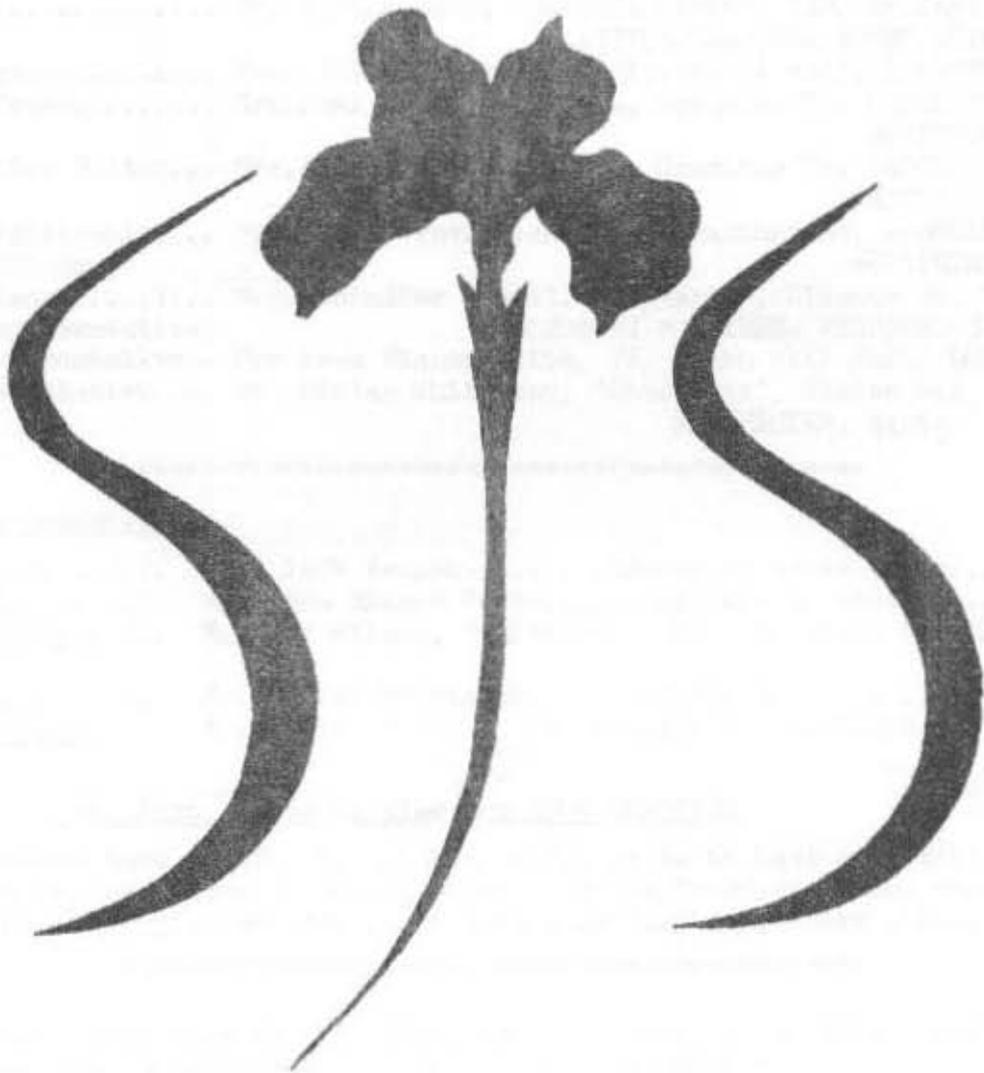


1976 — 1986

# NEWSLETTER



OF THE  
SIBERIAN SPURIA AND JAPANESE  
GROUP  
B.I.S.

1976 -- 1986

THE SIBERIAN, SPURIA AND JAPANESE IRIS GROUP

Newsletter No. 19, July 1986

of the BRITISH IRIS SOCIETY.

THE OBJECTS OF THE GROUP.

1. Communication between Members in Great Britain and Overseas.
2. A means of exchanging ideas, plants and seeds etc.
3. To assist beginners in growing Irises and to offer help with problems.
4. To report on Hybridisation.

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The Group's Officers.

- Chairman..... Mr. Jack Venner, 'Raven's Croft', 120, St. Osyth Rd,  
LITTLE CLACTON. ESSEX CO16 9NY.
- Vice-Chairman..... Mrs. Hilda Goodwin, 42, Tycehurst Hill, LOUGHTON. ESSEX. IG10 1DA
- Hon. Secty/Treas..... Mrs. Joan Trevithick, 86a, Grantham Rd. RADCLIFFE-on-TRENT.  
NOTTINGHAM. NG12 2HY.
- Hon. Newsletter Editor... Mrs. Joan Trevithick, 86a, Grantham Rd. RADCLIFFE-on-TRENT.  
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- Hon. Seed Distribution... Mr. David Trevithick, 86a, Grantham Rd. RADCLIFFE-on-TRENT.  
Officer. NOTTINGHAM. NG12 2HY.
- Hon. Librarian..... Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt, 'Haygarth', Cleeton St. Mary,  
(Siberian Representative) CLEOBURY MORTIMER. KIDDERMINSTER Worcs DY14
- Japanese Representative.. Mrs Anne Blanco White, 72, South Hill Park, LONDON NW3 2SN. OQU.
- Spuria Representative.... Mr. Adrian Whittaker, 'Chestnuts', Hilden Way, LITTLETON.  
WINCHESTER. Hants.

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Regional Representatives.

- Eastern Area..... Mr. Jack Venner..... address as above.....
- London Area..... Mrs Anne Blanco White..... address as above.....
- North Western Area.... Mr. Ray Wilson, 'Dalehead', 100, Blackburn Rd. CHORLEY. LANES.  
PR6 8TJ.
- Southern Area..... Mr. Adrian Whittaker..... address as above .....
- West Midland Area.... Mr. Philip Allery, 199, Walsall Rd. ALDRIDGE Nr. WALSALL  
WS9 OBE.

Mr. Jack Venner is also our SHOW REPORTER.

Many Members have written to say how useful it is to have our 'Officers in the field' We thank each and every one for their service to the Group, and hope that you enjoy it, and will continue to give your help and advice as long as you are able....

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We have had a very busy time in this, the early part of the 10th. Anniversary Year. Reporters have made a tremendous effort to put their Reports in, for which many congratulations. However, there is a slight delay in getting your Newsletter to you, so please forgive and have patience.... Thank you... Ed...

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SUBSCRIPTIONS £1 per Year are NOW DUE PLEASE.

Newsletters are published in February and July, remember, this is your Newsletter, so write in, if you have a query, comment or just to say how your Irises are faring... Ed....

EDITORIAL.

I have taken these delightful lines from 'DeLille, Les Jardins IV.':-

Soft where the distances recede, behold  
 Half veiled in mist perspectives wide unfold,  
 While near a bower attractive, and retired,  
 in Art's and Nature's choicest gifts attired,  
 Adorned with shrubs and flowers, appears to say,  
 'What seek ye more? Here, here contented stay!'

It is an acknowledged fact that gardening is a therapeutic occupation.... Seeing Irisarians at work with their beautiful exhibits at Moulton and again in London, everyone will agree that this is absolutely certain.... Despite Weather conditions, some excellent blooms were produced... I marvel sometimes at how it is done... no doubt at all ... loving care!!!

We had stands at both Shows this year.. Sincere thanks are due to the Members who helped, whether 'volunteers' or 'pressed men'. On June 7th. at Moulton, Marion Wood nobly 'stopped in' and worked, selling plants and seeds and offering advice for most of the day, ably assisted by Wendy Whittaker (Adrain's wife), who joined in after a long and tiring journey. They made a total profit of £60.14p. A wonderful effort... Harry Foster's beautiful Irises certainly put a finishing touch to our Stand, included in the vase were I.Sib. 'Lavender Light' a lovely pale lavender, 'Soft Blue', 'Emperor', 'Cool Springs', 'Olive Doige' an arresting red, seedling W 13 AP and 'Clee Hills' Jennifer's excellent Hybrid. Many thanks Harry... Many thanks also to the Members who brought along their plants to be sold for the funds, some quite 'special'... greatly appreciated.

The success of the whole Show was due to Brett Tussler and Sidney Linnegar, who, once again organised and arranged everything so well.

Anne Blanco White kindly carried and 'set up' the 'Photographic Exhibit' at the London Show, where we were allotted a corner space... There were quite a few enquiries concerning our Group... Again Harry Foster generously placed two vases of his Irises, to enhance our Exhibition. One containing I.Sib. 'Harpwell Haze' (Currier McEwen) received many admiring comments. As at Moulton the other contained the extremely attractive Tetraploids, which are now being seen, more and more, on the Show Bench. Sincere thanks to Anne and Harry.

A big thank you also to Eileen Wise (B.I.S. Membership Secretary) and her band of helpers, including Mary Fraser and Eunice Frenkiel and all the others who looked after the Stand on the 2nd. day of the Show, not forgetting the 'clearing up' afterwards. To Norman Payne, who, so willingly took a turn at 'minding the shop' while Committee Members were attending a Meeting to finalize the 'Conditions devised by the Committee for the Smooth Running of the Group' and the 'Constitution of the Committee' you will find both of these printed at the end of the Newsletter.

