

# NEWSLETTER



OF THE

SIBERIAN SPURIA AND JAPANESE GROUP  
(INCLUDING PACIFICAS AND WATER IRIS)

B.I.S.

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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 help with problems.
4. To report on Hybridisation.

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The Group's Officers.

Chairman..... Mr. Adrian Whittaker, 'Chestnuts', Hilden Way, LITTLETON.  
(Spuria Specialist) WINCHESTER. Hants. SO2 26QH.  
Vice Chairman..... Mrs. Hilda Goodwin, Corner Cottage, School Eoad, GEAT BARTON.  
BURY St. EDMUNDS. Suffolk. IP31 2HT.  
Hon. Secty/Treas..... Mrs. Joan Trevithick, 86a, Grantham Rd. RADCLIFFE-on-TRENT.  
NOTTINGHAM. NG12 2HY.  
Hon. Newsletter Editor.. Mrs. Joan Trevithick, address as above.  
Hon. Seed Distribution.. Mr. David Trevithick, 86a, Grantham Rd. RADCLIFFE-on-TRENT.  
Officer..... NOTTINGHAM. NG12 2 HY.  
Hon. Librarian..... Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt, 'Haygarth', CLEETON St. MARY.  
(Siberian Specialist)... CLEOBURY MORTIMER. KIDDERMINSTER. DY14 0QU.  
Japanese Iris Specialist. Mrs. Anne Blanco White, 72, South Hill Park, LONDON. NW3 2SN.  
Pacifica(P.C.I.) Mr. Ray Wilson, 'Daleshead', 100, Blackburn Rd. CHORLEY.  
Specialist. Lancs. PR6 8TJ.

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Regional Representatives.

Eastern Area..... Mrs. Shirley Ryder, 'Toadshole Cottage', Old Rd. FEERING.  
COLCHESTER. Essex. CO5 9RN.  
London Area..... Mrs. Anne Blanco White, 72, South Hill Park, LONDON. NW3 2SN.  
North Western Area..... Mr. Ray Wilson, 'Daleshead', 100, Blackburn Rd. CHORLEY.  
Lancs. PR6 8TJ.  
Southern Area..... Mr. Adrian Whittaker, 'Chestnuts', Hilden Way, LITTLETON.  
WINCHESTER. Hants. SO2 26QH.  
South Western..... Mrs. Mary Ramsdale, 'Winkfield', Swan Mill Rd. COLYFORD.  
COLYTON. Devon. EX13 6QJ.  
West&Midlands Area..... Mr. Philip Allery, 199, Walsall Rd. ALDRIDGE. Nr. WALSALL.  
Staffs. WS9 OBE.  
Wisley Show Reporter.... Mr. Ian Smith, 35, Abbey Rd. WESTMOORS. Dorset. BH22 OAX.

Our Regional Representatives augment the Committee, sending in News of Irises in their area, and extending the interest too. If you would like to exercise this in your part of the country, please write in, your accounts will be most welcome.

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Many thanks for your response to the request for seeds and plants, quite a few of you sent in. You will see at the end of the Newsletter we have quite a good list, and we have also sold the plants that you kindly sent. We are still receiving requests for more, so please, don't forget, if you have any seeds to spare, or plants to part, we have a need, you will receive postage for the plants.

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The Subscription will stay at £2 for 1992/93, and hopefully for a while yet.

Editorial.

'The warm and sunny days, no doubt  
Are still a long way off.  
There may be snow, high winds may blow,  
We splutter, sneeze and cough.  
But days are stretching, some birds sing--  
We'll manage to survive till spring...'

I thought these words, written by Francis Gay, are totally appropriate as we experience the hard cold days of winter, and the even colder nights. However, I have noticed that the spears of crocus and snowdrops are through, *I.dandfordiae* is showing colour, followed closely by *I.reticulata*. The Pacific Coast and Sibiricas have new shoots deep in the base of the leaves. The Spurias and Pond Iris are standing up to it well, as usual.

As we enter our 16th year, I am pleased to tell you that Membership is good, we record 11 new Members this time, we hope they will all enjoy our Newsletter and write in and tell us more about their gardens and the Irises they grow. Some, as you will see have already done so.

In 1991 the British Iris Society kindly gave me the Pilkington Award, in saying thank you, most sincerely, I feel very strongly, there are some credits due. In the S. S & J. Group, we are a team, leading us is our Chairman, Adrian Whittaker, who is always there with good advice and staunch support (needed quite often--I can tell you). Thanks Adrian, much appreciated. Hilda Goodwin, our Vice-Chairman, is always ready with help and advice. Thanks Hilda. The fully working Committee, often doubling up as Group Specialists, all respond when the need arises.--To them thanks, keep up the good work. Credit must also go to our Regional Representatives, working 'in the field' as it were, carrying the word, in their area, about knowing and growing our Irises. You know we need you to keep in touch. Many thanks. Where would we be without the help of Trevor Smith (Christian Duplicating Services), our Printer, who keeps us 'on the track' and swiftly translates our printing needs (you may notice the difference in this issue--at last, away with the dreaded STENCILS, very-trying..Hooray!) Heartfelt thanks, Trevor. It would be very remiss of me not to mention the work that my son David puts in. He looks after the seeds (although I send them out as he is also busy with his own work). All the posting, running about and checking is in his hands. We would grind to a halt, without his continued support. Thanks Dave, we owe you a lot.

Finally let us not forget the part played by YOU the Members, your terrific response makes it all worth while, you are regarding it as your Newsletter---something I have advocated all along, long may this continue.

On the Library front, our new Member Celia Brown from Mappleton Nr. Ashbourne. Derbys saw our appeal for Brian Mathews' book 'The Iris' and has kindly donated a copy, we do thank you Celia, and know that Members will enjoy being able to borrow it. Louis Fry from Novata California, the Seed Distribution Offr. of the Pacific Coast Native Iris Socty has kindly sent two reprints I. A Revision of the Pacific Coast Irises (Lee.W.Lenz.)  
2. Hybridization and Speciation in the Pacific Coast Irises (Lee.W.Lenz.), these will be of great interest to our Members who grow P.C.I's. Thank you Louis. The R.H.S. book 'Irises' by Sidney Linnegar and Jennifer Hewitt has been purchased from the British Iris Society at a reduced rate. Many thanks.

We have also added-- The S. S. & J. List of Pacific Coast Hybrids - 1990 so that you can identify your Pacific Coast Irises. ( see also seed list at back of N/L.)

All that remains is to wish you a Happy 1992, good Iris growing, and don't forget to keep those mulches going, it is still far too dry.

All Good Wishes. Joan.

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Chairman's Letter.

Adrian Whittaker.

I'm sure everyone will join me in congratulating Joan on receiving the Pilkington Award from the British Iris Society. Without Joan's untiring hard work, over many years, this Group would not have had such a broad member base, nor the undoubted success of a group which flourishes largely through postal contact. The award is richly deserved.

I should also like to extend a warm welcome to those who have joined the Group recently.

Moisture loving Irises form a significant group within the genus. The requirements of individual species within this group vary considerably. Acidity, drainage, nutrition, (over).

light and temperature ranges are all important factors. Gardeners grow plants, which may have origins in other, very different climates, with differing degrees of success. The wide variety of results obtained by different people with the same species is common. In some cases apparently near identical conditions produce dramatically different results..

Do write in with details of your successes (and failures). What you write may enable someone else to be more successful with a cherished plant, which has been a poor performer. Look carefully at your methods-- small details are often the key!!

May I end by wishing everyone a successful year ahead.

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We extend a warm welcome to the following New Members:-

The Aquatic Centre, Lowdham Road, BULCOTE, Notts, NG14 5GT. Helen Kennedy with her colleagues runs this Water Centre, they have a considerable stock of ornamental fish and already are growing *I. ensata* and *I. sibirica* as well as *I. pseudacorus*. Helen has joined us with great enthusiasm, and is already seeing the results of our seeds and plants, when they are available. We wish them every success.

Mrs. J. Moore, The Knoll, Northwood Green, WESTBURY-on-SEVERN. Glos. GL14 1NB. June writes that she is a comparative newcomer to our Irises, and wants to know more about them. She has a few *I. tectorum variegata* and an Iris, still to be identified, (send a description June, leaves, root etc. I am sure someone will name it for you.) She also has received some seeds of *I. bucharica* from the Swiss. Botanical Gardens, these are a lovely Juno, colours from golden yellow to nearly white, with a yellow blade on the falls. You will like them June, but I have to say that they are not hardy everywhere in our Country.

Mrs. L. Gabb, 18, Woodside Close, BARNHURST. Kent. DA7 6JY. Lis joined us just as the Newsletters were going out in July last year, since then she has had a series of mishaps, involving a nasty accident to her youngest son, which happened as the builders were doing some drastic alterations, then Lis herself was stricken down with a mysterious bug, so sorry to hear all this, but pleased to hear now that your son is better, the builders have gone, and that you yourself are feeling better. We send all good wishes and that 1992 will be a more peaceful year for you all.

