115. 00		
Building Society interest (net) added during financial year.	£12. 31	£12. 31		
		£1392. 35		£1392.

35

Notes: (1) - Including net interest at 1st January, 1997.

(2) - Paid in on 13th January, 1998.

(3) - Owed to the Hon. Treasurer at 31st December, 1996.

(4) - Including cost of indexing newsletters and membership details.

(5) - Greater part expended on December, 1997 newsletter

(6) - Value of Rotadex cabinets donated.

Audited and found correct

P.E.Allery
Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary

L. Wilkins,
Hon. Auditor. 6th May, 1998.