

April 2025

# TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 60<sup>th</sup> year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



**'Babbling Brook'**  
(Keppel, 1965)

Marcusen Sculpture Gardens,  
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2024

## President's Message

It's showtime! After months of planning, preparation, planting, tending, and education, we will have our show on April 19th. This is your opportunity to share your hard work, creativity, and iris beauty with your fellow iris lovers and the public. Bring everything you have as some might be winners and the less-than-perfect stalks can be used by the arrangers. Last year, Susan Schaefer won blue ribbons and best of show with just a few entries. I will see you there bright and early on the show's Saturday morning with a room full of iris color and fragrance.

- Kevin Kartchner

*"I went out on an April morning All alone for my heart was high, I was a child of the shining meadow, I was a sister of the sky." - Sara Teasdale*

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## Upcoming Events

April 6: 10 AM to Noon. Tour [Terry's garden](#) and watch demonstrations of selecting, cutting, and grooming iris stalks for the Show. See p. 2

TAIS Iris Show: April 19 in combination with the Rose Society Show, Trinity Presbyterian Church, 400 E. University Blvd. Set-up 6-9:30 AM. Open to the Public 1-4 PM. [Schedule available](#) on TAIS website. Show something & make us proud! No regular meeting in April

April 25-26: AIS Region 15 Spring Trek, Redlands, CA. Information [link](#)

May 10: Noon. TAIS meeting and 60th Anniversary Luncheon, 6940 E. Loma del Bribon (Sunrise Mtn. Ridge subdivision)

### Birthday Wishes to:

**Jim Wilcoxon**

**Nancy Rummel**

**Dorrell-Jo MacWhinnie**

**Shane Smith**

**Kathy Chilton**

**Joe Fernandes**



Photo by Rose Clark

# March Meeting Minutes



March 8, 2025 - Nineteen members gathered at the Eckstrom-Columbus Library for a presentation by Pat Olsen on preparing irises for the show, getting them there, etc. I showed slides of arrangements from our 2023 and 2024 shows and made a quick and simple arrangement. See my notes on p. 2, 5-6.

## Upcoming local floral events:

April 5: Master Gardeners tours

April 6: Meet at Terry's garden from 10 AM to noon for a tour and demonstration of how to cut and groom an iris for the Show. Lemonade, tea, and cookies provided, as well as tags for the show.

945 N. Perry Avenue

April 19: Our show!

April 25: TAIS Open Gardens

May 10: Our 60th Anniversary Luncheon at Bonnie's HOA Clubhouse. Food by Baggins. Noon. An email RSVP coming soon

Linda reported that the

Orchid Society's show last weekend at Mesquite Valley Growers was fabulous.

**Show Business:** Terry passed out show schedules. Members volunteered for the following jobs:

Set-up on Thursday, April 17 from 10 AM to 2 PM: Joyce, Bonnie, & Linda. Bonnie will purchase an 8' round plastic tablecloth for the Queen's Table (new feature) Clerks: Cathy P-S, Joyce, and Sally

Sales of potted irises: Joyce (has photos), Sam, Barbara, and possibly Jim. Terry has 99 potted irises, Joyce 90, Sally 10, Susan 10, Kristee 5, and Kathy 5 or 6.

Table with membership forms and handout with culture tips: Who? (new) Tally girl: Me

**Board Meeting:** We approved upping the website maintenance fee from \$500 to \$595. New and lapsed (1+ year) individuals

**Consider entering something in our show!**



**We're on the web:**  
**Tucsoniris.org**

may join AIS for \$10 through November 1, 2025.

- SC, secretary

## Artistic Arrangement Tips

You can order flowers from Trader Joe's three days in advance

Choose a simple container. Can spray paint or decoupage to coordinate with flowers

Can use instead of Oasis foam for an environmentally-friendly option: grid made of floral tape, small bottles filled with water, chicken wire or wire netting, a compact and dense "cushion" created of either a dried hydrangea, a cluster from a bougainvillea, just the small branchy-branches where bougainvillea "flowers" were, or branchy sticks from palo verde.