Mrs. C. Brown, 'Kenfield', MAPPLETON. Nr. ASHBOURNE. Derbys. DE62AB. Celia wrote to say how much she enjoyed our Newsletter, having joined through Norman Payne's good offices. She and her husband are trying to build up a collection of our Irises, having purchased some of Norman's *ensatas*. In addition Celia has written about her garden under 'My Irises' so I will leave it to her to tell you about it, sufficient to say that I saw some very unusual and beautiful plants and shrubs growing very healthily, and Celia is underestimating her efforts. Given time, as in all new gardens and inventive gardeners, it will be something to be really proud of, well done Celia.

Mr. C. Wood, Patchings Farm Art Centre, Oxton Rd. CALVERTON. Notts. NG14 6NU. Chas. and Liz (brother and sister) originally started renovating the Patchings Farm buildings in August 1988. The 'Painter's Paradise' began in September 1990, then in May 1991, the Duke of Gloucester opened this unique facility for the benefit of people who have an interest in Art and a love of the Countryside.

A variety of gardens and a fairly large lake are contained in the 38 acres, which also includes 10 'gazebos' for students to study the beautiful views, there is also a magnificent 'Clubhouse' built of Norwegian Spruce, which Chas tells me was cut and erected on the site in the space of 4 weeks.

Chas is responsible for the plantings and his aim is to emulate the French Painter 'Monet's garden', with the addition of native English plants. The statuesque bridge depicted in Monet's painting is already in place, and there are many water plants. Here it is our intention, as a Group to add to the water plants, in fact we have already started, and we will continue to assist with other Irises as the garden develops.

Liz works in oils and has been a self-employed artist for 12 years, after a period as Head of Art in Secondary Education. She paints portraits and Nottinghamshire landscapes. Exhibitions are held in the Art Centre, where she has a Studio. Classes are held in the Clubhouse, using the gardens for water colours and oil art works

We are only too pleased to help in this delightful idea of bringing Monet's garden to life in this part of Nottinghamshire, situated near to Calverton, where, by the way Christopher Dean of 'Torvill and Dean' came from.

Mr. & Mrs. P. McInnes, 'Rose Cottage Growers' Nursery, Main St. NORTH MUSKHAM. Newark, Notts. NG23 6GR.

Barbara and Peter have built their Nursery up over the past 14 years. It is situated just off the busy A.1. but is a quiet haven where they specialize in most unusual plants, trees and shrubs. Their stock consists of nearly 200 deciduous trees, around 500 varieties of shrubs and some 150 Hardy Plants, as well as a wide range of conifers, some I have not seen before. It takes a while to see all this as you can imagine, and I am very pleased that Barbara and Peter have agreed to add our Irises to their most comprehensive List, and that we will be able to help in the future. Best Wishes to you both.

Mr. C. Rose, 26, Devonshire Rd., BRISTOL. BS6 7NJ. Chris, on reading our Report in the B.I.S. Year Book has written to say that he would like to know more about our Irises, also he is interested in hybridisation. He already grows some unidentified Siberians pseudacorus, 'Holden Clough', chrysographes also ch. rubella, tetra-calsibes, tetra-sibitosa and kerneriana, laevigata and versicolor, and another 6 Spurias. Now I would say that you have quite a few Irises Chris, but we could add a few more named variety seeds, if you feel like growing them, we are having good reports from Members. I see you also grow Streptocarpus and hardy Geraniums, I hope you will enjoy ours too.

OVERSEAS.

Mr. D. Niswonger, 'Cape Iris Gardens', 822, Rodney Vista Blvd. CAPE GIRARDEAU, MO. 63701, USA

Dave stocks Floyd Wickenkamp's Spurias, in addition to his superb collection of Bearded Irises. He is well known for his own introductions of Spurias such as 'Looking Glass Eyes' 'Missouri Streams', 'Struttin' and 'Missouri Streams'. He also grows species halophila, carthalinae, C. alba, musulmanica, songarica, ensata and pseudacorus on which he has been working in the yellow and chartreuse forms, Good Luck Dave!

Mrs. M.L. Barnes, 5250 S.W. Waterpaugh Ave. CORVALLIS. OREGON. 97333. U.S.A. Mary has joined us through Dr. J. Smart. She is building up a collection of old Irises, pre-1900 and early 1900's, perhaps we will be able to help. You will find a list (as many as possible) under 'Member's Wants' in the Newsletter.

Mr. L.T. Fry, 4, Renata Court, NOVATA. CA. 94947. U.S.A. Louis and Caroline distribute the seeds for the Pacific Coast Native Iris Society. In addition to P.C.N's they grow a collection of Siberians, Louisianas, a number of laevigatae, I. tridentata, versicolors some Spurias (these are mostly Species). T.B's and a number of exotic bulbs, as well as Old Roses, and an assortment of Mediterranean and native plants. Louis edits the Aril Society International Newsletter, and has taken on the Caretaker assignment as editor of SIGNA (Species Iris Study Group of North America), you must have a very busy time Louis, we send all Good Wishes, don't do too much. We look forward to hearing more in our July Newsletter.

Mr. C. Mountford, P.O. Box 265, EPPING. N.S.W. 2121. Australia. joined in August 1991, through the B.I.S. we hope to hear about his garden when he has time please.

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Irises in New Zealand.

by Frances Love.

Frances, who is the President of the New Zealand Iris Society, wrote this in October 1991. We send her all Good Wishes and thank you, here is her letter:-

'We are once again starting our Iris season. Rather definite likes for our community are emerging.

People here are well into Irises for wet areas as pools are so popular, and farmers are making dams in their efforts to beautify.

The Sibiricas and Japanese Irises are ideal for this and so they are highly popular. Our area is very windy, which means that T.B's are not such a good bet. They both make bold clumps and are highly suitable for mass plantings, so too are Louisianas, although in the 'off-season' their leaves are not so attractive.

We are convinced that leaves should be highly considered, as they form the backbone of our gardens. Most of our plants fit this category, as the flowering season is relatively short, so there is a need for good leaf value.

Most gardeners in New Zealand are women, but there is an upsurge in men's interest. They just love the Spurias which they feel are very elegant in leaf, early in the season when our gardens can look somewhat dismal. When the visitors to my garden include men they are quite ecstatic about these Spurias, which grow in clumps in selected areas. (cont.)

The flowers do last well too and are lovely for floral work. We can always pick off dead heads to allow another bloom to come out.

Personally I have grown one or two which are very lovely, from seed received from the late Jack Venner, also seeds from the S. S. & J. when I was in England... One, I feel is quite different (for us anyway!), it is a mushroom self..I love it..

Under the deciduous trees I have Pacific Coasters, which just seem to grow with gay abandon. In selected places there are seedlings from various countries. Some spectacular breaks in many of these.. I feel that I now need to develop a New Zealand strain and I am on the way to do just that. The leaves of the deciduous trees, when they fall in the Autumn, I just leave to form a mulch around the Pacific Coasters.. This seems to work well.

There is an Iris for every garden, this is the versatility of our Genus. With some care and a little work, we can make suitable areas in most parts of New Zealand for most Irises.

Louisianas do well in Auckland where it is warmer, and there they have a terribly high rainfall, but they don't stand the frosts too well in the far South. Spurias, Sibiricas and Japanese Irises do well all over the country, as do the P.C's providing they are put in a drier area. The roots of the big trees seem to soak up a lot of extra moisture so that the P.C's don't get too wet in our winter and spring. I find they did not need summer watering. In fact, last season we did have more summer rain than usual, as a result these dainty Irises are somewhat later coming into flower this year. They are in full bloom now and do not seem to have suffered at all.

Spurias, in leaf over the winter, do not seem to mind the frosts. The Sibiricas and Japanese are dormant during this period and so they are not affected. Even so, I have some disappointments, I sibirica 'Cambridge', which I adore, just won't grow here or anywhere in New Zealand. I. sibirica 'Soft Blue', which I also imported from Britain has been with me for three years, but it is proving difficult. Certainly the change of hemisphere has to be taken into consideration, but not for this long. This spring it had formed quite a nice clump and started growth as it should. Looking at it 2 days ago, no leaves.. so I dug it up.. there is a good root system and some green deep down, I searched for root grubs, but could not find any. I have washed the roots thoroughly, made a good potting mix of peat and sand, and planted it back in a pot. Hopefully it will pick up, but I will be watching it carefully. Has anyone a suggestion???

We have had the coldest Winter in 7 or 8 years, with daily frosts and cold bitter days. In the far South it has been much worse. Even in Auckland, which they call the 'WinterlessNorth' they have had cold frosty weather. However this seems to do our Irises good, as most people have heaps of bloom and buds, depending on the type of Iris they grew.

I hope your English Winter is not too bad...

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Our Garden - Magic or Mayhem

by Celia Brown

'Tell them about your garden'!

'This years's, last year's or next year's , Joan? Our garden is of the restless variety, and like Zebedee tends to 'arrive'. I could write reams on the mayhem with our back garden; perhaps I'll tell you about it sometime. Although we've always had a garden I'm really a raw beginner. At 46 I'm gardening for for the first time: probably because I'm doing so closer to Nature. Gardening can be the original 'agony' and 'ecstasy'; it can also be humbling.

