

For Iris Lovers in the Cold Zones



Aurora

Newsletter of the Can-West Iris Society

Summer 2010

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Update from the Organizing Committee

It has been another banner iris year despite the weather conditions.

The Growing to Show workshop at Sandy Eggertson's was a huge success, despite the weather. Brenda Newton has done an article about it that can be found on pages 2 & 3. As well, the show was a hit with many iris that we do not normally get to see exhibited. It was the first sunny day in weeks! See show results, a few photos and an article by Sandy Proulx on pages 4, 5 & 6.

Coming up is the annual rhizome sale. This year it will be held from Tuesday, August 3rd to Sunday, August 8th so mark your calendars! The sale will be posted in the evening so nobody misses out. We have scored some amazing iris this year and you won't want to miss them. See the sale notice on page 7 for further details.

And in other news, AIS Regional Vice President Kate Brewitt's report is included on page 8 & 9. There have been some new developments which indirectly affect CWIS and our affiliation with the AIS you will want to read about. And, she has provided us with a bit more information on the Victoria 2011 convention hosted by British Columbia Iris Society, too. It is going to be a wonderful experience hobnobbing with the gurus of the iris world that shouldn't be missed. A tentative outline of what is when during the convention has also been included. Who knows when a Canadian group will be hosting again!!! Truly a once in a lifetime opportunity. And, finally, there is an opportunity for those members creatively inclined on page 10.

As always, we are here to listen and to help if you need us. Helpful and constructive criticism is always appreciated. If you'd like to see an article on something specific, let us know and we'll find someone to write it. Or, write it yourself. Articles are always gratefully accepted. We also need someone to volunteer for the member profile for the October issue. If this is something you'd like to consider doing, please contact the editor at jacksonb@brandonu.ca

You can reach the Organizing Committee members at:

B. J. Jackson - jacksonb@mts.net

Jennifer Bishop - Jennifer@dataways.com

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Growing to Show Workshop

(by Brenda Newton)

An open invitation was extended to all CWIS members to attend an iris showing workshop on May 30 at Sandy Eggertson's home. We were to dress accordingly and as there were rain showers the day before and cooler temperatures, rubber boots and light winter jackets worn by many of those attending. Many of Sandy's SDB irises were in full bloom and so the flowerbeds were very colorful. Sandy's soil is very much the Red River gumbo and thus a number of the iris clumps were sitting in water in many of her beds.

The workshop was very informal. Tables were set up in Sandy's garage and we all placed our lawn chairs in a semi circle around the tables.

El Hutchison and BJ Jackson introduced themselves and then showed us how to select a stalk for the iris show. We all went outside to see how BJ and El cut various stems from Sandy's great selection of irises in her flowerbeds. We then went back into the garage, where each of us were given a handout which detailed many points about cutting a stalk for showing, from when the best time of the day is to cut stems to what to look for in regards to branching, disease, flower quality, bud 'towing', where to cut the stalk, etc. The freshly cut stems were critiqued more closely as various points were discussed.

Grooming is very important. Both El and BJ have their own special tools to do this and showed us different tips and techniques to making sure that each of the iris stalks we chose would be groomed properly for showing. Points discussed were things like placement of stalks in the container, sizes of containers, insect activity on the stalks, branches with old flowers, proportioning the stalk to its container, the freshness of the flower, etc.

Once we have transported our chosen stalks to the show, we have to display the irises on the tables. BJ and El stressed how important it was to make sure that the iris you are going to display is correctly named and in its correct category or else it would be disqualified by the judges. Tags were handed out to those in attendance so that they could be filled out by those showing at the show, ahead of time so as to not make the morning of the iris show so rushed.

After the workshop Sandy invited those in attendance to come inside her beautiful home for a lunch and visit. For myself and most in attendance, it was a great day of reviewing iris showing tips but for others attending the workshop showing irises was a new venture and so, this workshop was an excellent day of learning for them.

