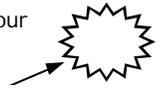


A RED DOT here means your
membership renewal
is NOW DUE.



BCIS

British Columbia Iris Society

Bulletin

Vol. 13, No. 1, Winter 2018

*Content, Editing: Richard Hebda
Editing, Production: Joyce Prothero
Dispatch: Ted Baker*

'Iris, the flower for all seasons'

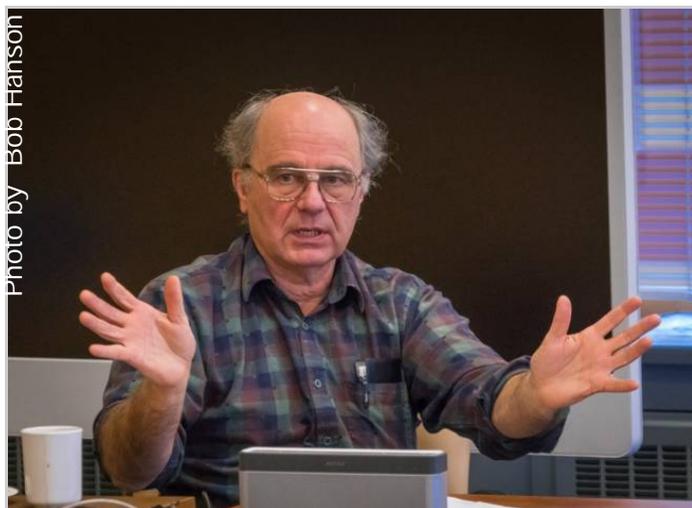
2017 DYKES MEDAL WINNER



MONTMARTRE (2008 Keith Keppel).
TB 33" (84cm), early through mid-season bloom.
Honorable Mention 2010, Award of Merit 2012,
Wister Medal 2014, American Dykes Medal 2017.

President's Message Winter 2018:

Praising the Median and The Rainbow Goddess



Richard J. Hebda, BCIS President

Welcome to the 2018 BC Iris Society (BCIS) Bulletin. BCIS in catching up with the times has decided to produce one yearly colourful bulletin and then connect more frequently with our members via an electronic newsletter. The Bulletin's purpose as always is to communicate and exchange information about irises. Using this well-illustrated hard copy format, we hope it will give you something to take and share hand-to-hand with other gardeners and entice them to join our society. I take my iris magazines including old bulletins to bed with me. The photographs and information help calm my mind and get me thinking about what other varieties I can grow in my garden and how I can grow them better.

In this issue Past President Ted Baker shares some of his favourite irises with the hope of convincing you to come to our AGM on March 24th at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific. He will be talking about his experiences in amassing what was likely the largest iris collection in Canadian History. And yes, he will show stunning pictures of many more favourites.

In an effort to conserve some of Ted and Sonja's collection, I briefly describe my trip to Salt Spring Island, before Ted's move, to bring many Median Irises to my garden in the Saanich Peninsula. Some of Ted's excellent photos are included with this article.

I also begin a series of articles about the Historic Iris Preservation Society (HIPS) of which BCIS recently became a member. All irises become historical after thirty years and some of our favourites are already in that category. Further contributions will appear in the BCIS electronic newsletter.

Ian Efford, a new BCIS director and an outstanding gardener and irisarian, describes and illustrates raising iris from seed in his garden near Duncan. His comprehensive information makes it seem so easy I cannot resist, though I am not sure I could deal with 1000 seedlings. And many of the seeds available will certainly yield some of the stunning shorter species of iris as well as TBs.

And from Bill Dumont, our Secretary-Treasurer, news of the launch of **The Rainbow Goddess**, our new quarterly digital newsletter.

"BCIS is pleased to announce our new Digital newsletter - **The Rainbow Goddess** - that will be circulated via email to all members quarterly and be loaded onto our website www.bcirissociety.com and our facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/bcirissociety>

facebook.com/
britishcolumbiairissociety

If you have articles or news items for **The Rainbow Goddess** please forward to wedumont@hotmail.com and me@brendaburch.ca”

Please check our website and **The Rainbow Goddess** on a regular basis and read about upcoming projects such as an iris workshop at Government House, Victoria in May.

To wrap up, here are two median irises, both technically Intermediate Border Irises (IB), that grow exceptionally well in my garden. I got them from Ted Baker and both are Aitken introductions. *Maui Moonlight*, a multiple award winner, was introduced in 1987. It is a vigorous grower and literally shines in the garden. *Dragonmaster* increases strongly and illustrates the opposite end of colour intensity being very dark red nearly black. It was introduced in 2004. Both are wonderful varieties of middle height to precede and compliment the TBs we enjoy so much.

Enjoy the Bulletin; please come to the AGM in March and bring your friends.

Richard



Maui Moonlight single flower (1987 Aitken)



Dragonmaster single bloom (2004 Aitken)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BCIS AGM and Guest Speaker Ted Baker on his favourite irises. **Saturday, March 24, 2018, 10am-2pm.** Couvelier Hall, Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, 505 Quayle Road, Saanich. Details: p5 this Bulletin, or contact Richard Hebda or Bill Dumont.

2018 Conventions

American Iris Society (AIS). April 8-14. New Orleans, Louisiana. Convention Chair: Paul W. Gossett, pwgossett@yahoo.com. Details: www.2018bcisconvention.org/registration.html

AIS Region 13 Spring Meeting. May 11-13. Salem, Oregon. Convention Chair: Susan Schouten, sschouten@canby.com. Details: p19 this Bulletin, and www.oregontrailirissociety.com

Society for Siberian Irises + Species Group of North America + Region 4 Spring Meeting. May 25-26. Hunt Valley, Maryland. Convention Chair: Carol Warner: 410-374-4788, draycott@qis.net. Details: www.socsib.org

Abkhazi Plant Sale.

