



# PRESCOTT AREA IRIS SOCIETY

VOLUME 13 ISSUE 3

APRIL 2016

## Presidents Message

Greetings to All,

Spring officially arrived on Sunday, March 20, but as we have all experienced, spring has been with us since February. The Non Nino has given us warm dry weather with little rain for our gardens and irises. We are now expecting windy conditions which will further dry out our gardens. Bloom in my garden is beginning to appear a month earlier than normal. If you have not been watering your irises, now is the time to do so. A deep watering once a week should help stimulate new growth and bloom. If you have not fertilized yet do so now.

Our spring show is just around the corner on April 30 and we need to begin our preparation for that. We will need volunteers to help setup on Friday April 29<sup>th</sup> and help with duties during the exhibit along with teardown Saturday afternoon. Please contact Barb McCurry if you can volunteer for those days. We also need your flowers for the exhibit. Last year we had an amazing turnout of visitors from Arizona and surrounding states. We had a wonderful display of bloom last year in many categories which astounded our visitors from other iris societies. The public loves the *Kaleidoscope of Color* event and looks forward to it each year. Let's not disappoint them.

We had a wonderful speaker at our last General Meeting on March 19<sup>th</sup>. Janis and Gordon Shackelford from the San Diego Iris Society joined us for their presentation on iris hybridization. It was a wonderful and detailed discussion with questions and answers. We were at our new location at the mall community room which worked well. Our next two meetings will also be located at the mall.

April begins our busy season. We will begin our events with a members Garden Tour on April 23<sup>rd</sup> followed on the 30<sup>th</sup> by the Spring Exhibit. See the additional articles in the newsletter for more information. We have some wonderful speakers, programs and events this year. Come join us for a great year.

Dennis Luebkin, PAIS President

## Coming Events

- April 16 Exhibit Preparation— pg. 2
- April 23 Garden Tour—see pg. 3
- April 29 Exhibit setup, Mortimer Nursery
- April 30 Spring Iris Exhibit, Kaleidoscope of Color, Mortimer Nursery
- May no meeting

**April and June meetings will be held at the Prescott Gateway Mall, Community Room at 1:30pm. See Mall Map in the March 11, 2016 email regarding the Meeting Venue.**

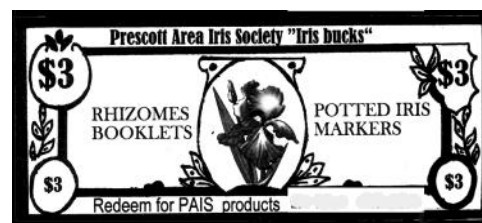
## ***WELCOME NEW MEMBERS***

**Loretta Bresof**

**Cierra Bryant**

## Iris Bucks

The time to spend your 2015 iris bucks is nearing an end. All iris bucks earned between May 2015-April 30, 2016 will need to be spent by the end of the spring exhibit. We will have potted iris for sale as well as metal plant markers.



*Dwarf Nectarine by Ruth Simons*



## 2016 Prescott Area Garden Tour

Alta Vista Garden Club, Prescott, Arizona, presents its biennial garden tour on Saturday, June 18, 2016, from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Guests will experience creative blends of perennials, annuals, native plants and vegetables located in six private gardens in Prescott Area's varied landscapes.



All gardens will include professional discussions of the techniques used, as well as local artists and musicians to add ambience to each garden setting.

On the day of the tour, the program with maps and wristband entry IDs will be available between 8:00 and 11:00 AM in front of the Yavapai Performing Arts Center at Yavapai College off of Sheldon Street in Prescott.

Tickets are limited. They must be purchased in advance for a \$15 donation at several Prescott area merchants or visit [www.altavistagardenclub.org](http://www.altavistagardenclub.org) and click on the "Garden Tour" tab to purchase your tickets using the PayPal account on the website.

