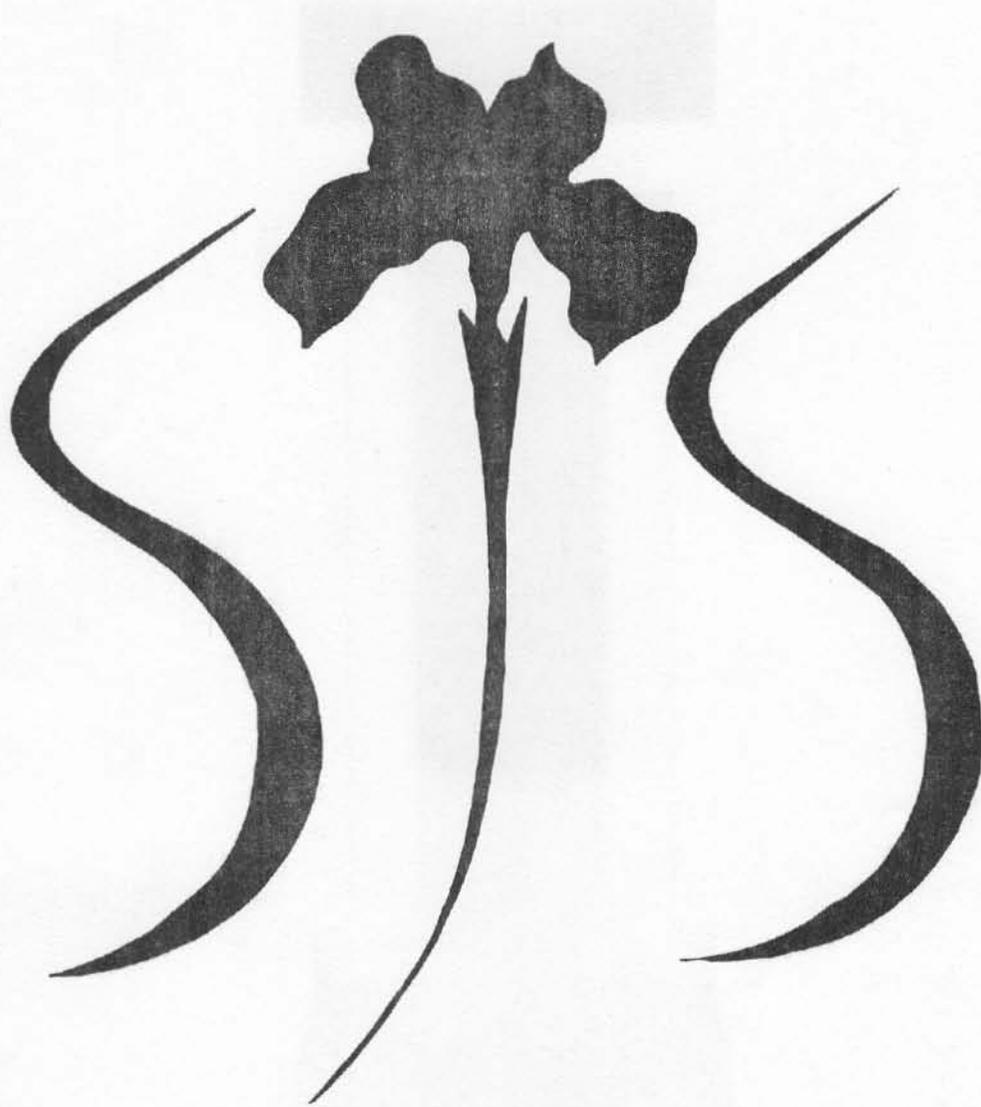


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NEWSLETTER



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

B.I.S.

The SIBERIAN, SPURIA & JAPANESE GROUP. (including PACIFICAS & WATER IRISES).

of the BRITISH IRIS SOCIETY.

Newsletter No. 32.

February 1993.

The Aims & 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.

The Group's Officers.

- Chairman..... Mr. Adrian Whittaker, 'Chestnuts', Hilden Way, LITTLETON. WINCHESTER.
(Spuria Specialist.) Hants. SO2 26QH.
- Vice Chairman..... Mrs. Hilda Goodwin, Corner Cottage, School Road, GREAT BARTON.
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- Hon. Newsletter Editor..Mrs. Joan Trevithick, address as above.
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- Hon. Librarian.....Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt, 'Haygarth', Cleeton St. Mary. CLEOBURY MORTIMER.
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- JAPANESE IRIS SPECIALIST.Mrs. Anne Blanco White, 72, South Hill Park, LONDON. NW3 2SN.
- PACIFIC COAST IRIS SPECIALIST....
Mr. Ray Wilson, 'Daleshead', 100, Blackburn Rd. CHORLEY. Lancs.
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Regional Representatives. (Reprting on activities in their area, and Irises grown.)

- Eastern Area..... Mrs. Shirley Ryder, 'Toadshole Cottage', Old Rd. FEERING. COLCHESTER.
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- London Area..... Mrs. Anne Blanco White, address as above.
- North Western Area.. Mr. Ray Wilson, address as above.
- Southern Area..... Mr. Adrian Whittaker, address as above.
- West & Midlands Area.Mr. Philip Allery, 199, Walsall Rd. ALDRIDGE. Nr. WALSALL. Staffs.
WS9 OBE.

Due to your continued support, by sending in and buying seeds, sometimes plants, we are able to keep the Subscription at £2 at least until 1994. If you have paid a commuted Subscription, you will be notified of the date when it expires. Otherwise, all Subscriptions will fall due on the 30th June 1993. We do ask you to pay as promptly as possible please. Make cheques etc. payable to 'The S. S & J Group. B.I.S.

Thank You. J.T.

Articles and copy for the July Newsletter, MUST be received by the 20th June, otherwise they will probably have to be held over until the next Newsletter.

Editorial.

A. Gardensr's Prayer.

O Lord, grant that in some way it may rain every day,
say from about midnight until three o'clock in the morning,
but, You see, it must be gentle and warm so that it can soak in;
grant that at the same time it would not rain on campion, alyssum, helianthus, lavender
and others which

You in Your infinite wisdom know are drought-loving plants --
I will write their names on a bit of paper if You like --
and grant that the sun may shine the whole day long,
but not everywhere (not, for instance, on the spirea, or
on gentian, plantain lily, and rhododendron) and not too much;
that there may be plenty of dew and little wind, enough worms, no plant lice and snails,
no mildew, and that once a week thin liquid manure and guano
may fall from heaven.

Amen

Karel Čapek.

This heartfelt prayer is reprinted by kind permission of Evelyn Jones the new Editor of the Japanese Iris Society Review. We introduce her to our Group, and wish her every success in her work, also we assure her of our full support.

I read also in Shirley Pope's Editorial (J.I. Review) that Claire Barr has been elected as President of the American Iris Society. Congratulations are due, Clarence Mahan tells me that it is the first time a woman President has been elected in the Society's 73 years History. Dave Niswonger becomes 1st. Vice President, and Clarence 2nd. Vice President. We send all good wishes for the future.

Unlike Karel's prayer, our early Spring has been much too wet and cold. Sympathy must be expressed to those who have been on the receiving end of floods and storm damage.

We have a very full Newsletter this time, so I will just content myself with telling you that despite the bad weather, aconites, snowdrops, polyanthus, hellebores and I. danfordiae are in bloom, with crocuses showing colour, signalling that Spring is nearly here.

Have a good gardening year in 1993. Joan.

Chairman's Notes.

by Adrian Whittaker.

This year has seen two important events for the British Iris Society -- Cannington in May and the participation in the EBBW VALE Festival later. We should congratulate all those whose efforts have made both a success, because they are the means by which a common interest can be shared and also, particularly in the case of Wales, a shop window for irises.

