

in this issue >>>

- Don Freeman dishes on Dirt
- Waco Judges Training Class
- Rhizome Survey
- Floating Iris Gardens



March 2018 — Vol. 27 #03

*Nelda Moore, Ken Fuchs, Editors*

A Monthly Newsletter of the Iris Society of Austin

# IRIS AUSTIN



**NEXT MEETING: TUESDAY, MARCH 13**

ZILKER BOTANICAL GARDEN  
2220 BARTON SPRINGS ROAD  
AUSTIN, TX 78746  
POT LUCK

EVENTS AT ZILKER:

**MARCH 10 – PLANT SALE INCLUDING IRISES** 9 A.M. - 2:30 P.M.

WITH PATTY LEANDER SEMINAR ON  
GROWING WARM-WEATHER  
VEGETABLES ON VERTICAL  
STRUCTURES 10 a.m. UNTIL NOON

MARCH 17 – 49TH ANNUAL AFRICAN  
VIOLET SHOW AND SALE 9 UNTIL 4:30

THURSDAY, APRIL 12 – ZILKER BOTANICAL  
GARDEN CONSERVANCY'S STARLIGHT  
SOCIAL 6:30-9 P.M.

**NO MEETING IN APRIL**

**MARCH  
MADNESS**

“FROM DIRT TO SOIL – IT IS ALIVE,”  
DON SAYS

Don Freeman provided an excellent program about soil and soil improvement when the soil depth is scarce over limestone outcroppings. Since flowers, vegetables, and other plants need 6 to 12 inches of soil to grow, Don suggested that soil should be placed down followed by amendments and compost so that the layers can be worked to hold organic matter and moisture. David Kraemer also revealed that he purchased soil from an unknown grower and all of his iris rhizomes died. He showed how he piles the dirt and amends it to grow his bulbs and vegetables in his new garden.

Although Texas soils are usually high in pH levels for native plants, some acid-loving plants need additional nutrients like powdered sulphur or azalea food such as Miracid or commercial fertilizers such as 5-10-5, 10-20-10 or 10-15-10. (Remember that plants can become chemically dependent. I use organic compost as well. – Nelda Moore) For yellow leaves iron sulfate can change them to green.

Don recommended taking a soil test, which can cost \$10 for a routine analysis to \$100, which includes soil textural analysis and detailed salinity tests since the level of micronutrients is also important. Complete the information on the form that you send with 2 to 3 cups of a mixture of the soil that is a representative sampling taken with a trowel by digging about 6 inches deep. Place this sample in a resealable heavy gauge plastic bag that will not break open during shipment. [www.soiltestingtam.edu](http://www.soiltestingtam.edu)

Don and Pat Freeman are both successful growers of many types of award-winning plants. They have won many ribbons and medals from the American Iris Society.

ISA Website: [http://www.kenfuchs42.net/isa\\_index.html](http://www.kenfuchs42.net/isa_index.html)

## WACO JUDGES TRAINING

by Tracey Rogers

Fourteen iris lovers from the Belton, Austin and Waco clubs attended the judges training on Saturday, February 17<sup>th</sup> hosted by the Waco Iris Society. Iris Society of Austin members attending included Jim Landers, Ken Fuchs, Al Elliott and Tracey Rogers.

Dell Perry, the Region 17 newsletter editor conducted the training on the topic "Are these Really the Rules?" She addressed misconceptions that are commonly thought of as rules by both exhibitors and judges but are really pretender rules — rules that are commonly applied but may be being misapplied if they are even actually AIS rules.

Pretender rules include personal prejudices such as "I don't like broken color irises," sparse details in handbook, misconceptions, applied common sense, 'that's how it has always been done,' taught by another judge, and rules that differ by area, region or affiliate club.

