



# MONTEREY BAY NEWS

www.montereybayiris.org

September 2008

Next meeting Friday, 19, 2008  
Doors open 7:00 P.M.  
Meeting 7:30 P.M.  
Place Native Sons Hall  
239 High Street, Santa Cruz

Newsletter of the Monterey Bay Iris Society



Fred Valentine, Elena Laborde and Jim Cummins help make the sales at the Saturday Aptos Farmer's Market a success!

## From The Prez

**O**UR ANNUAL RHIZOME DIG at Joe Ghio's Ranch proceeded smoothly and successfully. With a fine group of rhizomes at the Ranch, augmented by generous contributions of rhizomes from Jim and Irene Cummins and others, we were ready for a major sale. Many volunteers helped to trim, label, sort and display the rhizomes for our Annual Rhizome Sale at the Deer Park Marketplace. The ultimate presentation was quite impressive in quantity, variety and thoughtfulness of the arrangement.

The Annual Sale proceeded without a hitch, but surprisingly with a relatively low turnout of buyers. The missing ingredient was publicity! We had requested a feature story in the Santa Cruz Sentinel, but without success, and were surprised and disappointed to discover that the Sentinel had abruptly discontinued the print version of its garden calendar (there is still an online version, but with uncertain readership). We did have a small display ad in the Sentinel and a positive announcement in my On Gardening column in the Monterey Herald.

The small turnout of buyers left us with an embarrassment of riches. We needed to sell more rhizomes in a hurry! Sheryl and I quickly applied for a sale space at the Aptos Farmer's Market (Saturdays, at Cabrillo College). The Market Manager, Catherine Barr, was extraordinarily accommodating, particularly given our short notice. We secured a large sale space for the following two Saturdays, and, as a non-profit organization, did not have to pay a fee!

Our sales team convened in no time at all, led by new member Fred Valentine, and ably supported by Jim Cummins, Charley Kearns, Joe Ghio, Ann Pike, Brenda Woods, Tom Karwin, Sheryl McEwan, and others that I undoubtedly am failing to recognize.

## 2008 Calendar

**Regular Meeting**  
Friday, September 19 ..... 7:30 P.M.  
**Tall Beardless**  
**Refreshments**  
Crafts

**Regular Meeting**  
Friday, October 17 ..... 7:30 P.M.  
**PCIs**  
**Refreshments**  
Lindstroms

**Regular Meeting**  
Friday, November 21 ..... 7:30 P.M.  
**Program** ..... TBA  
**Refreshments**  
Valentines

**Annual Holiday Dinner**  
Green Valley Grill  
Friday December 19 ..... 6:00 p.m

*Ghio Second Annual Iris Sale!!  
One Hour Iris Surplus sale! Very recent varieties from such hybridizers as Keppel, Blyth, Schreiner and Ghio (of course!). \$5 each. And an infrequent \$10.  
Saturday, September 20th, 2008, 9am to 10am.  
Joe's Home: 1201 Bay Street, Santa Cruz.*

*Newsletter Deadline!!!  
Please get submissions in by Friday October 31st. Please do not turn material in late!*



Through their good works, we placed the remainder of the rhizomes in the hands of several very appreciative gardeners, including (it seemed) many who were new to the world of irises. The final financial outcome was not the best in our colorful history, but it was respectable. Thanks to everyone who made it happen.

We will seriously consider locating future rhizome sales at the Aptos Farmer's Market, which has several good features: large space, lots of buyer traffic, and no fee for participation! If we have the volunteer energy, we might even set up at another Farmer's Market in Monterey County.

Your comments on these new directions are welcome!

🌱 Tom



## CULTURE TIPS

**A**UGUST IS THE MONTH to finish planting and resetting your bearded irises. The following is from the CBRIS September newsletter. As this contains a lot of useful information we are re-printing it here for this month's Culture Tips.

### WHEN TO PLANT

For best results, plant iris rhizomes in July, August or September. The roots of newly planted irises must be well established before the end of the growing season. In areas with mild winters and hot summers, irises may be planted in September or October.

### WHERE TO PLANT

Irises require at least a half-day of sun. Some shade is beneficial in extremely hot climates, but in general irises do best in full sun. Provide your irises with good drainage by planting on a slope or in raised beds.

### SOIL PREPARATION

Irises will thrive in most well drained soils. If your soil is heavy, coarse sand and humus may be added to improve drainage. Gypsum is an excellent soil conditioner that can improve most clay soils. The ideal pH for irises is 6.8 (slightly acidic) but irises are quite tolerant of less-than-perfect soils. Have your soil tested before making corrections. Lime may be added to acidic soils and sulfur may be added to alkaline soils.

### DEPTH OF PLANTING

Irises should be planted so the tops of the rhizomes are visible. Spread roots beneath and tamp soil firmly to anchor the rhizomes until new roots begin to grow. Water well at planting time. In extremely hot climates or with very light soils, cover rhizomes with one inch of soil. It is a common mistake to plant irises too deeply.

