

- Meet Iris Hybridizer Marky Smith
- All about Aril & Arilbred Iris
- Zilker Garden Festival Volunteers
- February Meeting Minutes



A Monthly Newsletter of the Iris Society of Austin

# IRIS AUSTIN



## next ISA meeting >>>

Iris Society of Austin Meeting  
**Tuesday March 13, 2012**  
**6:45 pm** (gates close at 7:00)

**Late? call 477-8672 ext 13**

Zilker Garden Center  
2220 Barton Springs Rd  
Austin TX 78746

- Potluck Supper
- Business Meeting
- Marney Abel will present a preview of the 2012 AIS National Convention in California plus more exciting Iris info TBD!

## next AAGC meeting >>>

Austin Area Garden Council Meeting  
**Tuesday March 13, 2012**  
**10:00 am**  
Zilker Garden Center  
Debora Boyle – ISA representative

## upcoming events >>>

- March 17 – Weeding Zilker Iris Beds
- March 31 – Zilker Garden Festival
- April 3 – Regular Meeting/Show Prep
- April 8 – Annual ISA Iris Show
- April 16-21 – AIS Nat'l Convention
- August 3-4 – Reg 17 Convention

## Meet Marky Smith

### *Iris Hybridizer and Writer*

Marky Smith's name appeared several times during Shelia's February program about the 2011 Median Iris Convention. Besides her work as a hybridizer, Marky also finds time to write, and her article, "An Iris Lover; Twenty Five Years on my Knees" appeared in the January AIS Bulletin.

Marky was born in the Napa Valley of California, earned a BA in Creative Writing from Stanford and a master's from the University of Washington. When Marky was living at home, her mother grew irises, but Marky did not enjoy weeding the gardens.

Marky and Jim married and moved to Yakima in 1978, where they grew perennials that disappeared because critters either ate the plant or pulled it into the ground. Marky eventually had 30 different varieties of irises that she purchased from Schreiner's Gardens to take the place of her other ghost-like plants.

Although a great-uncle of Marky's, Melvin Naylor from Salt Lake City was an iris hybridizer, Marky did not really become serious

about hybridizing until a friend gave her Molly Price's *The Iris Book*. In 1984 she produced her first seed pod. Her first seedlings bloomed in 1986, and she joined the American Iris Society. She began corresponding with the Bulletin Editor, Keith Keppel. At the regionals she met fellow hybridizers, mentors and friends George Shoop, Bennett Jones, and Terry Aitken.

Marky showed a violet plicata SDB from 'Chubby Cheeks.' That seedling, her first introduction, became 'Starbaby' which later won the Cook-Douglas Medal. At the "Median Spree in '93" 'Gemstar' and 'Firestorm' were released and won the Awards of Merit. Then Marky developed plicatas (SDB 'Helmsman' and SDB 'Mosaic' 2006) and glaciates (IB 'Harmonium' 2002, and 'Elysium' 2003). In 2005 the best seedling of the median convention was her 'Nefret,' an arilbred-median.

Not only is she a talented creative writer, but she is also a remarkable hybridizer in the iris world.

## Aril & Arilbred Iris

At our February meeting Sheila presented a program on Aril & Arilbred irises, so the editor wanted to follow up with a little more information about these interesting iris. According to Barbara Perry Lawton in her book entitled *Magic of Irises*, the aril and arilbred irises group “include some of the most exotic-looking irises of the entire genus... the flowers are close to unbelievable.”

This iris group includes *Oncocyclus*, *Regelia*, *Hexapogon*, and *Pseudoregelia* plus hybrids of these. Of these subgenera the latter two are currently rare in the gardening world. Only two species of *Pseudoregelia* irises, *I. kamaeonensis* and *I. tigridia*, are sometimes seen in gardens of iris specialists that have gotten these dwarf mountain plants from eastern Asia.

These arils and arilbreds are named for the white collar that surrounds the helium, or spot, that marks the attachment of the seed to the seedpod. This white collar on the seed is a fleshy appendage not found on the seeds of pogon irises. This aril of *Oncocyclus* irises is quite large sometimes as large as the seed itself.

*Regelia* flowers have elongated standards or falls (*I. korolkowii*), linear beards, beards on standards as well as falls, conspicuous veining, and a prominent V-shaped spot in contrasting color.

*Onco* types (50 different species) have broad domes and reflexed standards (*I. gatesii*), ruffled and reflexed standards, accentuated globular form, extremely broad falls, well recurved falls, thick, heavy or

broadly diffuse beards (*I. susiana* or *I. gatesii*), a definable signal spot at the end of the beard, linear beards, and beards on standards as well as falls.