I could be smug about our superb tilth, near perfect pH., and healthy plants free of disease and insects. But next year might be a different story. You could be listening to my howls of anguish. 'Encourage wildlife', we are told. Believe me, the wildlife round here needs no encouragement, we feed them and have the pleasure of their company; they also earn their keep; and there are, thus far, no vandals among them. We feel lucky that the ecology we are after has made a good start; between them they rid us of slugs, snails and 'crawlies'. The ants polish off what the birds miss. I don't object to the odd seared leaf and black-spot on the roses is ignored. The plants aren't cosseted unless they need very special attention. Being of the open quality, the garden gets lots of fresh air; the farmers here don't shear their sheep, they wait for the wind to blow the fleece away!

Our gardens, both back and front are simple, flat rectangles. We have no fountains, fancy fencing, pergolas or plastic Herons (the real variety lives close by), but we are trying to make our own brand of magic. We do have lovely limestone and sandstone walls, and instead of lawn (I cut a swathe through our 'handkerchief' with 4 neat hems), this meandered beautifully but made mowing impossible.. we now have pebbles with the loveliest tones imaginable. Stone makes our garden more of an extension of the country around, somehow.

(cont.)

I'm no Beth Chatto, admirable though she is! There are no large drifts of greens here. I like bold, rich, bright colours. I'm a plant, rather than a Specie collector, although I do (now) have Irises coming out of my ears..(did you know that most garden centres still do not know what an Iris looks like!). We also collect dwarf and slow-growing conifers. If the garden does an 'all change' while the family's back's are turned, its because I'm trying to push boundaries and discover exciting associations. The accepted ones of yellow/red etc., can be very hard, with colours vying for supremacy. Where I have reds; Berberis, Cotinus, Prunus, Dogwood etc., I soften, but bring out the glow with apricots, creamy yellows and certain tones of pinks. I do this with other reds, too. I adore challenges in the garden, and the biggest one has been planting to enhance the wonderful, rich, 'earthy' tones in our sandstone wall. I planted... Now that would be another story!! (More in July please Celia...J.T.)

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My Garden.

by Christian Lindner

(Christian has written from his home Lidingo, which is on the outskirts of Stockholm.)

I became interested in Irises in 1986 after reading about them in an old gardening book. To build a collection was not too easy. I bought 15 plants of T.B's. All of them were historic types like 'Lent A. Williamson' and 'Ola Kala'. It is not possible to buy any modern types in Sweden. I am sorry to say that the interest for Iris is very low among the common garden-owners here.

Well! I am doing my share to increase interest by giving away plants to friends and people I know.

In 1989 I started to import T.B's from the U.S.A. and I now own about 100 modern varieties of them. One year later I began to import Siberians and I now have 15 varieties in my collection, 'Eric the Red', 'Butter and Sugar', 'Waterloo', 'Wing on Wing' and 'Alice Mae Coy' to name some of them.

Due to a mistake from the U.S.Mail 'Eric the Red', 'Butter and Sugar' and 'Waterloo' were sent by surface mail instead of airmail. These plants survived over three months in the mail, (5 other plants were dead). It was January so I planted them in pots and placed them in the cellar. In late April I replanted them in the garden. In August all of them were alive and looked fine. 'Waterloo' even sent up a flower spike. I must say that I am very impressed by this Siberian toughness and will to live..

Last year I also imported 17 varieties of Louisiana Iris. All of them survived the winter, but just one flowered 'Red Dazzler'. I hope it will be better next year.

I really like reticulatas and I have around 1500 bulbs, most of them Harmony.

Besides Iris I also grow Roses, Dahlias, Papaver Orientale and Tulips. Can anyone give the address of large suppliers of Tulips in Europe. It is very difficult to buy unusual varieties of Tulips in Sweden.

(Thanks Christian, nice to hear from you, I hope you hear from someone, for the answer to your plea. All Good Wishes. J.T.)

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In Memory.

We send our Sincere Sympathy to the relatives and friends of Joan Pierson, who died on the 30.th September 1991, so soon after her husband. Joan was the Registrar for the B.I.S., a post she held from 1976. She will be very much missed.

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Some Dates for your Diary.

- 18-19 th. Feb. Reticulata Show.
- 28th.-29th. April. Median Show.
- 18th.-22nd. May. Chelsea.
- 6th.-7th. June. Early Show at Ebbw Vale Garden Festival.
- \*23rd.-27th. May. Cannington 70th. Birthday Celebrations.
- 16th.-17th. June. R.H.S. Late Show.

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SEAWAYS GARDENS - Update - 1991.

Currier McEwen.

Joan Trevithick has invited this update of happenings at Seaways Gardens during the past year or two. our various interests and hybridizing goals have remained the same but (cont).

there have been some developments that are, I trust, worth noting. The first is the trip that Elisabeth and I made to Japan in June. The Japanese Iris Convention in 1990 was held in Maine and five Japanese came over for it (as did also Philip Allery and Koen Engelen from Belgium). After the convention, our Japanese friends stayed for several days with us at Seaways and subsequently urged us to come to Japan and learn what they are doing there. It was in every way a delightful experience. I learned much, but that has been reported in the Fall 1991 issue of the Review, so no need to be detailed here.

One unfortunate result of our trip was the need to miss nearly all of the bloom of our Siberian Irises. Normally the seedlings from 1988 crosses, having been growing for three years, would have been evaluated this year (1991), and all those not selected for breeding or possible introduction would have been discarded. Now that bed has had to be left for another year, with the result that in 1992 there will be seedlings of two hybridizing years to evaluate - a challenging task.

Although most of the 1988 seedlings were missed, I can comment on several. One (T8 88/1 (1)) was at least a week earlier than any other of my early bloomers, such as 'Lavender Light', and it also repeated enthusiastically, so I saw it before we left for Japan, and again after our return. My plant of Iris typhifolia, which Dr. James Waddick had brought from his plant collecting trip to China bloomed for the first time, but I did not see it, except in photos taken by my helper Sharon Whitney. She also made for me a number of successful crosses using it with several of my diploid Siberians. Photos she took of some very ruffled, round white tetraploids with beautifully crimped edges make me eager to see them when they bloom in 1992.

Missing the Siberian bloom made me even more eager than usual for July and the Japanese Irises, and I was rewarded, for this proved to be our best year to date, both as to quantity and quality. In past years about 35% of the Japanese Irises have bloomed in their second year, but this year 90% or more did, with the result that I was able to be a year early in using them for crosses.

I will mention only a few of the individual plants of the two years. Of particular note among the 1989 seedlings was a very large red one from 'Japanese Pinwheel', with three branches plus terminal and nine buds. For almost the first time there were some good violet-blue tetraploids and some with marbled patterns. Among the 1988 seedlings was a tetraploid (T7 88/11 (1)) so early that I could use it with the tetraploid I. pseudacorus still in bloom. This is one of the approaches I am using to try to obtain fertile yellow Japanese Irises. Those efforts are discussed in an article in the 1991 B.I.S. Year Book, so I need not repeat them here. Others that impressed me are some pleasing white diploids with very green signals. In both the 1988 and 1989 buds some improved pink diploids and tetraploids appeared which I think are promising. A fault of the pinks has been lack of branching, but among the new ones are some with good branches.

A long time goal has been to obtain yellow and true blue, red and pink flowers. Efforts to obtain fertile yellow J.I.'s are described in the B.I.S. Year Book mentioned above. Considerable progress has been made toward blue with the introduction of cultivars such as 'Southern Son', 'Midsummer Happiness' and 'Down East Postlude' (not yet introduced); and at the Kamo Nursery in June I saw one of Toyokasi Ichie's seedlings, as yet under number, that is still closer to true blue. A promising new approach to true blue stems from the identification by Tsutomu Yabuya of the pigment delphinadin in one Japanese iris, 'Chitosehime'. From experience in other types of flowers, it appears that in order to obtain true blue a flavone co-factor is needed. Having obtained 'Chitosehime', I made many crosses with it this season, with plants that might be expected to be rich in flavones. This is being very actively done now in Japan and one may hope that true blue is within reach. Pink and red are other colors that need improvement, but for them I know of no scientific breakthrough, and we can merely continue to cross flowers that we consider promising parents. Indeed, progress is being made toward pink, but there is still a long way to go for true red.

Shirley Pope and I have continued to introduce a few new ones each year. I will comment here about only two since all are described in Shirley's yearly lists of our introductions. One Japanese iris has been named 'Joan Trevithick' who gave me the seeds from which it came. It is very different from the large, overlapping tetraploids, a dainty pink flower of open form, slightly larger than its parent 'Rose Queen' and with a darker pink stripe down the center of the falls. The new Siberian we have named 'Golden Edge' for obvious reasons. Ever since 'Silver Edge' appeared some 20 years ago, I have hoped for one with gold edges. There have been a number such as 'Adj' with nice yellow edges the first day or two which then turn to silver. Our new one is the

(cont).

first to hold its color for the full four days of the flowers's bloom. The edges do lighten, but the yellow remains -- at least it does in Maine, and I trust it will elsewhere.

One final note concerns the contrasts in season of bloom this year. In Japan, and at the Japanese iris Convention in Oregon which we attended on the way home, the season was a week or two late. Indeed, in Oregon we saw many fine Siberians but very few J.I.'s. Yet in Maine, the season was about two weeks early. I have heard that the season in England was unusual too. In spite of all today's high tech. advances, mother nature continues in her own way!

