For Iris Lovers in the Cold Zones

Aurora

Can-West Iris Society

Summer, 2008 | Volume 2, Issue 2

Update from the Organizing Committee

By: B. J. Jackson

We survived! There were a few times during our most excellent weekend June 6th to 10th, 2008 that I wasn't sure I would, but we survived and we all did a stellar job! This issue will concentrate on the weekend's events primarily and will contain lots and lots of photos of people, the show and more people. For where would we be without our people??? Nowhere is where. Before I go any farther, I want to extend my sincere thanks and those of the entire Organizing Committee once again to all who came out to support the show, to cut their iris in the rain or very early in the morning and exhibit them. For a very first time effort we put on one heck of an event! I know I will not soon forget it or the support shown by our members and friends. Our thanks, too, to the members and friends who volunteered and gave of their time to do whatever needed doing. Since my attention was usually directed elsewhere throughout, that people just stepped right in and did the job that needed doing still amazes me.

Sandy Ives and wife Maureen Mark, our guests from ON, had an intense weekend with Sandy providing 10 hours of Judges Training, Maureen providing garden judging training as well as a public presentation, judging the show and conducting a mock show. You would think they would want to take some time off to recover but not so..... I hear they are in Kalamazoo MI this weekend for the Japanese Iris convention!

Kate Brewitt has provided a great report on the Austin TX AIS convention from earlier this year, too, that is included inside. You will also find the press release announcing the 2011 convention in Victoria BC as well as a profile on one of our members, Sandy Eggertson, a big winner at the show. Oh yes, you will also find a short piece about the upcoming rhizome sale, can't forget about that now, can we??? And, last but not least, our favorite columnist is back with the Iris Friend or Foe article winding up the issue. Ed is back and the information he presents is fascinating. Everything you always wanted to know about all things creepy crawly. For future issues if you have something you'd like Ed to write about, just let me know and send in a photo is you have one. Ed will do the rest.

The iris season is pretty much over for 2008 but sit back, grab a favorite beverage and prepare to be enchanted by visions from the 1st Annual Can-West Iris Society Show and associated events.

By all means, let me know what you think and contact me with any ideas you might have to do with anything that pertains to iris and the CWIS.

You can contact any of us by writing:

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Lone Star State AIS 2008 Convention

April 14–19, 2008 - Austin, Texas

by Kate Brewitt, AIS Region 16 RVP and Terry Laurin, Assistant RVP.

Not being native to Texas, we had no idea what an April day in Austin would be like. All we did know was that it was going to be warmer than the 10C we were experiencing in our home town. As luck would have it, the weather was apparently better than we could have asked for. A local couple informed us that at this time of year, weather is unpredictable in Texas. We were lucky to have 80F – 85F/27C – 30C and no rain…well, one night it rained but the tornados missed Austin! I think that's what they meant by 'unpredictable'.

As with all AIS National Conventions, the week started with Board meetings. Starting on Wednesday each Section presented a program. Some had power point presentations; others had question and answer periods. If you ever go to a Convention, these programs are time well spent. The Reblooming Society had a program featuring three iris hybridizers. We had the pleasure of hearing Terry Aitken, Richard Richardson and George Sutton speak on hybridizing iris. Terry and George spoke from the perspective of professional hybridizers while Richard, who called himself a 'white-collar' hybridizer, said he crossed what he liked and had more fun. Another night, the Tall Bearded Iris Society had a forum with Keith Keppel, Paul Black and Barry Blyth. Each hybridizer gave a presentation on the iris traits they are experimenting with; everything from yellow ground plicatas to small-flowered TBs. It will be very exciting to see what each of them introduces in the next few years.

With business behind us we looked forward to three days of garden visits. The Host Gardens were made up of three private residences, a community centre, a church, a tourist information centre and a garden centre. These gardens openly welcomed the Conventioneers, supplying food and drink at every stop. (Note: the cinnamon sticky buns at the Murphy Garden were to die for!) Knowing it was still two weeks before an iris would be blooming in our garden; it was wonderful to see the displays of TBs, Louisanas, Spurias and other iris.

