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February 2012 — vol 21 #2

A Monthly Newsletter of the Iris Society of Austin

IRIS AUSTIN



next ISA meeting >>>

Iris Society of Austin Meeting
Tuesday February 14, 2012
7:00 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
- Sheila Senghas will be presenting a program on median iris including slides from the 2011 Median Iris Convention in Oklahoma City.

next AAGC meeting >>>

Austin Area Garden Council Meeting
Tuesday February 14, 2012
10:00 am

Zilker Garden Center

Debora Boyle – ISA representative

upcoming events >>>

March 13 – Regular Meeting

April 3 – Regular Meeting/Show Prep

April 8 – Annual Iris Show

April 16-21 – AIS Nat'l Convention

August 3-4 – Reg 17 Convention

Cali•Zona Gold

AIS 2012 Nat'l Convention, Ontario, CA

It is time to pack your suitcase, find those frequent-flier miles, and relax in sunny California, where the beauty of the Pacific Coast Irises will overwhelm you.

AIS Region 15, which covers Arizona and southern California, will host Calizona Gold 2012 from April 16 through 21 in Ontario, California.

Register for the convention by the March 1 deadline to get the discounted rate of \$299. This includes two banquets, three full days of garden tours, one full day at the Huntington Library and Botanical Gardens, one breakfast and three lunches in the gardens. The registration fee goes up after March 1, and registration requests received after April 1 may not be accepted.

The Welcome Banquet April 18 will serve beef or vegetable ravioli, and the April 21 banquet menu will have oven roasted chicken, beef tri-tip, or vegetarian options.

Find registration information online

at www.region15ais.org/convention

You can also register for the Geek Dinner by contacting John and Joanne Jones at 510-795-9723, or aiselectronicsvcs@irises.org.

Headquarters for the spectacular showcase will be The Doubletree Hotel, Ontario. The cut-off date for hotel reservations is March 15. The hotel group rate is \$125 per night +tax with up to four people in a room that will have a microwave, small refrigerator, coffee maker, and other essential items. The hotel is pet friendly for animals under 50 pounds, with a one-time non-refundable fee of \$50.00. To make reservations telephone 800-222-TREE (8733) or 909-418-4848 or make your reservations online at www.doubletree.com. Be sure to use group code "AIS2012" to get the special group rates.

Read more later in this issue about special excursions that will be available in conjunction with the AIS National Convention.

Siberian Iris

Perhaps it is the way one plants Siberians either in early fall or early spring that enables these plants to survive and show their delicate-looking flowers that float like butterflies above the slim grass-like sword foliage.

If Siberian iris divisions are shipped, they must be soaked overnight. If these three to four inch tall plants are dug in early spring, they are easy to separate with at least six fans in a division on a cool invigorating day, but they must be kept wet. Most successful gardeners plant Siberians in early fall so that the divisions can begin growing new roots and re-anchoring themselves before winter. These rhizomes are planted horizontally with the foliage side up so that the tops of the slender rhizomes are two to three inches below the soil surface. The soil is acid with constant moisture.

When the cultivar is established, then it might tolerate periods of drought in the garden soil that has been prepared with humus, sphagnum peat moss, compost, well-rotted manure or other organic material. Dig the new planting holes large enough to spread the roots of the clump. Water the holes. Plant the divisions. Firm the soil over the roots and then tamp the soil gently into the hole and water the newly planted irises thoroughly to get rid of air pockets, which are a real “bugaboo” of Siberians.

Iris sibirica and *Iris sanguinea*, the two species that botanists accept as

major species of the Siberian series of beardless irises, have been cultivated for over two centuries. *Iris sibirica* with violet-blue to blue flowers grows in wet meadows from central Europe and northern Italy all the way to the land west of Lake Baikal in Russia. This species was first recorded and named by Linnaeus in 1754. Today, a number of species are included within the series Sibiricae of the section Limniris, which is part of the beardless iris subgenus Limniris.

Iris sanguinea, originally named *Iris orientalis*, was next discovered and described by Thunberg in 1794. It grew from east of Lake Baikal all the way to Japan. A majority of Siberian cultivars derive from these two



SI Fond Kiss - (Schafer/Sacks)
Morgan – Wood Medal 2008

species, but botanists recognize 8 other species that were discovered between 1875 and 1933 in this series. All are from central and eastern Asia. Some varieties are known for their long-lasting flowers. Depending on ample substance, strength, and firmness Siberian cultivars can bloom for up to 18 days. Colors range from nearly black and wine reds; to purples, lavenders, and blues; to pinks, whites, and yellows.

adopt-a-garden >>>

Weeders Needed

As part of the Adopt-A-Garden program, the Iris Society of Austin maintains two areas of irises in the Zilker Botanical Garden.

With cool, wet weather weeds are really growing. The beds were weeded earlier in the winter, but new seeds sprout with sunny days. These gardens need attention before the Zilker Garden Festival coming March 31.

If you get some spare time to help out, please try to pull weeds and remove any dead foliage around the

iris rhizomes. In the back gardens elm and live oak leaves can be taken out with the yellow or dying foliage of iris plants to help prevent rot when the weather gets warmer. Some snapdragons and larkspur are growing with the irises in the back which can be left, as can the Dutch irises and tulips. In the front bed only a couple of Dutch irises are growing alongside our bearded varieties. You will notice the plants with extremely narrow foliage.