(Editor's Note: See next page for photos from the day)



Workshop Memories

(photos by Brenda Newton)



B. J. Jackson and El Hutchison. do the 'iris happy dance' after announcing the CWIS now has its own, home grown judges and one to be qualified in 2011 (Ed Czarnecki)



*From left: Sandy Proulx, El Hutchison, Deb Petrie, Wilma Maurice and Sandy Eggertson listen to El explaining how to choose an iris to exhibit...
Check out the fashionable attire!*

Confessions of a CWIS Newbie

(by Sandy Proulx)

I guess I've been a gardener all my life, from the tender age of 3 when I first punched bean seeds into the soil (far too deep) under the direction of my father. Growing up in a farming community, gardening was a way of life for everyone, but most of the time our efforts were focused on growing things we could eat. Later, as an adult living in the city, I wouldn't have felt complete without my own garden, where I grew mostly vegetables, with a few flowers. Then in summer of 2008 I visited Brenda Newton's gardens near Brandon and had, I guess, a sort of gardening Epiphany. For those of you who haven't visited Brenda's place yet, she and her husband Glen have a property of just under 10 acres on the edge of the river valley west of Brandon. Her gardens contain hundreds of different irises, hostas, daylilies, lilies and many other kinds of beautiful plants. This was a revelation to me! Brenda told me about the Can-West Iris Society and I joined just at the time the CWIS was having its annual sale. I bought 9 irises with my first order, and felt like I was on my way. Talk about exciting! I was taking a crash course in acronyms! MDB, SDB, IB, TB, MTB, BB, etc., etc.

In 2009 I attended my first CWIS iris show. I remember waiting and waiting, well past 1 p.m. because the judging wasn't completed yet. Turns out that 2009 was a record year for the number of stems entered in the show. I felt overwhelmed by beauty as I walked slowly past the tables, looking at the displays. It's like your mind can only absorb so much and then it just gets overloaded by the number of colours, shapes and fragrances! I started listening to the comments made about the irises by other people, especially the exhibitors. Why this one only got a 2nd instead of a 1st, why some didn't get ribbons at all, what made the judges pick a certain stem for the Best of Show. Slowly I started to think that even I could learn to be an exhibitor! How exciting that would be.

I bought another batch of irises in the 2009 CWIS sale, plus more directly from Brenda and a few other friends, and then enlarged my garden in the back yard. This spring I dug two more flower beds in the front yard. (Perhaps you see a trend developing.) This year a lot of my 2008 purchases started to bloom. What joy! Spring was early this year, and every morning in May was like an adventure. I would take photos of every single one as it opened and send them out in emails to my family - "Iris of the Day!" I have 3 sisters; one of them made fun of my daily iris emails, but the other 2 started to say things like "I love that one! Where can I get it?"

The 2010 CWIS show was more fun than the 2009. I volunteered! If you want to learn, that is the way to do it. I spent most of the day on my feet, but it was well worth the aches and pains because I was able to observe first-hand how the exhibitors staged their iris, (it also helped that I attended the staging workshop held at Sandy E's house a couple of weeks earlier), then I shadowed Brenda as she clerked while the judges, BJ & El, looked at each stem. Another point of interest was that the selection of irises shown in 2010 was almost completely different from those displayed in 2009. Sadly, the warm spring meant that most of my irises had already finished blooming before the show so I didn't have any stems to enter. (Note to self: need to buy more IBs, BBs, TBs and Siberians for later bloom!) There's always next year though!

In closing, I want to say that while the irises themselves are beautiful in their infinite variety, the aspect that makes CWIS membership so worthwhile is its friendly, kind and helpful members! They patiently answer silly questions, happily look at 'noid' photos and try to help identify them, and will gladly share a division of that iris from their own garden that really caught your eye!

Third Annual Show Report 2010

(compiled by B. J. Jackson, Show Chair)

Best Specimen (Queen of Show): B. J. Jackson for TB Humoresque
AIS Silver Medal and Certificate: Brenda Newton, 14 red ribbons
AIS Bronze Medal and Certificate: B. J. Jackson, 11 red ribbons
Best Canadian Hybridized Stem in Show (sponsored by Chuck Chapman Iris):
B. J. Jackson, SDB Blueberry Tart
Best Historical Variety Stem in Show (sponsored by OnRussell Gardens):
B. J. Jackson, TB Humoresque (Keppel, 1961)
CWIS People's Choice Award (voted by the public): Diana Dhaliwal, TB Supreme Sultan

CWIS Section Certificates:

Section B - SDB - Brenda Newton with Death by Chocolate
Section C - IB - B. J. Jackson with Spiked
Section D - MTB - David Hutchison with Ace
Section F - TB - Brenda Newton with Cranberry Ice
Section G - Non-bearded - E. Hutchison with I. variegata form Reginae
Section J - Historic - B. J. Jackson with Humoresque (Keppel, 1961)

There were 12 exhibitors and a total of 106 stems exhibited which I consider a huge success in a very odd and challenging growing season. The Show Committee wishes to thank all who entered stems, helped throughout the day and generally got things done in a big way. We couldn't have done it without you all and your support. Thanks, too, to Deb Petrie, Brenda Newton and Valerie Dnesiuk for sharing their photos of the event.