Proceeds from this event go toward the Alta Vista Garden Club's work in local education, conservation and beautification projects. For more information about the Alta Vista Garden Club, visit- [altavistagardenclub.org](http://altavistagardenclub.org).

## April 30, 2016 Kaleidoscope of Color Iris Exhibit – Y'all come Y'hear!

The Iris Exhibit is a "People's Choice" event as the public is encouraged to vote for their favorite irises and arrangements. Last year's show with close to 180 entries awarded ten individuals \$25 gift certificates from Mortimer Nursery. Potted iris plants in a multitude of colors are also available for purchase at the show. Iris sales support club events and community outreach programs. Demonstrations are given on the care and planting of iris as members answer questions about growing iris.

Our annual Iris Exhibit is an all-hands-on-deck event...from set up to tear down, iris intake and labeling, information, greeters, cashiers, sales of potted iris and other items, runners, and many other jobs for lots of folks. Contact Barbara McCurry (928-775-2219; [bj4mccurry@hotmail.com](mailto:bj4mccurry@hotmail.com)) or Kathleen Shaffer (928-624-4594; [koicats@sbcglobal.net](mailto:koicats@sbcglobal.net)) to find out what you can do to help, if you haven't already volunteered to help. If you cannot stand or walk for long, there are still jobs for you

More information will be shared at the **General Member's Meeting on Saturday, April 16<sup>th</sup> from 1:30 to 3:30 PM at the Prescott Gateway Mall Community Room.** Our very own Master Iris Gardener, Carolyn Alexander, graciously agreed to teach us how to select, cut, transport, and display our iris for the April show. Iris entry requirements by category and filling out the entry card will also be covered. I look forward to seeing many of you at our April meeting and to meeting new members. To print out the entry rules before our meeting, visit our [website](#). Remember, there is no exhibit unless you contribute your blooms. We are counting on **you!** - Barb McCurry, VP





## Sculpture Garden Report

The Richard Marcusen Sculpture Garden at Yavapai College will be a featured visit on the PAIS Garden Tour on the morning of April 23, 2016. The Iris beds were recently cleaned up and fertilized thanks to the efforts of 7 members who needed some additional up-close time with Iridaceae. The blooms are already starting to open. Patrick Beatty

### CONTACT US

President : Dennis Luebkin dluebkin@q.com 623 628-4860

Vice President: Barb McCurry bj4mccurry@hotmail.com

Secretary: Joella Cheek joella@commspeed.net

Treasurer: Eugene Zielinski eez55@earthlink.net

Director at Large: Sue Crabtree sue49@cableone.net

Membership: Carolyn Alexander artwest@cableone.net

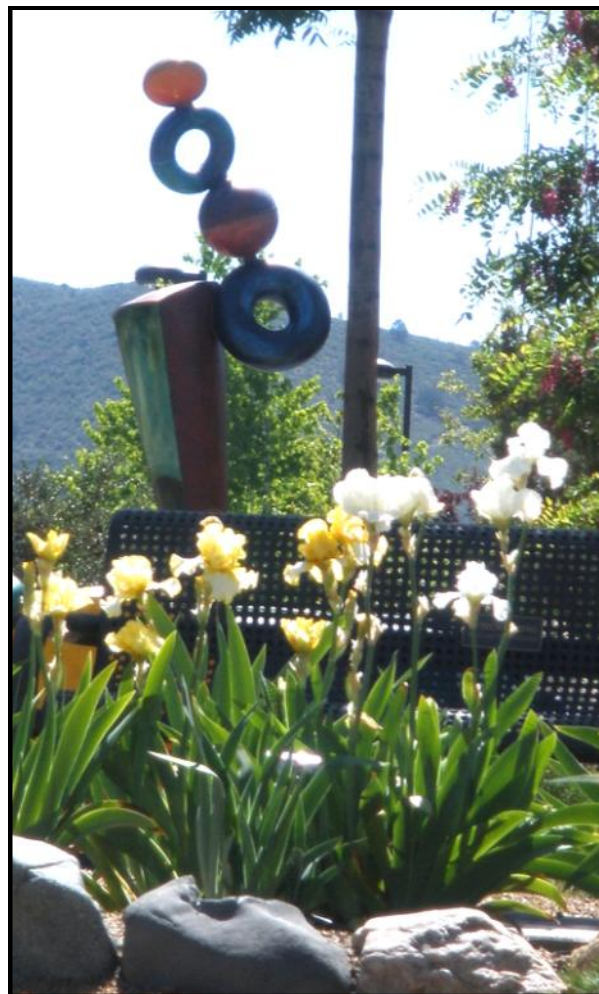
Sculpture Garden: Patrick Beatty patrick.beatty@ATT.net