Add foliage next to make the cushion more interlocking - rosemary, arborvitae, snake plant leaves, etc. Give each piece of plant material a fresh cut at base.

Add flowers. If they won't stay where you want them, add more greenery near their base

Flora can be collected from your garden or neighborhood (ask first!): examples - palo verde branches, Hesperaloe leaves and flowers, aloe flowers, rosemary, dill, asparagus fern, fountain grass, geranium leaves

Irises must predominate and be the focal point

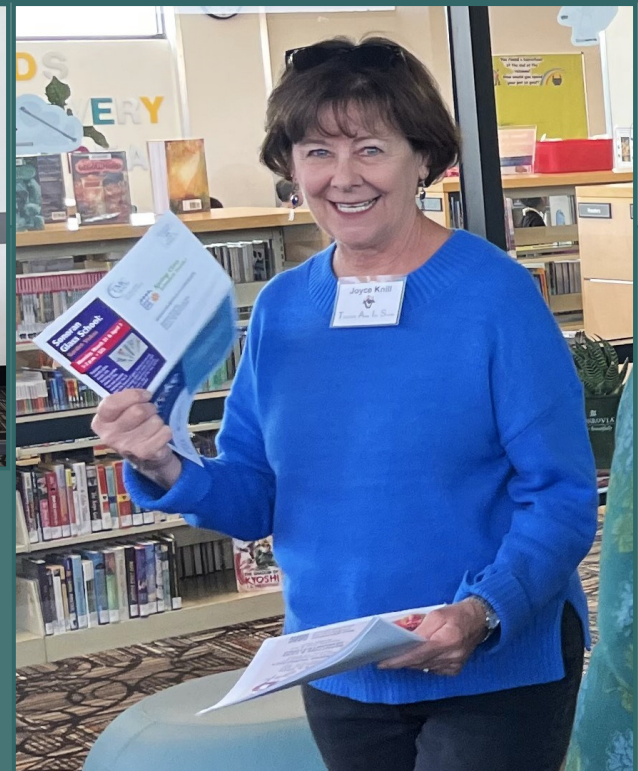
Place the largest flowers lower down and toward the center. This will create the focal point

I used Dutch iris (\$5), goldenrod-like aster (\$4), globe mallow, dill, & rosemary during the meeting

Top up the water and add FloraLife Flower Food - SC



## March Meeting - photos by Dave Smith





## Treasurer's Report for March - submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

BANK BALANCE 1 MAR 2025 13,392.38

TOTAL INCOME : 30.00 DUES

### EXPENSES

WEB	595.00
CHECKS	101.68
FLOWERS FOR MEETING	15.13
RHIZOMES FOR SALE	800.00
RHIZOMES FOR AUCTION	450.00
POSTAGE	29.20
SHOW SUPPLIES	41.00
REGION 15 RHIZOMES	677.00
REGION 15 CONVENTION	25.00
TOTAL EXP	2032.01

BANK BALANCE 31 MAR 2025 11,680.37



Above: Jumping spider grasping prey. These spiders can be kept as pets. Source: [Purcor Pest Solutions](#)



Image: Judy Gallagher, flickr.com/photos/52450054@N04/24330084773/



Image: Marshal Hedin, flickr.com/photos/23660854@N07/50171445592/



From top: Wolf spider found in Arizona. Note how well its colors camouflage it on the dried grass (Source 5). Female wolf spider with egg sac attached to her spinnerets (by [Geo Lightspeed7](#)). Note how she has to walk with her abdomen in the air. Jumping spider found in Arizona (Source 5), and a close-up of the face of a jumping spider (by [Opoterser](#)). He's kinda cute, don't you think? The flashy, iridescent blue parts are *chelicerae*, his jaws

## Beneficial Garden Arachnids, Part III: Stalkers

We'll round up our study of spiders with ones that stalk and hunt their prey. Both wolf spiders and jumping spiders have excellent eyesight, giving them a big advantage when hunting. They date back to roughly 50 million years ago in the Paleogene Period.