I believe there is a great need to publicise the iris more. The 'yellow and purple flags' image will still surface in the minds of many people immediately the iris is mentioned. Some of these people, may I say, are otherwise quite knowledgeable gardeners. It is up to all of us to change this image by using any opportunity to get the message home -- that irises come in all shapes, sizes and colours -- and, by selection, can be suitable for a good range of different garden habitats.

A growth in interest must be a good thing, both for the iris lover and the nurseryman who, let us not forget, can only sell what the buying public want. Ten minutes chat across the garden hedge or fence, may be all that is required to whet someone's appetite and perhaps make a life-long convert. A gift of the odd rhizome or two, here and there, is another mechanism. None of this is going to change things overnight, but in the long term, the wider the interest base the more chance the iris has of not being relegated to the horticultural sidelines.. So -- Spread the Message in 93!!

May I conclude by wishing everyone a happy and healthy New Year.

We extend a Warm Welcome to the following New Members.

Mrs Fiona Saba, 'Fairleigh', Clifton Lane, RUDDINGTON, NOTTINGHAM, NG116 AA. To extend her knowledge of Irises, for a Course she is taking, Fiona has joined our Group. We wish her every success, and hope she passes.

Mrs. S.J.A. Pierce, 89, High Street, MEASHAM, SWADLINCOTE, Derbys. DG12 7HZ. Sue is very busy getting the garden of her 'old' house in order, she has sent a description which is under the 'My Irises' heading.

(cont.)

Mr. & Mrs. I. Beale, Swanley Village Nursery, Swanley Village Rd. Swanley Village. Kent. BR8 7NN. Pam and Ian started their Nursery 15 years ago, their story is told under the 'Around the Nurseries' heading, inside the Newsletter.

Mr. & Mrs. J. Wallis, 'Goldcrest', Allington Lane, FOSTON. GRANTHAM. Lincs. NG32 2JR. Mavis runs a Wholesale Nursery of Small Decorative Conifers and Alpines, and John is an Irrigation Engineer, installing water systems in Nurseries or wherever needed. They have a new bungalow and garden, and are very busy getting it into shape. Already they have some Irises and are anxious to grow more. John intends to create an area into a 'bog garden', ideal for water Irises and Sibiricas round the edges. Good luck to you both.

Overseas.

Mr. H. Collins, Pyes Pa Road, R.D.3, TAURANGA. NEW ZEALAND. Hector has joined through the good offices of Eileen Wise, the Membership Secty. of the B.I.S. He had travelled the length and breadth of Great Britain, toured Ireland, the Isle of Man, rail trips in Scotland as far as the Isle of Skye. Hector spent time at Cannington, and with the Goodwins, the Wises and the Baughens. On Wednesday 29th. July he flew home to New Zealand, planning a three day stop in Singapore. Many, many films to develop and the prospect of getting into gear for the New Zealand Iris season, which will include a date with the Iris Society of Australia. Definitely a man with itchy feet! Hector is recently widowed. When his wife Jean was alive, they ran an Iris Nursery for many years. I think 'Maire Pinel'(T.B.) was one of the Irises they bred. (We send deepest sympathy Hestor on your bereavement.)

Herr. Artur Winkelmann, Zieglerweg 13, 8901 AINDLING. Germany. Artur was a Member ^{of} a Siberian Robin which he used to receive from America. He has now joined our Group to learn more about them. We welcome him and hope he finds the information we print in our Newsletters useful, also the Seed Distribution is a very good source for growing Sibiricas that you cannot find in catalogues elsewhere. All good wishes.

'My Irises,' or rather 'My Garden' by Sue Pierce

When we moved in, the garden was a rectangle of beautiful tilthy soil with three old chrysanthemums in it, and nothing else. Access to it is now via the occasional brick or rock placed roughly where I think it might be useful. At opposite corners, the rectangle has two small adjoining squares, they are along its long sides. One was to be a peat bed, but I discovered old foundations under the paving, so now it houses sibiricas, P.C.I's and ferns. The soil in the other square is atrocious, but as it runs along our south wall, I have raised it into a rockery for reticulatas and some of my favourite S.D.B's. There is a free-standing brick built scree in front of it, by the house, which forms the short end of the rectangle, and this has in it setosa and lacustris, in the way of irises.

The main garden used to be full of S.D.B's and Intermediates before they outgrew their space and ended up sprawling into my allotment. I made the grave mistake of visiting the late Mr. Humphrey's Nursery when his Irises were in bloom, but I am still entranced anew every year with what I bought from him. I have a sea of T.B's, these, I have yet to get round to clearing enough space and planting in my fiancée's allotment. Being in such a warm position, they flower profusely, and are now totally intermingled, and thus hard to feed. I follow Harry Randall's advice in this, since chemicals are easy to apply. I had filled up the garden with Irises before I thought about landscaping, it is as flat as a pancake and only has a climbing rose, honeysuckle, clematis and two shrubs to break, what the rest of my family regard as the dreadful monotony of an autumn iris garden. Since I know what wonders will be displayed for me next year, I'm happy to put up with it, and virtuously collect old leaves for the compost heap to provide a mulch for them.

As it is an old house, I'm lucky enough to be able to relieve it intermittently of sacks of old mortar rubble and dust which endlessly clutter up the sheds, waiting to be used. As our soil is generally around neutral, it lasts a long time. I am unable to fork it in as the irises are so tightly packed, so I only sprinkle it rather miserly on, it does, however, tend to cake. But, to me it is irreplaceable.

This is, in fact, an almost ideal garden from the point of view of irises. Apart from being too small, and containing a young walnut tree, because I want to grow more in it. I blush to confess that my last order from the Society had to go into my Mother's garden, since even I could not find space for them to grow. Still, if I am growing them as well as I ought to be, with a garden like this, and they don't turn out well, I can always blame it on the vine-weevil, leather jackets or molluscs!!!

(Thank you Sue, you sound as if you are doing all the right things. J.)

'My Irises'

by June Cole.

I have been growing irises since I was in my early teens. Just after the war I was introduced to them when I used to spend a week or two every Summer with my great-aunt in Woking. I really enjoyed weeding the pockets between the stone slabs in which they grew, (you could 'nt mistake them for a weed!). As I got more experienced I was allowed to help with the digging, dividing and re-planting. The perks were bits of irises for my labours.

Where I lived in London, the soil was the most dreadful, heavy, sticky clay, but the irises survived and so did my enthusiasm.

In 1960 I moved to Berkshire, the irises and young trees were the first things to go in, that is before we even started on the house renovations! Got the priorities right you see!

Being an old garden, despite the fact that it was wall to wall with nettles, there was a good depth of soil over most of it. However, a lot of boiler ash had been dug in over the years--doesn't do a lot for it, when we have heavy rain a residue of clinker ash is left on the surface. When we dig down the underlying soil is clay. We are 600 ft. up and it can be cold, wet and windy. A good old, thick box hedge borders part of the garden, together with shrubs and trees, planted over many years, provides some shelter.

T.B's are my first love, that is until my interest in Species began to develop about 20 years ago. I.pseudacorus were brought home from the local canal by my daughter. An unknown Sibirica was begged from a strangers' garden. I.orientalis, found by a friend, was handed over saying 'you like irises don't you?' I.japonica was the next to take my eye, soon followed by I.confusa, this came (dare I say it from Kew, a friend of mine works there.) It has happily grown in the floor of the greenhouse for years, thrives on neglect, and flowers profusely.