Iris for sale, and pots of Pacific Coast Iris in bloom. It's coming – a May weekend. Watch for date! Abkhazi is near Fairfield and Foul Bay Roads, Victoria.

Trips Available

European Tour This is a final call for our 2 week European Tour in May 2018. I am very pleased to tell you that we have secured an excellent experienced guide- Kitty Wiegert who has done many years of German and Dutch garden tours. Kitty has helped to refine our tour itinerary, and details on the tour can be found at www.DumontEvents.com

The deadline for your response and \$1100 deposit is February 5, just a few weeks from now. If you are sending in a deposit to Marlin Travel please let me know as well. Total cost is \$5100 for double and \$6300 for single accommodation and that includes most costs for the tour except airfare to Amsterdam and from London at the end.

Because this is a custom one-of-kind tour, it includes sights, gardens and experiences that are impossible to duplicate. Past Dumont Tour participants (UK, New Zealand, California, Oregon, South Africa, Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island) consistently rate these tours very highly for their attention to detail, fun and adventure, memorable experiences, organization, fabulous gardens, friendly people, great food and value for money.

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VIRAGS 2018 Spring Show and Plant Sale. Cadboro Bay United Church,

2625 Arbutus Road, Victoria. Friday, April 20 (1-8pm) / Saturday, April 21 (9am-3pm). Well-established juried show with rock and alpine plants, succulents, woodlanders and bog plants. Seed/plant sales, displays, etc.

More info: www.virags.com or virags@gmail.com.

Haida Gwaii in 2018 I am also announcing a couple of small group (less than 15 persons) tours to Haida Gwaii, formerly the Queen Charlotte Islands, off BC's north coast. I lived in Haida Gwaii for several years, maintain friendships there and have conducted many tours to these beautiful islands. This is not a garden tour but will focus on Haida culture and all the scenic and cultural highlights of these Misty Isles on a 5-day tour starting in Sandspit on Moresby Island and departing from Massett on Graham Island.

The two planned tour dates are Monday June 4 to Friday June 8, 2018 and Monday September 17 to Friday September 21, 2018 . If you are interested in these exciting tours please respond to me by March 31 with an email. I will have a cost estimate and other tour details by then.

If you have any questions, please give me a call or email me. Thanks. *Bill*

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Cobble Hill, B.C. Canada V0R 1L4
Tel:250-743 9882, Cel:250-709 5542,

wedumont@shaw.ca, www.DumontEvents.com

NOTICE OF BCIS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and GUEST SPEAKER PROGRAM Saturday, March 24, 2018 Horticultural Centre of the Pacific

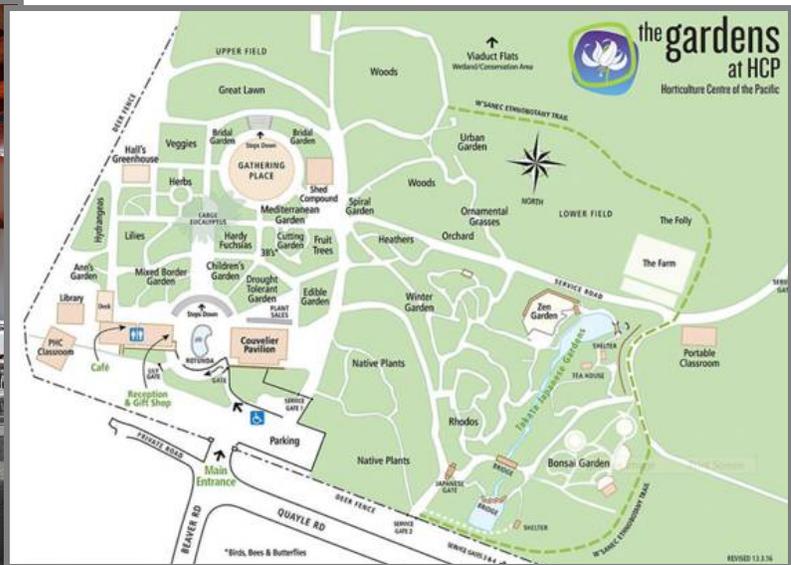
The BC Iris Society is holding its 2018 Annual Meeting at the new Couvelier Hall at Horticulture Centre of the Pacific in Saanich at 505 Quayle Road, Victoria on **Saturday March 24, 2018 at 10 am.**

Our special guest speaker is none other than our esteemed past President **Ted Baker** who will give us the goods on his favourite Irises and muse about the future of our beloved species and hybrids.

A delicious lunch is included for \$25. This also provides free access to the beautiful HCP gardens. Come early or stay late to enjoy them.

To confirm your attendance, please send your \$25 cheque(s) to BC Iris Society c/o 995 Hutchinson Road, Cobble Hill, BC V0R 1L4.

Bill Dumont, BCIS Secretary-Treasurer



The Couvelier Hall at the HCP (left) will be the location of the BCIS gathering on March 24th. Members will gather at 10 am for the Annual General Meeting, followed by lunch about noon, and the afternoon speaker. Attendees are welcome to stroll

The Gardens at HCP (right) during breaks before, between, and after the AGM and speaker.