Hospitality: Sharon Sundval 615-800-0298

Newsletter: Judy Book, Vicki Hughes jbookaz@gmail.com, vimticki@hotmail.com

PAIS website: <http://prescottirissociety.org/>

Prescott Area Iris Society P.O. Box 11918,  
Prescott, AZ 86304



*Pop Toot—Richard Marcusen Sculpture Garden*

**HAPPINESS IS TO HOLD FLOWERS IN BOTH HANDS. – JAPANESE PROVERB**

### PAIS Members Garden Tour April 23, 2016

It's spring and the iris are blooming. That means it's garden tour time! On April 23, we are starting our tour at Carolyn Alexander's house from 9 am to 10 am. **Maps for the tour will be handed out at Carolyn's home.**

The garden tour continues at Dennis and Sharon Luebkin's home at around 10:15 am where there will be beautiful iris in bloom. Danish and coffee will be served. The next stop will be at Embry-Riddle University at approximately 11 am to visit the Fireman's Memorial. The next stop is the Yavapai College, Richard Marcusen garden at approximately 11:30. Last, but not least, will be Hummingbird Iris Gardens (Linda Rossman's house) where there will be a talk on how to



choose an iris for a show. Carolyn Alexander will show us how to photograph iris for the photo contest.

Lunch will be served around 12:15 pm. Hope to see you all for a fun, educational day! Linda Rossman

**Carolyn Alexander's Home, 2555 W. Green Brier Dr., 928-778-1551 Take Williamson Valley Road North to Bard Ranch Road and turn right. When you reach the stop sign at Granite Oaks Drive turn left and proceed one block to Green Brier Dr. and make a right turn. The house is the fourth from the intersection on the right. Please park on the road unless you are handicapped. (Bard Ranch Rd. is 10+ miles north of Iron Springs Rd.)**



### **Ready, Get Set, Go Photo!**

It is nearly that time of year when we enjoy the iris blooms. Mine are all growing so fast you can almost see them grow. I was at both Dennis Luebkin and Sharon Phelps yards this week and their irises were growing by leaps and bounds as well. We are only a month away from full iris bloom and camera picture taking activities. If you are like me, you race out of the house every morning taking photos of every new iris that just opened. Save the best photos for our photo contest in the fall as we have great prizes planned plus it is a lot of fun to see everyone's favorite iris photo. You won't want to be left out of this activity which extends the iris season a bit.

Participation is what makes a successful photo contest. The photo has to be taken by you to enter the contest but does not have to be your iris. You can take iris photos anywhere such as PAIS Iris Exhibit, Region 15 iris spring show, another iris member's yard (my yard at PAIS garden tour is ok) your friends yard, and of course your own yard. Try to get a shot of your pet or grandchild with an iris, of course, or maybe someone viewing irises at the PAIS Garden Tour.

