



December 2025



TAIS Newsletter

Tucson Area Iris Society - established 1965

Our 60th year

An Affiliate of the American Iris Society



'Babbling Brook'
(Keppel, 1966)

Dykes Medal winner

Marcusen Sculpture Gardens,
Prescott, Arizona

Photo by Sue Clark, 2025

President's Message

Rain! After our oh-so-dry summer, my iris are really enjoying the best type of irrigation, rain. The weather people say we're about double our average rainfall for November and I'm hoping for that to continue through the winter. The attendance and food at our potluck were excellent and we learned where Pat's iris live and how she grows them. As usual, I ended up with more seeds and plants to try. Speaking of Pat, she has arranged a full year of interesting programs and events. Get a sneak peek at our website: <https://www.tucsoniris.org/events/>.

Happy iris and holidays and see you next year.

- Kevin Kartchner

"Frost upon a windowpane and softly falling snow, warmth beside a crackling fire while biting north winds blow. Books and blankets, steaming tea, The soft glow of an ember. Candlelight and cozy nights - the magic of December."
- Laura Jaworski



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Upcoming Events

No meeting in December. Happy Holidays!

January 10 meeting: "Diversity of Iris" presented by Eugene Zielinski. Location TBA

Birthday Wishes to:

Madeleine Glaser

Cathy Pane-Scire

Becky Clark

Jon Dunnigan

Richard Dreyfuss

William Witschi

And a late birthday wish to Donna Witschi



Source: Galbriat Savaria

November Potluck Meeting



8 Nov 2025 - Seventeen members and a guest enjoyed a potluck and plant exchange at Pat's home in Vail. Kevin revealed the winners of our recent photo contest. See winning photos on p. 5-7. Absent members were missed. Thank you, Pat, for hosting and Joyce for taking photos and notes! - Sue Clark, secretary



Pat Olsen has completed her training and is now a certified iris judge. Congratulations, Pat!

Iris Photos from Members and Family



Wild flag iris at Jody and John Willam's house in New Hampshire



TB iris blooming (reblooming?) in Beaver, Pennsylvania on November 9, 2025. There was a hard freeze on November 11, so it just made it! Photo by Rose Clark

**Happy
Holidays
from TAIS!**



We're on the web:

Tucsoniris.org

Trek Update

by Pat Olsen

The Silent Auction and Raffle organized for our Trek are intended to assist in offsetting hosting expenses. Numerous items generously donated to TAIS by Margie Valenzuela will be featured in both the raffle and silent auction. Requests for additional donations are being sent. All TAIS members are invited to request, recommend, or contribute donations. Prior to submitting a donation request, please consult with a member of the trek committee to confirm that a solicitation has not already been directed to the organization. Pat Olsen will oversee and maintain an updated record of all requests.

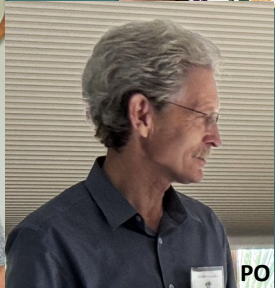
Given that many Trek guests will be traveling to Tucson, we encourage selecting items that are convenient to pack and transport. Iris-themed or Tucson-themed options — such as rhizomes, prickly pear food products, or creations by local artists — are excellent choices. Garden tools, including fertilizer, pruners, hats, gloves, sprayers, and yard art, are also appropriate choices. Donation request letters will be available at our January 10th meeting.



I am making a small quilt with four irises on it to donate. This is how it looks currently. - SC



November Potluck - photos by Joyce Knill & 2 by Pat



Treasurer's Report for November

- submitted by Jim Wilcoxon

BEGINNING BANK BALANCE 17,405.50

Income 0.00

Expenses 150.00 speaker

ENDING BANK BALANCE 17,255.50



Top row: ladybug (by [BIEDRONA](#)), ladybug larva and pupa ([ladybugplanet.com](#)), lacewing larva eating an aphid (by [Eric Steinert](#))

Center row: adult green lacewing (by [Mathias Krumbholz](#)), adult hoverfly (also known as syrphid fly) collecting pollen and nectar (by [Thomas Bresson](#)), and hoverfly larvae consuming an aphid (from [Colour Guide](#) listed at right)

Bottom row: Parasitic wasp approaching milkweed aphid victims (from [Wikipedia video](#)), aphid mummy with exit hole created by wasp larva ([BugGuide](#))

Beneficial Garden Insects, Part XIa: Aphid-eaters

You may already have many of these aphid-eaters quietly patrolling your garden. If not, attract them with some of their favorite plants: marigolds, calendula, sunflowers, daisies, sweet alyssum, yarrow, fennel, and dill. Avoid insecticides, as well.

We've covered most of these beneficial insects over the past two years, but not specifically as aphid-eaters. **Ladybugs** top the list of aphid-eaters, since both adults and larvae munch on the pests. Each ladybug can consume 5,000 aphids in its lifetime. **Green lacewing** larvae consume about 200 aphids a week, earning them the nickname "aphid lions." **Hoverfly** larvae devour hundreds of aphids before becoming adults, at which time they prefer flat-topped flowers like sweet alyssum and dill. **Parasitic or parasitoid wasps** lay eggs in aphids, resulting in swollen, bronze-colored "aphid mummies." (More aphid-eating bugs next month...) - SC

Sources: [BH&G: How to Get Rid of Aphids and Protect Plants](#); [17 Beneficial Insects that Eat Aphids](#); Wikipedia articles: [Coccinellidae](#), [Crysopidae](#), [Hoverfly](#), and [Parasitoid wasp](#); [Colour Guide to Hoverfly Larvae](#)



Winning Entries: 8th-annual TAIS Photo Contest

Nine individuals submitted 89 pictures in three categories this year: Single flower or stem (56 entries), Macro (14 entries), and Miscellaneous (19 entries). Winners were selected by popular vote via email and the winning photos were featured during our November meeting. All prizes are Iris Bucks. Thank you to the entrants, the 13 members who voted, and to our webmaster Tim Valenzuela for handling the submissions!



