



IRIS AUSTIN

A Newsletter of the Iris Society of Austin



Nelda Moore, Ken Fuchs, Editors

October 2022 — Vol. XXII #3

ISA Website: http://www.kenfuchs42.net/isa_index.html

NEXT MEETING:

Tuesday, October 18, 2022

6:30 P.M.

[Note: This is the 3rd Tuesday of October]

Zilker Botanical Garden - Auditorium

2220 Barton Springs Road

Austin, TX 78746

Potluck

JIM LANDERS HONORED DURING REGION A.I.S. MEETING



Jim Landers was honored during the Region 17 A.I.S. 63rd Annual Meeting in Amarillo, August 19 and 20. He was presented a beautiful Service Award for his contributions locally, regionally, and nationally for the past 30 years. He has been working as the Region 17 historian for 22 years and has served as show chair for the Iris Society of Austin, and iris societies in Waco, Belton, and Temple. In 2008 he co-chaired the A.I.S. National Convention in Austin. He has attended all but one national convention since 1993.

Jim is also a Master Judge and hybridizer of a Louisiana Iris named 'Lady of Lometa.' As a member of the Iris Society of Austin, he has many members who have chosen his iris as their favorite one.



THE LOUISIANA IRIS

Louisiana irises that grow in south central Louisiana and the Gulf Coast marsh from Texas to Florida are wildflowers of the United States. They are beardless or Apogon that comprise more than 60 species giving the color red to the iris spectrum and a wide range of forms. They were not known in Europe until 1788 when Walter first described *I. hexagon*.

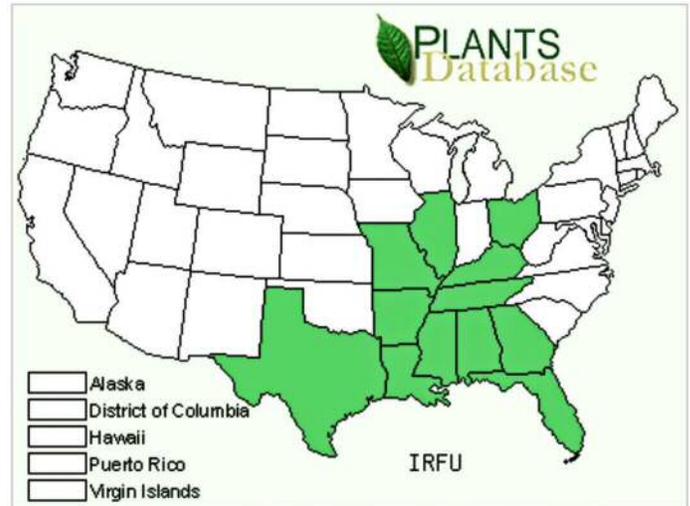
John James Audubon was the first to use the term “Louisiana iris” when he painted a parula warbler and referred to the swamp dweller in part of the background as a Louisiana iris.

I. fulva [copper iris] was described in 1812 by Ker-Gawler, but many collectors from the New Orleans area



in the 1900's included Mary Nelson and her sister Ethel Hudson and Ellsworth Woodward, the first professor of art at Newcomb College who sketched and painted them with his students that included Beverly Randolph Stevens and Mary Swords DeBaillon. The Society of Louisiana Irises was founded as a result. Other collectors included George

Thomas from the Parks of New Orleans who discovered the first yellow *I. fulva*.



Range map of *Iris fulva*. Courtesy of the USDA PLANTS Database.



In this small population, two color forms are present: the typical rusty orange and the atypical lemon yellow. Photo by Larry Stritch

Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Lyons possessed one of the finest collections while O.F.R. Bruce discovered the first bicolor. Many others also were important collectors in other regions such as Mary DeBaillon and Ira S. Nelson in Lafayette and W.B. MacMillan in Abbeville. Louisiana irises became widely known when John K. Small, curator of New York Botanical Gardens, introduced them to the world after making several trips to the Iris Center of the Universe where he named *I. giganteaerulea*.