The 2,400 species of wolf spiders are found throughout the world. They range from 0.4 - 1.4", not including their legs. Wolf spiders are found in many habits, from coastal areas to arid ones, and are common in suburban gardens. I have seen them in our backyard and have caught and released several from inside our house over the years. They are generally solitary spiders and do not spin webs. Mother wolf spiders carry their egg sac on their spinnerets. Even though they must raise their abdomen so that the sac doesn't drag on the ground, they remain formidable hunters. The baby spiders (spiderlings) crawl onto their mother's abdomen after they hatch and remain there for several weeks before dispersing aerially by releasing a strand of silk which gets caught in the wind. Wolf spiders eat crickets, other spiders, ants, and cockroaches, all of which makes them great assistants in the garden.

Jumping spiders, with their stereoptic color vision and nearly 360° visual field, have even better eyesight than the wolf spiders. Their eight eyes are arranged in a distinctive pattern on their fairly rectangular, front-facing head. The two middle eyes are larger than the others. (See photo). These are small spiders, ranging from 0.04-1" in length, excluding the legs. They do not build webs, but use their silk as a dragline when jumping or to build a shelter that resembles a pup tent. Most can jump 2-3X their body length, but one type can leap 38X its body length. Jumping spiders study their prey and very accurately pounce upon it. Their diet consists of ants, flies, grasshoppers, and other insects. Some steal prey from spider's webs (an act known as *kleptoparasitism*) or may even eat the spider itself. A few of the 6,000 species eat nectar, especially from acacias. - SC

Sources: [8 Beneficial Insects You Want to See in Your Garden](#), Wikipedia articles: [Wolf Spider](#), [Jumping Spider](#), and [Chelicerae](#); [Types of Arizona Spiders \(With Pictures\)](#); [Wolf spiders: Behavior, bites and other facts | Live Science](#)

## Queen of the Show - Blue Ribbon Iris:

### Pat's Best Tips for Preparing Irises for the Show

The advantages of holding an AIS-sanctioned iris show like ours are: there are set guidelines and rules, and we can offer awards including rosettes, ribbons, and medals. During 2024, there were 103 AIS-sanctioned shows with 9,409 blooms displayed. Although tall bearded irises typically won Best in Show, Louisianas and spurias occasionally took the top prize. There must be at least three exhibitors and five varieties in a section for a Best-in-Section rosette to be awarded. Silver and Bronze medals may be awarded in sections for which there are at least five exhibitors and 20 varieties.



### Tips:

Search catalogs for iris descriptions that say, "Shows well on the bench," "candelabra branching," or similar. Consider growing some of these to show.

February and March - Debris around irises can contribute to formation of soft rot, so eliminate it. Remove dead leaves and pests. Fertilize. Pat is currently using fertilizer from Comanche Acres.

Be careful not to get water on flowers or leaves.

Leaves can be trimmed - just follow the natural contour. No foreign matter can be on a bloom - this includes a ladybug.

Part of our goal is to educate the public, so bring different types and colors of irises. Consider bringing a potted iris - perhaps growing one in a pot just for the show. NoIDs may be shown, but are not eligible for awards.

A week or so before the show, start gauging which irises might be selected for the event. Look for straight undiseased stems with lots of buds.

A day or so before the show, see which of those preselected (or other) stalks have fresh, clean blooms (one day old maximum).

Most entries will be tall bearded, so other types have a better chance of winning their section.

Cut stalks as long as possible in the garden. You can trim later - stem must reach nearly to the bottom of the vase. Hold cut stem by the base or by the papery spathe under the top flower to avoid fingerprint marks on the stem.

A cool, dark room or closet may delay a bud's opening, and a warm, humid room may encourage opening. Small strips of tissue paper gently wrapped around buds can delay opening.

Verify the name of the iris to be sure it matches the flower. It may be disqualified if displayed with the wrong name in the show.