A Few Of My Favorite Irises: A Ted Baker Teaser for the Annual General Meeting in March 2018

Ted Baker, Past President, British Columbia Iris Society
Salt Spring Island, British Columbia

As you may know, I am going to speak at the 2018 BICS Annual General Meeting (AGM) about some of my favorite irises. Now that we no longer have our farm, more than one group has asked me 'What are your favorite irises?' While I was selling plants I said 'I loved them all' which is true, but I love some more than others. Here I will give you a very small sampling of a few of my favorites. You will have to come to the AGM to find out which type I like best and why!

One of my favorite Tall Bearded (TB) irises is *Dusky Challenger*. And it is not only my favorite, but it has been the favorite TB in the America Iris Society (AIS) TB popularity poll for many years. Dusky Challenger was introduced by Schreiner's in 1986 so it is now an historic iris. [To be considered an historic iris they must have been introduced for a minimum of 30 years.] Outstanding characteristics of *Dusky Challenger* include wonderful, clean blue green foliage, strong, upright, and well-branched stalks that do not fall in normal wind and rain. The flowers have exceptional form and substance so the



TB *Dusky Challenger* (Schreiner, R. 1986)

standards stay upright even in heavy rain...a vigorous plant with a great rate of increase.

The Medians (Median irises include bearded irises that are shorter than the Tall Bearded (TB) iris and taller than the Miniature Dwarf Bearded (MDB)) and includes several types of bearded irises. One that I would like to mention here is *Flying Circus*. I have had this Intermediate Bearded for many years and it never fails to impress. The plant is excellent with clean foliage and strong increase. There are abundant flowers with apricot standards and white ground falls with heavy reddish mulberry markings. The clump effect is wonderful.



IB *Flying Circus* (Keppel, 2004)

My Pacific Coast Iris (PCI) favourite right now is *Banner For Iona*. I know I am biased as it was introduced by our own Joyce Prothero. But it is one of the best PCI survivors as many tend to not do well and die. The plant is vigorous and has a bright silvery lavender bloom. It is doing very well in the AIS awards process and it should win the PCI medal in the next few years.



PCI *Banner for Iona* (Prothero 2010)

Rubicon was a very sweet Cal-Sib, a cross between a PCI and a Siberian iris. The colour is stunning, and a clump is breathtaking. It was created by Carla Lankow and was to be introduced shortly but every clump died after the 2014 AIS convention in Portland. Can one have a favourite that is extinct?

Siberians are wonderful garden plants. Many new colours and patterns are being developed each year by some very talented hybridizers. *Art In Bloom* is a good example of what is coming and is one of my new favorites. The plant is tall with upright foliage that looks good in the garden. The flowers are mesmerizing! The standards are pale blue with pale blue style arms tipped pale yellow.

The falls are yellow with dark blue violet veins and wash. However, because of our climate the veins and wash turn into a near-black rim. Stunning! Jan Sacks and Marty Schafer who live in Massachusetts introduced this iris in 2016. I sent a picture of it to Jan Sacks and she calls it the "Salt Spring type" because of the difference in colour.



Cal-Sib *Rubicon* (Lankow)

Then there are the Japanese and Spuria irises, and I have favourites in both types. And I will always love many of the species — so many really good irises to grow and enjoy!

LANKOW MEDAL 2017

PORTLAND PINK
(2015 Paul Black).
SDB 15" (38cm),
late to very late
bloom. Lankow
Medal 2017.



OTIS Newsletter, Jan 2018

Conserving A Special Collection: A Sample of Ted and Sonja Baker's Median Bearded Irises

Richard J. Hebda, BC Iris Society President

Most BC Iris members know that Ted and Sonja Baker sold their farm and moved to a much smaller place on Salt Spring Island. Few of you may not know that Ted and Sonja probably had the largest and most diverse iris collection in Canada perhaps ever. Such amazing collections are very difficult to assemble and maintain. Who knows how it may fare in the hands of the new owner. In this article I report that we have tried at least to sample and conserve some of it.

as possible to plant and conserve in a long bed in my field. I had prepared the bed over several months in a wide-open area with excellent drainage hoping to limit bacterial rot of rhizomes.

In late October I went over to Salt Spring and spent several hours with Ted in his garden and iris fields as he dug up little rhizomes and I bagged them and wrote down their names. We started with the smallest ones, Standard Dwarf Bearded (SDB), and worked our way up until we

were sampling Intermediate Bearded (IB) and Border Bearded (BB). For almost all of them, Ted recalled their names, the hybridizer and had an opinion on how they performed! If I already had the variety (mostly from Ted) growing in my garden, we did not sample it. I have only so much room to



Standard Dwarf Bearded Iris *Devoted*, Paul Black 2005, multiple medal winner

Tall Bearded (TBs) irises are everyone's favourites and I suspect that many of Ted and Sonja's TBs are in one or another of our gardens. Median Irises (those that are not TBs or Miniature TBs) perhaps do not get as much attention. I had been enticed to grow them by a brief article on smaller bearded irises in *The Garden*, magazine of the Royal Horticultural Society. With this interest, I wanted to save at least part of the collection on Salt Spring so I asked Ted if he would share as many MBs (Median Bearded irises)



Standard Dwarf Bearded Iris *Coconino*, M. Smith 2012



Standard Dwarf Bearded Iris *My Cher*, Paul Black 2012

accommodate them and did not want to crowd the rhizomes or weed more than I must. I brought the material over to my place on the Saanich Peninsula and began planting them so that within a week they were in the ground.

As I write in early January 2018, all appear to have become established. The only problem I have had is the occasional pull-out by deer. In anticipation of this I weighted down the lateral roots emerging from the rhizome with small rocks of which I have aplenty in my field.