Over the years we have been friendly with several Nursery Persons (let's get it right), and have had added enjoyment buying and swapping plants, including irises. Lately, I have been growing them from seed with varying success. I.chrysographes 'Black Form' came up as I.kernerana, but that was my fault. I.crocea still eludes me, but I will keep on trying. Now! White Pseudacorus, that sounds something special! Maybe a message 'don't sow that piece of the veg garden, I need a bit more room' will do the trick.

(Thank you June, you will like the white Pseudacorus, and the I.crocea take their time to germinate. J.)

October 1992 Update: U.S.A. General and Seaways.

by Currier McEwen.

Elizabeth and I are just home full of enthusiasms from the AIS Region 1 (New England states) meeting held in Southington, Connecticut. Perhaps most members of the SS&J Group know that the AIS is divided into 24 geographical regions each headed by a regional vice president. Shirley Pope who has been our region's RVP for the past two years, passed the gavel on to Barbara Schmieder for the next two-year term. Robert Holingworth gave a superb talk with slides of many of his own Siberian introductions, and of flowers to be seen at the Siberian Iris Convention to be held in his part of Michigan in June 1993. He ended with a fascinating discussion of some of the extraordinary developments that can be achieved, in the relatively near future through the new biotechnological methods such, for example, as developing true colors and irises lethal to borers.

SS&J readers may be interested in another project of AIS, namely the creation of a new medal to be named in honor of the late John Wister, as an award for tall bearded irises, comparable to the Morgan-Wood award for Siberians, Payne award for Japanese, Eric Nies award for Spurias and similar awards for other types of irises. Up to now the United States Dykes medal, although awardable to irises of all types, has never gone to any but a tall bearded iris. Now the Wister Award will be the special one for the tall bearded, and it, and the winners of the Morgan-Wood, Payne and others will then be voted on for selection of the Dykes. In view of the preponderant interest of AIS judges in tall bearded irises, I suspect that the Dykes will continue to go to the tall bearded competitor, but the new system will at least give more equal status to the beardless ones.

We are looking forward keenly to the Siberian Iris Convention. As you know, annual Japanese iris conventions are now well established in the United States, but there has been less pressure to start them for Siberians, because they bloom so close to peak bloom of the tall bearded irises that they can be seen at the large annual AIS conventions. However, the latter are so overwhelmingly concerned with TB's that Siberians are often poorly grown in the tour gardens and cannot excite much interest. Hence in 1993, the Society for Siberian Irises will host its own separate convention. Many of the newest introductions and selected seedlings

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from American, English and German hybridizers will be on display. We hope that some SS&J members from England will attend.

Turning to events at Seaways, the greatest change is that Shirley Pope has had to give up selling my introductions and we have been involved in the rather major undertaking of moving all the plants from Gorham Maine the 40 miles to their original home in South Harpswell. Sharon Whitney, who has helped me in the garden for many years, has created a large garden area on her nearby property and will take on what Shirley has been doing. Shirley's garden in Gorham is so situated that, in winter with little snow, the rain freezes as it hits the ground and forms half inch sheets of ice over large areas, resulting in the death of the plants, probably, at least in part, from suffocation. In two of the last four years Shirley lost more than half of the Japanese irises, and decided that she could not face another winter wondering what she would find alive in the spring. Sharon Whitney has taken on her new challenge with enthusiasm, and with Shirley's great help the move has been made smoothly. We shall be able to put out a new list for 1993 with three new Siberians and two new Japanese iris introductions, but stocks of some of the older JI's will surely be short in this transition year.

As far as our garden at Seaways is concerned, 1992 has been our best to date for both Siberians and JI's. Among the latter, I have been particularly pleased with a number of new tetraploids, some white with blue veins and styles, several nice pinks and a number (from crosses of 'Japanese Pinwheel' with white ones) with strikingly different patterns. I am very pleased also with about a dozen diploid pinks. All are from 'Celestial Pink' (illustrated in my Japanese Iris book) which I love, but have never been able to introduce because of its slow increase. The other parents are several Japanese imports. What amazes me is that neither 'Celestial Pink' nor any of the other parents have branches, yet all of the new ones have one or even two branches, and two of them repeated this year. I do not understand how this came about genetically. My new pink tetraploids mentioned above also are well branched.

I must raise one more question about the quality of the tetraploids blooming for the first time this year that have so impressed me. Aside from their other nice qualities, they are taller and flowers are larger than any previous ones. I would like to think that this is part of the progressive improvement from selective breeding, but these were all planted in rows which had been double dug with well composted manure dug in the bottom, and, I suspect it is due merely to better culture.

A final note from Seaways is that work has started seriously on the new book on Siberian Irises. I had expected to call it The Siberian Irises but Timber Press, quite correctly, does not care for that because it is the same as the title of the earlier book. This is definitely not a second edition, but an entirely new book. Can any of you suggest a new name? Your ideas would be appreciated!!!

(Thank you Currier for a most interesting account of your work. I hope Members will respond to your request. We have some of Currier's seeds (Sibirica & J.I's in the Seed Bank. J.)

1992 Favorite Ballot of Siberian Irises, compiled by Dorothy Hamilton.
(Reprinted by kind permission of Judy Hollingworth, Editor of 'The Siberian Iris',)

1. 'Lady Vanessa' 2. 'Jewelled Crown' 3. 'Butter and Sugar', 'Pink Haze'; Shirley Pope'.
4. 'King of Kings', 'Ruffled Velvet'. 5. 'Temper Tantrum'. 6. 'Sultan's Ruby'.
7. 'Mabel Coday', 'White Swirl'. 8. 'Esther CDM', 'Reprise', 'Springs Brook'.
9. 'Aqua Whispers', 'Shaker's Prayer'. 10. 'Dance Ballerina Dance', 'High Standards', 'Regency Buck', 'Steve Varner',
11. 'Indy', 'Jamaican Velvet', 'Liberty Hills', 'Super Ego'.
12. 'Percheron', 'Snow Prince'. 13. 'Heliotrope Bouquet', 'Tiffany Lass', 'Windwood Spring'.
14. 'Pas De Deux', 'Swank'. 15. 'Anniversary', 'Augury', 'Caesar's Brother', 'Cathy Childerson', 'Harpswell Happiness', 'Jaybird', 'Summer Sky', 'Tealwood'.

If you want to read more comments about the favourite Siberian Irises, you will find them in the Siberian Iris Journal which is in the Library.

In Memoriam.

We send our Sincere Sympathy to Norman Payne in the death of his brother John, who was a Member of our Group. John was Norman's inspiration in growing Irises and I know he misses him very much.

In 1993 Iris versicolors are in about the same place that Siberians were about 60 years ago. They are small charming flowers, largely ignored by the mainstream of iris growers. Few people are making crosses to improve their good qualities and minimize their weaknesses. Most introduced varieties are the result of bee-pods, which is a haphazard way of making progress.

I. versicolor is a plant waiting to be transformed by the hybridizer's art. There is a lot of variation to work with in the existing varieties. Height ranges from 9ins. to 3ft. In color of flower there is white, pink, red, light blue, light purple, purple and red-black, as well as white ground with pink, blue, red and purple veining. Good branching comes naturally to versicolors, with two or three branches plus a terminal for a minimum of seven buds, though more are common. This allows for a long season of bloom. Versicolor stalks have characteristics which are both charming and frustrating. They make marvelous cut flowers because of their graceful curves and bud placement, however, on the plant the stalks are often held around the outside of the clump, and in some cases even lie along the ground. Foliage height varies in proportion to the flower stalks - occasionally so robust as to hide the flowers. In some varieties the foliage remains bright and green all season, while others develop rusty streaks from the middle of August on.

We have bloomed only a limited number of hand pollinated crosses, but what we have seen leads us to believe that a lot of improvements could be made in a small number of planned generations.