During the evening, various activities were planned for the Convention attendees. Friday night was the popular Geek Dinner…it's an auction and not a dinner for computer geeks. This is where you get to bid on gift certificates from commercial iris growers, iris themed items and, the "piece de resistance", a petit-point broach in an iris motif donated by Jill Bonino, AIS Treasurer. The proceeds from the auction go directly into the AIS Electronics Services fund that sponsors such things as digital projectors and the online iris databases.

At other times during the day, and night, there was a Silent Auction. Here you could bid on everything from old copies of the AIS Bulletin to gift certificates. There was also a boutique where you could buy all things iris from jewelry to mouse pads. This was a fun place to go when you had a spare moment and a few dollars burning a hole in your pocket.

And as with every Convention, Judges' Training sessions were given. Dr. Epperson gave his always entertaining talk on Awards and Ballots plus there was another session on Arilbreds, a topic not likely to be taught in Canada. Some of us had the pleasure of receiving show training from George Sutton. George admitted he loved training and it showed. On Saturday we returned to the Murphy Garden and the Natural Gardener to spend time getting at least an hour of garden training.

After all the garden visits were complete, and before the Awards banquet on the last evening, everyone was asked to vote for their favourite iris in certain categories. The following are the results of the voting;

Ben Hagar Cup (Best Median Iris) – 'Crow's Feet' (Black 2006 - BB)
President's Cup – (Best Iris from a Region 17 Hybridizer) 'Jean Queen' (Burseen 2005 - TB)
Franklin Cook Cup (Best Iris from a hybridizer NOT in Region 17 – 'Gypsy Lord' (Keppel 2006 -TB)

And as another great AIS Convention came to a close, we said our goodbyes to our new found friends and went home to our respective States and Provinces. Region 17 did a wonderful job putting this Convention together. The 2009 National Convention is in Kansas City, MO. I hope some of you will be able to attend. For details you can go to www.kciris.org/AIS_Convention.





Photo left courtesy K. Brewitt;
photo above courtesy "tmtigger" used with permission

Did You Know:

The iris family is closely related to the lily and amaryllis families, and the difference is the number of stamens??? Lilies and amalyllis have six stamens wheras iris have just three.

2008 Rhizome Sale Information

I know it is late and I know everyone has been wondering so..... here is an update on the rhizome sale. This year we have reached an unprecedented agreement with Mid-America Iris Gardens for modern TB iris to trial on the prairies. Several retail between $10 and $30 apiece but we will be offering all of them for just **$5 each**. Yes, you read that right.... just **$5** for new and newer tall bearded introductions. You may want to have a look at their website located at http://www.mid-americagarden.com/ to see what's there so you will be ready when the list is posted. This is a great way to trial some cutting edge breeding for just a few dollars investment. It is an opportunity not to be missed!

We have also made a special purchase from Trails End Iris in Ontario, so have a look there, too, in anticipation. Their site is at http://www.trailsendiris.com . In addition, there will be offerings from CWIS members and friends at very reasonable prices.

So, as soon as I know what we actually have and the numbers and varieties are figured out, the descriptions, pricing and photos tracked down, the sale notice will go up on the website in the "members only" area first. After three days, the notice will then be posted on the Open Forum list for all to see. We will have photos for every single variety being offered, too. Members get first choice. If you've forgotten or lost your username and/or password, please get them again from Debby Nelson, because it is going to be fast and furious with limited numbers and members vying for their very favorites. If things work out as planned, the sale will go up the week of July 28th.

Show Weekend Report!

By B. J. Jackson

(Editor's Note: Photos of winners and various events will appear following this article)

The weekend started with American Iris Society Judge's Training at El Hutchison's home near Ste. Anne. The training was given by Ottawa judging instructor Sandy Ives who also judged the show the next day along with his wife Maureen Mark. Thankfully it was raining so the beautiful gardens weren't a distraction, at least not too big of one. There were three CWIS members of us who did the total 10 hours training including myself, Brenda Newton and Ed Czarnecki, while El did garden judging and one classroom session. A unique presentation at the Civic Centre was given by Sandy Ives on Friday evening. He called it his modified 'iris diatribe' and it was great. We all enjoyed it immensely and I just wished more members had chosen to participate.