Be sure to report any time you spend volunteering in the gardens!

Special Excursions

More Fun at the AIS National Convention

When completing your registration form for the National Convention in Ontario, CA, don't miss the opportunity to participate in the additional tours offered!

On Tuesday, April 17, you can sign up for an all-day bus trip through the San Fernando Valley to visit three different personal residence iris gardens. Visit Jill & Joe Bonino in Glendale, Randy Squires in North Hills, and Loren Zeldin in Reseda. The fee for the

special excursion is \$50, which includes lunch.

If you don't mind some walking, join the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris on Sunday, April 22, for a trek with an expert guide through the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens with an additional stop at the Matilija Nursery. This trip will be a good chance to see some Pacific Coast Native Iris. The SPCNI Trek has a \$65 fee and also includes lunch.

horticulture tips >>>

Valentine Fertilizing

With some reblooming iris in all their glory in December and January hope springs in us as we look forward to the April show after the brutal summer, a freeze at the beginning of December, and summer days following closely behind this unusual weather pattern. The 4-7 inches of welcome rain in late January gave us renewed excitement about more bloom stalks to come. February 14 is Valentine's Day, a time to prune roses, and a great time to feed irises in Central Texas.

Remember to feed bearded irises bone meal or super phosphate for stronger stalks and larger flowers.

Louisiana irises or water irises need acid soil or azalea food. These irises are heavy feeders, but stop fertilizing when a plant begins to show a bloom stalk. Perhaps the wavy foliage will be a sign that the plant will set those beautiful beardless blossoms.

Spurias, the other beardless irises, need rose food for the wiry rhizomes that do not need to be divided as often as other irises. In fact these plants can stay in the same place for years. In the summer the foliage becomes brown as the Spurias go dormant. They need very little water from that time until they emerge during cooler weather. Then the plants can be watered and fed. (It is usually in July that the dead foliage can be cut down to the ground.)

In order to know the difference between the Louisiana foliage and the slender long leaves of the Spurias, hold a leaf up to the light. If the leaf has many dots like black pepper sprinkled throughout, it is a Louisiana. Spurias have long leaves that can be used in flower arrangements. Usually an iron fertilizer produces beautiful green or blue-green leaves.

last meeting's minutes >>

Iris Society of Austin Meeting
Tuesday January 10, 2012

ISA President Nelda Moore called the meeting to order.

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.

Marney Abel provided information about the judges' training to be held on January 14 with Hooker and Bonnie Nichols, on Tall Bearded Irises with emphasis on space-agers and broken colors.

The horticultural report: it is time to be weeding!

Marney presented a program on Japanese irises.

submitted by Carolyn Wylie, Secretary

officer nominations >>

The Nominating Committee is working diligently to present a slate of officers at the February meeting. Tracey Rogers will reveal the slate at the meeting, but nominations can also be made from the floor. If you are interested in serving the club as an officer, come to the meeting and let us know, or give Tracey a call.

Judges Training

New In-Garden Class Added

A new in-garden judges training class has been scheduled on April 22 in Denison hosted by the Texoma Rainbow Iris Society. Dell Perry, Region 17 Judges Training Chair, reminds us that, "In-garden teaches you what to look for in a good garden iris, as opposed to what makes a show winner." The remaining judges training opportunities for this spring include:

The **Lone Star Iris Society** presents a class on **Spuria Iris** led by Dell Perry

March 3, 2012 10am – Noon \$10

First United Methodist Church – Fellowship Hall, 400 W 1st St, Hico, TX

Contact: Naomi Nabors or Mary Huggins, 254-597-1183 (Naomi), 254-796-4041 (Mary), howdynabors@yahoo.com (Naomi)

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 **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

reg 17 convention plans >

Planning continues for the Region 17 Convention to be hosted here in Austin this August.

The final banquet meal will include herb-roasted chicken with lemon buerre blanc, dinner salad with 2 dressings on the side, scalloped potatoes, green bean almandine and a choice of two desserts set on the table around the flower arrangement: cream brulee or amaretto cheesecake.

August 3

3pm Hotel rooms available evening Hospitality Room

August 4

light breakfast in Hospitality Room
8a Registr. for Judge Training
9a Judges Training
Noon Lunch on your own
1:30p Meetings and Auction
7p Dinner Banquet

Omni Austin Hotel at Southpark
4140 Governors Row, Austin, 78744

The hotel is conveniently located at the intersection of IH-35 and SH-71, ten minutes from Austin-Bergstrom International Airport and 7 minutes from downtown. The hotel is only 5 miles from the Bob Bullock Texas State History Museum with Austin's only IMAX theater, and the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library.

To reserve call 1-800-THE-OMNI.

Single -- \$99 +tax

Triple -- \$109 +tax

Convention registration information at

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



The Spring 2012 Judges Training in Austin was a huge success! Once everyone had their fill of wonderful breakfast goodies (top left), the class listened intently as Bonnie and Hooker Nichols (top right) explained all the intricacies of growing and judging broken color and space-age varieties of irises