The following is a list of registered versicolor with which we are familiar:-

- 'Between the Lines'. White ground with violet-blue veining. Yellow signal.
- 'Candystriper'. Delicate rose-pink veining throughout standards & falls. Signals yellow, styles pearly with a pink stripe.
- 'Cat Mousam'. Collected form. Large flowers, typical versicolor, mid-violet-blue.
- 'Kermisina'. Red-violet with white veined signal, it is unclear whether this cultivar and 'Claret Cup' are the same or different. More modern reds are an improvement.
- 'Little Rhyme'. Standards & falls white with lime green hafts. Yellow signal heavily veined green. The smallest versicolor we have seen. Does not grow large after bloom.
- 'Mint Fresh'. White ground with heavy magenta-red veining. Pearly styles ribbed magents. Crests edged red.
- 'Murrayana'. Collected Salmonier River. Pure white with yellow spear-like signal. Blooms short. Foliage tall, robust, stays green.
- 'Mysterious Monique'. Standards red-violet, styles same with white edges. Falls deep velvety violet, almost black. Signal white, veined.
- 'Oliver Pease'. Mid-purple standards, lighter markings. Styles same. Falls deeper purple with white signal veined purple. Narrow flower form.
- 'Party Line'. Standards & falls, smooth violet-rose, darker veining. Styles pure white with narrow line of violet-rose at mid-rib. Signal pale yellow, changing to white with dark red-purple veining. Superb plant. Stalks held rigid.
- 'Pink Peaks'. Dark pink falls and standards. Distinct notch (peak) on each standard. Styles match except for pure white curl on tip. White signal veined pink.
- 'Rougette'. Standards red-violet, paler edges. Falls velvety red-violet. White signal veined red-violet, yellow heart. Styles pearly with red-velvet midrib. Form an improvement on 'Kermisina' and 'Claret Cup'.
- 'Shape Up'. Entirely different form from most versicolors. Standards wide and semi-upright. Falls flaring, substantial hafts. Signal violet self with white-edged gold. Black veining throughout. Flowers well above foliage.
- 'Version'. Light rose-pink standards and falls. Small white signal area, though fall color blends up into it. Pearly styles with pink midrib only in heart.
- 'Whodunit'. Heavily veined with mid-blue-violet on white ground. More white shows through veining at signal area, but there is no distinct signal. Lovely flower, long flowering.
- 'Wild Hearts'. Orchid Pink with a signal of diffused pale brown. Pink color, not as smooth as 'Version'.
- 'Wild Wine'. Standards wine-red with darker falls. Signal white with maroon veining and yellow heart. Styles pearly with maroon midrib.

(If you want more details of these beautiful versicolors write to:-

Marty Schafer & Jan Sacks, 'Joe Pye Weed Nursery', 337, Acton St. CARLISLE, MA. 01741. USA.

Marty tells me that 'Joe Pye Weed' is a New England wild flower 'Eupatorium Purpureum' which they used to collect a long time ago. Now it only lives in the name of their business, though it still competes successfully in the wild with cattails and loosestrife. It is grown here too).

Jennifer has also written about *I.versicolor*.

Forms and Cultivars of *Iris versicolor*.

by Jennifer Hewitt.

As long as they can be planted where the soil does not dry out for lengthy periods in summer, the versicolors are among the easiest of irises to grow. A more or less permanently damp position does result in better growth, foliage and flower stems. Grown as marginal plants at the edge of the pond probably gives the best results of all. Some years ago seed labelled *I.laevigata* 'Alba' gave seedlings which I planted in shallow water and when they bloomed, all proved to be a pale blue form of *I.versicolor*. They have consistently grown taller and more richly than other versicolors grown in moist soil, and the flower stems are up to 30"(75cm) tall with two, occasionally three, branches. Possibly this is a characteristic of the form; mainly because all other suitable places are occupied by *laevigatas*. I have not tried any other versicolors in water. A New Year's resolution for 1993.

I.versicolor is a variable species in the wild, native to the eastern U.S.A. and Canada, and several colour forms have been known for years. The most widely grown being the rich red (in its best forms) var. *I.versicolor*'*kermisina*'. A paler version is var.'*rosea*'. Interest in them has increased in recent times and you will find seeds of several forms in the Seed Distribution. Mixed results are most likely, with many seedlings closely resembling the violet, violet-blue and reddish-violet forms of the species, but there can be surprises too. I have, from 'Claret Cup' seed, a white with blue-violet veining, and from '15 mixed colours' seed, a pleasant, quite velvety deep purple and dark red-purple. A good form in this last colour is grown in Burford House Gardens, Tenbury Wells. Worcestershire. (Treasures).

Bee Warburton (USA) has collected, raised from seed and named, a number of good forms and cultivars, and her work is being continued by Jan Sacks and Marty Schafer. Many of those listed in the previous account have been raised by her. Some that I have had from her are doing very well. They bring additional interest into the garden as they flower with, and often slightly after the Sibiricas. Flower size is usually a little larger than in the type species, most have branching with up to 8 buds, giving bloom for 3 weeks or even more. The flowers are in good clean colours and attractively marked. They are very easy to grow, some are dwarf, and are ideal for the front of the border. I will always be grateful to Jan and Marty for sending 'Pink Peaks', one of the shorter ones, it so delighted me when it flowered that I have added more of their listed plants each year.

'Mint Fresh' is particularly eye-catching as the falls are very noticeably striped in red on a white ground; the standards are similarly veined but paler, and the white style arms have red midribs, edges and crests. 18" tall with one or two branches. 'Whodunit' and 'Party Line' are two more that I have. Two whites followed: 'Murrayana' (a collected form) and 'Little Rhyme' a short one which has not yet bloomed here. During the 1991-92 winter, I potted up and stood in about an inch of water in a cold greenhouse 'Between the Lines' and 'Candystriper', but they both rotted off, I cannot understand why this happened, and would welcome suggestions? Meanwhile 'Wild Hearts' which arrived in 1992, is potted, but not standing in water. I should say that although versicolors are very hardy, plants from Jan and Marty, which always arrive in early September, are best potted up and kept under cover for the first winter, much safer. Of course warmer gardens do not have this problem.

Last, but the most dramatic versicolor - indeed, one of the most striking of all irises - is Uwe Knoepfadel's '*Mysterious Monique*' which he grew from seed in his nursery in Germany. It is immediately coveted by almost everyone who sees it. Coen Jansen has provided me with many good plants over the years, but this was one of his kindest gifts. The small standards are deep wine-red and this colour is repeated on the midribs and crests of the white style arms. The fall hafts are yellow, the signal is white veined with the deepest red-violet, and the blades are solid velvety near-black - the darkest possible tone of veining in the signal area. It is tall, about 24"(60cm), with two branches and multiple buds, vigorous and free-flowering. Stunning - no less.

When my plants have increased further, I hope to be able to make them available. Also some of the exciting new cultivars & hybrids from Canada and the U.S.A. later.

A WORLD PREMIERE.

A NEW IRIS.

(Reprinted by kind permission of Evelyn White the New Editor of the J.I.S. Review.)

June 26th, 1992 - A new hybrid iris was introduced to-day at the Montreal Botanical Gardens. This is, in fact, a world premiere since *Iris x versata*, known as 'the iris with an

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oriental touch', is the product of a cross, which has never previously been successfully obtained, between Iris versicolor found in many regions of Quebec, and The Japanese Iris (Iris ensata).

This new hybrid was created by W.H. Perron & Co. Ltd. with the assistance of the Institut de Recherches en Biologie Vegetale and the Montreal Botanical Gardens.

As M. Pierre Bourque, director of the Botanical Gardens stated 'with achievements such as these, the ornamental horticultural industry of Quebec is carving out an enviable position for itself on the international scene, through the introduction of a new product of superior quality'.

