



MONTEREY BAY NEWS

www.montereybayiris.org

February, 2011

Next meeting Friday, 18, 2011
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



Engagement Ring, Ghio, 2011 Introduction

From The Prez

OUR JANUARY MEETING LAUNCHED the new year with a fine turnout of iris aficionados, and an educational presentation on worm compost and worm compost tea by Master Gardener Dennis O'Hara and Sparky Bradley, a commercial worm farmer from Harvesting Solutions in Hollister. There is more information on this subject at harvestingsolutions.com or wormcastingsstore.com.

Planning for our February program is ongoing. Look for an Iris Alert with the latest news.

The MBIS board will convene this month, before the general meeting for February. The board meeting, which has been long delayed as a result of my procrastination, will happen because of the good offices of Elena Laborde, who organized the occasion. Thank you Elena!

The board will discuss a variety of matters, none of which I am pleased to report involve great urgency or anxiety. We will report board actions and recommendations to the members during our February meeting.

Meanwhile, I hope you are enjoying the unusually pleasant recent days, and seeing your irises showing signs of growth for the coming season. We're likely to experience more cold weather before the spring, of course, but this mild spell has encouraged many gardeners to spend additional "off-season" time with their plants.

We will gather for our meeting as usual at 7:00 and convene at 7:30 for our business meeting. I'll see you there! ❀ Tom

2011 Calendar

Monthly meetings are held in Native Sons Hall unless otherwise stated.

Regular Meeting

Friday, February 18 7:30 P.M.
TBA

Refreshments with a
Mushroom Theme
Pat L. & Barbara H.

Regular Meeting

Friday, March 18 7:30 P.M.
Program
TBA

Refreshments St Paddy's Day
Brenda & Larissa

Regular Meeting

Friday, April 15 7:30 P.M.
Program
Mini Show

Refreshments

Volunteers needed

Annual Iris Show

Capitola Mall May 6 to May 7
Set up

Friday, May 5 9:00 P.M.
Show

Saturday 9:00 a.m. - 8:00 P.M.

Sunday 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 P.M.

Regular Meeting

Friday, May 20 7:30 P.M.
Pizza Potluck

Regular Meeting

Friday, June 17 7:30 P.M.
Program
TBA

Refreshments

TBA



CULTURE TIPS

WE ARE COMING OFF A VERY DRY AND WARM January. Quite a contrast from last year's cool and wet January. Hopefully you took the opportunity to Clean up your irises and beds. If you didn't or still have some to do, get to it promptly. Also early February as the new growth gets underway, is the time to fertilize your iris. This is most important and beneficial thing you can do to you plants for the entire year. Use any beneficial fertilizer like 12-12-12, triple 10 or similar. Use whatever is the cheapest. Sprinkle a handful (about half a cup) around each clump. Then scratch it in. Normally your soil is wet enough at this time of year that no watering in is necessary. However if your soil is dry or sandy, apply some water if it doesn't rain.

It takes about 3 weeks for the effect of the fertilizer to show up in your plants. The plants will be sturdier, stronger and greener. At bloom-time the stalks will be stronger, sturdier and the color of the blooms stronger and brighter.

Gophers will be more active now as well. Macabee traps have been my most effective weapon against them. But experience has shown that it is best to trap them as soon as they show up before they get "smart" and seem to learn to unset traps without being caught.

Rust has become a decreasing problem in the last several years. Only reason I can see is our warming climate since this was mainly only a problem here in our coastal climate. While leaf spot seems to have become more prevalent. Leaf spot is bacterial while rust is fungal. Since nearly all sprays are aimed at fungal problems, hardly any are much use against something like leaf spot. The easiest thing is live with it. It will more or less disappear as the days lengthen and the weather warms. 🌸 Joe

Final Call for Dues

MBIS membership 2011 dues due. Members not renewing will be dropped from the roster. We don't want to lose anyone, so please remember to renew. Single dues are \$10, two or more at the same address \$15. If you want your newsletter by mail, add \$5 to your membership. Please pay at the meeting, or send your renewal \$\$ to our treasurer, Charley Kearns, P. O. Box 2361, Los Gatos, CA 95031..