We welcome 8 new Members, 6, here in Great Britain and 2, in America... Mrs. C.R. Calvert, who lives at Albrighton, Wolverhampton of David Austin Roses, has joined us. Miss Lucy Edwards M.B.E. of West Bridgford, a friend of Iris Radfords... more about Lucy under the 'My Irises' section. Mr. T. Winstanley of Beechill, Wigan is hoping to obtain more Siberian Irises to form a collection. Mr. Peter Maynard the Secretary of the B.I.S. joined us at the Moulton Show. Mr. Alan Edwards of West Hamble Dorking, came along and joined us at the London Show, after looking at Harry's outstanding Sibiricas, as also did Mrs. Anna Klaisner of Maida Vale who is hoping to grow White Sibiricas particularly. Overseas.. Mrs. Andrew C. Warner (Carol) of Upperco Maryland is the Hon. Treas./Membership Secty. of the Society of Japanese Irises U.S.A. Mrs. Lorena M. Reid of Springfield Or. U.S.A. runs a Beardless Iris Nursery with the delightful name of 'Laurie's Garden'.

We hope you all enjoy reading the Newsletters, and that you will write and tell us about your garden and the Irises you grow, when you feel like it, and have the time.

Our first Coffee Morning held at the home of Debbie and Paul Hudson in West Bridgford on April 12th, despite the bad weather, which prevented some Members from attending, proved a very enjoyable morning. Debbie and Paul's warm welcome, ably assisted by Naomi (3½) who dispensed the biscuits, dispelled the rain as we watched a Slide Show of Irises and their Holiday in Peru. The funds benefited by £28.50p. Many thanks to everyone.

Don't forget to save all the seeds you can please, not too many bees about...

We have sold more than ever this year... Keep up the Good Work. All the Best.

Joan Trevithick.

Chairman's Letter.

Dear Fellow Members. In last years' July Newsletter I mentioned that the Iris season had been extraordinary, so very late, due to continuous bad weather... What about this season??? Surely, for most of us, here in England, it must be the latest and wettest yet. The cold and showery April type weather, seems to have covered the whole country from February, right up to the end of May, with just an occasional dry warmer day here and there. The first days of June seemed more like winter. Some of us are old enough to remember the pre-war song 'It's June in January', well.. if you have'nt experienced that, you can certainly say that you have had the reverse... 'January in June'. That's Britain for you, one never knows weatherwise what to expect. One day it is winter clothing and raincoats, the next, the least amount of clothing to conform to respectability.... However, I must keep on the Iris track.. it has not, generally speaking, been a good year for T.B's, but it has, and still is, a fine season for Beardless Irises. The abundance of soil moisture seems to have produced lush foliage and plenty of flowers. Now that in the last days of June, we are having a sudden heat wave, the Spurias are showing a mass of buds.. Ben Hager's early 1966 'Protege' is in peak flower, an outstanding twenty 4'6" stems carrying numerous, large flowers with light blue-violet standards and white falls closely veined blue; a touch of yellow at the hafts adds to the attraction... a very striking Iris... The Sibiricas have been really gorgeous, but are now fading... 'Ruffled Velvet' still remains in full glory... a super long flowering plant...

I send my thanks to the Officers and Committee of the Group, and to everyone who has sent in an article or letter, also to those of you who help to make our Seed Distribution so popular. I hope that, like me, you are having a very successful Iris Season.. oh, by the way I am looking forward to the sensational blooms of the Japanese Iris Kaempferi (or Ensata call them what you will), I am keeping them well-watered during this dry period, hope you are too...

As always we look forward to hearing from you, both at Home and Overseas... Do'nt forget that the exchange of information and seeds etc. is vital to the progress in brooding better Irises for ourselves and for future Generations....

Happy and Successful Iris Growing... All the Best..... Jack Vennor.

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My Irises

by Mary Fraser

My two-thirds of an Acre garden was originally a clearing in a wood on a hill. Being on a slope, this more or less solves any trouble with drainage.. The soil is neutral...stony... The house is built of local flint, obtained from the quarry, which is on the other side of the hill... I think the builder must have buried the stones he rejected, in the garden!!! In the last ten years I have deliberately worked in parts of it to produce a more acid compost.

Today, the garden is encircled by trees, mostly different forms of conifer which were planted ten years ago, and are now matured enough to make their identity felt. They are large enough to provide some protection from most of the awful weather. Interspersed between these trees are Rhododendrons, Azaleas and shrubs which include Viburnum Sargentiae, Halesia, Nyssa Sylvatica, Clerodendrum Japonica and many others... There is now a woodland path round the garden, full of surprises.. and very useful when young nephews and nieces come to visit!!!

Two peat beds rise on one side of the house, in curved 'shelves'.. They contain some very precious plants... To tell you about all of them would take up too much space, but one of them does house Irises Winogradowii, Innominata (blue form) and Graminea...

In 1982 I joined the B.I.S. and almost immediately, the Mercian Group... By 1983 I had succumbed entirely and helplessly to the fascination of the Iris, especially the Species and joining the Species Group has enabled me to collect seeds and seedlings, some of the lovely wild Irises and some of their Hybrids. Included are I. Hartwegii, Macrosiphon, Manzii (kept in Alpine House), Douglasiana in several forms, Tenax, Dracteata, Sintensii, Kerneriana, Setosa, Ungulularis in several forms and a number of F.C.I. Hybrids. There are plants of I. Forrestii, Clarkei, Pseudacorus, Pseudacorus Bastardii, Fulvala, Virginica, Versicolor, 'Gerald Darby' 'Holden Clough', Ensata and Songarica.

Last year a practical friend helped me to build a bulb frame which is useful for difficult Junos. In this and the Alpine House there are several Oncocycclus, Roxelia and Regulocycclus Iris. Paradoxa, Lortetii, Gatesii, Acutiloba, Sylphide and Clotho flowered  
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last year; Iris Afghanica will, I hope, this year.

After the Mercian Plant Sale in the latter part of 1985, two more Iris beds had to be made, one for accomodating the Bearded Irises I had purchased and the other to house more P.C.I's and Sibiricas... Apart from the lovely Hybrid Reticulata Irises, I have several Species, two collected forms, Iris Hyrcana and Iris Pamphylica which, to my great joy, flowered this year in a very 'long tom' in the Alpine House, in which I also overwintered Iris Confusa and Iris Japonica, in order to keep the leaves green and free from the 'baby' slugs which 'machine-gunned' them last year.

On the other side of the house, a smaller 'white' garden is beginning to show signs of maturity. I need hardly say this venture stemmed from my first visit to Sissinghurst about 8 years ago...

At the bottom of the garden which is fairly moist, the Irises are contained in a circular pool... Water Irises, fish, frogs, newts and water lilies, inhabit this area.

Now I have joined you in the S.S & J. Group... The only Spurias I had before were I. Musulmanica (from seed) A.W.Taite, Halophila and Graminea... but the year is still young....

(Thank you Mary, you are to be congratulated on such a fine collection.. We will do our best to help you to extend this as time goes by. Best Wishes. Ed.)

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My Irises.

I. Sibirica 'Dragonfly'

by Phyl Oliver

A couple of years ago I was lucky enough to be given a root of W.J.Dykes hybrid 'Dragonfly'. Knowing nothing about it's format, I planted it near the front of a rather damp border in half shade. It seemed to like this treatment, as it has thrived and withstood the last two Winters... particularly cruel here in Kent.

I am not really an Iris Specialist, but would describe it's blue flowers as slightly better all round than those of the ordinary Sibirica; they are a little larger and a clearer blue (at least this is so in my slightly acid soil).

It's charm for me, lies in it's graceful height and it's generosity in flower. Last Summer, having established itself in barely two years, it produced seventeen fine stems, most of them almost five feet in height, and effectively disposed on the plant.. I would describe it as aristocratic rather than showy !!!!!

( Thank you Phyl, sounds a real beauty, also for the seeds. Ed.)

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My Irises.

by Marion Wood.

(Marion Wood's first letter should have been published last year, it was inadvertently filed. In publishing it together with this year's update, I send her sincere apologies for the omission. Editor.)

In the first letter Marion tells of the severe weather in February 1985, that the ground was frozen solid, but she had a lot of Chrysographes X P.C.I's (and vice versa) seed to raise for colchicining. Only a few of the 28 Sibiricas have doubled their chromosomes so far, and the results are not pleasing. Corrier has such lovely Tetraploids that it does'nt seem worthwhile going down that road... The 40 chr. Siberians are lovely but the petal texture tends to be too flimsy to stand up to the wind and rain we get here in Essex. I hope that perhaps a Tetraploid will have a better texture...

Currier's 'prairie Warbler' did not do well last year, but it is not really fair to judge a first year plant. I am hoping it will branch, as it does in his pictures, this Winter (85/86). I think, perhaps, the American plants need a hotter, drier sort of a climate than I have. 'My Love' was reblooming in the hot drought of Devon last year, but died out for me.

I have planted my box, but while I was away, during the first frosts, the blackbirds convinced themselves that they were multi-ended worms and carried off most of the seedlings... I have re-popped as many as I could find... I have a troop of scrappy squawking he-blackbirds trying to sort out territories at present, and digging like mad at anything soft....

Marion, in her second letter dated April/86 tells again of a disastrous Spring in which most of her Hebes and also her Louisiana Irises have died, helped by the marauding blackbirds and compounded by botrytis... How she has been treating some

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Tetraploid, germinating seeds (Spring 84) but none have shown as tetraploid so far. However a (Splashdown seedling X a seedling from a remontanant I. Forrester of Margaret Owen 'remonted' with a second sheaf of flower stems in September 1985. This may only have happened because of the late hot summer, but I shall be interested to watch it again this year. It's shape was poor and it was a spotty yellow flower.