This new hybrid was developed through the Iris versicolor development programme initiated in 1987 by the Research Department of W.H.Perron & Co. Ltd.

The National Research Council of Canada has provided the necessary financial support to the programme, which is aimed at developing the horticultural potential of Iris versicolor, a flower which many would like to see become the floral emblem of the Province of Quebec.

M. Claude Lemieux, President of the W.H.Perron Co. Ltd. was understandably proud of the success which the introduction of a new hybrid represents, especially when one considers that the improvement of a native species is a very great challenge for researchers.

This new hybrid will be much easier to grow in gardens than the native species. The larger and more numerous flowers, and the plant's improved disease-resistance will make this hybrid a choice plant for gardeners.

The director of the Institut de Recherches en Biologie Vegetale, Dr. Andre Fortin, was pleased to convey his pride in seeing tangible results of this project. 'This is an outstanding example of the scientific community and industry working together', he remarked.

Finally Mr. Tony Huber, director of the Research department of W.H.Perron & Co. Ltd., who has been working on the project for several years, mentioned that Iris versicolor, which grows in many regions of Quebec, has, up until now, interested only a few hybridizers, whereas the Japanese Iris has been the subject of improvements and selections for more than 500 years.

The first Iris x versata should be available on the market in 1994. Specimen plants of this new hybrid are on display at the Japanese pavilion of the Montreal Botanical Gardens from June 26th to July 5th, 1992. The Botanical Gardens are open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 8.p.m.

For further information:- Tony Huber or Monique Dumas-Quesnel at W,H. Perron, 2000, rue Dubois, Boisbriand (Quebec), Canada. J7E 4H4.

Ed. Note: The preceding was taken from a press release issued by W,H, Perron & Co. Ltd.

Early in July this year Mrs White and I made a trip to visit with Mr. Tony Huber, (whom I had met at the AIS Convention in Atlanta) to see the new Iris versata at W,H,Perron &Co, Ltd. This research center is located in Boisbriand, about 10 miles north of Laval, the second largest city in the Province of Quebec. Laval is a few miles west of Montreal.

The gardens at the research center were very well cared for, and the Versatas were in in long rows of about 200 feet. These plants are spectacular, averaging about 4 feet tall and very floriferous. The colors range from purples, blues to reds. No whites or pinks have been obtained yet, but work is proceeding on these colors. The flowers are larger than Versicolors, and this year they are making back crosses on Ensatas to improve size and to achieve new colors. These will be the DOM-F3 generation.

The first cross was Ensatas on Versicolor as the pod parent. The second cross was back onto Versicolors, which gave the second generation of Versatas, called DOM-F2. I have several plants of the F2 generation, started as seeds from seed which Mr. Huber gave to me in Atlanta. These plants are tetraploid and fertile both ways, either on versicolors or ensatas.

The versatas have 2, 3, and perhaps four branches per stalk, with five to six blooms per branch. The bloom period last year, on some plants was 58 days; this year some plants are blooming a little more than 60 days. As Mr. Huber says, these are the garden plants of the future.

This was a most enjoyable trip, meeting with Mr. Huber and Monique Dumas-Quesnel. They welcome visitors from the United States.

John. W. White.

(For further information, see AIS Bulletin No. 279, October 1990 - page 70.)

Before leaving Versicolors, I must tell you of a strange coincidence which happened this morning. In the Post came a batch of seeds from a German Member, these included a small number of Iris 'Mysterious Monique' (see Jennifer's article). There will be enough to send six Members five seeds each. Cost--three 2nd class stamps. First come first served, otherwise duplicates. J.T.

Now we go over to Pacific Coast Native Irises, the next item is reprinted by kind permission of Lewis Lawyer the Editor of the Society's Almanac.

Cultural directions.

by Adele Lawyer.

In nature, Pacific Coast native iris (PCI) generally grow in a well-drained gritty soil in lightly wooded areas. They thrive where the summers are long and dry, but tolerate rain and snow cover, and some frost, in other times of the year.

The most frequently recommended method for seed culture is as follows:-
Plant the seeds in a good, moist potting mix in the fall, rather than in the heat of the summer. The mix should be fast-draining with a pH of 6.5 to 7. Plant in pots or flats and cover and firm with about a quarter-inch of potting mix. Plant as many seeds as you can physically separate from each other when it is time to transplant them, (1/2 to 1 - inch apart). Keep the soil moist until they germinate, which takes two months on the average.

Transplant the seedlings to the garden or into pots when they are 3 to 6 inches tall. This will generally be from March to May. If pots are your choice, use 6 to 8 inch pots for each seedling. When planted directly into the garden soil, plant them 6 inches apart in rows which are a foot apart. In that way you will have room to dig those you select when they bloom. They grow best in filtered shade or morning sun. They transplant well. Most hybrid seedlings will bloom the following spring. Some species take two years to bloom.
(Thank you Adele for this most useful information. Ed.)

News from the Kent Group of the B.I.S.

In the 'Facets' the Newsletter of the Kent Group I read that they held their 46th. A.G.M. in 1992, and gained 7 New Members.

They manned stands both at Cannington and Ebbw Vale. For their Day's Outing they were entertained by Bob and Eileen Wise in their beautiful garden. In July a 'Bring and Buy' was held at Joan and Albert Bradshaws', where £168 was raised for the Group Funds. They joined the Kent Hardy Plant Society in September, but unfortunately it rained.

Now they have hopes of visiting Nigel Service and Lawrence Ransom in France, in early May this year.

This year also the Kent Group will act as hosts for the British Iris Society's Annual General Meeting, so they are busy making preparations.

Mercia Season - 1992.

by Eileen Wise.

This season must surely go down in history as 'short and sweet, with a sting in the tail'.

Because the Spring was so cold and relentless the Mercia Median Show had to be postponed until 3rd May, and yet five weeks later when the Ebbw Vale B.I.S. Early Show was held the T.B's were well past their peak in the South of England, and probably the Sibiricas would have been at their best. That is if you were very lucky and dodged the disastrous storms that swept across the country from 29th May onwards. These left spikes destined for Mercia Main Show on the 31st. - shredded (they looked like overblown parrot tulips) and Sibiricas were cut into small confetti-shaped pieces, the soil beneath looked as if a wedding had taken place. This damage, of course, set the seal on the Mercia Show. We all did our best while sighing over what might have been, our irises had carried so much bloom, but Mother Nature had the last word, as usual.

Socially it has been a crazy season, and I think a medal for tenacity or endurance should go to Mary Fraser who has tackled everything in spite of being in a particularly low state of health. Mary did the lot - Cannington, Ebbw Vale, Mercia Garden visits which included Savill Gardens and Sissinghurst, and needless to say, her own garden looked a picture, even in the rain.

Another accolade should go to Hilda Goodwin, who is again dashing around like a two-year old. She tackled the journey to Mercia Bring and Buy Sale by public transport, on her own, with a wheely basket full of plants, her walking stick hardly ever used now.

Our Bring and Buy Sale was some sort of miracle. We had so many plants, mainly T.B's, all good quality and sold at 'give-away' prices. Jack Grint and Clive Russell had set up an 'Iris Garden' sale independently, to titillate those who wished to buy something new and different. Kent Group Members were with us for the day, contributing plants and buying enthusiastically, but most welcome of all were about a dozen new Members stocking new iris beds, including a local nurseryman with a new-found interest in irises, who, at the end of the

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Day took every scrap away leaving only the soil on the table.

All this, and a flower arranging demonstration, a handsome tea, laughter and sunshine what more could we ask - except a profit, and we made it!

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PINEWOOD P.C.I.'s - 1992.