REBLOOMERS

Bring your reblooming irises now through March for show and tell and to drawing for first choice of door prizes.

Refreshments

We need refreshment volunteers for the months of April and June this spring and also for August, September, October and November. Please email Pat Lindstrom, Patlmft@sbcglobal.net, or sign up at the February meeting.

We are going to have a theme for the month's refreshments to make things more interesting! This month's theme is Mushrooms!

Board of Directors 2011

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Origins of Our Bearded Iris

Early references to the iris made mention of its use in medicine or in folk-lore, then in 1576 the Flemish Carolus Clusius, wrote exact descriptions of species iris, including 28 varieties of bearded iris. Caspar Bauhin, 1623, and Linnaeus, 1753, published even more iris descriptions. These books on iris prior to the 1800s described the species of iris that were known at that time and added the new discoveries, all found in the wild or semi-cultivated state.

Iris albicans, first mentioned in 1802, originated in Yemen or Arabia. Sacred flower of the followers of Mohammed, it was carried back from Mecca by pilgrims and spread throughout the Moslem world from North Africa to Spain. It was placed on the graves of soldiers that died in battle. By 1858 it was in gardens in Copenhagen. From Spain these iris were carried to Americas, which, up to that point had no native bearded iris, and are now found growing semi-wild in parts of Mexico.

Iris germanica, the subject of Van Gogh's painting, is the most common of the species iris. Easily naturalized it has been carried and spread like the plague, literally perhaps, considering the custom of putting iris on graves. Grown from ancient times, it is thought to be a native of the Mediterranean. *I. germanica* is so difficult to pollinate that it is often considered sterile, setting seed only in when it has ideal conditions including mild winters; its rhizomes however are difficult to kill and easily spread. Natural hybrids include *I. florentina*, grown in Florence for orris root;



Iris albicans Garden of Mu



Iris germanica Garden of Mu



Iris florentina Garden of Mu



Swertii Iris City Gardens

Amas, from Amasya, Turkey; *Askadensis*, from Russia; *Kharput*, from Harput, Turkey; *Nepalensis*, from Katmandu, Nepal; *Kochii*, similar in form to *Nepalensis*; and *Sivas*, from Turkey. Other iris closely related to *germanica* are *I. belouinii* (Morocco), *I. biliottii* (Turkey), *I. cypriana* (Cyprus), *I. junonia*, *I. Mesopotamia*, and *I. trojana* (Turkey.)

Our modern hybrids come from *I. pallida* (Italy) and *I. variegata* (Hungary). *I. pallida* is a tall graceful plant with a flower of a single color, lavender or slightly darker violet color, always sweet smelling and very hardy. One variety, *dalmatica* or *Princess Beatrice* has been prized for at least 300 years. *I. variegata* is short with yellow standards and veined brownish purple falls. It is thought that the yellow of *variegata* is the source of the yellow coloring current iris. Hybridization of these two plants occurred naturally or with human assistance. Early hybrids include *Favenscens*, a sterile pale yellow; *Swertii*, the first white, blue edged plicata; and *Samucina*, a purple, rose and gold blend.

1840 in Paris, Jacques Lemon issued a catalog of his iris including *Jacquesiana* (named after Jacques his mentor) and *Honorabile*. Other Lemon irises are *Mme. Chereau* (1844), *Faustine* (1858), and *Celeste* (1858). *Honorabile* (1840) was a garden favorite—legend has it that the pioneers took this iris with them as they traveled west, leaving it along the way so now it is found the Midwest.

John Salter of England became one the first to hand pollinate. His *Gypsy Queen* (1859), bronze and gold with purple striped falls and red based foliage, is now difficult to find, but *Queen of May* (1859) can still be added to your garden.

In the early 1800s William Prince, of New York, published a catalog of iris, importing and selling *I. germanica* and other varieties for 25 cents each. Then in the early 1900s Farr printed a color catalog selling the latest iris hybrids for the outrageously high prices of 50 and 75 cents. His introductions included *Quaker Lady*, *Juniata*, *Mt Penn*, *Wyommissing*, and *Anna Farr*.