In Spring /85 I treated a lot of germinating (Siberians (f)(40) X P.C.I.'s (m)(40)) seeds and lost about 80% after ten weeks. None of the reciprocal cross (P.C.I.(f)(40) X Siberian (m)(40)) germinated until /86. About half of the survivors were planted out and then many died in the 85/86 Winter... I had a few pots left in the cold frame, and when these seedlings started into growth this Spring, I cut them down to the growing point and colchicined them 'upside-down' for 12 hours... Washed and re-potted them. Many have since died, but a few are still growing into swollen green lumps, so may be interesting in the future... All my seed from crosses using 'Foretell' as female parent has been bad also from 'Pink Maze'... 'Dance Ballerina Dance' however, have set good seed... The green-house, frame, kitchen and garden are bursting at the seams, as is the bog, where all sorts of lovely Erythroniums--unnamed now, courtesy of blackbirds, are in full bloom. 'Prairie Warbler' and 'Varied Buntingare' are growing well in a nearby bed, but I think I will be moving them to a sunnier place in the garden.. I do feel that a lot of the American Siberians require a warmer summer than I seem to be able to manage, especially the 'repeat bloomers'. I may be greedy, but a second crop of blooms is a lovely treat, particularly if the first crop did not set any seed!!!

I would like to ask, through the Newsletter, if anyone is hybridising Japanese Irises in Gt. Britain??? Jack Venner said he would, if any would survive for him in Esse: so far they have'nt... He would like to have a go with Jap. Tets. Is anyone else trying this fascinating hobby??? if so I would like to hear from you please... All the best...

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#### My Gardening

By Lucy Edwards.

I have always loved gardening, inherited, no doubt, from my Father and Mother, also my Grandmother, but actually, in life, it is only since I have retired that I have been able to indulge myself. I have worked for 44 years as a Librarian for Nottingham City Council, founding in 1958 the first ever Department of Local Studies for the City Library (this has now become known, all over the Country). I became increasingly interested, during this time in our two famous writers.. Byron and D.H.Lawrence. For over 30 years, I worked at Newstead Abbey, and created the City's first D.H.Lawrence collection...

In 1978 I was awarded the M.B.E. for services to the City of Nottingham, rather nice, because I loved the work. Now 13 years later, I have retired but, but I still continue my interest in Local History, and in Byron and Lawrence actively. In 1988 we celebrate the Bi-centenary of Byron's Birth, at the moment I am busy contacting the many Members of the Society, both here and overseas.

In my garden I like to accomodate the birds as well as the plants and trees.. I grow quite a few Old Fashioned Roses, as well as several large trees, but as I live quite close to the River Trent I find that Irises, which I love, are growing very well, when they become established. I am very pleased to join your Group, because now I can extend my collection and learn more about them. Best Wishes to you all...

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#### In Memory.

We extend our Sincere Sympathy to John Taylor in the death of his dear Wife Mary.. Mary was always so full of fun and really enjoyed the Iris Meetings, until her illness a few years ago. Her courage and fortitude must help John in these dark days, He is not well himself. We send love and support, hoping that your Irises and the care of them will bring a measure of comfort.. God Bless.

Bill Christopher's sudden death on the 9th March, brought much sadness to his many friends who loved and respected him, particularly in the Mercia Group. We send sincere condolences to his family and the friends who knew him, he will be sadly missed.

In the U.S.A. the work of Professor McGarvey on the genetics of Siberians is, no doubt well documented, here we know him by name only, but his introductions have given us new colour breaks and valuable breeding Irises, they are really deserving of (an

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award. We have received a notification that Professor McGarvey died last December, we send our Sympathy to his family and friends. His name will live on in the shape of his lovely Irises.

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### Siberian and Japanese Iris ... Update 1986

by Currier McEwen.

Joan has reminded me that it is 10 years since I wrote my first article for the S.S & J. Newsletter (1976) and I am very pleased to have the chance to write this update. One of the most notable achievements has been the success of this Group and I send my warmest congratulations and thanks to those who brought it in to being and have guided it's growth. This, in turn, is part of the wider story of steadily increasing interest in Siberian and other beardless Irises in many Countries.

Ten years ago I was a lonely figure in the use of colchicine to induce tetraploidy in Siberian and Japanese Irises.. although some trials had been made in Japan. Now.. Robert Hollingworth in the United States, Marion Wood in England, Eckard Berlin also Tomas Tamberg in Germany, have joined in these efforts and perhaps there are others about whom I do not yet know.

Experience has shown, without question, I believe, that tetraploidy contributes some advantages in larger flowers with stronger substance, richer colors and accentuation of such features as ruffling and patterns... On the other hand, they tend to lack the more delicate grace of the diploids, and their strong substance tends to make them all have the flaring form... As one who was a pioneer in the development of tetraploids, let me emphasize, as strongly as I can, that I consider the tetraploids no substitute for diploids; each has it's own qualities and both have their place in the garden.

Particular progress has been made in the Siberians and in recent years their popularity in the United States, Gt. Britain and on the Continent has increased greatly. As a result hybridisers, who formerly worked only with Bearded Irises, have turned their attention to Siberians also, and those already in the field have been introducing flowers of ever increasing quality... A factor in many of the best new introductions, which gives me particular pleasure has been the discovery of the value of my 'Ruffled Velvet' as a parent... In the hands of Bee Warburton, Harley Brisco and others, it has contributed it's genes to some of the finest seedlings yet seen... I have been glad to see also a growing interest in miniature Siberians with the introduction of plants with 2½ inch stems and flowers on 6-8 inch stalks.

Another field in which Eckard Berlin and Tomas Tamberg have been especially active and successful, is of 'wide cross' hybrids, between 28 and 40 chromosome Siberians (and tetraploids from them) and Irises of other Series.. This has given, not only some most interesting and lovely flowers, but in the case of tetraploids has also contributed 'fertility' in what had formerly been sterile hybrids... and thus a whole new field of hybridizing has been opened....

Interest in Japanese Irises also is increasing, especially in the United States, although not as dramatically as in the case of Siberians... One disadvantage suffered by Japanese Irises is that, unlike the Siberians, they are not seen in the Tour Gardens at the Annual Conventions of the American Iris Society because of their later season of bloom... I am sure that this has been a handicap in England and other countries also.. In the United States, Japanese Iris Shows have been held, especially in Kalamazoo, Michigan and Summerville South Carolina for years, but for the first time a Japanese Iris 'Mini-Convention' was held last year in Kalamazoo, some 80 J.I. enthusiasts enjoyed two full days of garden visits, judging exercises, shows and lectures,.. The experience was so successful that at once it was decided to repeat this every two years, with the next to be in Summerville in 1987... Already, however, plans are afoot, to start Meetings in other parts of the Country, and I have no doubt that soon these 'Mini Conventions' will be held each year...

Thus far, I think I am the only one in the West working very intensively to develop tetraploidy in Japanese Irises... My first 'Raspberry Rimmed' was introduced in 1979... Since then there have been another four, and this year I am introducing two more, one of which, a very large, ruffled white, is my first six-petalled tetraploid. Several hundred seedlings will bloom this July for the first time... I wait eagerly to see them... Let me emphasize again, however, as I did in the case of the Siberians, that I continue my efforts with diploids no less avidly....

'Repeat Bloom' among both Siberian and Japanese Irises continues to be one of my special interests, as also is the development of 'Miniatures'. Last year a lovely little

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red and white, 3 petalled J.I. bloomed with 3inch flowers on 12 inch stalks... I love it.. but whether there is much future for 'little ones' in a class of preponderant huge flowers, remains to be seen.

Before leaving the subject of Japanese Irises let me ask for your help!!!!!! I have accepted the responsibility of serving as Editor of a book on Japanese Irises similar to the one on Siberians... I have been able to find little of solid information about diseases and pests of these flowers, and will appreciate greatly any information that you can send me either from your own experience or from your reading... I will also appreciate your comments about culture of J.I's in Gt. Britain and any other aspects of them that you consider noteworthy....

I can think of no better way to end these remarks than to mention the lovely experience Elizabeth and I enjoyed last Fall in our visits to England and Germany. During our short stay in London we had the opportunity to see only Anne and Thomas Blanco White and Jennifer Hewitt, but look forward to seeing more of you on our next trip.. A major advantage of the new arrangement by which Shirley Pope is now taking care of the shipping part of 'Seaways Gardens' is that Elizabeth and I have some time free in the Fall, but not, alas, during bloom-time when my hybridizing is in full swing...

Our lovely trip gave us more days in Germany, where we received heartwarming hospitality. Starting with Helen von Stein in Lanfen, we went on to Barbara and Eckard Berlin in Biberach then Christina and Tomas Tamberg in Berlin and finally Marlene and George Ahlburg in Rotgesbuttel... There we also met Monik and Uve Knopnadel from Friesland and in Berlin we also met the Langfelds... Although, there were, of course, no flowers in bloom, we had some fine opportunities to talk, see slides and form 'mental pictures' of all the gardens... Best of all was the chance to renew old friendships and to start new ones.....

(Curriers' Book 'Siberian Irises' is available from the Library.. It can also be purchased.. personally signed... direct from :- Dr. Currier McEwen, M.D.

South Harpswell. MAINE. 04079. U.S.A.  
(Price 7 dollars inc Postage and Handling.)