In a year or two we'll see which of the more than 50 varieties have succeeded and bloomed and identify the few which Ted could not remember. With some luck, when these bulk up, prepare to see them available for sale

in BCIS iris fundraising events in the future. Once I know what I have, I may be asking some of you for varieties on Ted and Sonja's last sale list to try to compete the collection and make sure it is fully conserved. Including the varieties, I already had, the collection may reach 80 of the approximately 120 that Ted and Sonja had available in 2016.

Median irises are excellent garden plants. They may not be as tall and large-flowering as TB's, but they withstand strong winds, flower early and form large brightly coloured masses. They suit today's smaller gardens perfectly.

A few of my and Ted's favourites include the SDB varieties; *Devoted* (2005), *Coconino* (2012) and *My Cher* (2012). Standard Dwarf Bearded grow to maximum height of 30 cm (12"). Good IB varieties include *Black Current*, *Season Ticket*, *Protocol* and *Highland Nugget*. Goldenhued *Highland Nugget* grows especially well and flowers early in my raised bed. Intermediate Bearded reach a maximum of 60 cm (28") tall.

Thanks to Ted Baker for checking over this article.
Photographs by Ted Baker



Intermediate Bearded irises in Ted Baker's field, including *Black Current* (front), *Season Ticket* (middle), *Protocol* (white standards and yellow falls) and *Highland Nugget* (opening in the background).

Historic Irises: Treasures not Forgotten

Richard J. Hebda, President, British Columbia Iris Society
Victoria, British Columbia

Irises have a long history in cultivation and many years have gone into the breeding of the showy varieties of today. Along the way thousands of very fine varieties have been developed and served as the ancestors of what is available now. Many of these remain beautiful irises in their own right, and many others are of historical interest or simply of nostalgic value.

The Historic Iris Preservation Society (HIPS) works to preserve historic varieties, make them available and spread the word about these amazing plants. Historic irises are those varieties that are more than thirty years old since their introduction for sale. So that makes anything from 1987 and earlier a historic iris, The BC Iris Society has just joined HIPS and has access to some remarkable educational material.

I'll be exploring the amazing content on their website and experts starting with this bulletin, and following up in our newsletters later in the year.

Before I introduce you to one of their resources, let's talk about the iris *Lent A. Williamson*, one tough and attractive variety. Cathy Egerer the president of HIPS lives in northern Michigan. She found this variety growing in a field near her home along the shores of Lake Superior and it helped get her hooked on irises again. I am sure we have it here. I rescued a similar variety from abandoned fields on south Vancouver Island. According to Cathy, her iris and my iris are the same (see the illustrations) and it is likely one of most widespread NOIDs (No Identification) irises in North America, growing just about anywhere tall bearded irises can grow.

One excellent feature of the HIPS site is



Cathy Egerer's *Lent A. Williamson* found growing in an abandoned field in Michigan State.

under the heading of "Iris Basics". Here you can learn or brush up on key elements of being an iris grower. Iris Basics covers the following topics very well:

Parts of an iris: beautiful colour illustration with clearly marked parts.

Bearded Iris classifications: taken from the American Iris Society (AIS) website, explains the differences especially among the classifications that are not tall bearded (NTB) irises. Some wonderful plants fall in to this NTB category. (See my article on saving Ted Baker's Median Iris collection in this issue.)

Iris colours and patterns: I get muddled up with the terms used for iris colour patterns. They are clearly illustrated and explained. For some reason the term *amoena* conjures up no image for me. Now I know it means white standards with coloured falls. You can also learn about “neglectas”, “luminatas” and “plicatas” too.

Getting Started: Here you can read about choosing the best spot, preparing the bed (lots of helpful information), using raised beds and growing irises in pots. I think I am going to experiment with using edging to keep out the relentless advance of bent grasses.

Choosing your irises: Topics covered here include a simple iris starter garden, a theme garden, a breeder collection, and an eclectic garden. There is an excellent list of reliable historic varieties largely colour-based for the starter garden. *Lent A. Williamson* is on it!

Planting and care for your irises: Labelling, planting, watering, and fertilizing are all covered. New information to me is the use of superphosphate, which as I recall

encourages root growth. Bone meal is a good alternative.

Unwanted Guests: This section links you to an excellent article on the AIS website.

Dividing and Sharing: HIPS is big on sharing irises as part of their goal to rediscover and save historic varieties. Cathy Egerer noted that even iris varieties introduced only thirty years ago seem to have been lost. This entry covers when and how to divide clumps, noting the value of a spading fork (I need to get one for my stony soil). Other topics include labelling (again), trimming and sharing.

Companion Plants: Irises of all kinds are incredibly showy on their own but we all look for colour through the season. This section suggests some excellent choices of companions such as phlox, daylilies and rudbeckia.

To conclude I add that, new this year, HIPS has produced an excellent slide show called *An Introduction to Bearded Irises: JEWELS OF THE GARDEN*. This beautifully-illustrated, relatively short presentation explains how bearded irises came to be the garden plants they are today. The presentation is available for you to download as a PDF file or Powerpoint presentation. To download, visit HIPS at <http://www.historiciris.org/presentations->



Richard Hebda's *Lent A. Williamson* (far left); and, Richard Hebda's *Lent A. Williamson* showing richly coloured style arms (left).