The categories are:

1. Landscape or iris scene (great time to take photo of a portion or all of iris flower bed)
2. Single iris or Cluster of irises (all individual or group photos of irises)
3. Artistic, Macro, Photoshop (example: get up close shot of just the beard and throat of iris)
4. Iris with people, animals, insects (example: Catch a candid shot of members active at the April exhibit)

You can enter all or a portion of the four categories. Pick your best photo to enter (limit one photo in each of 4 categories). Photos must be either 5x7 or 8x10 for good viewing. Photos are to be unframed without mat so everyone has equal starting point. Judging will be by member's choice. Start now taking great photos as prizes will be awarded to winners at the September 17<sup>th</sup> photo contest meeting. Prizes will include ***garden signs, iris night light, and photo albums that hold both 5x7 and 8x10 pictures.***

Join in! It is FUN! If you have questions, I'll be at the April 16<sup>th</sup> general meeting. See you there.

Carolyn Alexander (Photo Chairperson)

Single Iris or Cluster of Irises



Iris with animals





MEMBERS SPRING GARDEN PHOTOS—2016



Barb  
McCurry—  
Hyacinth,  
Daffodils &  
Crimson  
King Iris

Jean Cole - Daffodils &  
Grape Hyacinth



Ruth Simons—  
Apple Blossoms,  
Johnny Jump Up,  
Columbine &  
Daffodil



## April Iris Care-Preparing for the Spring Exhibit

Dennis Luebkin

What we thought would be a hard winter with much rain, snow and cold temperatures due to El Nino turned out to be a Non Nino being dry with warmer than usual temperatures. It is now the end March with the warmer temperatures and new growth appearing on our irises. Some of us have already experienced some bloom which is a month earlier than the norm. We are now getting ready for the spring exhibit the Kaleidoscope of Color Festival of Iris on April 30. In preparation for the event our general care for spring should be as follows:

- **Cleaning and Weeding:** Finish cleaning around your irises. Check for weeds and small tree seedlings which will be coming up in abundance now. Keep your iris beds free of dead leaves and weeds.
- Continue removing the dead fans by pulling or cutting. Exercise care in how much of the fan you remove. Be careful not to damage new grow or bud stalks that are appearing. Remove the dead fans since the dead fans harbor the eggs of rust spores, thrips and aphids. Use a soap spray solution to wash off aphids and thrips that you see. See our last issue for the solution to use.
- Check the rhizomes to see if they are covered or buried too deeply. Two things will happen during the freeze and thaw weather of winter. Freezing will either cause the ground to rise around the rhizome and cover it up or it will lift the rhizome and pop it out of the ground. If the rhizome is out of the ground and the roots are exposed, push the rhizome back into the moist ground or cover the roots with a little extra dirt keeping the top of the rhizome exposed. Be sure there is no air pocket under the rhizome. That will cause rot.
- Look for root rot. As you clean check for the smell of rotting fans and rhizomes. If the rhizome is soft take action immediately. Comet or Ajax cleanser is good to use on the rhizome. Sprinkle the cleanser on top of the rhizome which will help dry out the rhizome and kill bacteria and fungus.
- If you are experiencing spots on your iris fans and they were discolored and dying, this condition is most likely rust which is unusual in the Prescott area, but does occur. This is caused by excess moisture and may not be a problem this year. See the article in last month's newsletter for treatment to control rust. You want to treat it before the new fans produce too much new growth and it spreads to other plants.
- **Mulching:** remove any mulch that you placed around your plants.
- **Fertilizing:** If you have not fertilized yet, do it now. This will be your last opportunity to fertilize until after bloom season.
- A multi-purpose food such as Arizona's Best all purpose food 10-10-10 is still recommended or use Best 6-24-24XB which also contains sulfur and iron which is wonderful for producing bloom. All purpose rose foods are also good. Those fertilizers containing phosphate or triple phosphate are great for bloom production.
- **Watering:** With our warm dry weather and the prediction for windy weather our soils are dry. Begin watering your irises once a week with a deep soaking to develop good root structure, promote fan growth and produce good bloom.
- **Composting:** Composting is good to continue. You can use your mulch, the iris leaves and other vegetative material to add to your compost. Good composting now will provide you with good vegetative matter to add to your beds in the summer when you dig divide and transplant your irises.
- **Happy Gardening:** Your irises are now producing new growth for a spectacular spring bloom. Bring those beauties to the Spring Exhibit. Be sure you know the names of your irises and what category to enter them in or if they are nameless, just bring them for the Grandma's Garden display.

