

Tucson Area Iris Society



August 2016

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Tucson's World of Iris

Reminders for August

**We're back in business.
Meeting on August 20th.
Tucson Botanical Gardens.**

**September brings a lot of activity
because of our sale. We will need
volunteers for digging/ marking:**

**Tucson Botanical Gardens (9/17)
Gordon Jensen's garden– 3 days**

**Let us know if you think you can
help.**

**Friday 9/23 Sale Set up
Saturday 9/24 Sale**

President's Message:



Kristee, presiding at our May 28th potluck and by laws revision meeting at the Wilmot Library.

Summer and vacations seem to get in the way of doing business as usual. Please forgive the absence of a President's Message this issue. We'll be back in full force at a later issue.

Kristee

Wanted/ For Trade/ For Sale.

Earlier this summer, while I was reading the newsletter from Inland Region, I noticed a small article about a member wanting to find "certain iris" rhizomes for purchase. I immediately checked our data base of iris sold during our past two years sales, but did not find any mention of the named iris this member hoped to find.

While I pondered this situation, it occurred to me that Steven Ginter, one of our members, is wanting to create a "*BEATLES THEMED IRIS GARDEN*" and is seeking iris from the past 30 years bearing the names of songs sung by this famed rock-n-roll group. He has only found 7 and has about 20 to go. It occurred to me, why not reach out to our own Region 15 and ask members if they happen to grow *YESTERDAY* (Lineberger 1987, TB) or, *TICKET TO RIDE* (Lauer 2002, TB) as two examples. He is unable to locate these rhizomes for sale via the internet, or through commercial growers. Some titles are hybridized by a Russian named Sergey Loktev, and those plants may not have ever reached the United States. (Ex: *Hard Days Night*, 2010, TB).

My thought was to use our Region affiliates as a clearing house for members seeking hard-to-find iris. It's worth a try! Let's hear from our own members who may be looking for something. If we don't have it within TAIS, we could turn to Region 15, or even Region 14 (San Francisco). Let's help each other!



Birthdays to Celebrate– August

Dian Curran	August 8
Ben Herman	August 13
Miriam Diamond	August 26
Tonita Dellinger	August 30

The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just on the body, but the soul.

Alfred Austin

This one is important!

A potluck, Region 15 Auction and recognition of the members who will receive the new test iris, TIP, from Mid-America Gardens to be grown for our club, all at the same meeting!

Why not dig out that recipe you have been saving in your shoe box for years and try it out on us.

Tucson Botanical Gardens will be the site for our revelries.

Date: August 20th

Time: 12:30 pm

Address: 2150 North Alvernon Way 85712 (Alvernon & Pima)



Bring your dish and share in the excitement of our new iris introductions and auction.

Please tell Michelle at the Botanical Gardens how happy we are to be part of their amazing organization.

We're looking forward to seeing you there!

Business for August meeting:



Why come to the next meeting?

- 1) A great potluck always works for me. I like tasting new dishes someone else prepared. Melania's chicken salad in May was superb. So was the fruit salad.**
- 2) The new rhizomes from Mid-America will be awarded to our most active members. Did you qualify for a new iris?**
- 3) Kristee will present the new "Iris Bucks" program with plenty of bucks to spread around.**
- 4) A chance to see the photo collection of all the iris which will be part of our sale. Over 120 exquisite photos. Bring a note pad to make a list of the iris wanting a home in your yard.**
- 5) An opportunity to bid for iris in the Region 15 Iris Auction. This is our part in helping to raise funds for our southwest region along with the other 9 affiliates.**
- 6) Meet and greet Michelle with Tucson Botanical Gardens. They love us. Please say thank you!**

⁵ Iris Culture in Tucson

This article is a reprint from the club's booklet which is sold at most of our events.

Now is the time to get that new bed ready for the stunning iris you will be purchasing at our September Sale. Or, did you volunteer at enough projects that you received a new test iris?

There is no publication date on the booklet, so it is not clear if this is still current thinking for our Tucson soil.

Organic Materials:

1.) Compost. Builds good soil structure and is a source of many slow release nutrients. Use 25% to 50% of total soil volume depending on condition of soil being amended. You can't use too much!

2.) Manures. They are hot! They must be composted before use, or mixed into the soil 4 weeks prior to planting. Manures should never come in contact with the rhizomes. It is recommended that manure never be used in the top 4" of soil.