In the spring of 1941 twenty collectors formed the Mary Swords DeBaillon Iris Society with W. B. MacMillan, their first president and Ira S. Nelson,

secretary-treasurer. The membership rose to over 200.

Their first show followed for members only, but in 1943 the public was invited. Ira Nelson always presented spectacular shows. Today the organization is known as the Society for Louisiana Irises. Members have published articles, journals, magazines, and publications including *The Louisiana Iris The History and Culture of Five Native American Species and Their Hybrids* edited by Marie Caillet and Joseph K. Mertzweiller. The Louisiana Iris Society of America has a section of the America Iris Society. Their benefits apply to areas of the world.

COLOR OF LOUISIANA IRISES

Iris hexagona will have whites, blues, lavenders, purple, pale to medium yellow, rust, red, and many shades of blue. *Iris fulva* and *I. nelsonii* have dark purple, yellow, pink, and red flowers.



Iris hexagona

In the 1930's and 1940's color range evolved, also broader shades, blends, pastels, and bitones.

Controlled hybridizing of Louisianas brought full color chart except for green. Very dark purples nearly black resulted from selective hybridizing. Future expectations for diploids and tetraploids are patterns comparable to amoenas (white standards and colored falls), variegatas (yellow standards and red or brown falls), and plicatas (edging is narrow in Louisianas and the future should bring better edging).

For Louisianas the falls contribute more to the form since they are larger than the standards.

- Flaring form—falls spread outward when the flower first opens. The spread may be horizontal to slightly downward.

- Semi-flaring—Instead of near horizontal the falls have a downward arch in their outward spread.
- Pendant form—falls hang downward
- Recurving form—rolled back or recurved effect
- Open Form—requires narrow segments. Spidery like I. 'Black Widow'
- Overlapping Form—Standards and falls are wide enough to have segment overlap such as I. 'Peggy Mae'



Iris nelsonii

Doubles and Semi-doubles are derived from I. 'Creole Can Can' a unique *I. gigantea* collected by Marvin Granger. No two blooms are identical. Hybrids also have 2 main forms—cartwheel with 6 falls with signals and a minimum of petaloids. Double or semi-double with much more extensive petaloids.

PROPAGATION

Vegetative or asexual reproduction involves shoots or offsets formed on the main stalk. Seeds or sexual methods involve pollination, formation of seed and growth of seedlings and are responsible for new and different plants.

CULTURE — A KEY TO SUCCESS

There are definitely these requirements needed for having success in growing Louisianas: WATER, SOIL AND SOIL ACIDITY, and FERTILITY. These plants should have a half day of sun exposure. Natural fertilizers such as composted manure are required, but when this soil dries in hot weather, moisture is necessary. Some clay prevents this. Inorganic fertilizers are important, but they must be acidic.

Blooming begins in mid to late March on the Gulf Coast. Do not plant Louisianas in direct competition with large shrubs and trees. The soil pH should be at least 6.5. Values below 7 are acid. Above 7 soils are alkaline. Soil sulfur or aluminum sulfate are acidifying components. Louisianas are heavy feeders; therefore, feed them at least 3 times a year. Peat moss, rotted manure, and composted leaves are very effective in improving fertility and acidity. Most growers also add commercial fertilizers 8-8-8 or 12-12-12 when preparing the beds.

Dividing and replanting is done in late summer, late August thru September. Dig a hole deep enough for the roots and then cover the rhizome with an inch of soil. Plant firmly and water. NEVER allow the newly planted iris to dry out. They will not bloom.

Mark with a permanent label and draw a plot plan.

At 24 inches apart there is enough space for 3-4 years between planting.



'Rooster' - Betzer 2013

Old rhizomes that have been blooming need to be discarded. Some varieties tend to give reduced bloom or no bloom the season following replanting. Knowing this only plant a part of such varieties in a single season

Formation of large rhizomes requires plant food. Even though compost and manure have been applied to the soil, use acidic commercial fertilizers. Older beds should be lightly fertilized in October, February, and May with a balanced fertilizer such as 8-8-8. A dressing of complete acid fertilizer or superphosphate should be given 6-8 weeks before bloom. It is advantageous to apply commercial fertilizer just before or during light rains. While you

can over-fertilize and damage Louisianas, you cannot over-water Louisianas during the growing season and after they bloom.