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### Iris Species for Shallow Water.

by Eberhard Schuster

Among 150 to 200 species of Irises which we know, there are some which can be grown in shallow water all the year round (5-10cm.). They are very good plants for the water garden and absolutely hardy in colder regions, as it is, here in Germany. The species and their varieties make a nice view--point in full bloom in the garden. The best place for them is in full sun, but they will tolerate partial shade too... They like heavy soil, rich in nutritive substances, because they are very wastful, therefore they like to get additional fertilizers to bring on the many flower buds. Poor soil means poor blossoms. It is best to propagate the species and varieties, by dividing the rhizomes in Spring or Fall... The species can be propagated by seeds too to get true descendants.

Iris Laevigata is native to East Siberia, Japan, Korea and China. The plants reach a height of 60 to 80 cm. and their yellow-green leaves are smooth without a mid-rib. The standards of the flowers are narrow and typically erect.. The falls droop slightly. Many hybrids, forms and varieties are 'in culture', some with 'standards' and 'falls' of the same shape, but with 6 drooping falls, these are called 'double' forms. There are small and larger sized flowers... The true I.Laevigata, the type, has deep blue flowers, faintly lined with gold on their 3 falls.

I have given a list of the varieties and forms at the end....

Iris Versicolor, called the 'Blue Flag' is the American equivalent to the European I.Pseudacorus. The plants grow in similar places, shallow water, wet marshes or in the damp border... They are native to the North-Eastern United States as far North as Canada, West to Minnesota, South to Virginia... The plants range in size up to 80 cm. or more on height. The standards are shorter than the falls which have a white-yellow, violet-veined base. The flowers, of the type, have a blue-purple color, but there are many other color forms available e.g.:- 'Zambesi'-- soft blue...

In Japan a lot of varieties with exotic names are in culture, for instance 'Orizuru', 'Seiryu', 'Washino-o', 'Akebono', 'Tokino-Hane', 'Goshe-kou', 'Jashi-no-Wo' and others. In my collection I have about 20 varieties, but sorry to say, some older ones are not commercially available any more... Maybe, they are still growing in an Iris

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collection... If any Member has these varieties growing in his garden, I would be very glad if he would kindly contact me please... I. Laevigata and forms are the only true water Irises, which means they grow best in shallow water, all the year round. In our climate here they must be grown under these conditions, the rhizomes suffer frost damage if planted in beds. The other species will tolerate normal garden beds too and thrive under such conditions....

(Eberhard goes on to tell us about I. Pseudacorus, I. Versicolor and 'Gerald Darby'; but as space is limited this time, I thought you would rather have the list of I. Laevigata and information about the other three Irises in the February Newsletter, in this most interesting account, for which many thanks Eberhard. Ed.)

- I. Laevigata:- 'Alba'- snow white, a beautiful form, with 3 falls only. You will often find the mistake (also in the book 'The World of Irises' that Alba is a form with 6 drooping falls.
- 'Albopurpurea'- white flowers, falls flecked coerulean-blue, double, reblooms sometimes in September.
- 'Atropurpurea'- brilliant violet-purple-blue.
- 'Benikiren'- a shade of blue, attractively washed and mottled silver.
- 'Colchesteri'- pure white, large flowers which are heavily mottled to make a white edging effect, double..
- 'Monstrosa'- white standards which are in a little bit monstrose shape, blue falls <sup>double</sup>.
- 'Mottled Beauty'- cream-white standards, falls white flecked with pale blue blotches.
- 'Muraguma'- a lovely shade of deep blue, faintly lined gold, double, Japanese variety.
- 'Niagara'- ice-blue, double.
- 'Perfeld Beauty'- deep blue, very large.
- 'Regal'- rose magenta flowers.
- 'Rose Queen'- a lovely shade of soft rose, small flowers, hybrid with I. Ensata (Kaempferi).
- 'Royal Cartwheel'- Navy-blue-purple with deep white slash down the centre of each petal, double.
- 'Semperflorens'- deep blue-violet, rebloomer.
- 'Snowdrift'- very large, pure white flowers, marbled yellow at the base, double.
- 'Variegata' (elegantissima)- dainty pale-blue flowers, green and white vertically patterned leaves... My favourite Water Iris...
- 'Violet Parasol'- blue-violet, double.
- 'Walderbach'- clear blue, without lines, selected in Germany.
- 'Weide Mowe'- white, up to 1m. in height, very attractive, selected in Germany.
- 'Nanus' (Dwarf Form)- a dwarf form about 50cm. high.
- 'Ivory' ('Alba')- ivory-white flowers, markings in good contrast.
- 'Primrose Monarch'- up to 2m or more high, like 'Golden Gigantea', but paler.
- 'Sulphur Queen' (syn. var. bastardii)- sulphur-yellow with markings on falls. Collected wild in North Wales. Flowers are high above the top of the foliage.
- 'Variegata'- bright golden-yellow, striped foliage, passing to pale green during the summer. Small flowers. Not such an eye-catching form as I. Laevigata 'Variegata' A rare orange form is available too. In recent years tetraploid forms are in culture. Their flowers have much better substance and their form is more flaring. they are worthwhile for breeders to cross with tetraploid forms of I. Ensata (Kaempferi). Such tetraploid forms of I. Pseudacorus are:-
- 'Bad Schachen'- deep gold yellow, deepest colour of all forms.
- 'Beuron'- gold-yellow, overhanging foliage.
- 'Fahle Ilge'- sulphur-yellow, overhanging foliage.
- 'Ilgengold'- gold-yellow, erect foliage.
- 'Zitrone'- soft-yellow, free-blooming form.

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#### The Spuria Irises-- Introduction and Varietal Listing-1985 (Editor James J. Foreman)

Although it was reported in the February Newsletter that the cost of sending for a Copy would be 5 dollars, Floyd writes that he regrets that this will be by Surface Mail only, (I regret not having told you in February also.. sorry..). The revised charges are as follows:-

- By Air to Europe--- 7 dollars 75cents. postpaid.  
 By Air to Australia & New Zealand--- 8 dollars 50 cents. postpaid.  
 By Surface Mail anywhere--- 5 dollars postpaid.

Five copies would cost 28 dollars postpaid. All the Best Floyd  
 F. Wickenkamp, 10521 Bellarose Dr. SUN CITY. AZ. 85351. U.S.A.

7. Hybridization Methods.

The wild Japanese iris, I. Ensata Thunb. is native to Japan and adjacent countries of Eastern Asia. It is impossible to be certain when the first wild plants and selected wild variations, likely some colour forms, were transplanted to Japanese gardens, or when the first artificial crosses and selections of superior seedlings were made.. Hiraio in Kuribayashi and Hiraio (1971) noted that the oldest written record of Japanese Iris cultivars is a mid-fifteenth century account... At present in Japan and the U.S.A. plant-breeders use mainly the best available cultivars for further hybridization. In the text below, I describe methods for controlled crossing of Japanese Iris cultivars. Selfing and backcrossing can also be used for producing superior hybrid seedlings. Mackintosh (1983) described methods used at the U.S. National Arboretum to reach special breeding goals, such as plants with longer-lasting flowers. McEwen (1979) has produced several tetraploid Japanese Iris cultivars.

Long ago in Japan, plant-breeders selected parents and seedlings to conform to rather definite characteristics, such as the 'Edo', 'Ise', and 'Higo' groups of cultivars. Nowadays, plant-breeders often select the seed and pollen parents, as well as the hybrid offspring on a broader basis. In the last few decades, there has been much progress in producing superior cultivars, especially in plant vigour, range of colours, colour patterns and a marked increase in the width of the falls.

The technique of crossing two plants is relatively simple. The seed parent is selected and the flowers of an inflorescence are emasculated by removing all anthers. The flowers are then enclosed in rain-proof and dew-proof plastic bags to prevent insects from bringing unwanted pollen. When the stigmatic surfaces of the emasculated flowers have become receptive as determined by examination with a hand lens, a suitable pollen parent is selected. Pollen is ripe and ready to be shed or removed some time after the opening of the flower. The time of day for ripe pollen is partly related to the actual time of day, but I usually look for pollen both in the morning and afternoon. Other factors affecting the availability of pollen are air temperature, amount of sunlight or rain, and humidity.

When I locate a satisfactory pollen-parent plant with pollen readily observed with a hand lens. I remove a few anthers and place them in a small plastic bag or a small small glass dish. The anthers are handled with small forceps. The pollen is spread lightly over the stigmatic surfaces of the selected emasculated seed parent. If the stigmatic surfaces are receptive, the pollen adheres. Always examine the pollinated areas with a hand lens to be sure that plenty of Normal-appearing pollen has been applied. All three stigmas of each flower must be pollinated or a lopsided fruit may result. After the stigmas have been pollinated, each flower is carefully covered with a plastic bag. Secure each bag at the base with two paper clips. Place a strong bamboo stake alongside the plant and attach the top of each bag to the stake with several clothes pins. The bag can be left over the flower or removed as soon as the capsule has begun to swell. The capsule is harvested when the apex begins to split, the capsule becomes brownish in colour, and the seeds ripen. Store the seeds in a refrigerator until sown.

(Dr. Bowden's address is 32, Dinley Dve., SIMCOE, ONTARIO, CANADA. N3Y 4Z8. There will be more about 'Growing the Hybrid Seedlings', in the February 1987 Newsletter. Thank you for such valuable information..)

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British Iris Society Show Reports for 1986.

by Jack Venner.

Moulton Northants. June 7th.