(Thank you Currier, all good wishes in your search for yellow, red and blue. J.)

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IRIS TYPHIFOLIA. (The 'new' Siberian Iris).

by James W. Waddick.

Currier mentioned this Iris, on checking through the 'Siberian' (Fall 1991) I found this account, which I reprint by kind permission of Judy Hollingworth the Editor.

In 1934, the Japanese botanist Kitagawa described a new species of Iris found in extreme northeast China (TSI Vol. 6, No 9. Spring 1989). Because of its narrow, slightly twisted leaves, he named it Iris typhifolia. Typha is the generic name for cat-tails also known as reedmace in Europe. This new species' affinities to the series Sibiricae was obvious. Except for a few herbarium specimens, the species has been essentially unknown in the West until very recently.

Professor Zhao Yu-tang, the foremost expert on native Chinese irises, relocated the species in isolated areas of Inner Mongolia, Liaoning and Jilin provinces. He was able to collect seed over the past few years and distributed these to iris growers in various parts of the world. Last year a good quantity of seed was sent to me, and I distributed it to many Siberian iris growers and through the seed of the Species Iris Group of North America (SIGNA). SIGNA has had exceptional interest in seed of this species.

I have grown a few seedlings for the past four years and can report on this species with some specifics. I first obtained a very few seeds in 1988 from Maurice Boussard of France which he had received from Zhao the same year. I produced a dozen seedlings and planted them in various locations in my garden in Kansas. The seedlings grew vigorously and uniformly. A few were given to specialist iris growers in various parts of the U.S.

Bloom stalks first appeared in my garden in the spring of 1990, but a freak late frost killed the buds, while causing no harm to the foliage. A single seedling that I sent to my friend Bob Ward in Little Rock, Arkansas did bloom in the spring of 1990. Unfortunately Bob and his family were out of town and no flowers were observed or photographed.

Bloom stalks appeared again this spring (1991) and I took special care to protect them from frost damage. Fortunately no late frosts occurred and bloom continued in a normal fashion. Flower stalks were evident by early April, quite early for any Siberian iris in my climate. There were five bloom stalks on two plants in a group of three seedlings. The first three flowers appeared on April 17th. Flowering continued with one or more flowers open at once through April 30th. The final unopened bud dropped on May 1st.

At flowering the stalks measured 17, 22, 25 and 26 inches (44, 56, 64, 64 & 67cm.) in height, while the leaves ranged from 25 to 32 inches (34-82 cm.) in length. The widest leaf was barely 3/8 of an inch (1 cm.). Three of the stalks had terminal buds and a short spur. Of the five stalks, three had two terminal buds and two had three terminal buds. Both plants with three terminal buds also had a single bud on the spur, only one of the stalks with two buds had a spur with a single additional bud.

Flower color is surprisingly bright and brilliant. Falls are a rich deep blue-violet with true blue at the signal area. There are strong vein marks and a dull gold wash at the hafts. The standards are held erect and are an unmarked rich violet-blue. The falls measure approximately 1 inch wide by 1 1/2 inches long (2.6 by 3.8 cm.), the width of the hafts is 3/8 to 1/2 inch (1 to 1.3 cm.); the standards are 3/4 inch wide and 2 inches long (2 by 5 cm.). The entire flower is 3 1/2 to 4 inches in height (9 to 10.3 cm.) by 2 1/4 to 2 1/2 inches wide (5.8 to 6.4 cm.).

Due to the intense rich color and the relatively large flowers, this species has potential as a good garden plant. The foliage is deep green and very elegant. It is held upright throughout the growing season, unless badly battered by strong winds. Because it is believed to be a member of the 28 chromosome group of Siberian irises it has even greater potential as a source for new genetic material. It should cross easily with species and hybrids derived from I. sanguinea and I. sibirica.

(cont).

The first recorded cross involving Iris typhifolia was made by Mr. R. Wise in England who obtained viable seed using its pollen on the cultivar 'Dreaming Yellow'. Due to its early bloom here, I was only able to cross it onto my earliest hybrid 'Fairy Dawn'. Pollen was saved, but proved to be of low viability, and of numerous attempts, I believe the only success was with 'Aqua Whispers'. Both crosses may show some interesting results.

Although few iris species have either logical or likely common names, I suggest the quite appropriate common name of 'Cat-tail Iris' for this species. It has proven itself easy to cultivate, easy to germinate and widely adaptable, although because of its early bloom season, it may be best suited to locations where late frosts are uncommon. It has never been commercially available in the West, but owing to the wide distribution of numerous seeds, stocks should appear from specialist nurseries within the next year or two. I hope that it will prove a genetic treasure for the hybridizer and a garden treasure for the average gardener.

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#### CULTURE OF PACIFIC COAST NATIVES.

Reprinted by kind permission of Lewis Lawyer, the Editor of the Almanac of the Pacific Coast Native Iris Society. Written by Adele (his wife).

(Because the articles in this issue describe outstanding varieties may inspire purchases of plants, we are reviewing briefly some basic culture information, since new subscribers are interested in learning about methods of growing P.C.I.'s.)

The most important factor in P.C.I. culture is drainage. They do not tolerate soils in which water stagnates. They tend to do best in soils to which considerable peat or humus has been added, and which is slightly to moderately acid (pH 5.5 to 6.5.). Along the Pacific Coast, P.C.I.'s tolerate full sun, but inland, and in most of the areas with hot summers, it is best to plant them in a part of the garden where they receive moderate shade during the hottest part of the day. In most areas, some summer watering is required to keep them alive, and there is no easy formula for the amount of water to use in hot climates. Wet soils and hot weather promote disease. In the absence of a local grower who is already growing them successfully, you will have to develop a strategy of your own.

Transplanting is most successful when the roots are plump, white and actively growing. This is best done in the fall along the California coast, but some growers in other regions prefer spring. When you receive your plants they should be moist and should be planted as promptly as possible. Soaking the roots in a solution of Subdue (6 drops per gallon of water) for 20 minutes is helpful in their survival. (The Subdue dosage can be higher and the soak period longer without toxic effect). Once in the ground, in pots or in the garden, they should be watered immediately and kept moist until they are well established. In colder climates it is best to keep fall transplants in pots over winter, moving them into the garden after all danger of frozen soil is over. Once established in your garden, they can withstand considerable freezing; but mulching is desirable under severe conditions. Unlike bearded irises, the Pacific Coast natives resent being divided yearly, and it is best to let them grow undisturbed unless you have reason to move them.

To see if your plants are ready to be moved, scratch away some soil from around the base of the plants to see if plump, white roots have appeared. If the roots are ready move them according to the methods outlined above.

Bloom season varies widely according to locality. In most areas, peak bloom is about 20 days earlier than tallbearded bloom time. In California the earlier varieties can start blooming in January, peaking in mid-April. In Oregon and Washington it is a month and a half later.

(To explain the first paragraph of Adele's account, I must tell you this followed a list of popular varieties of Pacific Coast Irises, but it was rather too lengthy to print.)

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#### A Californian Reminiscence.

by Florence Day, Sierra Madre, CA.

My interest in Pacific Coast iris started when George Stambach gave me a packet of his seeds. Distributing native iris seed was his foremost interest, (and probably delight), as he always carried packages of P.C.I. seeds in his pockets. He loved, lived and worked with them, and when he came to meetings, he gave his little packages to those who would grow them.

I planted my seeds in a fruit crate taken from the grocery store bin. They were wooden in those days and made a good flat to plant in. I used Super-Soil with sand and some redwood shavings as a planting mix. I got 7 plants the next spring. From these, over the years, the

(cont.)

lower garden became full of Pacific Coast irises.

I have registered 5 plants, ... 'Coco Indian', 'Day of Dream', 'Gold Chips', 'High Coast' and 'Lavender Pink Lady', my favorite being 'Coco Indian', a nice ruffled, dark pink.

In growing Pacific Coast irises one needs a good drainage. Here in Sierra Madre, fall is the best time for planting so that they get the winter rains. They don't need as much watering in summer as other irises, and they like part shade.

Even though it does not involve a Pacific Coast iris, I want to close with a very pleasant iris memory. Back in 1966 we were rock hunting in Oregon, and when driving back home to Sierra Madre, we came through the Alturas, California valley area. The valley was just acres and acres of blue missouriensis or longipetala iris for as far as you could see. It was like a blue lake!

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Growing Pacificas in Maine.

by John W. White.

We live 35 to 40 miles north of Portland, Maine, in Minot, on the northwest side of Auburn. Winter temperatures of 10° to -10° are common, and sometimes it drops to minus 20°. Most years we have good snow cover, 12 to 24 inches. This past winter we had only 4 to 8 inches of snow and quite a lot of rain. This caused icing over the plants, about 2 ins. over our T.B. iris, which caused a lot of damage.

Five years ago I raised eight Pacificas from seed and got them through two winters. In the winter of 1988 we had a light snowfall, lots of rain, and a heavy icing of 3-6 ins. over these plants. Also they were planted in a location where the drainage was not as good as it should have been. Of course they all died.