You can start grooming at home. Practice with some stalks before the show. Use soft, clean brushes, such as make-up brushes. *Softly blend* any blemishes from the stalk, but do not remove all of the "bloom" (the powdery coating). Other items in Pat's grooming kit include an eyedropper to refill water in vase or transport tubes, small scissors to trim leaves.

Leaves and stems must not touch the vase. Leaves may not be inside the vase.

Remove any aging, wilted, or faded blossoms, as these are heavily penalized.

A spent terminal flower can be groomed off *if* there is another bud in that socket. Otherwise, the whole top must be removed. Carefully pull back the spathe, and then use your fingers to snap off the decaying bloom *with its ovary*. Spathes must stay intact and be undamaged.

Wedges must be below the rim of the vase. Stem must be straight in the vase.

Tags: the Division, Class, and Group come from the Show Schedule, p. 9-12. The portion with your name on it gets folded over for anonymity. It contains the →

## Pat's Best Tips for Prepping Irises for the Show, continued...

**name of the variety, year of introduction, hybridizer,** and your name. An iris may not be judged if the tag is filled out incorrectly.

You may only enter *one* of any variety, even in different categories.

Decide which side of the stalk displays best and then adjust it so that a fall is front and center. Position the tag exactly in the front of the stalk so that the vase gets situated like that on the show table. No additional grooming may be done after the flower is on the show table (aka show bench).

Deductions are taken for: tears in petals, any insects (even ladybugs), water spots, lack of pollen on stamens, trickery (glue, splints, etc.).

Transport irises with great care - space stems out in wine bottles or a PVC device à la Kevin's. Be sure they have enough water. Pat prefers an empty wine box with dividers, filled with formerly-empty bottles which are now filled with water and iris stalks.

Grooming is to be done solely by the exhibitor. Coaching is acceptable, but no other help is allowed. Grooming counts for a large portion of the points awarded.

Single Bloom entries - ones that get broken off or the last flower on a stalk, etc. - these can be shown in test tubes. They are judged but are not eligible for awards. [We do not have this category this year].

### At the Show:

Arrive early

Unload very carefully

Check in

Plan on 10 minutes of grooming per stem

It is OK to remove some leaves



Be sure that the entry is straight in the container with the terminal bud facing the front. Orient a fall front and center if possible. Place the tag where you consider the front to be. The tag will be on a bamboo skewer, which you'll run down through the Styrofoam wedge.

Do a final inspection to double-check everything.

Only the show chairman, judges and their apprentices, and the clerks are allowed in the showroom during judging (10 AM-noon).

Clerking is an excellent way to learn from the judges and improve your exhibiting skills.

Judges may ask the clerks to turn the iris containers or even to place them on the floor for a few minutes so as to view them from above. Each judge has her own style.



### Learn More:

On YouTube: "[Grooming Iris for a Bench Show - Mt. Diablo Iris Society](#)"

AIS website - [irises.org](http://irises.org)

[AIS Judges Handbook](#) - free download from the AIS iris wiki. Chapter 7 is called "[Judging Tall Bearded Iris](#)" and it is applicable to most types of irises. Appendix B is also good - "[Preparing Iris for Exhibition](#)"

### Miscellaneous:

Historic irises (from 1995 or before) are welcome. They have their own section in the show or they can be entered in the TB section.

"[Iris care - pre-bloom](#)" on YouTube

If an iris blooms too late for the show, consider relocating it to another spot in the garden, perhaps with more sun during the winter.

Joyce fertilizes her miniature tall bearded irises every ten days at this time of year. Pat surrounds hers with ice each evening. - SC



## TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2025

Kevin Kartchner - President

Cindy Long - Vice President

Sue Clark – Secretary, Signatory on Account

Jim Wilcoxon – Treasurer, Asst. Secretary

Pat Olsen & Sally Vega - Programs & Places

Diane Pavlovich - Publicity

Cindy Long, Linda Briggs, Kathleen Marron,  
and Evelyn Jacobs - Hospitality

Bonnie Else & Susan Schaefer - Door Prizes

Taffy Holvenstot - Membership

Dave Smith - Photographer

Sue Clark - Newsletter

## What to do in the Iris Garden during April:

**Maintenance:** Keep iris plants hydrated during this interval of rapid growth. Monitor with moisture meter. Check for aphids and other pests. Remove dead leaves, weeds, and debris. Verify that flowers match their names using the AIS [Iris Wiki](#) or other source. Replace faded labels.