Saturday, June 7th 2008. Show time!!! The day dawned clear and sunny but I was firmly convinced that with the weather the previous day, no one was going to have anything to bring in to exhibit. But, as the clock ticked by, members starting trickling in with their stems. We ended up with 110 stems entered by 11 exhibitors. These represented 63 different cultivars from all of the classes we can grow here on the prairies except the beardless classes. In addition to these identified cultivar classes, we also had a division for the NOIDs in which there were 23 entries and 4 first place ribbons given. And, the lengths some of us had to go to to get those blooms open! Believe me when I say that gardeners, whatever the plant, can be very creative.

Because of the size of the show, the judging took extra time and we ended up behind schedule for opening to the public. It was totally awesome to see people waiting to get in and see the show when the doors finally opened.

The volunteers at the sale table were kept extremely busy. Those iris were flying off the table fast and furious. And, when I finally remembered to hook up the lap top and run the slide show I had put together of the sale iris, they sold like hotcakes again. We didn't sell out but we came darn close!

Susan LeBlanc and Debbie Innes did an awesome job on the display arrangements, too. The shutters were clicking on many cameras that afternoon trying to capture their beauty. I certainly know quality when I see it and these ladies had it in spades!

Volunteers at the Membership/Education table sold memberships, distributed ballots and talking to the folks who dropped by to see the results of the judging.

And, the winners are.....

Starting our with the horticultural sweepstakes awards from the American Iris Society, the Silver Medal award for most first place ribbons awarded in the show was won by Sandy Eggertson. Just behind Sandy, winning the Bronze Medal award for the second most first place ribbons awarded was El "the iris queen" Hutchison. The award for the best specimen from the section exclusively for iris hybridized by a Canadian was won by Winnipeg member Len Giesbrecht with 'Eramosa Miss', a Border Bearded iris that was hybridized by Chuck Chapman. Irene Hyland's entry, 'Spot of Tea', a Miniature Dwarf Bearded specimen hybridized by Paul Black won the section award for best modern specimen. And, finally, (drum roll please.....)

(continued on next page)

Deb Petrie took home the top prize, the Queen of Show award for the best specimen in the show. Deb's winning entry, 'Star Woman', an Intermediate Bearded class iris hybridized by Marky Smith and introduced by Terry Aitken of Vancouver, Washington. And, not satisfied with just one award, Deb also took home the CWIS People's Choice award for the one and only Tall Bearded iris in the show, the historic iris 'Prairie Sunset' hybridized by Sass in 1936. After 60 years this iris is still taking home awards. Now that is longevity! This award was determined by show visitors votes.

When I spoke to each winner in turn, each was reluctant to take the credit for the beautiful iris they exhibited. Without exception, Deb, Sandy E, Len, and Irene credited Mother Nature for their success and considered themselves as minor players. Lots of sun, soil with good drainage, attention to detail in grooming for the show and careful transportation to the show were mentioned. Regardless of what they say, they all deserve credit for a job well done for their achievements.

Saturday evening a garden gathering for members at the home of Jennifer Bishop was held. The food was great, the people were wonderful and the conversation was excellent. Jennifer sure knows how to put on a party! And, amazingly enough, the weather cooperated! It was quite pleasant in her backyard where the major awards were handed out and the show tallies announced.

Sunday was a relatively easy day for most of us. A number of us visited El's garden and viewed her wonderful iris display. Despite the torrent from Friday's rains, the gardens were immaculate. Unfortunately, El did not really get a chance to visit since she and Sandy Ives were doing a mock show as part of her judge's training.

Monday morning it was back to classroom Judges Training for my fellow students and I. It was a long day. And, as I was driving home, I was thinking of all that we, the Can-West Iris Society, had achieved over this one short but very intense weekend and in our short existence. I was thinking of all the exhibitors who took up the challenge of making this first show the best it could be. I was thinking of all the volunteers who came to help out with whatever needed doing when-ever it needed doing. I was thinking of the credibility in the iris world we have attained by being able to stage such a weekend with a relatively small group. But most of all I was thinking **CWIS rocks**!!!

My thanks one more (for the final time) to all who participated in whatever capacity, our members and my friends. Most especially, thanks to the other members of the Organizing Committee. Finally, thanks to Jennifer for a place to rest my weary head and to Gerry for his patience with us both.