Iris Seeds: A Step towards Addiction

Ian E. Efford, Director, British Columbia Iris Society
Duncan, British Columbia

In the spring, any visitor to our garden, whether a gardener or not, is taken to see the Carolina Silverbell tree [*Halesia carolina*]. This tree is nearly 3m tall and in spring is covered with hanging white bells. The reason I am so proud of this tree is that it was the only product from the 300 seeds I planted a few years ago.

It is exciting when difficult seeds germinate but very satisfying when they grow to adult trees and provide us with a spectacular show of flowers in spring. I do have another tree that was grown from seed which, eventually will be equally satisfying to view. At the moment, however, it is about 2m tall and rather spindly. This is a specimen of the Chinese Golden Rain tree [*Koelreuteria paniculata*] and it may not flower until I am too old to care but I enjoy watching it grow well despite the interest of the nighttime visits from white-tailed deer.

This illustrates two successful attempts to grow plants from seed. There are also failures that contribute to my experience!

I mention these successes to illustrate the

level of anticipation and excitement from growing plants from seed. I have been growing irises from seed for well over thirty years and almost all the irises in our garden have been grown from seed or given to me as gifts from other iris enthusiasts.

In this article, I will describe the practical aspects of iris cultivation and some of the pitfalls that might help the novice.

Sourcing the Seeds

Seed can be obtained from a wide range of sources.

1. You can take seed from your favorite iris in your or your friend's garden. If it has been bee pollinated, it will produce a range of plants that may differ considerably from the parent. If you really want to produce the same plant, then hand pollination is necessary but even then, not all of the plants will be the same as the parent but the exceptions will give you some exciting new hybrids. Most parents know that predicting the nature of their children is a lost cause!



Carolina Silverbell Tree (*Halesia carolina*)

2. The second source of seed is one of the many seed exchanges run by iris societies around the world. These are inexpensive to members, usually about \$0.50/package and each package contains between 10 and a great many seeds. From one package, I have planted out two complete 2.5m. rows of seeds and almost all have germinated. If you contribute seed to these seed exchanges, you usually obtain additional seeds or a wider choice of seeds at the time of distribution.

Over the years, most of my seed has come from the British Iris Society seed exchange but there are many other groups such as the American Iris Society, S.I.G.N.A. [The Species Iris Society of North America], the Beardless Iris Society and other specialized groups. SIGNA specializes in species and it is a good source of plants if you wish to build up a collection of species as they are rarely available commercially. Other excellent sources are the Alpine Garden Society and the Scottish Rock Garden Club. In the case of desert irises, groups like the Pacific Bulb Society is an excellent source.

One reason to obtain the seed from an iris society is that the identifications are more accurate. Seeds from other garden societies, such as N.A.R.G.S. [The North American Rock Garden Society], can sometimes be inaccurately identified.

3. Finally, there are all the commercial seed companies that sell packages of seed that, although about ten times more expensive than the seed exchanges, still give you some excellent seed and many plants that are well worth the cost compared to purchasing the plants themselves. For very rare seeds, there are seed collections in east Europe and Asia that distribute their seeds through sellers in Eastern Europe or through North American companies that have personal connections to rare plants seed collectors. One such person is Kristal Walek of Gardens North [<http://gardensnorth.com/index.asp>]

Labelling

It might seem somewhat incongruous to talk about labelling before describing methods of germination but it is important to start the process on the right foot. It is advisable to label all the seeds planted, whether in the ground, in a container or in a pot. Not only that, if the seeds are planted individually in pots, each pot should be labelled separately. In the past, I would prepare a tray of 15 pots with only one label and then keep the trays on wire shelves. That is until one or more rats managed to get into the greenhouse and carried out their Olympic trials on the shelves. The result was that the top shelf came off its hinges and fell on to the next shelf, etc. In the morning, I found a pile of pots, some with the plants still in place and some empty. The problem was then to sort out the unlabelled plants. It was not possible. A label in each pot would have identified the plants that remained in their pots.

In the case of small closed containers, I label the container and the lid. Unfortunately, when these containers are stacked outside, water sometimes accumulates on the top and the labels wash off or the label fade.

If the seeds are planted in rows in the garden, label both ends of the row. It is amazing how many animals can take out and move the labels. Deer hooves dig them up, birds pull them out and throw them over their shoulders, and dogs can decide to roll in a bed or have a wrestling match there. Squirrels are also guilty of digging in order to hide nuts.

These comments are based on my own failure to think ahead. One final problem is caused by seeds germinating over more than one year. Leave the bed and labels in place for another year after the seedlings have been transplanted. In some rows, germination in the second year will result in additional irises. Even this advice is suspect! In one case, I gathered a seed pod and sprinkled the

seeds in a row. I then labelled it. After two years, I gave up as no plants appeared and I removed the labels. The next year a row of "onion" sprouts appeared but I would not have planted any vegetable in that area of the garden. The next year, larger "onions" appeared, again the identification was a mystery. Finally, this year a row of Dutch irises appeared and flowered. The Dutch irises in our garden are all dark blue so I was particularly pleased when the plants in this "mystery" row were not only dark blue but also there were some white and some pale blue. It was worth waiting for but it would have been better if I had left the labels in place!

Finally, I will mention a nightmare that I have. All the seedling beds are well labelled but what if....? I visited a well-known rhododendron grower with a large, very well-labelled collection of species rhododendrons. He told me that they had a family gathering and the grandchildren were playing in the woodland garden. Eventually, they all returned to the house and with great excitement said that they had been playing a game to see how many labels they could collect. Dumped on the table was a large pile of labels. As the property had a cliff at one edge, I am surprised that he did not jump!

