

## in this issue >>>

- *Show Practice on April 3*
- *Meet Steve Kelly*
- *All About Spurias*
- *March Meeting Minutes*

April 2012 — vol 21 #4



A Monthly Newsletter of the Iris Society of Austin

# IRIS AUSTIN



## next ISA meeting >>>

Iris Society of Austin Meeting  
**Tuesday April 3, 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
- Lots of info to get you ready for the 2012 Iris Show

## next AAGC meeting >>>

Austin Area Garden Council Meeting  
**Tuesday April 10, 2012**  
10:00 am

Zilker Garden Center  
Debora Boyle – ISA representative

## upcoming events >>>

3/31-4/1 – Zilker Garden Festival

April 3 – Regular Meeting/Show Prep

April 8 – Annual ISA Iris Show

April 16-21 – AIS Nat'l Convention

May 8 – Regular Meeting

August 3-4 – Reg 17 Convention

## Easter Iris Show

### Plans Finalized for Annual Show April 8

It's almost time for our annual Iris Show to be held on Easter Sunday, April 8, at the Zilker Garden Center Auditorium.

Members of the Iris Society of Austin will provide breakfast for the judges and clerks. Pat Byrne is bringing orange juice and a cake. Pat Freeman and Audrey Baker will bring cinnamon rolls. And, Nelda

Moore will serve breakfast casserole and cake. Lunch will be catered.

Volunteers are needed for Saturday afternoon from 3-5pm to help with set-up, and the schedule of events for show day, April 8, is as follows:

7:30-9:45am	Entries received
10am-Noon	Judging
Noon-2pm	Luncheon
1-4pm	Show open to public

## Show Practice

### Bring Your Grooming Kit to the Meeting

The program for the April meeting will be a "hands on" practice of grooming and presenting irises for show competition. Learning by doing can be very effective, so members are asked to bring their grooming kits and iris bloom stalks from their gardens on which to practice. Bring a few extra stalks, if you have them, for those who do not have gardens in bloom. Vases will be provided for this practice. After some instruction, we will divide into teams to compete in a mock show judging.

The contents of an iris grooming kit should include:

- Small sharp knife
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Q Tips
- Soft clean cloth (T-shirt/diaper)
- Small soft make-up brush
- Tape measure
- Foam pipe insulation
- Entry tags
- Ball point pen
- Personal return address labels
- Rubber bands

## Meet Steve Kelly

In the Spring 2012 edition of *Tall Talk*, the official publication of the Tall Bearded Iris Society, Steve Kelly of Las Cruces, New Mexico tells about attempting to hybridize irises in 2007, and finding out that he was doing it all wrong. But then, after attending the American Iris Society Convention hosted by the Iris Society of Austin in 2008, he got all jazzed up and ready to try it again.

When Steve arrived home, a club

member showed him the correct way to take pollen from stamens early in the morning and place it on the 3 stigmas of the pod parent when the stigmatic lip had separated from the style branch. Then he learned that to avoid a landing platform for bees, he should clip the falls and cover the iris as soon as possible after removing the stamens and the filaments with their anthers. He crossed the few blooms that he had left and the result was 105 seedlings that he planted in 2009, and that first

bloomed in 2010. The next year he planted 207 seedlings that bloomed in 2011. In February 2011 a harsh freeze caused very few sprouts and the brutal heat took care of those seedlings.

Steve is still addicted, and some of his seedlings are pictured in the Spring 2012 edition of *Tall Talk*. He is also shown with #PBD 09-2, which won the "Best Seedling of the Show" at the Roswell Iris Show in April 2011. (*see page 37*)

## new officers >>>

At the March Meeting we voted on a new slate of officers for the Iris Society of Austin. Per our by-laws these new officers will take charge as of June 1, 2012, so we will install them at our May meeting.

### Officers for 2012 – 2013 for the Iris Society of Austin

#### President

8045 Chalk Knoll Dr

Austin, TX 78735

#### Marney Abel

512-330-9052

#### Vice President – Programs

1005 Shinnecock Hills Dr

Georgetown, TX 78628

#### Donna Little

512-869-0683

#### Vice President – Membership

710N 11th St

Temple, TX 76501

#### Ken Fuchs

254-773-5017

#### Treasurer

1102 Aster Dr

Katy, TX 77493

#### Pat Byrne

281-391-6190

#### Secretary

2703 Park View Dr

Austin, TX 78757

#### Dara Smith

512-454-1430

#### Historian and Librarian

4608 Hoffman Dr

Austin, TX 78749

#### Tracey Rogers

512-280-4856

## early blooms? >>>

Are your irises blooming early this year because of our warm winter? Are you worried that some of your favorite blooms might fade before our annual Iris Show on April 8?

You can also bring your blooms to the **Zilker Garden Festival Flower Show**

Bring cut stalks to the Zilker Garden Center on Friday, March 30, from 8:30a – 9:30a. Vases will be provided, and you can pick up an entry card that morning to identify your entries. Judging will begin at 10am Friday.

For information on the flower show and all the other festivities of the annual Zilker Garden Festival, go to [www.zilker garden.org](http://www.zilker garden.org) and look for the link - [55<sup>th</sup> Annual Zilker Garden Festival](#).