Show Arrangements.....*by the talented Susan LeBlanc and Debbie Innes*









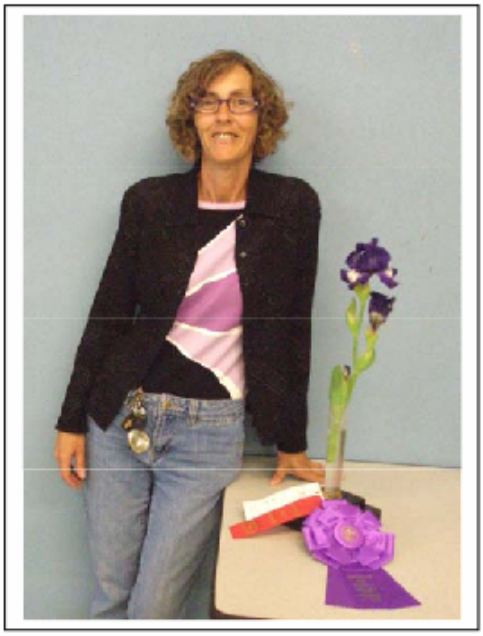
Show Winners



Sandy Eggertson, AIS Silver Medal Horticultural Sweepstakes Winner for most 1st place ribbons



Irene Hyland, Section Winner with her winning stem of MDB Spot of Tea



Deb Petrie with Queen of Show stem of Star Woman IB



Len Giesbrecht with section winner Eramosa Miss BB stem

More People Pictures

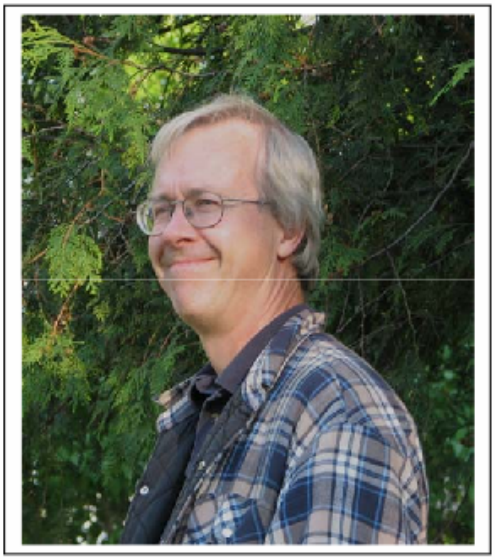


El Hutchison, winner of the AIS Bronze Medal, Horticultural Sweepstakes.

Photo submitted by El Hutchison



Gerry and Wilma Maurice at the garden party



Sandy Ives, Show Judge and Judges Training Instructor



Len Giesbrecht and Ed Czarnecki at the garden party

All photos by BJ unless otherwise indicated

SANDY EGGERTSON:
A PROFILE

Editor's Note: Since Sandy was the AIS Silver Horticultural Sweepstakes winner at the CWIS June show, I thought members might be interested in just who this excellent iris grower is and more about her gardens. Hence, a profile she put together for your reading pleasure.

I was always more or less a "gardener" having grown up on the farm in St. Andrews. Over the years when I lived in Winnipeg. first in St. Vital. and then from 1986 to 1999 in North Kildonan, I had veggie gardens (the standard large plot type garden that always needed roto-tilling). and your standard perennial gardens. which included pieces of everything from my mothers "cottage" garden. We simply called them the - "yellow iris, purple iris, tiger lilies. red peonies. and white peonies". Also. there were hollyhocks, daisies and larkspur and various other self-seeding biennials.

In July 1999 I moved back to SI. Andrews to a three-acre lot which was situated right on River Road with the entire property on a hill. There was not one garden (veggie, flower or otherwise) anywhere to be seen. The only flowers on the property were peonies pink, red & white. The entire rear of the acreage was "grass" which had been overtaken by dandelions.