B. J. Jackson , CWIS Show Chair 2010



Above: El Hutchison presents AIS Bronze Medal and Certificate to B. J. Jackson; Right: B. J. Jackson presents AIS Silver Medal and Certificate to Brenda Newton.





Top: B. Newton's 14 first place winners; Bottom left: B. J's Best in Show stem of Humoresque; Right: Gwen Jamieson admires the exhibits.

2010 Rhizome Sale Update

(By: B. J. Jackson, Rhizome Sale 2010 Chair)

This year's rhizome sale is going to be great!!! It will run from the evening of Tuesday, August 3rd to Sunday, August 8th or until sell out, whichever comes first.

In addition to some wonderful bearded iris from Snowpeak Iris Gardens (including two of Denise Stewart's new introductions), we have also secured two sources of Siberian iris in Canada that were able to supply us with a very limited number of some real beautiful Siberian iris at a time we can't usually get them.

My thanks to El Hutchison for taking the lead on this year's sale. The Snowpeak boxes are in the mail as I write this and barring a Canadian Border Services snafu, will arrive just in time. Thanks also to members Ted Baker in British Columbia and Shauna Willoughby in Alberta for the wonderful Siberians. And to our members who have donated iris from their own gardens, a very big "Thank You" from the Rhizome Sale Committee!

An added bonus for the sale will be another item that was asked for. You will be able to get a copy of the full "Growing to Show" workshop video that Brenda Newton made for us. The only cost will be for the CDs or DVDs required to burn the video onto. Further information will appear in the sale instructions.

Mark your calendars and remember it is first come, first served. Also remember that we have 50+ members and a limited number of rhizomes available. There is something for everyone and the prices are very reasonable, even for the newest iris.

And a warning, Canada Post charges have gone up once again so we have had to raise the shipping fees. Watch for further details when the sale goes up. Members will receive the instructions and listing direct to their inboxes and it will be posted to the CWIS Open Forum not earlier than 7 p.m. Tuesday, August 3rd.



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More Show Winners

*Left: IB Section
Winner 'Spiked';
Right: MTB Section
Winner 'Ace'
(in the Editor's
gardens)*



American Iris Society
(AIS) Region 16 2010 Summer Report
by Kate Brewitt, AIS Region 16 RVP

Greetings to all CWIS members

This year's AIS National Convention in Madison was wonderful...once we got there! Foul weather in the Chicago/Detroit corridor saw flights delayed and even cancelled for those coming from the east. But despite the travel woes, it was a fantastic convention. And even though the bloom was waning there was still plenty to enjoy, after all, there were over 1,000 irises! And the weather certainly cooperated. Except for one morning of showers, days were warm and sunny. It wasn't until everyone had returned from the last garden on the last day that the heavens opened up and poured!

Like every Convention, the attendees who visit the gardens are asked to vote for their favourite irises in certain categories; iris by a region hybridizer (President's Cup), iris by an out-of-region hybridizer (Franklin Cook Cup) and best median iris (Ben Hager Cup). It's interesting to note the different styles when it comes to evaluating the irises; some feverishly make notes on every square inch of paper, while others casually peruse the gardens making mental notes, perhaps adding the odd scribble to their convention booklet. Either way, the attendees voted as follows;

President's Cup – 'Born to Please' (R. Rogers '06) TB

Franklin Cook Cup – 'Tree of Songs' (Schafer/Sacks '06) SIB

Ben Hager Cup – For the first time there was a three-way tie for this cup.

The Median Society decided to give an award to all three recipients.