In January and February of 1990, I planted Signa seed in 6- x 8- inch peat flats in the house. When they germinated and were about 1 inch high, I picked them out and planted them in 2-inch pots in a potting soil. By mid July I had 42 seedlings, 3 to 4 inches tall, which I set out in an area of good drainage and partial shade. Thirty of these seedlings survived the winter of 1990/91 and are growing well, despite the fact that this winter was what we refer to as 'an open winter', not much snow, and too much rain and icing.

Richard Kiyomoto gave me 4 potted plants in July 1990, these I planted outside. Only one survived the winter, but that one, a seedling of Richard's, bloomed this year in June, a nice white flower with light blue veining.

I think that the Pacificas have beautiful colors and patterns that we do not get with our Siberians. To develop cold-hardy varieties is what Richard Kiyomoto and I are trying to do, and if hybridizers in California can develop heat-resistant varieties, Richard and I, given time, can develop some cold-hardy ones.

P.C.I. Tetraploids.

also by John W. White.

This past winter, in January and February of 1991, I planted seed which I had received from Terry Aitken, Richard Kiyomoto via the Abregos, Duane Meek and from Signs. About half of this seed was started in Petri dishes on damp, sterile paper, and the rest was started in peat flats. When the seed germinated in the dish (or flat) and the leaf was about 1/2 in. tall, I treated half the seed in .03 % colchicine. Each seed was dropped into a test tube containing 1-2 ins. of the colchicine. Most of the seed was left in the colchicine for 12 hours, but some for 16, 18 and 24 hours. The seed was then rinsed in a strainer under lukewarm water for 2-3 minutes and planted. The other half, untreated was planted in 2 ins. pots of planting mix.

I could see no appreciable difference in the survival rate of the seedlings, regardless of the time that they were left in the colchicine. I found that the seedlings raised in flats and colchicine treated had a more rugged root system than those germinated in petri dishes & treated with colchicine. Also, the survival rate of seedlings from flats was better, about 30% as compared to 10% for those raised in the Petri dishes. It would appear that the more-rugged tolerate the colchicine treatment better.

All seeds started in Petri dishes had been treated with a fungicide, then stored in the refrigerator for about 2 months before starting the colchicine treatment. I did have some trouble with mold developing in the Petri dishes. The seed planted directly into peat flats had no mold problems.

After the seedlings were planted in pots following treatment, they developed a stunted look, and were darker green and thicker at the base of the leaves than the untreated plants. It was about 3 months before the treated plants started to grow, whereas the untreated plants were 6 to 8 inches tall by that time.

Dr. Currier McEwen came to see these seedlings and felt that they were induced tetraploids. Only if we can get them to flowering stage and can check the pollen under the

(cont.)

microscope, (or better yet get a chromosome count), can we be reasonably certain.

I have 11 of these TI plants growing in pots outside. They are now 3-4 ins. tall. The untreated diploid plants are 12ins. tall.

You may wonder why I have been doing the colchicine treatment with Pacificas. It is mostly out of curiosity to see how it may affect the plant, the flower color and the substance of the flower. Although frost resistance is one of our primary objectives, I doubt that colchicine will have any influence on it.

At present I have 75 Pacificas, 11 of which I believe to be tetraploids. It certainly is fun working with these lovely flowers, but I would not be surprised if half of them died this next winter. When and if we can get some of them to flowering stage, we can work on cold-hardy varieties, whether diploid or tetraploid.

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#### Help Wanted.

Help! I'm looking for P.C.I.'s that are fragrant, either seeds or plants...

Joanne Derr, 36488, Log La Barre. Estacada. OR. 97023. U.S.A.

These three items are reprinted by kind permission of Lewis Lawyer the Editor of the Almanac of the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris.

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#### Trevor Nottle's Letter from Australia.

Trevor wrote on the 30th. July 1991, which is their mid-winter.---- Plenty of rain, fog and cold, cold weather..(For the first time ever). I went out and bought some long johns to wear under my trousers to keep warm! Reticulata irises are up, but no signs of blooms yet. Otherwise Narcissus austuriensis, Narc. cyclaminus, Narc. minor, Tete-a-Tete and some other early 'boys'.

My interest in Iris has been slowed somewhat by the incessant demands of two teenagers and a job which takes up most of my 'free time', something I do not have. None-the-less my established irises continue to prosper and I have simply refrained from planting much seed. Friends in America sent me a nice collection of field collected seed of Pacific Coast Native irises - I.macrosiphon, I.munzii etc. I have  $\frac{1}{2}$  dozen plants of each of 7 species or sub-species to plant out in a few weeks. The Secretary of the Japanese Iris Society (U.S.A.) sent me seeds of some new Japanese Irises which I will plant too-- and that should keep me busy and interested over the next few years.

I have hopes of getting Akira Horinaka's Book, rather costly, when repairs to the car have been completed.. There are very few I.laevigatae here. Last year, I tried to buy the 3-4 species and cultivars which are listed -- Monstrosa, Colchesterensis etc. Every single plant I was sent turned out to be a very vigorous (tetraploid?) I.pseudacorus !!

As the garden matures, I have less success with Spurias and Siberians -- Tree roots, shade and competition for water discourages them. The species seem more tolerant and I prefer them, but even so, I grow fewer than previously, because I attempt to concentrate on quality instead of quantity. I keep in touch with SIGNA, but my only Iris growing friend has moved over 1,000 Km. away, so all my Iris interests are long distance. We have a Tall Bearded club, but they haven't the remotest interest in anything else..

Hope you all have a lovely Iris gardening Summer!!

(Trevor wrote later that I.ensata, grown from our seed was flowering magnificently -- 5ft. tall, 27 stems, multi-branched, wine red, some had four petals, but mostly threesomes);

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#### Jean Peyrard's Letter from France.

Jean also wrote this in July 1991.

Siberians; few blooms ('Soft Blue', 'Gatineau', 'Ewen', 'Ego') often had short stems, perhaps because of the return of frost in April. There many losses in the species beds and few blooms. Sibirica, chrysographes, and chrysographes x chrysofor, unfortunately the roots were all eaten by rodents. I have dug them all up, put a sheet of plastic and a plastic net in the holes, modified the soil and so on. I am very pleased with the dwarf 'Baby Sister' which grows well in normal soil near a rose bush, it has pods, so if I can get seeds I will send some. I was deceived by all the 40 chromosome series hybrids, drooping foliage, no blooms and poor increase.

Laevigatae; I was waiting for blooms on seedlings from 1987 SIGNA seeds, they were named laevigatae hybrids mix.... I get I.pseudacorus a yellow form and a creamy one. My laevigatae are in a 40 litre pot with always 3cm. water on the soil, except in winter (I have made drainage holes--but no bloom.)

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Four Japanese seedlings from McEwen seeds have bloomed; a big simple violet-rose, a double one, a blue double with long yellow signal, and a double white, largely veined and stitched light blue - branched. All have been grown since 1989 in 15 cm. pots in a plastic bag with 10 cm. water. Yesterday, I repotted, and the whole volume of the pot was a mass of roots; so I increased the size of the pots and divided some. They are from the reblooming strain, (but reblooming McEwen plants never rebloom in my climate!) -- Do they rebloom in Great Britain? The 'intermediate' strain gives a short plant but did'nt bloom this year.

Spurias :- I. kernerneriana, I. sintenisii, I. graminea, I. maritima, I. violacea and I. ocroleuca, (two hybrids also). I have tried for 12 years to find three various plots in the garden, with poor success. I should be glad to check the determination of species, but I cannot find a key.

P.C.I.'s I lost nine tenths of imported plants set in pots this winter, despite the protection of dead leaves. I also lost many young seedlings which I put the pots in the earth in too damp a place. But two seedlings from Ghio seeds, planted in the ground 4 years ago, bloomed this year; normal soil, no protection in winter; an orchid-rose one with some blue in the throat; and a light yellow and brown, I have crossed the two. Others are grown in the worst place in the garden, (cooler and less sunny) they increase slowly, but do not get frosted. If you would like plants, let me know! All good wishes to Members.

(Jean was as good as his word and sent plants, as Members who asked for lists will know. Incuded was T.Tamberg's Sibirica 'Berlin Versilau', you will see we still have a few left in the plant list. J.)

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Regional Report from the East.

by Shirley Ryder.

I am able to sit down and write this today because it is actually too wet to work outside. We have had the luxury of three consecutive days of rain, the last time this happened was in June. So, the thing that will be remembered about the weather this year, in the East, is once again the drought. Things looked promising earlier in the year, and I was pleased to see lots of buds on I. japonica, but in actual fact I didn't get any flowers at all because we had a series of very sharp frosts. The Pacificas bloomed extremely well and managed to dodge the frosts, and I had the best display of T.B's ever.

As usual it was too dry for the Sibiricas and I only had bloom on my two 'old faithfuls' that come whatever the weather, i.e. 'Soft Blue' and 'Navy Brass', but neither has produced seed. About three years ago I purchased 'Dance Ballerina Dance' and 'Lady of Quality' through the Plant Sales scheme, but I have yet to see them bloom, and it is some years since I saw them 'in the flesh' at a Show, I find I have completely forgotten what they look like.