**Organic care:** Feed with fish emulsion every other week and with feather meal and alfalfa meal (or alfalfa pellets) monthly. Apply humic acid as desired.

**Non-organic care:** Apply weekly or every other week: Scott's [Super Bloom](#) (12-55-6), Miracle-Gro [Bloom Booster](#) (10-52-10), [Schultz Bloom Plus](#) 10-54-10), or Ferti-lome [Blooming & Rooting](#) (9-58-8). Mix as indicated on package.



## Tip Exchange

Slugs and snails can damage iris leaves. Watch for ragged edges or irregularly-shaped holes and slimy trails. These mollusks are most active in moist conditions such as after a rain or in the shade. You may pick them off by hand in the morning or evening, sprinkle crushed eggshells around the plants, treat with repellent such as [Sluggo](#), or bury a jar partially-filled with beer to trap them. - SC

Source: [Iris Pests and Treatment Guide](#)

## Iris Limerick

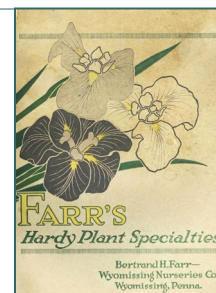
There once was a man named Thaddaeus  
Who was really quite fastidious.

His garden was tidy.

He was strong and so mighty.

That iris-loving man named Thaddaeus.

- Sue Clark



Farr's 1918 catalog

## Did You Know?

Advertised as "the nation's largest and longest-running horticultural event," the Philadelphia Flower Show is held during the first week of March each year. The theme this year was "Gardens of Tomorrow." Featured exhibits included a two-tiered garden, gardening presentations by experts, a vendor area, floral design area, gardening activities for children, and a make-and-take section. The Show is put on by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society.

Source: [PHS Philadelphia Flower Show](#)

**"Flowers...are a proud assertion that a ray of beauty  
outvalues all the utilities of the world." R. W. Emerson**

## A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

In the 1890's and especially after the turn of the century, many more Americans became involved in importing, growing, and hybridizing Japanese irises. Bertrand Farr of Wyomissing, Pennsylvania advertised 78 varieties of them in 1909. Here is an excerpt from his 1909 catalog: "Our collection is a result of many years of careful selection and study. The descriptions given are taken from the blooms in our own fields, and may be relied upon. It is impossible to get these Irises from Japan true to name, as the Japanese send us nothing but mixtures. The varieties we offer are all distinct kinds, true to the descriptions given. We have retained the Japanese names, and have also numbered our collection, so that customers may order by name or number." In 1911, Farr offered 100 varieties of Japanese irises, including ten English-named ones. They were known as *Iris kaempferi* at this time (and from 1886 until 1985, when they were renamed *Iris ensata*, their original published name from 1794).

The J. F. Lovett catalog of 1911 listed "Imperial Japanese Irises" (*I. kaempferi*) that came directly from the imperial gardens of Japan. They also introduced two marbled varieties. To be continued next month... - SC

Sources: "Japanese Iris Come to America" by Kathleen Sonntag in *AIS 100 Years Bold*, Supplement 2 of 4 to *IRISES: the Bulletin of AIS*, 2020; *The Japanese Iris* by Currier McEwen, 1990: the Japanese Iris Society and the University Press of New England



# **2025 Tucson Area Iris Society Show**

**Saturday, April 19 at Trinity Presbyterian Church  
400 E. University Blvd.**

**Free and open to the public 1- 4 p.m.**

**Potted iris plants for sale**

**Entrance on the east side of the church**