### SPACING PLANTS

Planting rhizomes 12 to 24 inches apart is the norm. Close planting results in instant color but makes dividing clumps a necessity in 2 to 3 years.

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## WATERING

Newly planted rhizomes need moisture so their root systems develop. Once established, irises usually do not need watering except in arid regions. Deep watering on occasion is better than frequent shallow watering. **Over watering of irises is a common mistake.**

## FERTILIZATION

Soil type for your area will determine your fertilizer needs. Superphosphate, alfalfa pellets (without salt), bone meal or 6-10-10 fertilizer are recommended. Avoid anything high in nitrogen as it encourages soft rot. A light application in early spring and again a month after bloom is appreciated. Place fertilizer around rhizomes, not directly on them. The fall rains take over.

## Nominating Committee

This is the month we start the process of getting our set of officers for 2009.

The President appoints the chair and two additional members are voted on from the floor. The Committee will report at the October meeting. Further nominations may be made from the floor and the election is held at the November meeting. The new officers are installed in December.

## Beardless Iris

Siberians and the Pacific Coast Natives can tolerate light shade but the Spurias, Japanese and Louisianas demand full sun. Louisianas and Japanese require moist conditions during the summer months while the Pacific Coast Natives enjoy a very low humidity and dry soil no matter how hot it may get. All, except Louisianas, should be planted in a permanent spot where they can remain for many years as they resent being disturbed. Louisianas tend to “creep” and therefore, should be tended to every few years. All are heavy feeders and need to be fertilized regularly.

Some spuria are difficult to establish. Basically spuria need water, manure, and mulch to become established. Begin the planting by making sure the soil will allow for good drainage and is enriched. Then make a hole about two inches below the surface. Add fertilizer (14-14-14 is suggested) to this hole. Then put lots of water into this hole. Finally add the rhizome, cover with soil and mulch. Watering this new spuria rhizome from the top of the soil is not sufficient for establishing a clump. Mulch spuria the first year of growth. Saw dust is the best mulch to use. After the clump is established, the mulch may be removed during the blooming season.

Japanese Iris should be planted 2 to 3 inches deep in a depression which will help catch water. Then fill the depression with organic mulch such as peat moss. After planting or division it is essential to not let the JI dry out. Planting the iris in a depression is important because new JI roots grow in above the old roots.

Japanese Irises prefer a rich soil with ample organic matter, which helps in water retention as well as adding nutrients. The soil pH should be slightly acidic, ideally between 5.0 and 6.5. NEVER ADD LIME, as this will raise the pH and eventually kill the plants.

Japanese Irises are heavy feeders. A liberal application of a balanced fertilizer (10/10/10) in the spring and just before bloom is beneficial. Weak plants will be invigorated with a biweekly foliar and drench application of a water soluble acid fertilizer such as Miracid. The preparation of your iris bed with composted manure and peat will be a good start for your JI, but once planted do not fertilize transplants until they have become established. (The same is true for Siberian Irises)

Japanese iris need to be divided every three to four years when the new roots will be coming out right at the soil level. A clump that has formed a solid ring with a bare center needs to be divided. After the plants have been divided, trim the leaves to a height of four to six inches. Replant the divisions in a depression and it is essential to keep the new divisions wet.

At the time of division, the iris should be moved to a new location where Japanese iris have not grown before. Japanese iris in Japan are commonly grown in pots and it is easier to

replace the soil the iris grow in.

More information about Beardless Iris can be found online. Some sites to look at are:

<http://www.spuriairis.com/culture.htm>

A site for information on hand pollinating Japanese Iris:  
<http://academyhouse.mystarband.net/pollinatingji.htm>

History of Japanese Iris

[http://www.kcis.org/kcis\\_education/et\\_japaneseiris.htm](http://www.kcis.org/kcis_education/et_japaneseiris.htm)



## Annual Iris Sale(s)

We had multiple August rhizome sales this year. August 2 at Deer Park, and August 9 and 16 at the Aptos Farmer's Market. Deer Park sales were \$1,193. The Farmer's Market, August 9 were \$1,249 and August 16 were \$840. Total for 2008 is \$3,282; 2007 Deer Park sales were \$3,143. It took 3 sales this year to match last year. Thanks to all that worked the 3 sales. Many members worked all 3—a special thank you to those. We also have \$729 in income from the Smart Garden Faire and Brenda Woods wrap-up and \$836 from the picnic..



### **Door Prizes**

The club has purchased a variety of Spuria and Japanese Iris. If you have any of the large beardless iris that you wish to share, please bring them.



### **Bloomers**

Bring your rebloomer to share! First drawing goes to those who have brought blooms. Rebloomer drawing starts in August and goes until February.

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