The
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Rainbow
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Iris Society of Austin

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OCTOBER MEETING!!! This is to remind you that there will be a special called meeting of the Iris Society at the Garden Center on the eighth of October, the second Tuesday of the month. Everyone is strongly urged to attend. As always, visitors are invited and will be sincerely welcomed.

REBLOOMERS

At the September meeting we had a very interesting discussion on rebloomers. There is so much to know and enjoy about those irises which give twice or even more beauty and enjoyment than their oncer cousins. We learned from the article by Walter Moores that rebloomers are very regional in their performance, and not all will produce the way we would like them to produce. Some of his advice was to put all of your rebloomers in the same bed for easier cultivation. Sidedress the clumps with a balanced fertilizer shortly after the spring bloom. When the weather warms, spray with a low nitrogen foliar plant food every two or three weeks. If watering is necessary, soak the roots leaving the foliage as dry as possible. And provide some shade in the afternoon. He states that the biggest problem in producing a second bloom is to keep the plants from entering dormancy. The suggestions above should assist all of us in our reblooming efforts. Also, the chart on the frost-free days can serve as a

guide on plants that have done well in areas similar to ours.

FALL SALE The annual plant sale was held in early September and was a great success. The plants purchased for the sale and the hundreds of plants donated for the sale were all sold by noon. There was interest shown about the Iris Society and several people joined the club. Also, a nice profit resulted from the sale.

IRRESISTIBLE IRIS Irises are one of the most beautiful of all the perennials. They are also one of the easiest to grow and are well adapted to all areas of the state with the exception of the Gulf Coast. There are four main groups of irises with the Bearded being the most popular. The other three are the Beardless, the Crested, and the bulbous Iris.

The word iris comes from the Greek language and it means "the rainbow". This is an excellent description because irises come in all colors of the rainbow. Different types of iris are found naturally all over the world. The major areas are many parts of Asia, Europe, and North America. Most of the irises you see today are hybridized from native species.

The bearded iris gets its name from the "tufts" of hair or "beard" that grows on the three lower petals or "falls". They usually have three inner segments (petals or "standards") which stand upright or flare out slightly. The three outer petals or "falls" hang downwards. The leaves are sword like and stand upright. Irises grow from a rhizome which is actually an underground root that grows horizontally along the surface of the soil. Roots grow from the bottom of the rhizome and the leaves and blooms grow from the sides or top. Irises grow best in full sun or with partial afternoon shade. They can take the heat but will not perform in poorly drained soil. Irises should be planted in late Summer to early Fall, but can tolerate transplanting anytime.

The most important step in planting irises is the Soil Preparation. The bed area should be well tilled with the addition of 1/2 organic matter. The addition of fertilizer will help produce better plants. Avoid high Nitrogen fertilizers which can cause the rhizomes to rot. The rhizomes should be planted with just enough soil to cover the top. The roots should be spread out as far as possible. The area should be watered until the soil has settled and no air pockets remain. Iris that have just been divided should have the foliage cut back to 6 or 8 inches. Apply the same fertilizer in the spring after blooming and again in the fall. Irises grow from the end of the rhizomes with the leaves, so that end should point in the direction you want the plant to take. Rhizomes can be planted from 8 to 24 inches apart. The closer placement will give more color impact but will require dividing earlier. Every two or three years the iris clumps should be dug up and divided. Use a sharp knife to cut the new rhizomes apart from the old. The old ones should be discarded to reduce the chance of disease. (Janet Lockwood, Plant Parenthood, Tem-Bel Nursay, September October 1991)