The Spurias were a non-event and disappointingly they have not increased at all since they went in three years ago, so I did not order any new ones this year as I planned to do. I was on a Course this year where I had the use of a laboratory, so I took the opportunity to do lots of tests on my soil, to find out why I am not doing very well with the Spurias. I have a perfect neutral soil that has the right amount of everything, so I cannot think what is wrong. They were planted on a deep bed of horse manure and although there is a water shortage, I do water them every day. As a last resort, I have just bought them a present of some Super-Dug -- more I cannot do. Why is it that that which is most difficult, is most desirable? Because my soil is neutral it is the first time I have been able to grow Pacificas (I do hate that term, but I suppose it is shorter than Pacific Coast Hybrids) and when my husband retires in two years' time we had thought to move back into Suffolk, but I have to say that the thought of not being able to grow them is making me think seriously about it.

I went to visit gardens in Holland and Belgium this year and was very surprised to see only one Iris growing (a Spuria), and in their best Nursery they only had one or two very old varieties of Sibiricas on offer. I am told that English-style gardening is in its infancy in Belgium and Holland, so perhaps it is only a matter of time before they discover the Iris.

I had hoped to visit Peggy Venner this year to see her Spurias, but unfortunately it was a late season and I was away at their blooming time. However, I did'phone her and she tells me that she had a terrific year for all Irises, but especially for the Japanese. She had one or two functions at the garden so plenty of visitors had the pleasure of seeing them. It is really heartening to know that the wonderful collection that Jack put together is still being tended and shared with other people. I especially appreciate this, as although I have made several gardens, I have never managed to leave anything behind. My first garden is now a car park, and the second has a house built on it. My third was taken over by some self-sufficient people and my Iris bed now has a pig-stye on it. My fourth was taken by people who loved bedding plants, and they removed every perennial plant that was there, including several hundred Iris. Perhaps the fate of this garden will be a kinder one.

I wish everyone a happy gardening year for '92, and I am so looking forward to our Cannington Week. So hope I will meet some Spuria growers and learn some tips.

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The experimental bed at Wisley has been a great success and looks like becoming a permanent trial. The garden staff have been fascinated by the way visitors have homed in on the display of unusual plants.

The undersoil irrigation was helped this year by the generous supply of rainwater during the spring and by the late summer it was possible for the J.I.C. representatives to make a useful assessment of the exhibits.

Quite outstanding was 'Caprician Butterfly', which I noted last year in Norman Payne's garden, with admirable texture for so large a flower, good branching and good bud count. 'Flying Tiger' is smaller flowered with heavy blue/violet veining on a white ground and excellent texture, but there were only two flowering spikes to a 12 " diameter clump which seems inadequate. 'Katy Mendez' also had only 2 spikes to the 12 " clump, but again superb texture and small flowers. 'Hekito' was a rich dark blue colour, but had only 3 flowers to the spike, while 'Magic Opal' was almost pink fading to shades of lilac. 'Taga Sode' from Wychwood, was handsome with heavy crimson veining on a white ground, but the large flowers had inadequate texture.

The Allery seedlings were all well-branched, well budded and with good clean foliage. They did have an advantage over the American imports by being rather larger to start with. (Plants have to come airmail and that is very expensive.) There was a nice, distinctive white with blue-veined style arms and a good self in a medium true-blue

The plants sent by Ray Jeffs were an interesting collection with J.E. 4 having lilac buds expanding to white flowers, but lacking in texture, rather like 'Rose Queen'.

The display gave the committee a good opportunity to assess a fairly wide range of cultivar styles and to arrive at certain requirements. The weather before judging day had been that of a normal English summer with fine weather and some heavy rain and wind. There was a sharp distinction between those plants with good flower texture, which had withstood the weather well, and those with inadequate body where the flowers had been damaged. In fact, these plants are rather like a collection of old fashioned T.B's and modern ones. The tougher quality does tell.

So, for preference we want petals with much the texture of a modern T.B., but there should not be an impression of rigidity. Size should relate to the size of the plant, and single, double and multiple petalling are equally acceptable. Foliage is one of the difficulties; members of the laevigata group are apt to have the leaves more or less heavily marked by 'rusty' veining. A number of the plants seen looked so awful that the Trials Staff had been seriously worried about their health. Frost damage did account for some of the mess, but was usually associated with stunted leaves. In spite of the frost many plants had smart green foliage without this marking and breeders should reject any seedlings which show this characteristic because they are going to be turned down by the judges. The distribution of marked and unmarked leaves was quite random in the bed and so frost alone could not be responsible for the rusty ones.

And, by the way, if you are visiting Wisley from August through to November it is well worth going down to look at this bed, for many of the plants are remontants or rebloomers and there could well be something to see.

South of Watford this has been a better year for all the plants in which this Group specialises. The spring rains made all the difference to growth although the weather at flowering times resulted in a rather poor seed set. Everthing was late, I think, and a sudden and vicious late spring frost (in my Sussex patch down to 8° F) did a great deal of damage, as had freezing winds a little earlier in the year. And flowering was rather sparse, except on the spurias which did splendidly. The ensatas were still feeling the effects of the 1990 season, but I expect better performance this year. We could have used more autumn rain to encourage growth which started rather late. The sibiricas which were replanted in the autumn of 1990 survived in good form and should show well this summer. Its an odd situation where the hardest winter weather is down south and the glorious sunny days are north of the Great Glen!

( Anne has additional plants to offer for the Plant Scheme, namely Jack Ellis' 'Chance Beauty' and 'Regal Surprise', £7.50 each inclusive. The money to go to the Group. You will find this included at the end of the Newsletter. Thank you Anne.)

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MEMBER'S WANTS.

Celia Brown is looking for a root of 'Holden Clough', if you can spare it please get in touch with her, her address is 'Kenfield', MAPPLETON, Nr. ASHBOURNE. Derbys. DE62AB. Hope you are successful Celia.

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News of the Mercia and Kent Groups.

by Eileen Wise.

'Christmas is my time to say  
'Another year has got away',  
We've had our normal busy scene  
No time for us to sit and dream'.

(How very true Eileen!)

The autumn seems to have been so dramatic, that is it difficult to recall the iris season or even gardening.

Mercia Group had their usual busy time, packing in as much as possible during the season, we're not quite so frenzied as we were 25 years ago, but we blame the price of petrol rather than our old enemy 'Anno Domini'.

In early Spring we went to the new home of Mr. Humphrey's irises, near to Dorking Surrey, and it happened to be our first sunny day. Five of us packed into the car, Joan Pierson, Phyl Christopher, Mary Fraser, myself and our driver with a picnic in the boot. We had a lovely time, the nursery drifts over the crest of a Surrey hill, miles away from anywhere. We tried to get into Wisley later, but the rest of the world got there first.

Thirteen of us had a grand two-day trip to Bury St. Edmunds to see Don and Hilda Goodwin's garden, we stayed in a hotel locally and Hilda and Don joined us for our evening meal which was a lovely occasion. Bob and I, later on in the year visited them again, and on that occasion we took a trip into Constable country, then on to Beth Chatto's garden, where we had a superb wallow in the plant centre, another place up there where we enjoy a wallow is Bressingham Nurseries.

On Mercia Show Day we had a lovely lot of irises for once, mainly because George Casey borrowed the Multiple Sclerosis ambulance and filled it with flowers instead of patients.

Kent Group joined us on Plant Sale Day again, but we all met first at Savill Gardens, where we prowled around had lunch and managed to keep to a complicated itinerary beautifully.

We have become involved with the Kent Group much more since Eric Pierson died, because we take Joan along to meet her friends. We went to Whiteleggs this year to their Show, and it was magnificent, much more support than we get at Mercia, and the buffet feast, behind the scene was enormous, but then Joan isn't the only large lady in the Kent Group these days!

With Joan we attended the Kent Group Plant Sale which was held at Ted Pett's home, I'm not too sure that I like the 'auction' system, it goes on a bit, but then they don't have to arrange an additional entertainment. We didn't realise until that day what a wonderful cook Ted is!

This happened to be the last occasion that we took Joan out, though we weren't to know that. Both Groups have a summer break and by the time the Reading Seminar came round Joan was in hospital, she died on 30th. September, 2½ weeks after admission. We helped her brother and his family to sort out her things..

Fifteen of Mercia Group went to Jack and Irene Grint's restaurant on the 3rd. December for our Christmas meal and had a lovely time, now all that remained is the domestic preparations for that great expensive event--Christmas..

Among our plans for 1992 in the Mercia Group is a coach trip to Sissinghurst in May. Jennifer Hewitt is coming to talk to us and so is Ralph Tubbs. In addition we have to find our way down to the Ebbw Vale Festival for the Early B.I.S. Show, where the Iris is the flower of the month for June. One of our garden visits will be a trip to Wisley (a.m.), and a visit to Berney Baughen's garden at Downe, Orpington, in the afternoon. A farewell party for Eileen Wise (that's me folks) is being planned for October, I have been the Secretary for 25 years and feel I just want to be an attending Member, I have promised to retain responsibility for the TEAPOT!