(Tie): Left: Spuria Seedling by Pat Olsen

Lower left: 'Blutique' by Diane Pavlovich



(3-way Tie): Center: 'My Little Wagon' by Sue Clark

Below right: NOID at Arboretum by Dave Smith

Lower right: 'Autumn Reisling' by Diane Pavlovich



Flower Category



Winning Photos - Macro Category



Above Left: 'Line Drive' by Pat Olsen



Above Right: Walking Iris by Kevin Kartchner



Bottom Right: 'Mariachi Music' by Sue Clark

Winning Photos - Miscellaneous Category



 Above: Sue's Artistic Arrangement by Dave Smith

 Top right: Wild Iris with Chugach Mountains by Linda Briggs

 Below: (tie) 'Revere' by Kevin Kartchner
Angel with NOID by Pat Olsen



TAIS OFFICERS, ETC. FOR 2026

Kevin Kartchner - President

Cindy Long - Vice President

Sue Clark – Secretary, Signatory on Account

Jim Wilcoxon – Treasurer, Asst. Secretary

Pat Olsen & Brian Moon - Programs & Places

Diane Pavlovich - Publicity

Cindy Long & Linda Briggs - Hospitality

Bonnie Else & Susan Schaefer - Door Prizes

Cindy Long & Linda Briggs - Membership

Dave Smith - Photographer

Sue Clark - Newsletter

What to do in the Iris Garden during December:

Maintenance: Monitor for aphids. Spray with water to remove. If you have not done so, create or update a map of your iris beds or containers, just in case labels fade or go missing. Replace faded labels. Names are required when showing irises.

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

Non-organic care: Buy some [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) to get ready for feeding from New Year's through May. These are available at Harlow's, Mesquite Valley Growers, Ace Hardware, Amazon, and other places. TAIS member Susan starts applying this in early January; Kristee on Valentine's Day. - SC



Tip Exchange

Noelle Johnson, the AZ Plant Lady, sent these tips in a recent email message: to save on potting soil (and weight) when filling large pots (24" or taller), you can place empty bottles of water with their lids on in the bottom 1/3 of the pot to take up space. She also mentioned that annuals and succulents need at least 18" of soil for their roots, while shrubs do best in pots at least 24" tall - the depth of soil in these large pots helps to insulate their roots during the hot season. - SC [Source:](#) email of 30 October 2025 from azplantlady.com

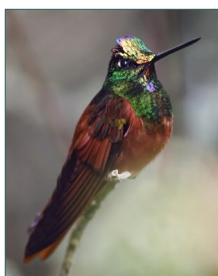
Haiku

My dad and I gazed
As Pennsylvania skies shimmered
With Aurora Borealis

- Sue Clark

Did You Know?

There is a hummingbird with
"iris" in its name - *Coeligena iris*,



the Rainbow starfrontlet. Found in Peru and Ecuador, its usual habitat is along the forest edge, but it has been observed at 13,000' in the Huascaran National Park in Peru. This hummingbird is larger than the ones around us, and ranges from 5-5.5". Note the rainbow effect on its crown.

Sources: Wikipedia article: [Rainbow starfrontlet](#), also known as *Diphogena iris*. Photo by [Nick Athanas](#) on Wikimedia



Iris pumila

"Shivering - grey clouds darken mountain snow."

- Michael P. Garofalo, [Cuttings](#)

A Little Bit of Botany and Iris History

As adventurous British horticulturalists explored the world and sent iris specimens back to England, adventurous iris hybridizers, including Dykes, Foster, and Caparne, made many crosses to see what they could come up with. Goos and Koenemann were on a similar mission in Germany, where they developed a series of smaller hybrids which were very popular in the United States. Chromosome counts indicate *Iris pumila* in their background. The Sass brothers and Grace Sturtevant made their own crosses to create a group of intermediate-sized irises.

A series of events led to increased interest in the Median irises and eventually to the creation of the Median Iris Society. The first of these events involved Robert Schreiner importing seeds of the species *Iris pumila* in the 1930's. Up to this point, "pumila" was incorrectly used to identify any and all dwarf irises. Paul Cook worked with some of the plants that Robert Schreiner grew from the *I. pumila* seeds, and established a race of stable *I. pumila* plants.

Because *I. pumila* is key to the creation and engineering of the Median types of irises, let's pause to look at it here. This small iris grows across the steppes of Eurasia, from Austria through Russia and into Turkey and the Caucasus. Often called the Pygmy iris or Dwarf iris, it is thought to be a naturally-occurring hybrid of [I. pseudopumila](#) and [I. attica](#). Each plant produces a single flower held about 4-8" above the ground. Most of the stalk is a lengthened perianth (tube at the base of the standards and falls), so that the ovary sits upon a very short stem near the rhizome. Colors range from the common purple or yellow, to white, cream, blue, and blended. Falls typically have one dark spot and they often curl under. More on Medians next month. - SC

Sources: "The Median Iris Movement," by Geddes Douglas in *AIS 100 Years Bold*, Supplement 2 of 4 to *IRISES: the Bulletin of AIS*, 2020; Wikipedia article: [Iris pumila](#); Native Plant Trust: [Iris pumila](#); Iris Society of Australia: [Iris Anatomy](#); AIS Iris Wiki: [Iris pumila](#); and the [AIS World of Irises Blog post of 18 Apr 2016](#)