The Iris season was extremely late this year. Irisarians must have set off for Moulton on June 7th wondering whether there would be much to see. However, if not in quantity, there were a number of newer bearded Irises for T.B. enthusiasts. The beardless Irises were much better represented than one would have expected, mainly due to the efforts of our Members.

Harry Foster had 3 nice blooms in 2 varieties of Sib. 'Lavender Light'- a reliable early flowering lavender-pink, shown with 'My Love' an unfamiliar older variety, violet in colour. This exhibit was judged good enough to be awarded the German Iris Plaque...

In the B.I.S. Class 17 Div. 2. for 3 Siberians in one vase the aforementioned

(cont).

varieties, plus a nice seedling W 13 AP won a First Prize Certificate for Harry.

Bob Wise showed a vase of I. Gracilipes and Brett Tussler was Highly Commended for 3 un-named blue-purple Sibiricas. Very nicely staged by Hilda Goodwin were 4 I. Innominata golden-ochre in colour, they really caught the eye!!! Cy Bartlett showed 3 blooms of the same type and colouring.. quite an acceptable exhibit, but not quite so appealing as the better balanced of Hilda's exhibit, due to the shorter stems.

Ray Jeffs had only one spike of I. Missouriensis at this Show... Apparently his plants had failed to produce the fine abundance of blooms we remember from past Shows.

Iris Pseudacorus Variegata was prominent in a number of exhibits... a very bold foliage plant this... it also has small but quite respectable flowers.. Brett Tussler used it in a very effective collection of Beardless Irises he had staged. An excellent collection of Pacific Coast Irises was shown by Maureen Foster, there were 10 named varieties in two vases, mostly American forms raised by Joe Ghio. This exhibit was arguably the best in the Hall...

The S.S & J. Stand had a selection of Beardless Irises for sale, brought in by Members to sell for the benefit of the Funds. I would like to put on record my thanks to Dr. Marion Wood, Wendy Whittaker, our Secretary and David, who all worked so hard to make it a success...

### The British Iris Society Show... R.H.S.Hall June 17th & 18th.

For a normal Iris year, if there is such a thing, a very late date, as experienced this year, would probably have been a disaster. However the long spell of cold, showery weather, preceding the Show ensured that it was well supported... The T.B's were fine although it could be said, there were few, if any, that were of outstanding quality... The Beardless Irises, revelling in the damp soil conditions, gave exhibitors the chance to show many well-known varieties were shown at their best.

In Class 16:- Harry Foster won a First Prize with Sibiricas 'Creme Chantilly' a pale cream variety, 'Anniversary' (Brummitt) an older Iris, yellow, hafted white, still among the finest Siberian, though sometimes difficult to grow; 'Fourfold Lavender', nice colouring and form, and 'Silver Edge', I have not seen better examples of the last two, both Tots. Now I appreciate why 'Silver Edge' is still Harry's favourite Sibirica.

The Hewitt Trophy was won by Cy Bartlett for 5 excellent stems of Sibirica 'Navy Brass'. This McEwen Tetraploid is now well known among enthusiasts... The brassy-yellow hafts contrast well with the deep violet-purple colouring of the petals, it should breed good Tot. seedlings. 'Butter and Sugar' also shown by Cy had nice creamy-yellow and white flowers, small in size compared to other Modern Types.

Ray Jeffs received a Third Prize for 'Dreaming Yellow', (it seems to have been outstanding everywhere this year). 'Tamberg Seedling SST T88' 'Cambridge' & 'Silver Edge'. Bob Wise showed nice stems of Siberians 'Snow Bounty', 'Cambridge', 'Silver Edge' and the fine mid-blue 'Orville Fay'. An interesting point about the deservedly popular 'Cambridge', is that whereas, in my opinion, no other Sibirica.. diploid or tetraploid can match it's striking colour, as grown 'in the garden' it does seem to lose some of it's lustrous, vibrant 'sheen' when shown under cover!!!

It was good to see Ian Smith's collection of Chrysographes Seedlings, showing such colour variation, it won for him the 'Twin Cup'. He also showed some good stems of Sibs. 'Dreaming Yellow', 'Polly Dodge' (Lovely mauve-crimson), 'White Swirl' & 'Blue Mere'. 'Blue Mere' was the only Hutchison Siberian Variety that I saw at the Show.. a great pity as Hutchison variety, though old, are still first-rate diploids and form a gene pool responsible for many of the newer varieties we now enjoy.

Ray Jeffs also won a Second Prize Certificate with 'White Swirl', 'Tamberg SS TT 88' 'Ruffled Velvet' an outstanding deep purple for garden and Show Bench. 'Ero' deep blue-purple, and 'Dreaming Yellow'. Cy Bartlett also had another exhibit showing 'Navy Brass' 'Sally Kerlin' a popular light blue, and 'Rote Denkewitz'.

Maureen Foster put on another excellent Show of P.C.I.'s, as at Moulton, with named Varieties such as 'Roaring Cam', 'Oval Office', 'Gone Native' and 'Ano Nuovo'. All were in superb condition and most attractive, but, in my opinion, the star of the collection was 'Roaring Camp', a must on anyone's list... Large, flaring, dark yellow with chocolate-red blotches on the upper parts of the falls.

Hilda Goodwin also had an attractive display of P.C.I. Seedlings in more restrained colours, but very charming nevertheless.

The S.S & J. Stand with it's large screens of colour Photographs, supported on either side by vases containing Siberian Irises, attracted many visitors, bringing two New Members, who are most welcome. My thanks to all who helped.....

'It ain't necessarily so'...

We accept as immutable truths many statements which are untrue: that Unguicularis Irises should be starved- they will do a lot better if they are fed, and will try to help themselves if they aren't;- that bulbs should be planted their own height below the soil surface-this made life a lot easier for the gardeners who had to lift them after flowering and ensures that, if any attempt is made to naturalize them, they will probably rot under the combination of heat and rainfall in an English Summer. And that forms of *I. Ensata* and the *Kaempferis* should always be grown on acid soils.

Now the various forms of *Kaempferis* (and I include the *Ensatas* for convenience) have been developed over many centuries by the Japanese for specific purposes and, no doubt, their propagation techniques were established for their convenience.. That convenience originally dictated an acid ambience. At the same time, the gardeners selected certain forms and bred from them so that, to get the best results, the plants required acid soil conditions. When these plants were introduced into the West they came with a firm statement that they required acid soil and could only be grown under those conditions... And this is true enough for plants which have been specifically bred for such conditions, but it means that we totally ignore the potential, within this group of plants, for performing equally well under totally different conditions.

A plant bred for acid conditions can be transferred to a neutral soil and, given otherwise adequate culture, it will put on a good show.. Allowance must be made for the fact that after such a transfer, the plant will need a year or two to adapt to the new soil, but this is a common occurrence with herbaceous plants anyway... Currier McEwen makes the point that his plants will only give of their best under acid conditions with neither branching nor remontancy being good under neutral or simulated alkaline states.. This is to be expected.. No doubt a Derby winner can jump a fence if conditions demand, but it won't jump a series of fences in the style of a steeple-chaser..

The *Kaempferis* are currently locked in a vicious circle of breeding and growing under acid conditions, but if they are ever to become really popular they must be able to grow in 'any good garden soil'. Incidentally, the Pacific Coast Irises were nearly caught in the same trap, but fortunately became so popular and were bred so extensively that the newer ones can be recommended for almost any garden. And the average gardener has no idea what sort of soil is around the house, so stays away from any plant needing special treatment.. Some decades ago, a German grower decided to experiment with *Kaempferis* for alkaline conditions and he developed the CARE strain (calcium resistant). I doubt that 'resistance' is really relevant; what he did was to select back for tolerant seedlings over and over until finally, he had plants for the opposite end of the pH spectrum, probably passing through, and neglecting, a general or neutral phase, which would have been the equivalent of the original *Ensata* stock.

Now, we talk glibly of acid and alkaline soils and pH's of 7 or 3, while quite neglecting the quality of the soil itself... There is a great difference between peaty soils and sandy ones, while the pH may be identical... *Kaempferis* will grow perfectly well in flower beds, but anyone with a very sandy soil is in dire trouble over water supplies at critical times.. Similarly, chalk lands and limestones may have comparable pH's, but many plants, blissfully happy on limestone, will fade away on chalk. Equally, it takes aeons to change the pH of a soil... Just adding lime or peat may help, but this has to be done regularly and additions of trace elements are often needed to top things up.. Clearly if *Kaempferis* can be bred equally for acid or alkaline soils there is a neglected potential for plants which will, individually, tolerate being grown on almost any soil. There's no need for them to do this, not even the most virulent weeds require that... Nor is it necessary to go back to the wild forms and start again.. I have never actually seen a CARE plant growing.. they seem to have nearly disappeared, but in any case they might still not achieve present day standards..

What is needed is for breeders to use plants with known good branching and good quality flowers, which will grow happily under ordinary garden conditions, even if they do'nt give of their best. Seedlings should be selected by the normal garden and bench criteria, until the breeder can say to a friend 'that's a good place for *Kaempferis* I'll send you a couple' no worry about the pH. No need to waste time and effort which has been put into breeding these gorgeous plants, just extend their scope.. Considering the way my *Kaempferis* have survived the last few winters on heavy clay (apart from losses due to moles and drought) they have something more than mere potential for garden use in our present climatic phase. Remontancy may be a different 'Lake of Golden Carp'.

Regional Report for the North West.

by Ray Wilson.