Too late of course to plant anything that year, I started planning. It was a challenge, because everything would have to be tiered or retained in some fashion or it would simply wash away down the hill. That's when I discovered raised beds. A couple of years prior, my sister had converted to raised beds so it was a natural progression. That fall, the first of the vegetable gardens were constructed. They have now expanded to 11 beds. ranging in size from 8 x 8 to 8 x 24. I do lots of canning - pickles. tomatoes. Salsa, (even ketchup) etc.

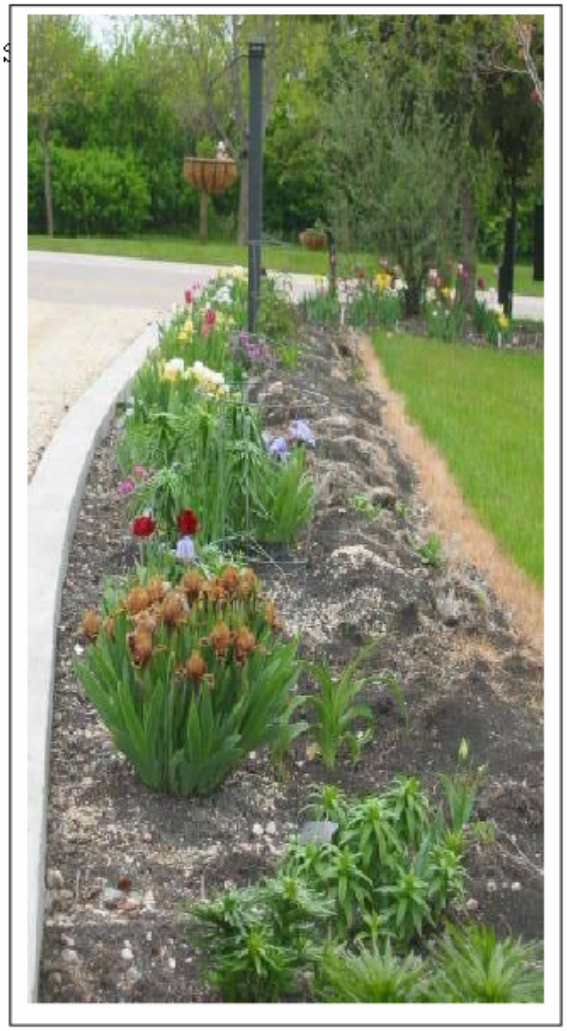
I was still considering what to do about perennial beds, when my path crossed with my friend Sandy V late in 2001. She told me it was high time I was introduced to the "Cold Zone" and my first downtown lunch included Sandy V, Jennifer B. EI H. and Naomi. W. With that crowd it didn't take long to become introduced to the wondrous world of iris. lilies. hosta. etc. It didn't take long to get my first ;VIDI3's from EI H .... in 2002 I placed my first order to Chuck's and the same year bought my first lilies from the MRLS Sale in September. I was hooked - and I started digging. Every year new beds are planned. dug.

amended. so they are ready for the next spring. Sometimes there are larger projects. for instance:

- Planting 200 bare- root Amur maples (which has now turned into a lovely hedge. and which I now intend to maintain at about 4-1/2 to Sleet tall. It "snakes" along towards the bottom of the hill to what I call the "Zen" garden" Revamping the pond in the "Zen" garden - This year the pond was removed and will be replaced with pond liner and a dry river bed
- Constructing the nursery beds
- Starting a small orchard
- De\'eloping a shade garden amongst the tall pines at the bottom of the hill. There is an arbor entrance and a natural clearing. where there is a table and benches. bird bath. bird feeders.
- Reconstructing the grape trellises after they were destroyed in the storms last year
- Spreading 15 yards of mulch on the pathways between the raised beds
- Digging the driveway beds and last year doubling their width
- Constructing the raised "root boxes" for all manner of squash and melons

Since I got my first "named" iris in 2002. my collection has expanded to just over 200 (not including this year's orders). I haven't done a head-count on lilies. but it's probably nearing that mark as well. I started ordering daylilies the last couple of years. There arc also numerous hostas. a myriad of other perennials. to numerous to list. As I see the look of the flower beds over the year. I keep adding things with the goal of having something in bloom from 1\1ay to \\henever.

Whcn I first started planting iris. I had several losses the first two years. either heaving. rotting. not enough sun. etc. etc. Through the help of initially the Cold lone members. and now CWIS. I think my techniques for planting. and maintaining the iris has markedly improved.