Methods of Planting

There are four different ways that one can plant iris seeds although one is rather specialized and would not be used by most iris enthusiasts.

1. Planting in the Garden

The basic approach is to plant the seeds in rows in the garden. This means preparing an area and using a long rod to place a straight groove about 1cm deep. The seed is then placed along the groove and gently covered with the soil that has formed along the edge of the groove. I then use a rake on end to tamp the soil down along the row.

Label each end before actually distributing the seed as it is easy to lose track of the end of the row when the seeds have been covered! Keep watered and wait 10-12 weeks. As the seed from seed exchanges is usually distributed in early spring, the small plants will appear and grow to substantial plants during the summer when they can be spaced out in rows before the winter. This method is very easy.

I saw a variation on this method when I visited a Japanese iris hybridizer in Maryland. He took the seed pod from a cross and sprinkled the seeds on a prepared one metre square plot before covering them with a shallow layer of soil. Each seed pod was given a different, labelled, square metre. The seeds were left to germinate, grow and flower in that square metre before the best ones were removed for further hybridization.

2. Using 375ml Deli Container

For some years, I used this method almost exclusively as it used very little space and did not take up any garden until the seedlings were at least a couple of inches tall. These deli containers can be obtained at very little cost in 100 container rolls with lids from restaurant supply houses. I fill each container 2/3rds full of soil containing a high level of sand or chick grit. The seeds are stirred into the soil and then I add one third of a cup of water. Any more water makes the soil waterlogged. The lid keeps the soil moist for many weeks. A great advantage of growing irises from seed compared to other plants is that they do not suffer from damp off which would kill most other seedlings in such a closed moist environment.

As mentioned above, the lid and the container are labelled and the containers stacked five deep outdoors in a shaded area. When planting, the number of seeds in the container is written on the label and when a seedling is removed that number is changed. Over time, most of the seeds in the containers germinate and, unless one does

this, one cannot remember if more are to come. There is no point storing containers where all the seeds have germinated.

The seeds germinate over a period of time and as each one grows to the two-leaf stage, it is carefully removed and planted in a 3 inch pot and the lid returned. It takes only a moment to see if there are germinated seeds by looking through the side of the pots in a stack. If condensation obscures the view, tap on the top pot and the sides become clear.

It is important to check these pots each week and transplant seedlings that are at the two-leaf stage - that is about two inches tall. There are two reasons for this. The first is that they have a tap root that wishes to go straight down and the pot depth will not allow this. The second is that some irises, particularly desert irises, have evolved to germinate and grow very quickly when they are watered. They can easily damage themselves because they grow and curl over in the container. I lost quite a few *I. cycloglossa* seedlings because I did not appreciate how quickly this happens. I have raised seeds using this method with the pots kept outside in temperatures as low as -30C.

Japanese iris seedlings germinated in containers and subsequently planted out in pots.



3. Planting in Plant Pots

Just planting the seeds in normal garden pots works well but, unlike planting in containers, it is necessary to keep the pots moist and not allow them to dry out. This can be achieved by covering them with a plastic film, watering from underneath and keeping them in the shade. This method requires more space but the pots can be kept outside in a shady area in the garden.

4. Long Toms

The vast area that is bordered by the Mediterranean in the west and Pakistan in the east and extending from the sea to the south up to southern Russia is almost entirely dry, rocky semi-desert. The irises that grow here are very interesting and beautiful but much more difficult to grow in a temperate climate. They require a dry dormant period during most of the summer and a substrate that is very well drained and calcareous. These irises are the Junos [Scorpiris] and the Oncocylus irises. Because of the nature of their habitat, the roots tend to be long as they are seeking the cool, moist conditions that are found well below the surface.

In order to grow these irises from seed there are a couple of things one must do. The soil must be well-drained and, once the seedling leaves have died down at the end of spring, the plants must be covered with a glass plate to keep out the rain or the pots put under the house eaves until late September. In order to provide depth for the roots, "long tom" pots should be used. These are clay pots which are about twice as tall as normal. These pots are particularly important for Juno irises which develop large thick roots each year which extend well down into the soil. When transplanting these bulbs, it is very important to do it carefully so that the roots are not broken off. A few of these irises can be planted successfully in a rock garden and others are best grown in the pots. The Okanagan Valley of British Columbia is an



Juno irises in Long Toms during the summer dormant period.

Ideal climate in which to grow these irises outdoors.

These four methods of planting iris seeds have advantages and disadvantages and choosing which to use will depend on the individual gardener, the numbers of seed to be grown and the local conditions. I have used all four methods successfully although some years nothing will germinate at all from a particular package of seeds. When this happens, I throw the labels away and get on with life as I have other seedlings germinating to keep me occupied!

One or Two Results

There are a couple of excellent reasons for growing irises from seed. Firstly, it is very inexpensive. For \$10, depending on the seed exchange one uses, one might get 10-20 packages of seed which contain a minimum of 10 seeds/ package but sometimes closer to 50. With good management, that can give you close to 1,000 plants. Purchasing that many plants would cost close to \$10,000! More importantly, many of the plants one wishes to add to the garden are simply not available from local nurseries. I know that most iris lovers are enamoured by the tall, blousy bearded irises [which can be grown from seed], but I prefer the smaller delicate species such as *I. forrestii*, *wilsoni*, *clarkei*,

etc. or even the wild form of *I. ensata*, the Japanese iris. That is where the seed exchanges come up trumps.

Even if one is growing hybrids, there are literally hundreds of crosses made by enthusiasts around the world that can be found on the seed exchange lists. Each package produces an amazing range of colours and, after selecting the one or two that you wish to keep, you can delight your gardening friends by giving the rest away.