For the P.C.I.'s the season was over very quickly due to the hot, sunny days and during that time we must have had 250-300 seedlings come into bloom, and it was a magic time. Bob and I became quite excited, a rush into the garden in the morning to see what had come into bloom overnight, then out shopping or something equally boring, with an immediate dash to see whether this or that bud had opened in the meantime. Suddenly Bob's head would come round the door saying 'Come out here, Eileen, to see if you can see something special!' (Fancy Bob being flippant!). But the season was over so quickly.

We had a certain amount of success, five seedlings deemed **** were submitted to the J.I.C. and all were Selected for Trial at Wisley, so at the moment we have eleven -- either at wisley or due to go, and Bob has nominated one, in addition the plants already on the Test beds look fit and healthy.

Seedlings selected for trial:-

- 10/92 Brown with paler blaze on falls.
- 11/92 Yellow/Brown blend.
- 13/92 Yellow Ground with darker veining.
- 17/92 Tall purple with four buds.
- 21/92 Yellow background, purple halo on falls.

We are also quietly horrified to note that Bob marked 18 seedlings for retention until next season, which means, at worst, this hybridising is becoming a monster, at best, less room for more seedlings next year (we are now picking ripe pods). Sections of rock garden and lawn still disappear at speed!

(Eileen sent their 1993 programme. Dates for the 1993 Shows are:-

- B.I.S. Reticulata Show. 23rd. February.
- B.I.S. Median Show. 8/9th. May.
- Chelsea Flower Show. 25/28th. May.
- Mercia Show. Sunday 30th. May.
- B.I.S. Early Show. 5/6th. June.
- B.I.S. Late Show.
- Mercia Plant Sale and Member's Slides. 24th. July.)

(Thank you Eileen, nice to hear from you all. We send every good wish for success with your P.C.I.'s, they sound delightful. J.T.)

News from the East of England.

by Shirley Ryder.

(Shirley wrote this in November 1992.)

I am delighted to be able to sit down and write this, because at long last my garden is too wet to work. As usual, here in the East, it has not been a good year, but I expect everybody who watches the T.V. weather forecast will be quite familiar with the rain going all the way across the country, with the exception of the East Anglian bulge where it will remain dry and sunny. My T.B's were very poor this year and I do not know why!. The Spurias just did not 'happen'. However the P.C.I.'s were fantastic and really cheered us up in what has been a disastrous year. I didn't expect much from the Sibiricas because of the drought, and I was not disappointed, but, at last I was going to see, in my own garden, the long awaited 'Lady of Quality' and 'Dance Ballerina Dance'. Now whenever I am asked why I am so keen on the genus Iris, of late, I have added another reason to my long list, this being 'because rabbits do not like them'. However, this year the rabbits decided to try them, only two, but, of course the aforementioned long-awaited Sibiricas. This cannot be a co-incidence and I have given it much thought, and I came to the conclusion that if we touch plants we must leave our scent on them which, inturn attracts the wildlife.

My cat, who is very good in the garden and does not usually cause trouble, becomes a different animal from March until the middle of June. She haunts the Iris beds, leaps and sleeps on them and it has to be because I have been touching them. I really must make an effort to leave my most treasured things alone and enjoy the anticipation from afar.

Because it was so heartbreaking in my garden this year, I spent my time visiting other

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people's gardens in more civilised parts, both here and in Europe. I started off with our own celebration at Cannington, and I must say that I enjoyed it more than anything else I did this year, it must have been the company. I always feel very envious of the U.S., Australia and New Zealand because they have an annual get-together, and it is so nice to see our friends from other countries. Indeed it is so nice for me to see my friends from this country, because, although we do have our annual competition, until Wisley is on the Public Transport system, I miss out on that also.

In July I went to Holland and Germany, and because I was with a Group particularly interested in Lilies, our first visit was to be to a garden growing mainly the Martagon type, which is of particular interest to me. However, when we arrived we could see that some parts of Germany were in a worse drought situation than the U.K. and the season had come about 2 weeks early. The Martagons had been and gone, so we were going to visit a different garden instead. I then heard the name Ahlburg mentioned, and was really delighted to find that it was, indeed Marlene Ahlburg of yellow amoena Sibirica fame. Of course, we were too late to actually see one in bloom, but we saw lots of pictures of them. This garden was really delightful and had many lovely plant and colour associations. They had not fallen into the ^{pit} which so many single plant enthusiasts do (myself included), in that if you do not have a really large garden and you're madly keen on one genus, you could end up with nothing but that in your garden. They had a really interesting collection of plants, and the garden was full of colour, at that time, with marvellous displays of lilies and hemerocallis - the photographers amongst us had a field day. I am left with the ambition to see it again one day when the Sibiricas are in bloom. I was very impressed with the German and Dutch gardens that I saw, and surprised at the wealth of plants available in their nurseries. Next time I would like to go in a large van -- is anybody interested ?

I came home to my desert and settled to watch my plants give up the ghost. We are not actually on a hosepipe ban here, but I am at the end of the line down a country road, and I can turn on the water, but only a little dribble will emerge, so I might as well be banned. I occupy myself by germinating all my soft-coated seeds in water in the Kitchen, so that I always have a huge replacement waiting, batches of them. Last week I had various pots of very healthy transplanted seedlings. One morning I watered them all at 9am. I noticed at mid-day that they were all quite dead. I have never seen anything so devastating. I went over everything that I'd done and got it down to the fact that I had been simmering spiced vinegar for the pickling, so, I suppose I had created the equivalent of acid rain!

Looking back on the year it is obvious that I must change my choice of plants to fit in with the lack of rain, and as the P.C.I.'s seem to thrive, I think they must be my choice. I have quite a lot of them, but the only named ones I have are the Broadleighs. I have thought about importing, but have given up the idea after listening to horror stories of parcels of dried up stalks that do not recover. My favourite is 'Simply Wild' but I know it is difficult to obtain. If you have it my Telephone is (0376 570642).

I wish everybody well for 1993, and for myself 'some rain'.

(Thank you Shirley, you asked about P.C.I.'s in Gt. Britain, you will find that Pauline Brown has a good collection, and is hopeful of obtaining more. J.T.)

South of Watford.

by Anne Blanco White.

The spring rains of '92 were a very good thing for our plants in general. Those which had suffered from the '91 drought after transplanting were able to put on good growth, though they did not necessarily flower well, while those plants established earlier did flower satisfactorily. Sibiricas were well represented at the Late Summer Show, the Spurias and ensatas were rather too late. My own ensatas were a mixed bag, in the stream bed they flowered admirably, but those in flower beds were sulking after the previous summer, and, in spite of this autumn's rain, I'm not happy about them at the moment, but it may be that the voles have eaten the rhizomes and that won't be apparent until the post mortem. The spurias on the other hand, put up a magnificent show with several flowering for the first time. Just too early for the local H.S. show, but you can't have everything I suppose.

This autumn's rain has left the ground rather more than saturated which is how all these plants like to start the year, so if we didn't have a lot of nice drying winds around March & April there should be a splendid display of flowers from the whole group. Remember though, that the rain has leached out any autumn fertiliser that may have been applied and so they will all benefit from extra spring feeding as they come into growth. Little and often should be the motto here: a small amount over several weeks is better than a huge dollop at the beginning of the season, let alone well into it.

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The Wisley ensatas flowered well, and the removal of the rogue pseudacorus plants meant cultivars further along the irrigation line showed a marked improvement in performance. The J.I.C. selected suitable plants for the new Trials from amongst these, and, of course, others were added from Committee meetings. It was disappointing, though, to take American visitors interested in the ensatas down to Wisley in late September, only to find that there were no blooms and no sign of any spikes either. Possibly there may have been some later, but I wasn't there to see. The moral here is that repeat bloomers, of any kind, need feeding up to the bitter end, even if they are to be replanted after the blooms have gone. The extra growth they need to put on exhausts the soil faster than with the older varieties.