At left, the East side driveway bed under construction. Above, iris nursery beds under construction. A work in progress. Sandy reports that the beds were doubled in width (you can see where nothing is planted) last fall, and just getting ready for new plantings this fall. Photos: S. Eggertson

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2011 AIS National Convention

Press Release

American Iris Society (AIS) will hold their 2011

National Convention in Victoria, BC.

The British Columbia Iris Society (BCIS) has graciously offered to host the AIS 2011 National Convention in Victoria, BC.

Salt Spring Island, BC, July 2, 2008: It was announced at this year's AIS National Convention held in Austin, Texas in April that the 2011 AIS National Convention will take place in Victoria, BC. It will run from Monday, May 30th to Saturday, June 4th, 2011. The event will be hosted by the British Columbia Iris Society

There is a lot of planning to be done in the next three years. If you would like to contribute to the excitement of organizing an AIS National Convention, please contact Ted Baker, Convention Chair. Distance is not an issue. People from Wisconsin and Ontario are already helping out. Ted can be contacted at tedebaker@shaw.ca or his telephone number on Salt Spring Island is 250-653-4430. Additional information can be found on the BCIS website, www.bc-iris.org or the AIS Region 16 website, www.aci.on.ca/~kbrewitt/AIS_Region_16 . As a reminder to our US visitors, passports will be required to return to the US so get one early and avoid last minute delays!

BCIS has selected four wonderful public gardens to host the guest iris. The featured gardens will be;

- *Finnerty Gardens* on the grounds of the University of Victoria.
- *Glendale Gardens and Woodland* operated by the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific Society. (HCP).
- *Government House Gardens* on the grounds of the home of the Lieutenant Governor who is the representative of Her Majesty The Queen of Canada in the

Iris-Friend or Foe

By: Ed Czarnecki



The organism shown in the photograph (taken by Jodi Horne) in AB last summer is Slime Mold, a broad term often referring to around six groups of Eukaryotes (organisms whose cells are organized into complex structures enclosed within a membrane). Eukaryotes include animals, plants and fungi. Prokaryotes in contrast usually lack a cell nucleus or any other membrane bound organelles. Examples would include bacteria, blue-green algae and mycoplasma - these are found in some of the harshest environments on earth like the Antarctic, sulphur springs and ocean deep sea vents.

The various groups of slime molds include:
Myxogastria/Myxomycetes/Myxomycota : plasmodial or coenocytic slime molds.
Protostelia : smaller plasmodial slime molds.

Dictyosteliida : unicellular slime molds.

Acrasidae : similar to above but with uncertain taxonomy.
Plasmodiophorids : parasitic protists which can cause cabbage club root disease and powdery scab tuber disease.

Labryinthulomycetes : slime nets.

Slime molds feed on microrganisms in decaying vegetable matter and can be found in soils, on lawns and in the forest commonly on deciduous logs. They are also common in leaf mold and mulch. When the food supply wanes slime molds transform into fruiting bodies or sporangia. Most slime molds are smaller than a few centimeters however the very largest reach a size of 30 square meters making them the largest undivided cells known. Many have bright colours such as brown, yellow and white.

For science studies, slime molds like Physarum polycephalum are useful for studying cytoplasmic streaming. In addition slime mold aggregation is a natural process that can be approximated with partial differential equations (anyone for calculus?). In some cellular slime molds, up to 125,000 individual cells aggregate and flow together, forming a multicellular mass called a pseudoplasmodium that resembles a slug and crawls about before settling in a location with acceptable warmth and brightness. (wonder if it would like a couch?).

There are about 65 cellular and 500 known plasmodial slime mold species, found in forests and sometimes lawns throughout the world.



Susan LeBlanc and Gerry Maurice checking out the exhibits (Photo courtesy Len Giesbrecht)



Deb Petrie;s People's Choice winning stem, TB Prairie Sunset

Did you know????

... that now is the time to start recording your 2008 favorites for the CWIS Second Annual Popularity Poll?

.... that we will be asking for your top 5 picks in each of the bearded iris classifications for the next newsletter due out in October 2008?