Every year interesting plants arise. They are sometimes very colourful new hybrids from bee pollinated plants and sometimes have some other features of interest. This year, I have had two of particular interest. I received a package of seeds from BIS [162] which had been submitted by Helmut von-Kotzebue in Germany. This package contained hand-pollinated self of the Siberian *Reddy or Not*. I planted them in early 2016 and almost exactly one year later, one of the plant had grown twice the height of its siblings in the row and soon after that it flowered! Normally, one might expect a few to flower in the second year and the rest in the third year and it is quite a surprise to have flowers at the end of one year. It appears that one of the genetic combinations has resulted in quite an increase in hybrid vigour. There is a seed pod on this plant but it is too early to say whether the seeds are viable.



BIS 162.
Flowering 15 months after seed planted, *Reddy or Not* selfed by Helmut von-Kotzebue.



Rather attractive, very short Siberian seedling whose parents are unknown.

Another plant that I found particularly interesting was not in one of my seedbeds but in a neighbouring bed. I have no idea what it is; it is very short and has beautiful blue colour with white markings on the standards. I have never grown this iris before and have no idea the parentage of the seed. Irises growers find seedlings around the garden which sometimes have flower colours which are quite different from the parent plant. I find this is particularly true for hybrid spurians. At the moment I have found six spurians with new flower colours in the garden which I have

never seen before. Pacific Coast irises produce a great range of different colours, often unlike the parent. In this particular plant, in the case mentioned above, I cannot relate it to any other iris in the garden or in the seedbed. Over time, I may be able to narrow the identification down.

Conclusions

I strongly recommend that iris lovers plant seeds. The source does not really matter. It can be from a pod in your own or a friend's garden, from seeds obtained from a seed exchange, or from another source. Within two or three years, you will be addicted and the withdrawal symptoms will be so severe that you will grow more and more seeds until you reach an age when you give up gardening. To illustrate my point, here is a photograph of part of the garden of Currier McEwen, one of our and Japanese iris hybridizers when he was in his 90s.

I wish all gardeners similar success!



Seed Changes

<https://www.britisirissociety.org.uk/>
<http://www.irises.org/>
<http://www.beardlessiris.org/>
<http://www.signa.org/index.pl?Intro>
<http://www.pacificbulbsociety.org/>

In addition, iris seed is also available from the various rock gardens and alpine societies.



A Very Happy New Year from the Social Media Gal

As always, to British Columbia Iris Society members, both our website - <http://www.bcirissociety.com/> and our Facebook Page - <https://www.facebook.com/britishcolumbiairissociety/> try to keep up to date with the Society's events and information as well as sharing information from other iris societies in the American Iris Society.

As you can see here, the BCIS is hosting our AGM at the Horticultural Centre for the Pacific (HCP) in their lovely new building on March 24th. All the details for the event are elsewhere in the Bulletin.

The great news is that the BCIS Executive is in favour of having Ted's very informational session video-taped and perhaps be live-streaming at our AGM in March. This will provide all of us - members and prospective members alike - the opportunity to see the founder of the BC Iris Society talk about his iris passion. Ted is hugely informative and deeply knowledgeable on every aspect of the Iris genus.

We surely hope to have as many members as possible to attend our AGM. We have had some outstanding speakers over the years at our AGM, but perhaps Ted is our best!

Does anyone in the membership have a good video understanding? Could you take a video of our AGM but mostly importantly a video of Ted's brilliant presentation? We need someone who

can create a video that can be uploaded to our website and Facebook page and be used with various Garden Clubs and new member gatherings. We are just asking.....

I ask, as I do every article, for photos, videos (videos are considered the best way to communicate online) and any other information you can provide so we can include it in our website and Facebook Page. We share activities and photos and particular Iris plant requests with many other Iris based garden clubs and they are very happy to do the same. Are you hankering for some specific Spuria Iris or a particular Tall Bearded? Ask us on the website and you would be surprised how many folks respond.

We've only got couple of months of awful weather before our beloved Iris of all species start growing and a few blooming! Please share even your early sprouts with your fellow BCIS members. It's grand to share and will jolly us all up!

Please consider attending the AGM - How can you miss perhaps Ted Baker's best speech???

Brenda

To email pictures, messages, etc. either email me at me@brendaburch.ca, post on Facebook at the BCIS Facebook Page - above, or the website under Contact at the website address above.



AIS REGION 13 SPRING MEETING

May 11-13, 2018 – Salem, Oregon

Hosted by OREGON TRAIL IRIS SOCIETY

Bus tour on Saturday to three gardens: Miller’s Manor, Mid-America, and Schreiner’s.

Guest irises at Miller’s Manor and Schreiner’s.

Judges training on Tall Bearded (Thomas Johnson) and box lunch at Mid-America.

Open gardens (Fri. and Sun.): Keith Keppel, Larry Lauer, and Kevin Vaughn.

Banquet guest speaker: BARRY BLYTH.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

	Friday	Saturday
Morning	Visit open gardens	Red Lion buffet breakfast (Red Lion guests)
1 pm. . -	Region 13 TBIS board meetings	Miller’s Manor Gardens
3 pm. -	Region 13 general meeting	Mid-America Gdn (Judges Training, lunch)
4 pm -	TBIS general meeting + Iris Auction	Schreiner’s Garden
Evening	Open. Dine at local restaurants	Banquet + Guest Speaker Barry Blyth
		Iris Redistribution
	Sunday	Check out hotel, visit open gardens

HOTEL - Red Lion, 3301 Market Street NE, Salem, OR 97301. Phone 503-370-7888, www.redlion.com

Room rates (Fri-Sat nights) includes free breakfast buffet (Red Lion guests only).