Round the World in 60 Days.

Well, we weren't in a hurry, and it was cheaper to go the whole way round than to go out and back. So, we started with a couple of days in Vancouver, but autumn was well away and there were only rather depressed traces of Iversicolor to be seen in the ponds. Two days in Honolulu were pleasant though that isn't iris country, but anyone contemplating moving there should do well with LA's. Then New Zealand which was our real destination. Arriving in the North Island I found an invitation to join the newly formed New Plymouth Group on a 'Dwarf Safari' at Flimmerton. A morning's drive south and a night in a motel which provided excellent fish and chips for supper. There was a show, a talk, visits to several gardens and much talking and eating. Since the Kiwis had been suffering one of their coldest and wettest springs for a long time, the Dwarfs were of the opinion that they would wait for the summer, but not even that sort of weather kept them all back. There was an LA in bud and there were masses of ensatas and spurias, but they were not so far advanced since this was only the second week in October. There were lots of P.C.I.'s in the gardens and how I envied the Antipodeans their ability to grow irids out of doors, while we have to grow them under glass.

On the way home, we visited a garden centre and found a good stock of flowering P.C.I.'s as well as other container-grown irises. About a fortnight later I visited Dorothy Wood's nursery near New Plymouth. She and her husband have a large collection of irises: mainly TB's at present, but there was a good collection of P.C.I.'s and other varieties are filling the gaps rapidly.

Incidentally, water irises of all kinds are habitually grown in flower beds, in both islands, and also in the Melbourne area of Australia. The rainfall is generally fairly high, gales are a real hazard and frosts troublesome in some areas.

Early in November we crossed the channel between the islands by ferry, and to my quite unreasonable surprise met a number of the North Island members who were also going to the Convention in Nelson. We had intended to complete the journey by bus, but were firmly ^{highjacked} by Hec. Collins and Shirley & Charles Spicer. They took us by a much pleasanter route.

The Convention was great fun: visits to gardens, the A.G.M., a Species Group meeting, a show and talking, talking. Alison Nichol, who organised the Convention had bad luck in that the late spring had held back the irises, the roses weren't going to stand in for their rivals, and even the rhododendrons were opening in instalments. Although we went everywhere clutching our impermeables, the weather was reasonably kind. New Zealand gardens are very like English ones, but more tightly packed with plants. The general view is that to leave a patch of bare earth is merely to invite a weed; better put a proper plant in. Its only when you look closely that you appreciate how many of the plants are definitely not ones we grow over here. Gorse and broom are rife and hated in the countryside, in spite of their gorgeous colour. The biggest display of irises, again mainly T.B.'s, was at Alison's nursery. Nelson is not really water iris country, but the P.C.I.'s do well. Heavy mulching is the order of the day and consists mainly of various forms of chopped bark.

Sight-seeing in the South Island naturally took us to Christchurch where we visited Ron & Gwynneth Isles' garden, also Dora Sparrow's. Dora has a most interesting line in P.C.I.'s with really upright stems, and a splendid arrangement for passing on her surpluses to her daughter-in-law who is building up a large garden with a good sized pond. Indeed we saw more sibiricas there than anywhere else. A warm spell meant that the irises were putting on a really good show. The Botanic Garden houses one collection provided by the Christchurch Iris Circle and the Thomas Collection. All seemed to be doing well, though the Circle plants had to be transplanted at a most inconvenient time. There were irises in a park in Queenstown and in the Auckland Botanic Garden, but we were unable to take up an invitation to visit an iris garden outside Auckland.

The start of the journey home was four days in Melbourne. Les Donnell rallied round and took us to Barry Blyth's nursery. This was well past its best, but was interesting none the less because he grows large quantities of spurias and LA's. Then we went on to John Glenn's nursery where his ensatas were in full bloom and being despatched in large quantities to

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garden centres around the State. Actually John specialises in bearded, the beardless are really the responsibility of his daughter Sue. Again, the Botanic Garden co-operates: there is a large bed of T.B's, effectively looked after by John Baldwin, which are supplied by the Victorian Society, and there is also a large bed of beardless irises.

The weather remained damp and cloudy, but just now and again it cleared for us to see the views our hosts were anxious to show us. Much the same applied in Singapore where, again irises are not much in evidence though orchids are, and the weather was comfortably warm. And finally home at the very end of November to the weeds in my own gardens.

Should any of you be contemplating the journey of a lifetime, or a trip round the World, I can strongly recommend a leisurely visit to New Zealand and a side trip to Australia. The countries are lovely and the iris splendid. We enjoyed ourselves enormously.

A Short Profile of MARK COOK our Member from LEXINGTON. KENTUCKY.

Mark is one of our younger Members who writes in regularly, and also sends seeds and photographs of his own garden, as well as views of Lexington. He is majoring in Agriculture at the University of Kentucky. His special interest is in perennial plants including Irises.

Since 1971 he has had a special hobby recording temperatures and sky-conditions, adding to this in 1977, rainfall.

In his spare time he goes to several yards and gardens to work and extend his knowledge.

Mark tells me that the outdoor flower blooming season was the longest ever, lasting 329 days. Ending early December. Reblooming lasted until mid November. More in July.

In Search of Iris Ensata in the United States.

by Dr Jimmy Smart.

My garden in Devon encompasses a small valley below the house and at right angles to it. A stream runs the length of it and has been dammed in three places to make three small lakes, and in between there are fairly extensive areas of bog garden. I am fortunate in that the stream has never dried up in the 43 years that I have lived here.

In addition to the large drifts of candelabra and other Primulas, Hemerocallis, Astilbe (of which we hold the National Collection), Ligularias etc. I have grown Iris sibirica, versicolor and ensata there for some years, also I. laevigata actually in the water alongside Zantedeschias which thrive when their base is submerged to protect them from the frost.

I. ensata has always grown and flowered well here, although it is in a frost pocket, and I do not give them any special protection in winter, they are not affected by the cold. Temperatures drop routinely to 20 degrees Fahrenheit in the main garden.

I decided to extend the planting of Iris in 1991 and had a 3 week visit to the U.S.A. I started by attending the American Japanese Iris Society Convention in Portland, Oregon, then on to Kalamazoo, Ensata Gardens, Washington D.C. and Maine.

It was an abnormal season and there were very few ensatas in flower for the Convention, but we had interesting visits to gardens and nurseries where we saw good displays of Paeonies and T.B's. There were some good sibiricas and I was struck by many of the newer cultivars also tetraploids which I had not met previously. Most of those I admired were introduced by Dr. Currier McEwen - I particularly liked 'Harpwell Hallelujah', 'Regency Belle' and 'Dear Dianne'.

Many of the spurias also made me wish to try growing them here. I brought some home to try, they have bloomed this year and seem happy in either the moist area by the water or in the drier part near the house. 'Redwood Supreme' flowered particularly well by the water, conditions moist but not boggy.

Gardens visited in the Portland area included 'Caprice Gardens' with splendid Paeonies, Aitkens 'Salmon Creek Gardens' where I saw spurias, sibiricas and a large number of T.B's I was particularly struck by 'Golden Waves', this is a hybrid between a P.C.I. & Siberian, known as a Cal-Sib. It has the appearance of a yellow Dutch Iris, but is not bulbous. This is one that I lost this winter, but I like it enough to order again next year.