3.) Peat Moss. Relatively expensive to use on a large scale. Use 25% to 50% of total soil volume.

4.) Shredded Wood By-Products. Also known as mulch/sawdust. These products must be used with the addition of some nitrogen unless they are already fortified by the manufacturer. Use 25% to 50% of total soil volume. Inorganic materials: Used for specific purposes, i.e. water retention in sandy soils.

5.) Physical Amendments. Perlite and pumice are inert materials that improve the texture of clay soils and because they are porous, they absorb water. They last longer than organic materials, but provide no plant nutrients and are expensive. Vermiculite and expanded mica can absorb water, nutrients and provide some potassium and magnesium. It does not last as long in the soil as perlite and pumice.

6.) Chemical Amendments.

a) **Gypsum:** calcium sulfate is used to rid soils of excess sodium, allowing the soil to absorb water more readily. It also supplies some sulfur. Use 20-30 lbs per 100 sq. ft. and apply 4" of water.

b) **Sulfur** is used to reduce the alkalinity of Tucson soils. 5 lb per 100 sq. ft.

c) **Lime** is not used in the native soils of Tucson.

This recipe is for most types of Bearded Iris, Spurias, Arils and Arilbreds based on a bed 100 sq. ft (10 x10), dug 18" deep.



Spuria Iris Family

This article was adapted from the American Iris Society booklet, *Basic Iris Culture*. For more in-depth information, you may peruse this and other iris articles on line.



Spurias are known as very tough, hearty beardless iris that form magnificent clumps. Their rhizomes grow in a way that keeps the clumps from becoming crowded, presenting a sense of casual elegance. Gardeners value them as garden specimens because of their dramatic architectural qualities, whether planting them alone, or in a mixed perennial border.

Their tall, strong stems and long lasting flowers are sought after by florists and arrangers. Their elegant clumps grow slowly, but eventually span to five to six feet in diameter and 4 to 5 feet in height. The leaves are sword shaped and indeed are sword sized. Spuria rhizomes are fleshy and fibrous. Their new roots produced in the fall are large and succulent, while the old roots are tough, wiry and difficult to work with. Spurias are among the last iris to bloom in the spring, blooming after the tall bearded. Their strong stems are either un-branched, or with several short, closed branches giving a spiked appearance. Spuria flowers resemble those of Dutch iris. The form of the species includes long thin petals with elongated hafts and prominent style arms. Modern hybrids feature rounder petals with flaring falls and standards held vertically at 45 degree angles, or flat. Colors include white, yellow, lavender, rose, red, brown, blue-violet and dark purple.

Spurias have been in commerce since the late 1800s giving them ample time to become widely distributed. These adaptable iris naturalize easily and their huge clumps may be found in old neighborhoods and public plantings. They are long lived and may also be found at abandoned home sites. Spurias are popular world-wide. They are grown throughout the United States, but are favored in the southwest. California and Arizona have long been the centers of American Spuria activity.



A location providing full sun and excellent drainage is essential for growing healthy *Spuria*. They prefer a rich soil, either neutral, or slightly alkaline. They are heavy feeders and will reward the grower who gives them regular, annual feedings. Well rotted manure is a good choice, but well balanced commercial mixes are effective as well. Although they are known as drought tolerant, they should be watered during the spring. Do not water them during the summer months. Growers in areas with heavy summer rains report poor bloom. *Spurias* are normally planted in the fall after the heat of summer has passed, but early enough that the new roots may get established before the end of the growing season. The rhizome should be planted 1 to 2 inches deep, depending on the soil. When planting, take in mind how large the clumps will eventually become and that they really don't like to be disturbed.

Give them plenty of room to grow, space them 3 feet apart. In areas with cold winters, newly planted *Spuria* should be given some sort of winter protection; leaves, straw, pine needles work fine. This material should be removed when the plants begin to grow in the spring. Old foliage should be cut to the rhizome after it has died back. Stems should be cut back to the rhizome after bloom.

Mosaic virus can be a frustrating problem for northern growers. This disfiguring disease usually appears when the weather is cool and wet during bloom season. It is manifested by mottled foliage, misshapen flowers and splotchy color. There is no known treatment for this virus. Growers in the southwest may grow *Spurias* for decades without ever experiencing mosaic virus in their gardens, while more northerly growers have to cope with it from time to time.