Mulch with 2 or 3 inches of pine straw, dried grass clippings, or hay that can be left throughout the year and tilled into the soil.

Leaf miners can be controlled with 'Cygon' spray.

If Louisianas are grown in pots with holes in the top to drain extra rain water, cover the pots during an Arctic Express because these can freeze. Some never recover. The pots that are buried in the bed can survive such a freeze.

When Louisianas are grown near a pond, they tend to spread into shallow water faster than spreading into dry soil. The rhizomes grow bigger preferring soggy soil instead of deeper (3 to 6 inch) water if they are not established plants.

After bloom, the stalks should be cut and dead foliage removed. Beds should be weeded, cleaned, and watered throughout the season.

HORTICULTURE

Many irisarians divided their clumps of iris and donated them to the rhizome sale that was held in the Norris Conference Center on September 10. According to President Ellen Singleton the sale was enjoyed by many visitors even though there were no Louisiana Irises for sale this year. When she handed a sheet containing many questions about favorite irises and how they are grown and shown to the members, most wanted information about Louisianas.

Louisiana irises are heavy feeders and need to be damp all of the time or they will not bloom. They are fed at least 3 times a year with acid fertilizer or super phosphate. The foliage has many specks of pepper showing when held to the sunshine. These beautiful leaves are added to the container holding the design for a show. Another thinner leaf from a Spuria iris can enhance an iris for a show. Spuria irises also grow in Central Texas.

Use bone meal around the rhizome that is planted with about an inch of soil and then water deeply, but never just sprinkle them. When the rhizome takes hold, it sometimes kicks out and basks in the sun. That is fine, but during the winter usually the rhizome likes the slight covering.

Note that if you plant them too deep, they do not bloom.

Keep your garden clean by removing dead leaves

and iris foliage that is dead. Check the irises to see that they have not been pulled by deer or dogs. If you move the irises when they are too thick, either plant them in a new bed or add amendments to the soil such as compost mixed with new soil.

Minutes of the May 10, 2022 Iris Society of Austin Meeting

The meeting was called to order and presided over by Ellen Singleton.

The Minutes from the March 8th, 2022 meeting were not presented. The Treasurer's Report was presented but no motions were entertained for approval. The account balance as of today is \$14,854.18. Recent transactions included in this balance are related to the collection and payment of Membership dues.

ISA Business:

The following topics were discussed:

- Meeting and Event dates:
ISA Show Dates: 1st choice - April 22, 2023,
2nd choice - April 8, 2023
ISA Sale: Saturday September 10, 2022 9a - 2p at
Norris Conference Center
- ISA has 22 members.
- Membership Dues: Discussion of the Increase in Membership Dues. AAGC Dues are \$12 per person. AIS Dues are \$30 (print) or \$45 (full w/e-membership) per person.
- There was a suggested proposal to change the ISA membership dues to \$30/year and change the ISA By Laws with the intent to make the new change in the amount of dues effective January 1, 2023. There was no motion entertained.
- The "Bev Shed" that has been used to store the ISA vases and various supplies needs to be cleared out. Ideas for what to do with the vases were shared and included: Bring them to the sale and sell them? Keep them? or Get rid of them? Store them in another location? If so, where? What should we do with them? There was no decision.

Important Dates:

- ISA Rhizome Sale: Saturday September 10, 2022 9a-2p at the Norris Conference Center
- September Meeting: Tuesday September 13, 2022
- October Meeting: Tuesday October 11, 2022 -

preparation for relocating iris beds at Zilker

- November Meeting: Tuesday November 8, 2022
- 2023 American Iris Society Convention - Grapevine, TX April 16 - 23, 2023

Program: Plant Swap

The meeting was adjourned.

Dara E. Smith, Secretary

Submitted for Approval on: September 13, 2022



• 'Purple Gloaming' - Grieves 2007



'Blueberry Mousse' - Jackson 2015