One of the biggest points I came away with is Dell's suggestion for judges to read the Handbook from cover to cover just before show season starts as a refresher. You can't remember everything. I would suggest that show chairs read it too before reviewing or revising a show schedule. Many rule issues that aren't clear in the Judges Handbook can be addressed in the show schedule.

While all judges training classes are informative, I would recommend that everyone attend this class as it reveals a lot of assumptions iris growers make about rules for judging that just aren't the case, or in other words they aren't rules, but are pretender rules. Examples of assumptions that aren't rules include faulting crinkled leaves, and paper spathes should always or never be trimmed. Crinkling is weather related and is normal in Louisiana irises. Detectable trimming is mentioned in the Handbook, but it isn't banned.

One topic that frequently comes up in our show is whether to wipe the stalks or not. The Handbook states under "Cleanliness" – 'The stalk, flower and blossoms should be clean with no dirt, dust or spray residues. Slight smudges or fingerprints on the stalks demand little penalty and are easily removed when the exhibitor gently wipes the stalk with a soft tissue.' This is an example of a custom or show rule, so put the rule in the show schedule to determine if wiping is allowed.

Hopefully a lot of the points raised by Dell will be addressed whenever the new Judges Handbook comes out.

## 2014 RHIZOME SURVEY FOR MARCH 2018

by Tracey Rogers

In starting the annual search for what to buy for our fall rhizome sale, I started wondering about how rhizomes from previous sales have performed in our gardens. I know from looking over what some of us have contributed to past sales, that at least a few of the Jedlicka irises from Blue J have done well. Both Isadora Belle and Hyperspace have shown up at later sales.

I'm curious about a few from the 2014 sale in particular: 'Good Vibrations' (Schreiner 1997); 'Starfrost Pink' (Gibson 1976) RE; 'Easter Lace' (Byers 1988); 'Galactic Warrior' (Hedgecock 2000); and 'Salt and Pepper' (Valenzuela 2007). I picked the names at random, some because of color or hybridizer. I lost a couple of my orange irises last year and I remember liking 'Good Vibrations' so I was curious if anyone had any luck with it. I know it usually takes 2 years to bloom, but with last year's low turnout, I went back a little further. I don't know if any members purchased any of these at the sale, but if you did or if you had especially good or bad luck with a plant, please let me know at [rogers89@earthlink.net](mailto:rogers89@earthlink.net). No need to let me know about 'Bottled Sunshine' or 'Zekie'; I know those were disappointments as far as what we were sent. Everything else we got from those growers was great that year, but those were major failures. Thanks for your feedback.

## STARLIGHT SOCIAL TO RAISE FUNDS FOR GARDENS

Jeff Pavlat has taken over the duties that Cat Newlands had for the conservancy and works for its interest in raising funds to provide money for the improvement of the gardens. He works diligently, and has reported to the Club Representatives that the Starlight Social has a sponsor to provide a special fundraising gala for one and all. KTEX is one of the sponsors for this event that will have food prepared by Austin High School, music provided by the new band for enjoyment, and plenty of drinks for the thirsty who might dance for the huge show. There will be valet parking, and tickets will be sold for \$100 each, but there are packets for

\$5000 each that will include at least 2 tickets. A packet for \$15000 will include sponsorship as well as a couple of tickets.

The Social will be held April 12 from 6:30 to 9 P.M. Purchase your tickets on line.

### PROTECTING IRISES FROM BECOMING EXTINCT

The Historic Iris Preservation Society has appointed W. Douglas Paschall Cultivar Preservation Chair to protect irises from becoming extinct. A Guardian Gardens Program has been created as a grassroots enterprise to set aside dedicated beds in private gardens across geographic and climatic zones for the exclusive purpose of saving the rarest of the extant historic irises of the world.