Foliage problems are not common with most *Spurias*. Leaf spot and rust may appear in wet climates, but *Spurias* are less susceptible to these diseases than other types of iris. Treatment for leaf spot and rust is the same for *Spurias* as it is for the tall bearded. A unique feature of *Spurias* is that they secrete nectar at the base of their perianth tubes, which draws ants to the flowers. Aphids and thrips may also find *Spurias* to their liking. The gardener's arsenal against such pests includes systemic and contact insecticides, insecticidal soaps and beneficial insects (lady bugs and lace wigs, etc.) Iris borers are not widely reported to cause problems with *Spurias*.





Rhizome Sale

September 24th

Many thanks go out to the three members who completed their “dig list” as requested in the June issue. We have the following count and photos for the sale event:

Gordon Jensen:	71 names and photos
Madeleine Glaser:	2 names and photos (her Marana garden is new)
Kristee West:	18 names and photos

Add to this group, the iris from the west bed of the **Tucson Botanical Gardens** which we will dig and mark on September 17th. That should give us quite a selection from which our guests can purchase. At last count, 102 named iris.

I have spent many hours labeling, printing and laminating the photos for our club and I can't wait to buy *Montmartre*, *Raspberry Swirl*, *Kah-Nee-Ta* and several others. I hope you will be as excited about seeing these new iris as I was. We'll have the photo collection at the August 20th meeting. Make your wish list.



Kah-Nee-Ta
Ernst 1989

Raspberry Swirl
Sutton 2009



Montmartre
Keppel 2007



Our grab bags will be priced at great, irresistible prices. I hope you have been collecting paper bags all summer as we hoped you would!

As of July 25th, I had over 60 on hand. (Editor) How about you? How many? Bring your bags to the August meeting and get your iris bucks.



Kristee wants to award iris bucks to the first, second and third place winners of the most bags collected.

Start counting!

TAIS “TIP”

Roger Osgood– Yuma

While Kristee was able to watch and track her iris on a daily basis, I was not able to do that. Growing in Yuma and living in Tucson posed some problems as a caregiver. Mostly, I was only able to follow the increases and bloom dates. Here is what I can report. Branching and such will follow when the rhizomes are replanted here in Tucson.

All iris were planted on October 1, 2015 just after our sale. These comments are based on just 7 months growth. That is not a long time to track an iris.

Dots and Splashes: This has been featured in two newsletters, with Yuma photos. Other than being stronger in color than published, it is a sturdy iris. It produced spring blooms over a 2 month period. There were eight increases in 7 months.

Easy Peasy: Produced 6 increases in 7 months. It bloomed in early April and on May 1st it was producing new buds again. This intermediate may just like our summer heat. We'll wait and see.

Get Back: This rhizome, while healthy, did not produced any blooms as of early April and the increases were few in number. Not a strong grower.

Hawaiian Sunrise: This re-bloomer was strutting its stuff on February 1st when it bloomed in Yuma. It only produced 3 increases in 7 months, but it gave me a remarkable number of blooms over the month of February.

Risk Taker: While this 2014 iris was supposed to be an early bloomer, as of late March, it had only produced one increase and it never did bloom.

Treasure Trader: In 7 months, this iris only produced 2 increases. Kristee said hers did not bloom early. My iris was in bloom on March 24th.

Are you a creative person?

Michelle, the director of **TUCSON BOTANICAL GARDENS** is excited about the idea of creating some themed iris beds. Our beds can be ever changing and an “old and tired bed” can put on a new look from time to time. She liked the idea of a black and orange planting called “Halloween”. Steven wants to suggest a bed based on the song titles of the Beatles (there are 27 of them). Other ideas are “Pretty in Pink”. Can you put on your thinking caps and propose some other themes? Your winning idea is worth some iris bucks!

Thanks for your readership

This is my last newsletter for TAIS.

I want to thank all of you for your kind comments and thoughts. Creating this newsletter has been a labor of love.

Especially, my thanks go to Tony Kutz and Steven Ginter for the many photos they provided that made the articles come to life and sparkle.

Now is the time to pass the torch to another member who will take the newsletter in a new direction. Who will step up and volunteer?

Roger Osgood

I am now a docent at Reid Park Zoo, and have just been elected Vice President for Reveille Men's Chorus here in Tucson. Add to that my treasurer duties for Southern Arizona Senior Pride and you can see I have a full and active life. Remember that your volunteer hours DO COUNT for something.

Get off the couch, shut off the television and stop telling yourself "I am too busy."

There is no such thing.

Our iris need you!