Looking back over the past few months, when frost persisted far longer than normal, and the air temperature had yet to exceed 70deg. F. it seems that all must be in a state of disrepair and despair. But none of it... evidence abounds that the Irises have coped well with the conditions, it is we who have grouched.. We have had losses, but in the future, we must learn the major lesson, that of being better prepared for this inclement weather... Another lesson for us, has been the realization that, without very good soil, it is useless to expect plants to be able to survive and then put on a lovely show... Starting with the idea that most Irises are Hardy Plants, capable of growing exceedingly well in the poorest of soils, and producing show standard Spikes, with little effort, we have slowly gravitated to the improved <sup>conditions</sup> where we now follow Charles Bird's method (B.R.I.G. Newsletter): he is a great believer in the Thesis that you can only expect Remontants if the soil is not merely good but super... So.. despite some of the worst weather on record and a very late season, what has emerged ... has done jolly well.

Ruth and David Conley are thriving, they seem to have more energy than many much younger, and good luck to them... They send their best wishes to all old friends and new ones.. The Hardy Plant Society recently had a survey of peoples' favourite flowers, quite a number of the people who responded have an interest in Irises. Most, however, did not belong to the B.I.S., I wonder why not??? Those in this area seem greatly interested in the Siberians and I hope that some will eventually join our Group...

While I was messing about with some seedlings from my germination trials, I have noted that although Spurias are more difficult to germinate, once they have passed the 'nursery' stage, they do better than the Sibiricas. Spurias, also, seem less fussy about the type of soil in which they grow.. The Sibiricas need a much richer diet and plenty of humus to retain a lot of water, otherwise they soon die off... My Spurias, obtained from the S.S & J. Seed Distribution are about 3 ins. high, about 3 months old... In the early stages they all need a humid atmosphere of about 60-65 deg. F., indeed it seems easier to germinate the seeds, than it is to get them over the next stage of growth. Do try growing them from seed, it is very rewarding. All the best...

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Regional Report for the South.

by Adrian Whittaker.

Whilst the effects of two consecutive years of rather drab, cold, wet weather are clear to see in my T.B's (except the Remontants) I am pleased to report that the Spurias have suffered no growth problems only, as might be expected, a reduction of flowering, due to lack of sun..

According to my notes, most of the Irises in the garden are about two weeks behind the normal pattern, but it is interesting to note that the Spuria species Orientalis and Carthaginiensis, both from damp/wet habitats are just about 'on schedule' with buds well formed (June 15).. All of the cultivars are not as advanced and will be later than usual... In the light of this observation, there may be a need for breeders in NW. Europe to look closely at the genetic backgrounds of proposed parents, in order to retain 'damp suitability' in the offspring...

It is pleasing to see Sibiricas 'My Love' and 'Outset' already in bloom ahead of everything else.. The flowers of 'Outset' are particularly impressive and the branching excellent...

I am able to report some success in growing Japanese Iris on a 'pebble bed' as an experiment, because of the extreme alkalinity here... The method used is not visually attractive, since it is purely experimental, but it will suggest a system which can be readily adapted to offer a viable means of growing the Japanese Iris in otherwise difficult, or near-impossible situations...

A largish blue plastic agricultural chemical container was cut about two thirds down to form two separate containers. Both were cleaned very thoroughly.. The old bottom part functions as a nutrient solution collector. The plastic screw cap of the nutrient is then screwed on, not too tightly, so that it drips, when inverted, and the container is filled with a few inches of water. This forms the growing container, which is placed on the top of the lower part.. Small (roughly 1cm. sized) pebbles were placed in the upper container to a depth of about 20 cm. and then the rhizome was pressed gently into the pebbles which were flooded with a half-strength liquid feed, twice a week in the growing period. The collected liquid is recycled for a month before it is thrown away. Rain causes overflowing of the collector, but the pebbles do not remain flooded for long, due to the 'leaky' cap drain.. Rainwater is used throughout. In late October the system was moved into an unheated greenhouse and the watering discontinued.

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except for very small amounts of rainwater at about six week intervals when the temperature was above freezing. It was placed outside again in early April this year and feeding restarted. A single rinse of copper fungicide appeared to remove algae without problems... The increase has been phenomenal and the flower stems, with buds about to burst, are much larger and healthier than I have ever had before... I am adopting the same method with a Louisiana now and have confidence that it may reverse previous difficulties.. I am sure suitably elegant containers for, say patios or flagged areas can be found and I would not think the overwintering in the greenhouse at all essential...

(Thank you Adrian for telling us of your very interesting method of overcoming the problem of wanting to grow these Irises, but not having the right soil, I am sure that many of our Members will want to 'have a go'... All the best. Ed.)

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#### Regional Report for East Anglia.

by Jack Venner.

Although I managed to attend both of the B.I.S. Shows in June, domestic difficulties, including my Wife's illness have curtailed my travelling, so my Report is restricted to the 'Tendring' District in which I live. I am pleased to say that the Beardless Irises, passed on to neighbours, have not let me down... Their performance was magnificent.. Many people are 'over the moon' about 'Holden Clough', it seems to be quite a favourite with flower arrangers, and no one has complained, so far, that this rampant variety, has taken over their garden.

I have a lovely clump of a 'Wilsonii' variety, given to me, some years ago by Jennifer Hewitt... It has formed a nice round plant about 1 foot 6 inches in diameter and has forty 2ft, 6ins. stems with masses of creamy flowers with light Chrysographes markings... Sibiricas and Chrysographes have been extra good this year, with plenty of blooms. 'Yankee Consul' has been a favourite with visitors.. it has a metallic sheen over the mid-violet-blue petals.

For the first time Sib. 'Harpswell Hallelujah' flowered... This is a new McEwen tetraploid with clean foliage and deep violet-purple flowers of 'White Swirl' shape on very short 1ft. 6ins. stems. Unfortunately it is a very slow grower here.. In two years I have only 5 fans, 4 of which are in flower.

Space forbids me from giving details of the various 'Pseudacorus' I am growing, but I hope to write a Special article for the February N/L 1987, and include the 'Virginicas' and 'Versicolors' as well.

I am writing this in the Summer House, where the only distraction is the nearby 'Spurias', which I keep looking at, knowing that in a week or two, they will be a mass of glorious colour... I shall be most interested to here about your Irises both 'at home' and 'overseas', write and let us know!!!!

Oh! by the way I have a superb clump of 'Dreaming Yellow' this year, as our American friends would say WOW!!!, it's a knockout, as long as you do'nt dream too much about the yellow in the description... I am told that 'Butter and Sugar' is even finer, this, I regret I have not got, but I look forward to seeing it...

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#### Regional Report for West Midlands.

by Philip Allery.

##### News, Comment and Show Report.

The late Mrs. Mary Taylor, wife of John Taylor of Moreton-in-Marsh. Before making this report, it is with great regret that I must tell those of you who do not already know, of the sudden death on 30th May last of Mrs. Mary Taylor. Throughout the past years Mary has shown great courage and determination in coping with illness, helped by John and all her family, to whom we send our deepest sympathy. Mary will be sadly missed by many friends throughout the Iris world, and by the West Midland Group in particular. She was a charming hostess and a good friend to us all... We also send our sympathy to John and good wishes, for recovery from his present illness..

An Autumn Review:- Although there will still be much work to do in the garden when Newsletter is published, I suggest that Members make time to review the siting of their Irises.. I have done so and find that in two instances position can be improved to take account of the varying requirements of the several species and their hybrids, to give an opportunity for better results...

Raising Irises from Seed. It will soon be the season to sow Iris seed and I cannot do better than to recommend those readers who are experiencing difficulties to read a 'Beginner's Guide to raising Irises from Seed', compiled by Mrs. Pat Foster, from contributions by several Members of the West Midland Group. Recognised by the B.I.S. it can be obtained from Mr. Ray Wilson our North Western Reg Rep. by sending 50p and a stamped addressed envelope size 9" x 6". (Address at the front of the N/L)

I gratefully acknowledge Ray's help and his outstanding work in the field of Iris seed germination.. His comprehensive and informative exhibit at the Show (Treasures) drew a lot of attention and favourable comment from senior B.I.S. Judges, Group Members and members of the Public alike... A mention too for the assistance given by Ray's wife Joyce. Remember 'Ten to a 6" pot' is an excellent maxim when sowing Iris seeds...

West Midlands' Group Summer Show, (21st June at Treasure's Nursery, Tenbury Wells.)

This Annual event had a new venue this year. Treasure's of Tenbury Wells, famed for it's Clematis and Gold Medallists at Chelsea, had offered Show Facilities in their potting shed. The light and airy premises were ideal for Show purposes with room to spare for 3 excellent non-competitive exhibits. Treasure's not only allowed the Group to use their premises, including parking space for Members, they also allowed plants to be sold, provided they did not include varieties which were on sale in the Nursery. Very generous, Group Funds have benefitted substantially!!

Division III, classes for Beardless and Species Iris, were as follows:-

Class 8. - 1 vase 4 spikes of Hybrid Sibs. (28 chrs.) in one or more varieties.

1st. Mrs. J.Hewitt... 2nd. Mr. Cy Bartlett... 3rd. Mrs. M. Owen. This was a very closely contested class and Cy's entry included 'Marlene Ahlberg', a new variety raised by Jennifer Hewitt, which caught my eye.