Although the first verifiable record of arils dates to 1573 when an aril iris species, *I. susiana*, was brought to Europe from Constantinople, some think these exotic irises may have been the “lilies of the field” mentioned in the Bible.

We don’t see many arilbred iris in Austin shows because not many folks around here grow them, but it is possible. They don’t mind a dry hot summer, but they do like a cold winter as well.

The key to growing them in a raised bed with excellent drainage is to make sure there are no air pockets



AB-OGB - Shabaza - (George Sutton 2001)  
HM 2004, AM 2006, Mohr Medal 2008

around the rhizome and roots. The top of the rhizome should be 1-2 inches below ground level in heavy soil, 2-3 inches below ground level in sandy soil. Plant rhizomes a foot apart since they multiply rapidly. Keep the root zone moist, but not soggy during growing season. Apply a general-purpose fertilizer in the fall and spring, since these plants are heavy feeders, and they prefer soil with a higher pH than other bearded irises.

### zilker garden festival >>>

## Volunteers Needed

Because The Iris Society of Austin is one of the member societies of the Austin Area Garden Council, all ISA members should plan to volunteer at least 4 hours during the upcoming Zilker Garden Festival. This is a great way for us to help meet our club’s quota of volunteer hours for the year. The festival is March 31 and April 1 in Zilker Park, and below is a list of contact people for the different areas that are still needing folks to sign up to help.

After your 4-hour shift, shop with over 50 vendors selling plants and gardening supplies, enjoy live

music in the Rose Garden, and get a bite to eat in The Oaks. Bring your kids to enjoy balloons, face painting and many types of crafts in the Kids Corner.

Two tickets per member of ISA were passed out at our February Meeting, and additional tickets can be purchased at the gate for \$8 for adults, and \$4 for children.

### VOLUNTEER CONTACTS

Water sales	Anita Mapes	261-1497
Info booth	Dolores Rumpf	836-2190
	Lynn Sissney	441-8184
Kids Corner	Linda Ray	282-2554

# Firewise Planting

## Landscape to prevent wildfire damage

For folks who live in areas where wildfires might be a problem, there are some steps you can take to make sure your landscape does not increase your risk of a house fire.

Experts recommend thinking of your landscape in 3 zones. Zone 1 is a 30-foot circle around your home and should contain only low-growing plants with high moisture content and nothing with waxes, oils or resins. Keep lawns mowed, use rock or stone whenever possible, and clear any brush, overgrown plantings or dead plant material.

In Zone 2, 30-100 feet from the house, leave 20-30 feet between trees, use a mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees, and create fuel breaks like driveways, gravel paths, or lawns.

In Zone 3, more than 100 feet

from the house, the rules are relaxed, but it is still a good idea to thin trees if they are growing too close together and to keep undergrowth cleared.

Irises are great firewise plants as they grow low and don't burn easily as long as you keep the dead leaves cleaned away. If you do plant iris in a fire-prone area, the rhizome can often survive a fire and pop back up blooming the next spring.

Some other plants with low flammability are butterfly bush, American beautyberry, coralbean, rosemallow, hydrangea, possumhaw, lantana, turk's cap, autumn sage, coralberry, yucca, flame acanthus, agarita, red yucca, crape myrtle, yellowbells, bluebonnets, Texas bluebells, blanketflower, spider lily, gayfeather, penstemon, phlox, columbine, coreopsis, and larkspur.

## horticulture tips >>>

# Caution Triclosan

If you have been using Dial dishwashing detergent or some other antibacterial soap to combat rot on your iris rhizomes, be sure to dilute the soap with water before soaking.

Dial and many other antibacterial soaps contain a substance called Triclosan which is suspected of being toxic to aquatic life and is being found built up in ever higher quantities in rivers, lakes and soil.

Using a diluted solution instead of just using the soap full strength will help minimize runoff as well as the

buildup of Triclosan in the soil.

For a more organic solution, try just cutting off the affected portions of the rhizome, then allowing the rhizome to dry in the sun for a few days before replanting.

And remember, the best way to avoid rhizome rot is to prevent it. Both bacterial and fungal rot appear in warm moist conditions, so once the weather warms up and your bloom season ends, stop watering your iris as they go dormant for our long hot summer.

## last meeting's minutes >>

Iris Society of Austin Meeting  
Tuesday February 14, 2012

Minutes of the November meeting were approved.

Pat Byrne presented the treasurer's report.