Thanks to Mike Unser with the Historic Iris Preservation Society and to Greg McCullough of Iris City Gardens for giving permission to use their wonderful photographs. Please do not reproduce them without asking them first.

If you want to find more information about Historic Iris, be sure to visit the Historic Preservation Society website at <http://www.hips-roots.com/>. It has more photographs, information and links to sources for these irises. You can also purchase iris from Iris City Gardens, <http://www.iriscitygardens.com/>, Argyle Acres Iris Garden, <http://www.argyleacres.com/>, and Superstition Iris Garden, <http://community.webshots.com/user/rickt103>. You can see the iris in bloom by visiting Superstition Iris Gardens in Cathey's Valley. Of course, you can also visit the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens in New Jersey.

Sources

Dykes, Willam Rickatson: *The Genus Iris*; Mathew, Brian: *The Iris*; Price, Molly: *The Iris Book*; Warbuton, Bee, editor: *The World of Iris*



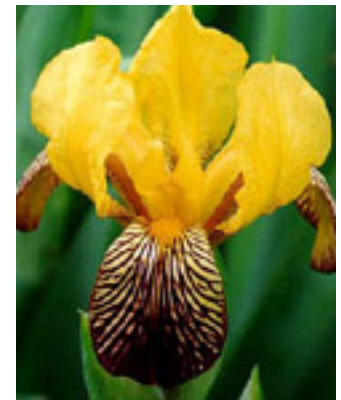
Queen of May Iris City Gardens



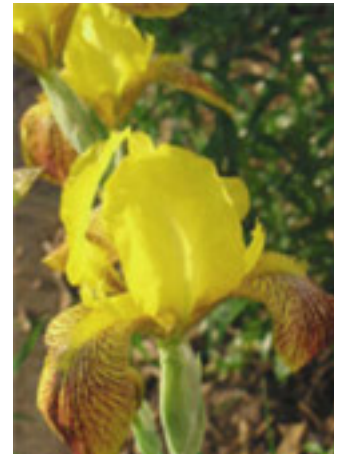
Quaker Lady Iris City Gardens



I. Pallida Garden of Mu



I. Variegata Garden of Mu



Honorabile S. Scheel



Mme. Chereau Iris City Gardens



DOOR PRIZES IRISES



1. **ADVENTUROUS**, M. Sutton, S. yellow; F. violet w/ruby band.
2. **ARTISTIC WEB**, Tasco, Magenta rose luminata.
3. **BETH'S BLESSING**, Burseen, White, gold halo on all petals.
4. **BLACK IS BLACK**, Schreiner, Ruffled black self.
5. **CENTER ICE**, Ghio, White; blue band on F.
6. **CLASS RING**, Keppel, Russet plicata on white base.
7. **CRIMSON CLOUD**, Schreiner, S. white; F. wine purple, white band.
8. **FALLALERY**, B. Johnson, Very lacy bright yellow.
9. **GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH**, Kerr, S. orange; F. black, white around red beards.
10. **JUDY NUNN**, Kerr, Pink and orange blend, violet L&S on F.
11. **MURANO AMBER**, L. Johnson, Deep orange self.
12. **NOTTA LEMON**, Burseen, Good formed Lemon yellow.
13. **SAY YOU WILL**, Baumunk, Oyster white, yellow hafts.
14. **SOLAR GAIN**, Keppel, 09, Dark gold glaciata, IB.
15. **SPICE TRADER**, J. Painter, S. bronze; F. gold overlaid brown.
16. **STAN COATS**, L. Painter, White, turquoise wash.
17. **SUMMER SUNBURST**, Aitken, Intense yellow.
18. **TABLEAU**, Kerr, S, white, yellow halo; F. white, blue band.
19. **TWILIGHT RAPTURE**, Schreiner, Lacy lilac lavender.
20. **UNCONDITIONAL LOVE**, Ghio, Ruffly broad pink self.



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