Class 10. - 1 vase up to 5 spikes of Beardless Hybrid Irises not eligible for other classes  
2nd. Mrs. M.Owen ... 3rd. Mrs. J.Hewitt. Both entries included Chrysographes hybrids and I was impressed with the wide range of colour achieved. No 1st Prize awarded.

Class 15 in Div. V. was for 1 spike (Beardless) raised by the Exhibitor. to be judged for B.I.S. Seedling Commendation in addition to Class placings. Eleven entries produced 3 seedling commendations with the following placings:-

1st. Harry Foster (with S.C.) - A mid-blue diploid seedling, laced over with violet, triple terminal and branched.

Seedling no. 12/78/231/83 (White Swirl Ruffled Velvet)  
This has been selected by J.I.C. for trials at Wisley

2nd. Mrs. J.Hewitt (with S.C.) A striking red seedling

3rd. Mrs. J.Hewitt (with S.C.) A blue seedling from Remontant breeding...

In each case a seedling Sibirica hybrid was successful. It is interesting to note that Dr. McEwen's Harpswell Happiness, a tetraploid Sibirica hybrid, has been selected for trials at Wisley... This outstanding White hybrid was among thirty Hybrid Sibirica Spikes of Excellent quality staged by Harry Foster, ably assisted by his wife Maureen, in a spectacular non-competitive exhibit covering a comprehensive colour range of these graceful hybrids.

The third non-competitive exhibit was mounted by Mrs. Vera Hemming to demonstrate the use of Irises and foliage in Japanese-type flower arrangements. Yet another exhibit of considerable public appeal.... The overall winner was Mrs. Margaret Owen, who won the Batts Trophy for the second year running... In all, this was an excellent Show, with well-presented exhibits, which proved very popular with members of the Public...

In conclusion may I comment how much I enjoyed meeting Officers and Representatives of this Group at the B.I.S. Early Summer Show at Moulton.. Group Membership has many benefits, but I think one of the most important is the opportunity to meet and share one's enthusiasm for Irises... Happy Iris Gardening.....

( Philip has also written about 'Composts and Manures' and 'Hybrid Sibirica Varieties for the Beginner, due to such a lot of Members writing in, and lack of space, I am afraid these will have to be included in the February 1987 Newsletter. However we do thank him, most sincerely for this account, particularly of the W.M.Show, and look forward to reading more next year. Ed.)

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An Account Received for My Irises.

by Eunice Frankiel

My garden, not exactly the proverbial postage-stamp, but more the double, special issue size, is still quite small for what I want to cram into it.. It's on chalk-- in fact lumps rise to the surface, therefore I do not grow P.C.I's or other lime-hating species to my regret... I have grown Irises continuously on the same plot for nearly twenty years, so obviously my plants have taken far too much out, and (probably) I don't put enough back in, for I am always disappointed with the flowering pattern of Sibiricas and Spurias, and I am always promising myself to do better next term... Cows being in short supply in my part of urban Surrey, I have to make do with leaf-mould, garden/household compost, plus the odd handful of Growmore and a sack or so of the proper stuff, when feeling prosperous. Perhaps I have been a bit too lavish with the Growmore this Spring because I have noticed

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rot among my T.B. rhizomes for the first time...

I was very interested in what Adrian Whittaker said about 'to cut' or 'not to cut' Spuria Foliage down in the Autumn... Having tidied everything up last year, this year I will revert to my usual lazy practice and try not to notice the unsightliness...

Another item of interest to me was Jack Venner's article in the 1985 Year Book, about the use of bonfire wood-ash on T.B's but not on Beardless Irises... Am awaiting dire results, because thinking I was giving them a rare treat, I have favoured my Sibs. and Spurias with a dose each, before I fully read his remarks...

A few years ago I received some of Alex Back's seedling Spuria plants when his garden was dismantled, these have now flowered:-

AB5 - Like Orientalis--clearly defined, hard yellow patch on wide round falls.

AB24- 2 pieces which turned out to be different.

1. was like Orientalis, but yellow on falls not so clearly defined as on AB5.

2. was a small lavender flower; falls lavender streaked with small yellow blaze.

AB25- slow grower, having had a poor start- no report.

There was one other a hard intense blue, widish blue falls, streaked with a yellow blaze.

( Thank you Eunice, nice to hear about Alex Back's Spurias, I have some lovely plants but they are taking a long time to flower... perhaps next year... Ed.)

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The Group Library.

Copies of the following American Books and Publications, also B.I.S. and Group Publications, are obtainable from the Hon. Librarian:-

Mrs. J. Hewitt, 'Haygarth', Cleeton SE, Mary, CLEOBURY MORTIMER, KIDDERMINSTER, Worcs. DY14 0QU.

Siberian Irises by Currier McEwen.

The Spuria Irises--Introduction & Varietal Listing-1985. Editor. James J. Foreman. Newsletter of the Spuria Iris Society.

Review of the Society for Japanese Irises.

Journal of the Siberian Iris.

The Genus Iris, subsection Sibiricae. B.I.S.

Alphabetical Table and Cultivation Guide to the Species. B.I.S.

All back numbers of the S.S & J. Newsletters.

Please include Postage when requesting items

(Currier's Book can be bought for 7 dollars inc. The Spuria Introduction and Listing from Floyd Wickenkamp Surface Mail 5 dollars, Air Mail.. Europe 7dollars 75cents, Australia & New Zealand 8dollars 50cents. Five copies 28dollars... Quite a few back copies of the S.S & J. Newsletter are available, see under Treasurer's Report.)

An Account of the Group Library.

by Jennifer Hewitt

There is a cardboard box sitting in our house: it contains the Group Library. On very rare occasions a letter arrives asking for the loan of some of the contents and I happily remove and post off whatever is requested. I wish these occasions were more frequent. Our Secretary and Newsletter Editor mentions the Library in every issue, but perhaps a description of the contents is needed.

The Group Newsletters there is a complete collection of these, dating back to the Group's foundation and containing a store of fascinating history and information. Those who joined at the start will have the Newsletters, but if you have become a Member more recently, you will probably enjoy following the development of the Group and reading a great variety of articles.

British Iris Society Publications. Only two of these are in the Library, probably because they and others can be bought from the B.I.S. for pence rather than pounds. 'An Alphabetical Table and Cultivation Guide to the Species of the Genus Iris' sounds daunting, but it is not; it is an excellent quick reference list of species and their synonyms with a brief description and suggestions for cultivation. Some changes in taxonomy have been made since it was published. Useful to the beginner who doesn't yet want to lash out for Brian Mathew's 'The Iris'.

'The Genus Iris': Subsection Sibiricae' by Christopher Grey-Wilson is a brief but comprehensive monograph on the species in this subsection, both 28- and 40- chromosome, mainly botanical but has notes on cultivation at the back. Worth seeing for the excellent line drawings.

'Siberian Irises' Dr. Currier McEwen has generously presented the Group with an inscribed copy of his Book. Excerpts have already appeared in the Newsletter, but every Siberian grower should read this and then buy it for the home bookshelf. Comprehensive,

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enjoyable, informative, it covers just about everything to do with Siberians and is illustrated with line drawings and colour photographs. Borrow it from the Library and you'll find it is worth the cost of getting your own copy from the U.S.A.

'The Siberian Iris' is the journal of the Society for Siberian Irises (of the U.S.A.) Thanks to the generosity of the S.S.I. and it's Editors, Peg Edwards and now Carolee Clay, we have issues dating back to 1977. Soon after our Group Newsletter was started, we were able to arrange to exchange publications with the three U.S.Societies, which concentrate separately on our three main interests, an exchange which benefits us greatly. 'TSI', as it is known for convenience, contains much of interest to Siberian growers and also tells us something of SSI activities. Articles have been reprinted in our Newsletter but there is a lot more in TSI. To mark their 25th. Anniversary, SSI is preparing a Check List with details of species and cultivars plus biographical and historical notes. It is a major undertaking, which will be of great value, and we hope to have a copy in the Library as soon as possible.

Newsletter of the Spuria Iris Society another fascinating Journal, well worth the cost of the postage. As with the other magazines, there is information about new introductions and also older cultivars which have proved their worth, cultivation, hybridisation etc. The S.I.S. has from time to time had problems in finding an Editor and there are one or two gaps in the sequence 1976-1985 when the Newsletter failed to appear, but Dr. Donald Koza who was one of our first overseas Members and who arranged for the Newsletter to be sent to us, did us a great and continuing service.

'The Spuria Irises: Introduction and Varietal Listing'. Kindly presented to the Library by Helen Grier and Floyd Wickenkamp of the Spuria Iris Society. Published in 1985 it has lists of Spuria species, named cultivars up to and including 1984, an interesting biographical section on hybridisers and their introductions, a list of Nies Award winners (the highest U.S.honour-apart from the Dykes Medal-given to Spuria hybrids) and, most valuable to hybridisers, a section giving details of Spuria Iris as parents, from which can be traced successful 'lines'.

'The Review of the Society for Japanese Irises' All the publications from the U.S.A. have been listed in the order in which they appear in our Group's title, but the arrangement would, I think, be reversed if I took the order in which we first received them. I remember my surprise and pleasure when Bill Ouweneel, the former Editor, sent the Review' to me, out of the blue in 1976 and proposed an exchange of Journals. More recently Leland Welsh has kindly brought the set of issues up to date and they are a fund of valuable information. Perhaps the greatest benefit of being Librarian is that I am able to read every acquisition!