Deborah Boyle reported on the AAGC meeting and plans for the Zilker Garden Festival.

Nelda reported that the irises at Zilker Garden need weeding. James Hadley suggested that we schedule a group weeding day, and we agreed to have a work meeting at 9 am on Saturday, March 17.

We voted to donate \$100 to AAGC for the Zilker Garden Festival.

New members Esther and Bob Stone were introduced and welcomed to ISA.

Tracey Rogers presented the nominating committee's report. The following members are nominated for officers for 2012-2013:

President	Marney Abel
VP Programs	Donna Little
VP Membership	Ken Fuchs
Treasurer	Pat Byrne
Secretary	Dara Smith
Historian	Tracey Rogers

Nominations from the floor were invited, but none were made. The election will take place at our next meeting on March 13.

Don Freeman provided a horticultural tip on an interesting new product:

# Judges Training

## Two New Opportunities for Education

New Judges Training Sessions have been added in April in Amarillo and Waco. The remaining judges training opportunities for this spring include:

The **Johnson Co Iris and Daylily Society** presents 2 classes on **Arilbred Iris** led by Dell Perry

**March 10, 2012** 11am – 2pm \$10

United Cooperative Svcs – Community Room, 3309 N Main St, Cleburne, TX  
Contact: Laura Smargiasso, 817-202-9808, 817-846-5359c, smarg1@aol.com

The **North Plains Iris Society** presents a class on

**Growing and Showing Prize Winning Iris** led by Dawn Boyer

**April 15, 2012** 1pm – 3pm free

Dawn Boyer's garden, 1900 Daws, Amarillo, TX, 79124

Contact: Dawn Boyer, 806-881-9775, dawn.boyer@region16.net

The **Waco Iris Society** presents an in-garden class on

**Tall Bearded and Seedling Evaluation** led by Peggy Cathey

**April 17, 2012** 9am – 12pm \$10

Peggy & Dan Cathey's garden, 1115 HCR 1414, Covington, TX, 76636

Contact: Peggy Cathey, 254-854-2558, natvtxn1@windstream.net

The **Texoma Rainbow Iris Society** presents an in-garden class on

**New Introductions and Seedlings** led by Peggy Lamb & Annette Brown

**April 22, 2012** 2pm – 4pm \$5

Annette Brown's garden, 36 Alta Vista, Denison, TX, 75020

Contact: Annette Brown, 903-465-6364, 972-834-9444c,  
jamesmabrown@graysoncable.com

### miscellanea >>>

The Spuria Iris Society is having a fundraising sale of Spuria Iris. Go to their website at [www.spuriairiris.com](http://www.spuriairiris.com) and click the "Features" link.

Long-time source of iris, Cooley's Gardens, closed its doors in October 2011, shortly after the death of its owner Rick Ernst. You can read all about Cooley's Gardens, which published its first catalog in 1928, in the AIS Blog, "World of Irises." Go to [www.theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com](http://www.theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com) and look in the archived articles for October 2011.

The Society for Louisiana Irises will have their national convention April 19-22 in Shreveport, LA. For more information, go to [www.louisianas.org](http://www.louisianas.org).

The Society for Siberian Irises will have their national convention June 7-9 in Lansing, MI. For more information, go to [www.socsib.org](http://www.socsib.org).

### meeting minutes cont'd >>

AG Grand Natural Liquid Bonemeal. It is available at GeoGrowers, 12002B Hwy 290 West (288-4405). Or order online at [www.aggrand.com](http://www.aggrand.com)

Shelia Senghas presented a program on median irises.

*submitted by Carolyn Wylie, Secretary*

### welcome new members >>

Please make sure to look for these folks at an upcoming meeting and welcome them to our club:

- Sandra McMinn

### in memoriam >>>

**Charles Luther Segrest**, a member of the Iris Society of Austin, passed away February 15 in an Austin healthcare facility. He was a veteran and UT graduate. He worked for many years as a registered nurse, and later for the State of Texas from which he retired in 2005. He was an avid reader, gardener, and art enthusiast. Family and friends will gather to celebrate his life on his birthday, March 30th. Memorial donations may be made to The Blanton Museum or the Lady Bird Wildflower Center.

### new youth AIS members >

Katherine Abel, granddaughter of Roger and Marney Abel, and Cody Hullum, great-grandson of Joe and Nelda Moore, have joined the American Iris Society as Youth Members. Both were born on January 20<sup>th</sup>, but Cody is two years older than Katherine.

### daylight savings time >>>

Don't forget to "spring forward" one hour on Sunday March 11, 2012.