Early birds BEFORE Feb. 18: \$110-single, \$120-double; Feb. 18 - April 27: \$119-single, \$129-double.

After April 27, 2018: prevailing room rate, subject to availability.

Mention **“Oregon Trail Iris Society”** to get the special room rates when you register.

Oregon Express Shuttle from PDX to Salem Red Lion: \$25/adult one way (2017 pricing)

Call 541-207-0493 or go to web site to schedule. www.oregonexpressshuttle.com

Convention Chair: Susan Schouten, OTIS President. 503-989-5226, sschouten@canby.com

Please cut here and return, along with your check, payable to OTIS, to Dennis Muchmore, OTIS, 2770 Holiday Drive S, Salem, OR 97302.

REGION 13 / TBIS REGISTRATION FORM (Downloadable at www.oregontrailirissociety.com)

MEETING REGISTRATION FEES (US funds)

\$95 - Breakfast Buffet (Red Lion guests only), Bus Tour w/lunch & Judges Training, and Banquet

\$30 Banquet only

Meeting registration closes May 2, 2018

NAME(s) _____

Region 13 member _____ TBIS member _____ Other _____ (check all that apply)

Bus tour package _____ **banquet only** _____ (check one)

Banquet choices: chicken salmon risotto cake (circle one)

ADDRESS _____ CITY, ST/PROV, ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____ TOTAL PAID _____

Mail your registration form and check (payable to OTIS) to:

Dennis Muchmore, OTIS, 2770 Holiday Drive S, Salem, OR 97302, USA

BC Iris Society www.bcirissociety.com / www.bc-iris.org

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1st Vice-President (vacant)

2nd Vice-President: Malcolm Ho-You

250-245-9865, ho-you@telus.net

Secretary/Treasurer: Bill Dumont

250-743-9882, wedumont@shaw.ca

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Electronic Delivery

You have the option of receiving electronic versions of the Bulletin. To request e-delivery, contact Diane at <voltaire@islandnet.com>.

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Ted Baker, Dispatch

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me@brendaburch.ca

Membership Dues

If you see a **RED DOT** near your address on the front of this bulletin or read "2017" on your address label, then it's time to renew your BCIS membership.

Annual dues are \$15 for an individual and \$16 for a family. Youth dues (\$5/year) are available for those under 18 years. Please make your cheque payable to BCIS and mail to: Diane Whitehead, 5088 Clutesi Street, Victoria BC, V8Y 1X4.

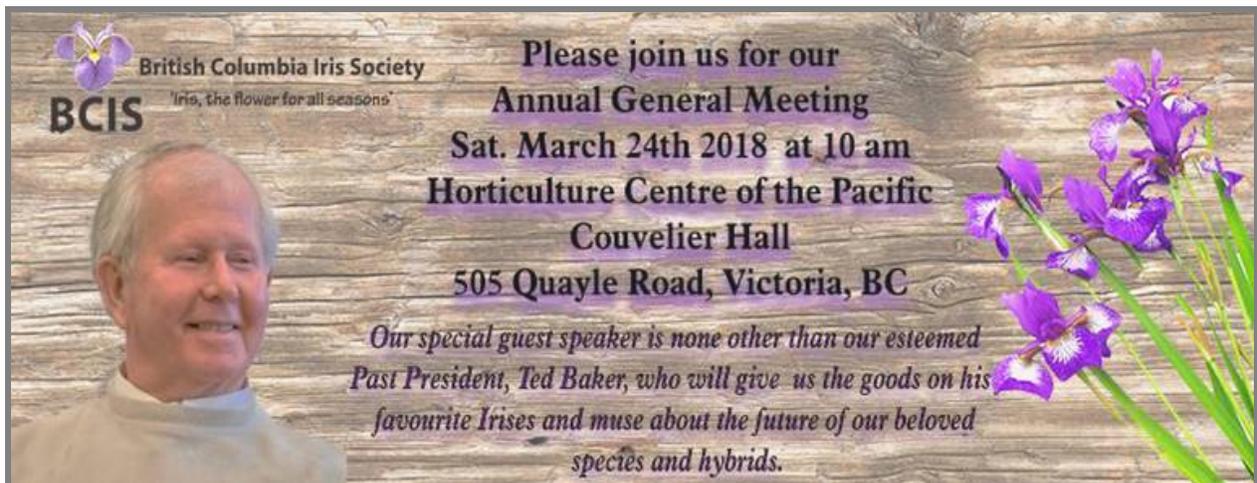
Questions? voltaire@islandnet.com or 250-658-5640

Here are the links to get you to the British Columbia Iris Society Online:

Website: <http://www.bcirissociety.com/>

Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/britishcolumbiairissociety>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BCIrisSociety>



The poster features a wooden background with a portrait of Ted Baker on the left and a cluster of purple iris flowers on the right. The BCIS logo is in the top left corner.

British Columbia Iris Society
'Iris, the flower for all seasons'
BCIS

Please join us for our
Annual General Meeting
Sat. March 24th 2018 at 10 am
Horticulture Centre of the Pacific
Couvelier Hall
505 Quayle Road, Victoria, BC

Our special guest speaker is none other than our esteemed Past President, Ted Baker, who will give us the goods on his favourite Irises and muse about the future of our beloved species and hybrids.

Poster Art by Bob Ianison