'Dallas Mahan' (Mahan '07) MTB

'Ruffled Rascal' (R. Rogers '07) BB

'Survivor' (Miller '07) MTB

Also at this year's convention the AIS Board of Directors' decided to make a change to the alignment of Region 16 (Canada) with the rest of the regions in the US. The following motion was passed unanimously at this year's Board of Directors' Meeting;

...that Region 16 be dissolved effective 6 November 2010 and AIS members and Affiliates in Canada be assigned as members of AIS Regions as specified below

Yukon and BC to Region 13

NWT, Nunavut Territories, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba to Region 21

Ontario and Quebec to Region 2

Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island to Region 1

What does this mean for CWIS? Your society will now have access to a functioning AIS Region. Region 21 has over 150 members who live in North and South Dakota, Iowa and Nebraska. This area encompasses USDA zones 3b to 5b. Within the region there are eight (8) affiliates. They have a full Board of Directors plus the following activities and benefits,

1. Spring Garden Tours – this year's was held in Scottsbluff, NE.
2. General Membership Meeting weekends which include garden tours, Judges' Training, speakers, plant sales and auctions. This year's is being held in August in Kearney, NE.

3. An email robin – a yahoo group to discuss all aspects of iris culture with other iris growers in similar climatic conditions as well as news and events from local clubs. <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/region21-iris>
4. A beautiful colour news bulletin: AIS members will receive twice annually (Spring and Fall) a hard copy of the region's 30-page bulletin which includes affiliate reports, articles on irises and regional gardens. An additional copy goes to each affiliate.
5. A Library – books and tapes on irises can be 'checked-out' to read and use.
6. A Youth program.
7. A pool of almost 20 AIS judges who may be willing to help judge your shows and provide Judges' training.

But, this realignment isn't meant to suggest that CWIS limit its interaction to Region 21. Far from it! It's simply meant to give those who are interested in expanding their 'iris' horizons a way to do so. CWIS will hopefully continue to work with other iris groups in Canada as well as those in other parts of the US.

In the coming months, the CWIS OC will work with me and Region 21 on the smooth transfer of CWIS from one region to another. **This realignment will be effective November 6, 2010.**

And with the 2010 AIS National Convention behind us we should all be looking forward to the 2011 AIS National Convention being held in Victoria, BC. . The following link will take you to the slide presentation given by Ted E. Baker, BCIS President and Convention chair at the Awards Dinner this year in Madison...just to give you a taste of what you can hope to see! http://www.slideshare.net/aissshare/victoria-bc-notes-embed?from=share_email. Otherwise, registration forms are available on the BCIS website, www.bc-iris.org. You can book your room at The Empress hotel on-line through <https://resweb.passkey.com/go/ais>. If you book before February 28, 2011 you will be eligible for a draw for one of two free nights' accommodation. We hope you will join us for the fun!

If you are interested in learning more about the AIS, you can find more information on their website at www.irises.org. You can also email me at aisrvpl6@irises.org.



AIS Convention 2011

Hosted by British Columbia Iris Society

Program Schedule

(Ed Note: Following information may be useful in planning your vacation!!!)

Sunday May 29th/Monday, May 30 – AIS/Section Board meetings.
 Tuesday, May 31st – morning - Section Programs
 Tuesday, May 31st – afternoon - Butchart Gardens
 Tuesday, May 31st – evening - Welcome dinner.
 Wednesday, June 1st – morning and afternoon – Garden Tours
 Thursday, June 2nd – morning and afternoon – Garden Tours
 Thursday, June 2nd – evening – optional 'Geek Dinner'
 Friday, June 3rd – morning – Garden Tours
 Friday, June 3rd – afternoon - Section Programs
 Friday, June 3rd – evening - Awards dinner
 Saturday, June 4th – all day - Optional Tour to Salt Spring Island

These Iris sections may have programs of talks, slides, and displays which will be open to all, not just to members of the relevant section.

- Aril Society International
- Dwarf Iris Society
- Reblooming Iris Society
- Society For Japanese Iris
- Society For Louisiana Irises
- Society For Pacific Coast Native Irises
- Society For Siberian Irises
- SIGNA (Species Iris Group of North America)
- Spuria Iris Society

There will also probably be the 13th annual ‘Geek Dinner’ either Wednesday or Thursday evening. The real fun of this event is the Geek Dinner Auction where you get to bid on new iris introductions, gift certificates from commercial iris growers, and iris themed items. The proceeds from the auction go directly into the American Iris Society Electronics Services fund that sponsors such things as the digital projector for slide shows and the online iris databases.

The Organizing Committee is looking at having a logo designed with a view to making up some promotional items that are uniquely CWIS.

If you would like to take a whirl at putting something together for us to look at, please feel to let the Organizing Committee know. We have no pre-conceived notions as to what the logo should look like so let your creativity reign. There is no deadline set but we wanted the membership to start thinking about what they’d like to see in such items.

If you’d like to talk to us about it, please feel to contact any of us. Contact information on page 1.