# A Look at *Spuria Iris*

Spurias are native to the Mediterranean from Spain around to North Africa. These beardless or apogon iris were first introduced in England by Sir Michael Foster in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. "Monspur" is his best known introduction, and it has been very valuable to spuria hybridizers.

T.A. Washington, the first American breeder of spurias used 'Monspur' and *Iris halophila* to achieve the summer-green foliage trait.

While bearded irises have been bred for twenty-five to thirty generations or 150 years, spurias have only been bred for about eight generations.

Ben Hager of Stockton, California has earned the distinction of outstanding hybridizer for many years and won the Nies Award for 'Elixir,' 'Archie Owen,' and 'Ila Crawford.'

Not all spuria hybridizers hail from California. Dave Niswonger of southeastern Missouri has also won the Nies Award in 1980 for 'Buttered Chocolate.' In improving qualities such as form, color, height, and compact blossoms, he also made crosses using species spurias.

Usually spurias bloom one to two weeks after the tall bearded irises and are wonderful for floral arrangements since the flower blooms last up to 3 or 4 days. They are among the tallest of irises, most growing as tall as 3-5 feet.

The leaves of spuria iris are leathery,

the rhizomes are woody, the roots are wiry, and the plant usually goes dormant during the summer when in July the brown foliage is cut off. During this time the spurias need no water to supplement scarce summer rains. In northern climates most of the spurias never go dormant. 'Belise,' for example, is classed "summer-green" and needs extra water as it continues to grow.

Dave Niswonger's method of planting spurias is as follows:

- "Mix two gallons of compost into the planting hole that is 12 x 12 x 18 inches. Add a handful of slow-release fertilizer and a handful of superphosphate. Plant spuria rhizomes an inch deeper than tall bearded irises in wet but well-draining spots where tall bearded irises will not thrive. Avoid extra watering during periods of heavy rain and high humidity. This will help the spurias avoid their main enemy, mustard-seed fungus."
- Composted barnyard manures or commercial fertilizer such as 10-10-10 or 10-20-10 can be used for these heavy feeders.
- They prefer an organic soil that does not dry out completely in areas of partial shade as well as full sun. They must be well weeded and groomed to discourage Southern blight.
- Rhizomes must be kept damp and stored in a refrigerator before being planted in either fall or early spring. These plants do not have to be divided as often as tall bearded irises.

Iris Society of Austin Meeting  
Tuesday March 13, 2012

ISA President Nelda Moore called the meeting to order.

Marney Abel presented a program on Aril and Arilbred irises and a preview of this year's national AIS convention, which will be in Ontario, California, in April.

Minutes of the February meeting were approved.

Pat Byrne presented the treasurer's report.

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

We voted to spend \$100 on Arilbred irises for auction at the Region 17 convention in August.

We discussed plans for the ISA iris show (to be held on April 8).

The following officers were elected for the coming year and will be installed at the May meeting:

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

We voted to buy rhizomes of twelve new irises as listed in the latest issue of Tall Talk. These will be given to ISA members.

*continued on next page*

# Zilker Weeding

*Thanks for all your hard work!*

March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2012, was a beautiful cool spring morning as nine dedicated irisarians signed in on the AAGC volunteer list and meandered toward the back iris garden to weed and clean. It was a beautiful stroll passing azaleas blooming in Easter colors, roses, redbud trees, and overhanging wisteria. While the annual Violet show was going on in the Garden Center, Marney Abel, Lori Anderson, Don Freeman, James Hadley, Donna Little, Nelda Moore, Tracey Rogers, Shelia Senghas, and Dara Smith worked diligently to clear the covering of light green clover, henbit and other weeds to

allow the darker greens of the iris foliage and bloomstalks to show. There were several nice blooms in the back iris bed, and we hope that it will be in full glory for the Zilker Garden Festival on March 31.

Thanks to the folks who showed up on our group weeding day, and thanks as well to everyone else who has come out at any other time to take care of the irises at Zilker. Feel free to go and work in the Zilker iris beds any time the spirit moves you, just be sure to log your hours in the notebook in the Library at the Garden Center.

## meeting minutes cont'd >>

Further discussion of the upcoming Region 17 Convention included plans for a silent auction and for preparation of bags for participants. Pat Byrne will make the bags with help from Audrey Baker, and we will stuff them at our June meeting.

A motion was made and approved to amend ISA by-laws to establish youth membership dues, which will be one-half of adult dues.

*submitted by Carolyn Wylie, Secretary*

## did you know? >>>

Yellow flags or *Iris pseudacorus* is used in water purification when it is planted in a substrate or lava-stone in a reedbed-setup so that the roots of the iris can improve water quality by consuming nutrient pollutants from agricultural runoff.

## artistic designs >>>

In the Iris Show on April 8 there will be room for a total of 20 entries in the various classes of the Artistic Design Division, but reservations are required. Please contact Pat Freeman as soon as possible if you are interested in providing an Artistic Division entry for the show.



clockwise from above:  
-- Marney hopes the sprinkler doesn't come on  
-- Nelda and Dara hard at work  
-- Jaime and Sheila take a break to hear gardening advice  
-- Don in his tireless fight against the invading weeds