## Species Iris

### Eugene Zielinski

In last November's PAIS presentation, I talked about a number of species iris and I talked about them pretty quickly. Some club members were interested in seeing a list of the species I discussed as well as some cultural information – particularly information on which irises were likely to succeed in the Prescott area without too much coddling. The central highlands of Arizona present a number of challenges to growing irises, and a lot of other plants for that matter. The first challenge is our arid climate. Many species come from moister climates and appreciate supplemental water year round. They may also appreciate more humidity. Another factor is our (relatively) cold winters. A few of the irises I mentioned come from milder areas and would not survive a winter where temperatures went much below 15° F. Our monsoons may not be to the liking of some irises which come from dry summer areas, such as the Middle East. A final factor is our alkaline soils. A number of irises, such as those from alpine and subalpine areas in East Asia, prefer a more acidic soil.

Here are some of my thoughts on species irises and their growing requirements. I'll start with the species that are most suited to Prescott, and work my way from there.

*Iris germanica*, *I. junonia*, *I. kashmiriana*, *I. lutescens* & *I. lutescens campbellii*, *I. pallida*, *I. pumila*, *I. suaveolens*, and *I. variegata*. These are from the bearded iris group, native to Europe and Asia, and they can be grown like our tall bearded iris. (Some of them, such as *I. variegata*, were important in the early development of bearded iris hybrids.) Like the bearded iris hybrids, they will appreciate supplemental water and fertilizer in the spring.

*Iris bakeriana*, *I. histrioides* (and *histrioides* "George"), *I. kolpakowskiana*, *I. reticulata*, and *I. winogradowii*. These are from the bulbous iris group, which come from dry mountainous areas in eastern Europe and Asia. All of the ones mentioned are fairly small (under 6 inches) when in bloom and should do well in the Prescott area. They may need supplemental water in the spring; they also appreciate some extra fertilizer while they are in growth. When the clumps become too crowded, the bulbs will need to be dug up and separated after the leaves have died down; if you don't do this regularly, you will have a clump of leaves and no flowers.

The Juno irises (*Iris albomarginata*, *I. cycloglossa*, and *I. rosenbachiana*) are also bulbous and should be treated like the bulbous irises above. They may not like our monsoons, but are still worth trying. Most bulbous irises like a dry summer. The exceptions are *I. winogradowii* and *I. cycloglossa*, which don't like to dry out completely in summer. If you water them like bearded irises, they should be OK.

*Iris missouriensis* is the only iris that occurs naturally in the Prescott area. I've found them on Mingus Mountain, where they bloom in May. While they don't grow in standing water, I've only seen them in areas where the soil stays moist all the time. I've seen them growing in sunny and somewhat shaded areas, but they bloom better in sunny areas.

*Iris unguicularis*, a native of Greece and other parts of the Mediterranean, is definitely worth trying in the Prescott area. Some forms may start blooming around Christmas, or even earlier in a mild winter. Again, some supplemental water in the spring would be appreciated.

The beautiful aril irises are also worth trying in the Prescott area. They can be divided into two groups, the *Oncocyclus* (*Iris barnumae*, *I. gatesii*, *I. haynei*, and *I. iberica*) and the *Regelia* (*Iris hoogiana* and *I. korolkowii*). These irises come from desert areas and will have problems with summer water, i.e. our monsoons. The *Regelias* are more tolerant of summer water. If I ever have the opportunity, I will try growing *Oncocyclus* irises in a raised sand bed – basically a six to eight inch layer of pure sand over regular garden soil, a sandbox for irises, so to speak. Although the aril irises don't like summer water, they do like some water in late winter and spring while they are growing.