All the American Journals are published twice a year, and all are worth reading by anyone with an interest in Irises. You may not be growing a particular type at the moment but borrowing from the Group Library could change all that! All you need to do is to write to me and ask to borrow whatever you want. When the package arrives, note the amount of postage and refund it to me when you return the books. We do ask you not to keep Library material for too long, in case someone else is waiting for it, but repaying the outward postage is the only rule-except, I suppose, that you must return whatever you borrow!

Mrs. J.Hewitt, Hon Librarian. address as above....

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#### Treasurers Report.

The funds are looking much healthier this year, due to the two 'money raising' efforts we have had. First the Coffee Morning at Paul and Debbie Hudsons, then the Sale of Plants etc. at Moulton, all very gratifying, and thanks once again to all concerned. This means that we are able to keep the Subscription at it's present level, for the time being. But, and it is a big But, postage is going up later this year, and the costs are higher each six month. The situation is to be reviewed in February. With a little money in the Bank this year, it is proposed to put some in a Reserve Fund as a hedge against inflation and leaner years, when we do not have the opportunity to raise funds...

#### We have the following Back Numbers of the Newsletters for sale:-

Copies of Alex Back's Original Newsletter 1976 (an Historical Document) 20p plus postage

Copies of Newsletters:- July 1981... February 1982... July 1982... February 1983...

30p. plus postage.

February 1985... February 1986

\*\*\*\*\* 40p. plus postage.

#### The Seed Distribution.

There are one or two packets of seed left in the Distribution, your support in this (cont.)

area has been superb this year... Thank you,...

Packets of Seeds are 10p. each including Postage and Packing. The usual rules for the Distribution of seeds apply, no responsibility for individual items can be accepted, as they come from all over the world.. However we do our best....

As we are short of space, they will be printed under their commonly known headings...

I.Pseudacorus... I.Pseudacorus Bastardii... I.Pseudacorus 'Sulphur Queen'... 'Golden Queen'  
'E. Turnipseed'..... I.Pseudacorus Variegata....

I.Versicolor... I.Versicolor Mixed Shades... I.Virginica Mixed Shades...

I.Setosa..... I.Sibirica 'Dreaming Yellow', 'Blue Mere', 'Marcus Perry'

I.Chrysographes x Chrysofor Mixed crosses..... I.Orientalis... Orientalis selfed sdgs.

I. Spuria 'Elixir'.....

send to Mr.D.Trevithick, 86a, Grantham Rd. Radcliffe-on-Trent, Nottingham, NG12 2HY.

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#### CONDITIONS DEVISED BY THE COMMITTEE FOR THE SMOOTH RUNNING OF THE GROUP.

1. The Title of the Group will be the Siberian, Spuria and Japanese Group of the British Iris Society.
2. The Objects of the Group are:-
  - (a) Communications between Members in Great Britain and Overseas.
  - (b) A means of exchanging ideas, plants and seeds etc.
  - (c) To assist beginners in growing Irises and to offer help with problems.
  - (d) To report on Hybridisation.
3. Membership will be open to persons living in Great Britain and Overseas. Providing the appropriate Subscription has been paid, each person will be regarded as a Member. Family Membership will be counted as one, providing only one Newsletter is required, this will be pointed out when joining.  
In certain cases Hon. Memberships may be awarded on the recommendation and decision of the Committee.
4. Subscriptions. These will be reviewed annually by the Committee, with a view to keeping it as low as possible, on information supplied by the Treasurer... later published in the Newsletter.. Members joining after February will be asked to pay a Half-Yearly Subscription and receive one Newsletter. The year runs from July 1st. to June 30th...
5. Annual General Meetings. Will be held in June.. Motions agreed by the Committee will be put before the Annual General Meeting by the Chairman and will not require a Secunder.  
Motions sent in by Members must be Secunderd and be in the hands of the Secretary 14 days before the Meeting.  
Note:- Any suggestions, articles etc. may be sent to the Committee to be discussed where necessary.
6. Special or Extraordinary General Meetings. These can be called by the Committee if judged necessary.. If any Member wishes to have a General Meeting, an application must be made in writing and signed by 10 Members.

ONCE THESE CONDITIONS HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED, THEY CANNOT BE ALTERED, EXCEPT BY MAJORITY OF MEMBERS AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.

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#### CONSTITUTION OF COMMITTEE of S.S & J. Group B.I.S.

1. The Management of the affairs of the Group will be invested in a Committee consisting of:-
  - (a) Officers of the Group:-  
Chairman. Vice-Chairman. Hon. Secretary. Hon. Treasurer. Hon. Librarian.  
Hon. Seed Distbn. Offr. and Committee Members up to a total of 7 in all, to cover the three Sections of the Group (Siberian, Spuria and Japanese), and also achieve the required odd number for a deciding vote by the Chairman... Taking into account the World-wide Membership and the expenses incurred for co-ordination, the Posts may be combined. Posts held by one person will count as one vote...
  - (b) The Chairman will normally serve for a period not exceeding 5 consecutive years.
2. Elections. All nominations for Officers and Committee Members must be in the hands of the Hon. Secretary 14 days before an Annual General Meeting. Existing Officers and Committee Members who have indicated a willingness to stand again, do not require re-nomination.

In the event of Nominations exceeding the number required, a ballot vote will be taken from only those Members attending the Annual General Meeting. (cont.)

If the Officers and/or Committee falls below the required number, the Committee reserves the right to co-opt Members (particularly during Mid-Term) if considered suitable, willing and able to serve, subject to that person's permission.

Reminders of the Annual General Meeting and Committee will be reported in the Newsletter.

A quorum of the Committee will consist of not less than 5 Members, two of whom must be Officers, if possible the Chairman and Secretary.

3. Procedure of Committee. Committee Meetings will be called when necessary, otherwise because of the very nature of the Group, business must be carried out by correspondence... as is the present custom.

Accounts. The Hon. Treasurer will make up the Accounts each Year... They will be signed by the Chairman before publication in the Newsletter.

Library. The Hon. Librarian will keep in safe custody all literature (books etc.) they will be available on loan, upon such terms as the Committee decides.

Regional Representatives. The Committee is empowered to appoint Reg. Reps. to report on Irises in their area, as well as Local Shows and anything of interest to the Group.

Specialists. Siberian, Spuria and Japanese, appointments of Members who have specialised knowledge of these Irises, to answer queries etc. through the Newsletter. Regional Representatives and Specialists Posts may be held jointly.

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Answers to Questions.

In reply to Trevor Nottle who commented on 'named varieties' and the uncertainty of some cultivars... Jennifer Hewitt writes 'Remember the Gal-Sib. 'Margot Holmes' Iris Chrysographes x Iris Douglasiana, winner of the first Dykes Medal in 1927 and still growing well in British gardens. There are P.C.I.'s registered by Marjorie Brummitt in the early 1970s which are still going strong... Perhaps they are more transient in warmer climates? And/or where they have to withstand longer and drier summers than we normally have? Or, with more advanced generations, hybrid vigour is diminishing? In spite of the examples cited, it seems that you have raised a matter that we should keep in mind... With regard to couch grass among Japanese Irises and the use of weedkiller: I have 3 or 4 seedling Japanese and last Summer found Sorrel (Rumex acetos) which is a pest elsewhere in the garden, but hadn't previously appeared in that particular bed... Protecting the leaves of the Irises by wrapping polythene around the lower parts (it was left in place for at least 24 hours, until the weedkiller had dried). I carefully sprayed the sorrel with glycosophate (Tumbleweed) with a small hand sprayer, and the spray also covered some other weeds, killing them and the sorrel but apparently having no adverse effect at all on the Irises. Tumbleweed also works very effectively on couch grass and I've used it in the same manner on couch among Siberians with good results... This species of Sorrel has running roots which are very fine and it is impossible to get every bit out of the soil, and it re-grows just as badly as couch. I shall be watching this year to see if it has been completely killed and whether the weedkiller seems to have affected the Irises.

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Names and Addresses of New Members. (Full List of Members, please send S.A.E.)

- Miss L.I. Edwards M.B.E. 6, Adbolton Grove, WEST BRIDGFORD. NOTTINGHAM NG2 5AR.
- Mr. A. Edwards, 'Tryfan', Burney Rd. WEST HAMBLE. DORKING. Surrey RH5 6AT.
- Mrs. C.R. Calvert, 11, Bowling Green Lane, ALBRIGHTON. WOLVERHAMPTON.
- Mrs. M. Fraser, Barsham House, Roundwood, Bucklers Lane, KINGS LANGLEY. Herts. WD4 8BE.
- Mrs. A. Klausner, 70, MAIDA VALE. LONDON W9 1PR.
- Mr. P.R. Maynard, 43, Sea Lane, GORING-by-SEA. WORTHING. Sussex. BN12 42D.
- Mr. T. Winstanly, 22, Sycamore Ave. BEECHILL. WIGAN. Lancs.

Overseas.

- Mrs. Andrew C. Warner, 16815 Falls Road. UPPERCO. MARYLAND U.S.A. 2155.
- Mrs. Lorena M. Reid, 'Lauries Garden' SPRINGFIELD. OREGON. U.S.A.

Change of Address.

- Flt. Lieut. M.B. McCarthy, 31, Northern Ave. HENLOW. BEDS.

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I see now, that we have 9 New Members, and that I have not welcomed Mary Fraser to the Band of Pilgrims.. Sorry Mary, I'll tell you exactly why, you seem to have been with us so much longer, taking part, writing, helping and becoming a part of our Group so very quickly... We send best regards and good wishes until next February.... Bye!!! Joan.