As a result of focus on the genus Iris this takes in the work of lesser-known breeders, foremost hybridizers, species of limited native ranges to the earliest cultivated varieties that survive to well-known irises, award winners, and parents of long iris lineages that have been undertaken by newer cultivars. "The plants adopted into Guardian Gardens are grown expressly for increase and dissemination to other program participants and to botanical gardens, ensuring each variety the safety of numbers and wide dispersal in permanently, attentive care. After those core populations are thriving, further increase will be steered into public circulation with the greatest exposure and appeal that their rescue brings," reveals W. Douglas Paschall.

### THE "FLOATING ISLAND GARDENS" IN LAFRENIERE PARK

Joe Musacchia

Greater New Orleans Iris Society

The Louisiana irises in the "floating island gardens" in Lafreniere Park in Metairie are doing great! They should put on quite a show in a few weeks. The park is located near the intersection of David Dr. and West Napoleon Ave. in Metairie, La., a suburb of New Orleans. The main entrance to the park is on Downs Blvd., which is off of Veterans Highway.

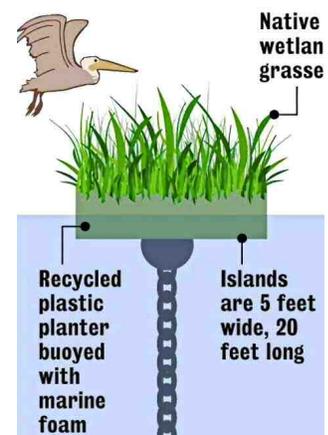
The floating islands are 5-by-20-foot beds of recycled plastic, injected with foam to keep them afloat and planted with native Louisiana plants and

grasses. The idea is that the grass will take root in the sediment below, anchoring the islands. The roots of the plants that drag below the floating islands are intended to aerate the water and reduce levels of chemicals such as phosphorous and nitrogen. These chemicals likely have seeped into the lagoon from rain runoff or decades of waterfowl fecal matter. The islands float and are anchored to the bottom. Some of the islands actually sit on the bottom allowing the plant roots to anchor them.

The islands were planted with Louisiana irises, soft rush and vetiver. They now hold thousands of Louisiana irises. Every other island includes a cypress tree.



### IMITATION ISLANDS



MINUTES OF THE IRIS SOCIETY OF AUSTIN  
February 13, 2018

The meeting was called to order and presided by Donna Little. The minutes from the January 2018 meeting were approved as published in the newsletter. Welcome to our new member John Selassi!

Treasurer's Report:

The ending monthly balance for January 2018 was \$14,505.38.

AAGC Council Report:

There are many Spring 2018 events planned; check the Zilker calendar for event dates and times. There will not be a Garden Festival this year. There will be a fund-raising event "Starlight Social" Thursday April 12, 2018 6p – 9p.

Austin Iris Club business:

1. ISA wishes to thank Al Elliot for leading the Judges Training on Saturday January 20th, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. at the Westlake Hills Presbyterian Church.
2. Saturday March 10, 2018 9a – 2:30p - ISA with Master Gardeners will host club sales in a tent on the South lawn. Setup will be from 7:15a to 9a. We will sell the potted "mystery" irises that came out of the rose garden beds.

Priced per pot at \$10 ea. / 3 for \$25 (avg. 3 plants per pot).

3. The Nominating Committee for new officers has the following nominations:  
President: Jaime Hadley  
VP Programs: Ellen Singleton and Marney Abel  
Membership: Nelda Moore  
Secretary: Dara E. Smith  
Treasurer: Tracey Rogers  
Historian: ?
4. Voting on the slate of officers will be done at the March 13, 2018 meeting.

Important Dates:

Iris Society of Austin – Next Meeting – Tuesday March 13, 2018.

AIS - SLI Convention in New Orleans, LA – April 8 - 14, 2018.

The meeting program was an informative talk on DIRT by Don Freeman.

The meeting was adjourned.  
Dara E. Smith, Secretary

Submitted for Approval on: March 13, 2018.



There is a large bed of Louisiana irises on the bank of the pond in Lareniere Park just off a nearby bridge in Metairie.