*Iris unguicularis* by Eugene taken at Atlanta Botanical Garden



The spuria irises (*Iris orientalis* and *I. spuria*) should do well in our area. It appears that they like extra water in the spring, but they don't absolutely require it. Most spurias like a dry summer. *Iris ruthenica*, a small purple Asian iris, likes similar conditions, but doesn't care to dry out completely in the summer.

I discussed a number of East Asian irises in my presentation. I feel most of them can be grown here, but not without some effort. As I mentioned above, our soils may be too alkaline. Our climate is definitely too dry; these irises like to have water year round and don't like soils that dry out quickly. They will also need some protection from the intense Arizona sun – not full shade (they won't bloom) but not full afternoon sun either. Some will be easier to grow than others.

*Iris tectorum*, the Japanese Roof iris, is definitely worth trying. They are rather shallow rooted, so they will need frequent watering. When I saw these growing in the eastern US, their leaves always seemed to be disfigured by a fungus. They may not have this problem with our dry air. The Blackberry Lily, *Iris domestica* (formerly *Belamcanda chinensis*), is another species worth trying and should need less water and more sunlight than *I. tectorum*.

*Iris setosa* is native to northern Asia and northern North America. I saw large fields of it in bloom when I visited Anchorage, Alaska many years ago. It likes moisture year round and will need extra watering in Arizona. Considering its northern origins, it may find our springs and summers too warm.

Two woodland irises from the southeastern USA, *Iris cristata* and *I. verna*, may succeed in our area. Both will require shade and enough water so they never dry out. *I. cristata* likes a rich, somewhat alkaline soil while *I. verna* prefers an acidic soil (which may make it difficult to grow here). *Iris koreana* is a relative from East Asia and should be cultivated like *I. cristata*, although it may like a little more sun.

A number of the Asian irises from my presentation fall into the broad classification of Siberian iris. These include *Iris bulleyana*, *I. chrysographes* (the Black Iris), *I. forrestii*, and *I. typhifolia*. Siberian irises like a rich soil that doesn't dry out, and, as mentioned above, they like sun, but not intense western sun. I wonder if we need to grow them like tomatoes – in other words, grow them in a raised bed amended with a lot of compost, fertilize them well, and make sure they never dry out. I may have to try this if I have the opportunity.

Our winters are probably too cold for irises from the Pacific Coast, but they are pretty enough to be worth a try. The species I mentioned were *Iris douglasiana*, *I. hartwegii*, *I. innominata*, and *I. tenax*. They like moisture fall through spring, and a dry summer. *Iris foetidissima*, an Asian iris more appreciated for its orange berry-like fruits than its pale flowers, requires similar cultural conditions.

I talked about irises that grow in wet situations, including a number that don't mind growing with their rhizomes covered by a few inches of water. *Iris brevicaulis*, *I. fulva*, *I. giganteaerulea*, and *I. tridentata* come from the southeastern USA, *I. ensata*, an important parent of the beautiful Japanese iris hybrids, comes from East Asia, and *I. pseudacorus* comes from Europe, but is extensively naturalized in eastern North America. These irises are going to require lots and lots of water if they are going to succeed in the Prescott area. It's probably a better idea to build a shallow pond if you would like to grow these. They also appreciate extra feeding. The Japanese irises may have trouble dealing with our alkaline water since they prefer more acid conditions. Unlike the others I've listed, Japanese irises don't like to have their rhizomes covered with water, but they don't like to dry out, either.

Finally, there are two irises I mentioned that probably won't do well in the Prescott area. *Iris barbata* and *I. decora* are native to alpine meadows and will probably find our summers too hot and dry. I must confess that I am trying to grow these from seed, so we'll see what happens.

One warning – while a few of these irises are readily available commercially, many are not. A number are available as seeds. Seeds can be fun to germinate, but the process can be complicated, and it will be a few years before the plants bloom. Check out the [Species Iris Group of North America](#) (SIGNA, an affiliate of the American iris Society) for a bunch of nice pictures and useful information.