The highlight of our personal gardening year has been the P.C.I.'s which Bob has been breeding for the past few years. Our garden has looked like a jewel box, as those of you who saw the Brummitt's garden will well remember. If you have a mass of them the season is remarkably long. Bob has had a further three seedlings selected for trial at Wisley, and one already there has been awarded Garden Commendation, so has been christened 'PINWOOD AMEPHYST'. Bob is doing his own hybridizing, I understand Mrs. Brummitt's successes were from bee-set pods. They are not the modern saucer-shaped flowers, but tailored, of myriads of colours and markings, Bob is breeding for branching and more buds as well.

We had our first I. unguicularis bloom at Christmas, about a month later than last year. All good wishes to Members for 1992.

(Congratulations to Bob on his 70th Birthday, and to you Eileen on your 25 years as Secretary of the Mercia Group, not forgetting your part as the Membership Secretary of the B.I.S. I know of your hard work and untiring efforts and say thank you on behalf of all Members. Well done! J.)

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Regional Report from the South.by Adrian Whittaker.Spuria Notes.

Anyone who had grown Irises from seed will know that a measure of patience is required. Flowering is generally a matter of years, rather than months, from germination. Germination itself is rather a thorny subject, since batches of seed from similar parents may show wide differences in germination rates, whatever methods are employed.

As Spurias are generally slower to reach their flowering time, than say, the T.B.'s, in my experience, anything which can improve both the speed of germination, and the subsequent growth of the seedling is obviously of benefit to the grower.

It is difficult to conduct any valid, controlled, experiments in this area without being able to raise thousands of seedlings. As this is out of the question for the average gardener, we should perhaps look at the results which are being obtained, on a small scale using different methods.

By this means, it should be possible to effect some improvement over purely random methods.

I generally sow my own Spuria seed 'green' (as soon as the pod shows signs of splitting) in small pots which are placed outside to overwinter. The thinking here is that the rain will help to leach out inhibitors in the seed coat, and that periods of low temperature will break dormancy. Results are variable, and in any case, seed from other sources may be much older and may not respond to this method.

There is a strong argument in favour of following more or less the same line, but in a much better-regulated way indoors - soaking and washing the seed, then cooling more precisely in the fridge, followed by planting in a known temperature environment.

I'm looking now (mid Jan) at a pot of T.B. seedlings which are about five inches tall, the result of just this process with seed harvested in mid Oct. It may therefore be possible to get similar results with Spurias if an appropriate method can be found.

Could I therefore ask anyone, either with firm experience already, who is willing to share it with us, or those willing to experiment -- please to write in and let us know what **their** results are? By sharing information we may be able to improve on the results which are currently being accepted as the norm for the species. Attempting to duplicate the conditions which hold for the species in the wild may not be the optimum for the seed of the hybrids we now have!

(I quite agree Adrian, I'll be having a go this spring, I hope Members will take heed, it is such a good way to obtain some of the newer cultivars..)

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Regional Report for the West & Midlands.by Philip Allery.

The 1991 season for water-loving irises was probably my best yet. This was particularly true of the Japanese iris bloom and was due, in part, to the use of a soaker-hose installation which gave sub-soil irrigation, with liquid feeding facilities. An established clump of 'Good Omen' (Marx '56), an early deep red-wine self, was the first to give a cheerful display; and a bed of recently imported tetraploid J.I.'s raised by Dr. Currier McEwen gave promise of excellent bloom this year. Improved watering and feeding also assisted re-bloom, and a plant of 'Popular Demand' (McEwen '88) gave me further eye-catching bloom in early September, some six weeks after its main bloom.

I hope that my comments on growing J.I.'s in pots were helpful and of interest. At that time correspondence from Shirley Pope, President of the American Society for Japanese Irises, commented on the need to avoid the risk of the sun heating up the roots of the plants in pots. I experienced this problem last year, despite mulching. Shirley avoids root damage by burying the pots in soil, then mulching; subsequently filling them with soil in late autumn so that ice cannot form on top of the plant, and further mulching well against winter frost. These are all important points whether or not the outer container I suggested is to be used. I will modify my planting practice this year and let you know the results. I enjoyed a mid-year visit to Norman Payne, with whom I compared notes on this subject, and I also enjoyed seeing his extensive planting of Japanese Irises.

Although it was an excellent season with good bloom on Pacific Coast hybrids, Sibiricas and water-loving plants, slugs caused considerable damage, and there were several seed-setting problems. A poor seed harvest resulted. In the autumn I had the opportunity of increasing my collection of J.I.'s, which will enable me to form a sound hybridising base for future years.

With water-lilies in bud, and young slugs already on the move, I fear that this may be a warning of another early season. If so, this may cause trouble with dates of the Shows not coinciding with peak bloom, yet again! This year the B.I.S. June Show (Wisley) will be  
(cont.)

held at EBBW VALE, the site of the 1992 National Garden Festival. The B.I.S. and the West and Midlands Iris Group (previously known as the 'West Midlands Iris Group') both have display beds, which it is hoped will attract visitors and encourage membership both of the B.I.S., and of the Group. I was a member of the West Midlands planting team and it was an eventful and enjoyable day. From what I saw the Festival will certainly be worth a visit, and there will be a publicity stand as well as the display beds to promote irises, one of the five Festival Flowers, that for the month of June!

Other events planned for the West Midlands this year include an Annual Iris Show, date and place to be confirmed; also the manning of a Stand at Clack's Farm, Ombersley, near Worcester, for a week-end Garden Show, late in July.

Happy iris gardening and good wishes for a successful season!

( Happy'Eventing'to you Philip, don't work too hard. J.)

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Around the Nurseries.

Tom & Ellen Abrego 'Chehalem Gardens': NEWBERG. OR.

My apologies to Tom and Ellen for not including them in the 1991 list... Tom writes that they do not export, but he likes to hear our news through the Newsletter.

Ellen is the daughter of Robert Schreiner, and they both work for 'Schreiner's Gardens' as he says 'they toil endlessly in the Iris Factory'. In 'Chehalem Gardens' they grow mostly T.B's, but have quite a list of Spurias. Here are Tom's tips on culture:-

Cover the rhizomes with  $\frac{3}{4}$ " of soil when planting. They should be spaced at least 2 feet apart. They grow well in all types of garden loam, but prefer neutral to slightly alkaline soils. Good drainage is imperative. Best in full sun. After planting water well, continue watering until established. In future years they need moisture before the blooming season, no need to water afterwards, as most Spurias have a summer dormancy period. An application of well-rotted barnyard manure or commercial fertilizer will give superior growth. Newly planted rhizomes need a mulch, such as straw, for the first winter. Removed as soon as danger of frost is over. Do not expect peak performance until 2nd. or 3rd. year. Left alone for years, they grow into the large clumps for which they are noted.. (Thanks Tom, very useful.)

Michael Wickenden, 'Cally Gardens', Gatehouse of Fleet, CASTLE DOUGLAS.

Michael writes that he is abroad collecting plants. He has sent his catalogue, which includes I.chrysographes, ch. 'Black Form', 'Black Knight', 'Mandarin Purple'. I.forrestii, I.fulva, I.japonica, 'Rudolph Spring', variegata, I.sibirica 'Ego', 'Ellesmere', 'Orville Fay', 'Southcombe White', I.Spuria 'A.W.Tait', Monspur, uniflora carinata. He hopes to increase his selection in the future.

Pauline Brown (V.H.Humphrey). Westlees Farm, Westcott. DORKING.

Pauline has quite an extensive stock of Spuria Irises, including 'Archie Owen', 'Dawn Candle', 'Barbara's Kiss', 'Media Luz', 'Janice Chesnik', 'Redwood Falls', 'Vintage Year' and many more. I.sibirica 'Ann Dasch', 'Blue Mere', 'Ewen', 'Mabel Coday', 'Polly Dodge', 'Pirate Prince', 'Ruffled Velvet', 'Vi Luhn' to name a few. Also some Pacific Coast Irises, as well as iris species I. florentina, I. graminea, I.halophila, 'Holden Clough', kerneriana and Klattii. And of course T.B's, Miniature D.B's, Standard D.B's and Intermediates. Pauline is certainly keeping up the family tradition. All good wishes.

Vanessa Cook, Stillingfleet Lodge Nurseries. YORK.

Sorry Vanessa I incorrectly gave your name as 'Dorothy' in 1991, I mixed you up with a local Dorothy Cook who was a Member at the time. We have your correct name now, and here is a list of some of the Irises you stock:- I. 'Banbury Ruffles', 'Dark Spark', 'Gerald Darby', 'Jersey Lilli', 'Kayo', 'Lady Mohr', I.flavescens, I.foetidissima 'variegata', I.lacustris gracilipes, I.lazica, monspur 'Cambridge Blue', I.pseudacorus 'Dwarf form', variegata, I.sibirica 'Snow Queen', I.tectorm alba, I.unguicularis and quite a few more..

I was quite delighted last spring to walk into the greenhouses run by Steve York for Bardills' Roses, Stapleford, and see that he had on display seedling Irises, all grown from our seed, very well, I may say, and providing great interest to members of the Public. I really felt we were getting there, at last we are reaching out and letting people know that there are other Irises as well as T.B's, well done Steve!

The same could be said for Mira & Arthur Staples, Coach Gap Nurseries. They too are showing (cont.)

irises grown from our seed, and plants from our Plant Scheme. Mira tells, people are really showing interest. We hope to have more as time goes by. Thank you for your efforts. J.

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The Group Library.

Publications. (Please include Postage when sending for items. Thank you!)

- Alphabetical Table and Cultivation Guide to the Species (B.I.S.) (56gr.)
- Cult of Irise. (Beardless). (B.I.S.) (56gr.)
- Guide to the Pacific Coast Iris.(B.I.S.) (113gr).
- Irises for the Water Garden. (B.I.S.) (56gr.)
- Know Your Irises. (New Zealand Iris Socty.) (75gr.)
- Raising Irises from Seed No.2. (B.I.S.)
- The Genus Iris. Sub-section Sibiricae. (B.I.S.) (56gr.)
- The Spuria Irises-Introduction & Varietal Listing 1985. (J.J.Foreman. U.S.A.) (252gr.)
- The S. S. & J. List of Pacific Coast Hybrids - 1990.
- The Cumulative check List of Siberian Iris. (U.S.A. 1989.)
- A Revision of the Pacific Coast Irises (Lee.W.Lenz. U.S.A.)
- Hybridization and Speciation in the Pacific Coast Irises. (Lee.W.Lenz. U.S.A.)
- Journal for the Siberian Iris Society. (U.S.A.) (Twice a Year.)
- Newsletter of the Spuria Iris Society. (U.S.A.) (Twice a Year.)
- Review of the Society for Japanese Irises. (U.S.A.) (Twice a Year.)
- Almanac for Pacific Coast Native Iris. (U.S.A.) (Twice a Year.)
- All Back Numbers of the S. S & J. Newsletters.

Books.

- Siberian Irises by Currier McEwen. (U.S.A.) (175gr.)
- Growing Irises by G.E.Cassidy and S.Linnegar. (Gt. Britain.) (420gr.)
- The Japanese Iris by Currier McEwen. (U.S.A.) (780gr.)
- The Iris by Fritz Köhlein. (Germany, English Translation.) (990gr.)
- The Iris by Brian Mathew. (Gt. Britain.)

R.H.S. 'IRISES' by Sidney Linnegar and Jennifer Hewitt  
Send your request for Library Books to:-

Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt, S. S & J. Librarian, 'Haygarth', Cleeton St. Mary, CLEOBURY MORTIM KIDDERMINSTER. Worcs. DY14 0

(Please note the new additions to our Library, we are grateful to the donors!)

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Treasurer's Report.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st. DECEMBER 1991.

	£.		£.	
15.2.91	Book purchase.	27. 25.	Subscriptions.	213.
22.2.91	Newsletter & Postage	111. 44.	Donations.	20. 65.
9.3.91	Postage, Postage on Pcls. & Stnry.	18.	Interest	7. 19.
			do. (Res. A/c)	2. 85.
23.3.91	Postage.	5.	Seeds sold.	66. 16.
29.3.91	do.	6.	Plants Sold.	169. 60.
19.6.91	Postage on Pcls & Post.	10.	Literature & N/L's	15. 50.
24.5.91	Postage.	5.	<u>Stock.</u> N/L's	37. 50.
24.5.91	Postage on Parcels.	10.	Covers.	2.
21.6.91	Postage.	5.	Leaflets.	10.
28.6.91	Postage on Parcels	10.	B.I.S. Lit.	20. 40.
17.7.91	Cheque to B.I.S.	10. 50.	P.C.I. Lists.	6.
26.7.91.	Newsletter & Postage	113. 62.		
2.8.91	Receipt Book.	4. 70.		
9.8.91	Members cheque Retnd.	2.		
3.10.91	Postage on pcls, Stnry.	17. 40.		
3.10.91	Postage on Books.	2. 60.		
11.10.91	Postage on Pcls.	10.		
25.10.91	Postage.	6.		
25,10.91	Book purchase.	2. 60.		
1.11.91	Postage on Pcls.	15.		
8.11,91	Postage.	10.		
25.11.91	do.	5.		

	£407. 11.	£560. 95.
surplus	153. 84.	
	<u>£ 560. 95.</u>	

Accumulated Fund.	£ 269. 21.	Interest.	£ 7. 19.
surplus.	153. 84.	Cash in Bank	264. 19.
		Interest	2. 85.
		Cash in Res.	82. 82.
		N/L's Covers Lit. etc.	66.

423. 05.

423. 05.

Cash in Bank £ 271. 38.

In Res. £ 85. 67. Total £ 357.05.

signed. Adrian Whittaker, Chairman.

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The following back numbers of the N/L's are available:-

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B.I.S.Publications: 'Guide to Pacific Coast Irises 60p. Irises for the Water Garden 40p. Alphabetical List of Genus Iris. 85p. Genus Iris Sibiricae.40p.Cult. of Beardless. 40p.

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Contacts Overseas.

- Editor Spuria Newsletter. B.Charles Jenkins, 418-A Cayuga St. SALINAS. CA. 93901. U.S.A.
- Editor of Siberian. Mrs. J.Hollingworth, 120, Sherwood Rd. EAST WILLIAMSTOWN.MI.48895.USA.
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SERIES SIBIRICAE.

I.sibirica mxd. (s), 40chrs. mxd.(s), Alba (vs), White (vs), 'Arabian Princess'(vs), 'Acuta'(vs)  
 'Mountain Lake'(s), 'Caesars Brother'(vs), 'Fourfold White'(p), 'Laurenbuhl'(vs), 'Clee Hills'  
 (s), 'My Love'(vs), 'Papillon'(vs), 'Orville Fay'(s), 'Rejoice Always'(s), 'Lavender Bounty'X  
 (s), 'Tropic Night'(vs), 'Wine Wings'(vs), 'Sea Shadows'(vs), 'Swank'(vs), 'Wiltrud Gissel'(vs),  
 Large blue Tet(vs), Wild from(vs), Mixed diploids(s), Mixed diploids Red (s). 'Kelat Spires'(vs).  
 Chrysographes Dark Purple (vs), Chr. 'Black Knight' (vs), ChryXChrysofors(s), delavayi(s).

SERIES SPURIAE.

Orientalis(s), Orientalis white yellow falls,(s), Carthalinae Alba (vs), Halophila(vs), Crocea  
 Kerneriana (p), Sintensis(s), Musulmanica(vs), Spuria Mxd.(yellow & brown)(s), (Yellow, brown  
 & reds(s), 'Bali Ball', 'Barbara's Kiss', 'Border Town', 'Candle Lace', 'Diminuendo', 'Elan Vital',  
 'Elixir', 'Eurasia', 'Finally Free', 'Janice Chesnik', 'Lenkoran', 'Lively One', 'Now This',  
 'Penny Bunker', 'Purple Reign', 'Universal Peace', 'Zeal', 'Ethic', 'Kaibab Trail', 'Mystic  
 Mesa', 'Adobe Sunset', 'Violet Bloomfield'.

SERIES CALIFORNICAE.

'Bottom Line', 'Californian', 'Canyon Snow', 'El Centro', 'Las Olas', 'Mission Santa Cruz',  
 'Rhett's Memory', 'Spring Daze', 'Western Queen x Night Messenger', 'Banbury Beauty',  
 P.C. Brummitt & Hargreaves mxd. Brummitt & Wise mxd. Peach seedling. Peach/Apricot sdlg.

Douglasiana (vs), Tenuis (vs), Macrosiphon(vs), and P.C.I.Mixed.(P.C.I. Lists for sale - 7.2<sup>nd</sup> class stamps)  
 Plus... Foetidissima Citrina (p). Setosa (vs). Setosa blue purple (vs).

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Member's Wants.

Here are a few of the old Irises that Mary Barnes is looking for:-

'Juanita', 'Wyomissing', 'Anna Farr', 'Catrina', 'Crusader', 'Kashmir White', 'Alcazer', 'Mme  
 Claude Monet', 'Dominion', 'Monspur', 'Miss Wilmot', 'Lady Foster', 'Shelford Chieftain', 'Arac',  
 'Miranda', 'Ann Page', 'Purissima', 'Matula', 'China Maid', 'Lord of June', 'Lord Lambourne'.  
 And oh so many more. Please write to Mary if you know of any of these, or others.

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Such a little space for YOUR LETTERS, but I will remedy this in the July Newsletter..  
 Thank you to Mark Cook for more lovely colour prints of his garden, they are all in the  
 Album (NO2.). Also for your information on 'Jesse's Song' and 'Lucy's Pride' (lovely names).

Floyd Wickenkamp has been rather poorly, we hope that you are feeling better, and that you  
 will soon be looking at those Spurias which you grow so well. Best Wishes. God Bless.J.

Joseph Beattie wrote that he was very pleased to see 'Silver Edge' in flower this year.

Please amend Jennifer's account of her trip to read 'BEGG SHIELD', and BERRY not Barry as  
 printed sorry!

Plants for Sale! Well! we will have a few, plus the two which Anne is offering:- 'Chance  
 Beauty' and 'Regal Surprise' (£7,50 each incl.). There will be Gerald Darby at £1.50, and  
 Sib. 'Berlin Versilau' at 50p(small), also 'Silver Edge' and 'Floating Island', these will be  
 35p. each, because unfortunately they got mixed up in the Post, but they are both desirable.  
 Please send in for a list because they come in at any time. Used up all the space now, so  
 Bye-Now. Joan.