A long expedition took us to Lorena Reid's garden, this lies further south so there were more ensatas in flower. Her bed of seedlings still under number awaiting assessment contained a lot of very promising plants. Elsewhere I noticed 'Royal Fireworks', 'My Heavenly Dream', 'Rose World' 'Good Omen' (a very good doer wherever I saw it growing).

Schreiners is probably the largest Iris nursery in the country, if not in the world. The coach drives you through miles of fields of chiefly Tall Bearded Iris. However we were entertained by Mr. Robert Schreiner in his private garden of I. ensatas, many introduced from

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Japan. I took note of 'Mikokagura' with a blue centre to a mauve fall. *Chionanthus virginicus* (fringe tree) was in full flower. The display garden had extensive plantings, in raised beds of T.B.'s with *Ranunculus* and *Violas*. I find it rather surprising, due to the comparatively short Iris season to find whole gardens given over by specialist growers to the Iris, with occasionally the odd *Hosta* for support.

The abnormal weather conditions which had interfered with the Conference were of great benefit at Kalamazoo, where Bob Bauer and John Coble, 'Ensata Gardens' had their Iris at Peak blooming. As in other gardens there was a large area of Seedlings being assessed. I had plenty of time while staying with them to decide on my favourite flowers. In the heat the white blooms did not stand up too well. Arthur Hazzard's 'Prairie Mantle', 'Prairie Noble', etc. were good. 'Trilled Enchantment' with 6 petals and narrow borders of bright rose-red I photographed time and again. 'Joyous Youth' and 'Intrepid Ingenue', entertaining names & attractive flowers. So difficult to pick out favourites, but 'Caprician Butterfly', 'Japanese Pinwheel' (red, white edge) 'Blueberry Rimmed' (broad blue border), deserve special mention. One, just acquired, should prove considerable benefit to hybridisers was 'Chitisi Helme' (hope spelling correct), it contains 'delphine' the source of the flowers strong blue colouring.

I was able to photograph and pick out the ones that I wanted to bring home. They were dug up, put in pails of water at Clarence Mahan's in Washington. My next port of call. At the enormous Airport (Washington), I panicked, how would I recognise him. No bother, there was Clarence standing at the head of the stairs, looking like the Statue of Liberty, waving a fine stem of T.B. Iris. Clarence and Suky took me to a number of interesting gardens and two Shows in the area. Sterling Innerst has an outstanding collection. One of his new ones still under number, stood out, the centre of each fall being a contrasting sky-blue to its surrounding red-purple.

Lunch with Clarence at Alec Summers', His major interest is *Hostas* (huge collection) and *Hemerocallis* (many). The edging of his drive is covered with H. 'Eenie-Weenie', quite dwarf, foliage covered with flowers, and I. 'Kimboshi' alias 'Aichi-no-Kagayaki', the cross between *I. ensata* and *I. pseudacorus*. As seen elsewhere I had not cared for it, as the whole plant looks chlorotic but, set off by the strong yellow of the *Hemerocallis*, it looks very well.

Carol Warner grows Clarence's Iris. I liked her 'Let Me See' (after puzzling). I brought home several remontanant T.B.'s including Clarence's 'Suky', 'Champagne Elegance' & 'Eternal Bliss', they have all remonted already, extending the Iris season.

On from Washington to Maine as the guest of Currier McEwen. He is a remarkable man. I enjoyed his expertise in Hybridisation of *ensatas*, brought home plants of his very fine *sibiricas*. I have never eaten finer lobsters in my life!

How to tell you of some of the results in my garden. Those planted in a raised bed in very rich compost, with 'Leaky Pipe' irrigation mulched with Farmyard Manure have done extremely well. Increased and good number of fine blooms. Even here, however, I did lose a certain number which failed to emerge after the winter. Those planted in the bog-garden, the ones in full sun did well, partially shaded by the trees, although no frost, I believe that ground did not warm up in Spring as it did elsewhere. We mulched with wood chippings, I think manure would have been better to maintain warmth. There have been a number of losses, plants very small. With extra feeding they are now beginning to grow.

The *Sibiricas* have done well. Currier's 'Tall Blue', blue with a very little purple tinge. 'Baby Sister' very floriferous for the front of the border.

Of the *ensatas* 'Rose Adagio', 'Wine Ruffles', 'Dark Enchantment', Purple Marlin, 'Royal Fireworks', George Bush's 'Snowy Trio' a very simple 3 fall white, small striped 'Katy Mendez' This is only an early assessment, there should be many more after their transatlantic move!

More about Spurias.

by Adrian Whittaker.

1992 has been a good year for *Spurias* with me, although the flowering dates have varied widely from the norm, even with well established plants. Since the year has not been particularly sunny or hot, it may be that '93 will show less satisfactory results. Yet again, the yellows and red/browns have produced a better show than the blues in my garden, but I now have seed from 'Belize' x 'Protege' which may lead to a better blue series for me, since both do well here. I am also waiting for the first flowering of three seedlings from a red/brown Russian wilding which should prove interesting.

While on the subject of seedlings, I've been asked to repeat the general method, for those interested in raising *Spurias* from seed.

The principles are roughly the same for *Pseudacorus* (easy) and *Sibiricas* (variable). Fresh seed gives much the best results in terms of speed of germination. So, regardless of origin, start as soon as you can. Generally, most iris seeds need to have their built-in

(cont).

dormancy broken by low temperature before warmth. From what I've seen with my attempts, cycling between near freezing and say 10 deg.C higher a couple of times, seems to be better than a continuous spell of low temperature. This is easy to arrange in an uncontrolled way by putting the seeds outside over the winter.

I generally harvest Spuria seeds just before the pods show signs of splitting; at this stage they are usually light-coloured to pale green. They are then placed about 1.cm deep in a reasonably gritty, damp seed compost, which is firmed down gently over the seed, a whole pod contents to a 10cm. pot. The surface is covered with grit to prevent birds or rain spoiling things. Placed near a wall in a shady position, planted in late September, they should show signs of germination by April, providing they are kept damp all winter.

The alternative, with well-ripened seed, or some which you want to start indoors, is to soak them for about a week, changing the water daily (if you can remember): Then place in dampened, clean vermiculite, in sealed plastic bags, a pod full to each bag. These are then placed in the fridge (NOT freezer!) with the temperature about 4 deg.C. for at least 6/8 weeks. Look at the bags on a weekly basis, after week 3, for signs of germination. When this occurs, wait until the developing shoots are at least 2cm. long before removing the bags from the cold. If, after three months, there are no signs of germination, move the bags into warmer conditions and monitor frequently. I've had no problems with mould growth at all, but I add half a teaspoonful of household bleach to each litre of water used for moistening the vermiculite.

The outdoor seeds should be left in the pot, when they germinate, but a weak liquid feed should be started once the green shoots appear. All Spurias resent disturbance (and also dryness at the seedling stage). so I wait until they are about 4 inches high before replanting them individually into 10cm. pots, again in a good, gritty, seed compost. There they can be liquid fed steadily until ready for planting out into their permanent garden position.

I find the best time to plant Spuria seedlings out is either April or September, since the golden rule is never to let them dry out at all. With an April planting there's obviously much more growth that year, but you do have to be careful to keep them damp, but not WET. An autumn planting out normally solves the dampness problem, but you might need to give some protection if the weather turns cold quickly.

With the indoor germinated seed the system is similar - pot up in tens first and grow on in warmth, feeding steadily, and then repot individually when the seedlings are large enough.

In my experience with the Spurias, first flowers can be expected in 3/5 years from plant-out, so you need a measure of patience. One way round this is to plant a pot of seedlings each year, so that after the first round of flowering there's something to look forward to every year. I certainly think the effort and the wait is very worthwhile!

(Thank you Adrian for this detailed explanation. I am sure Members will be encouraged to try growing these stately Irises from seed, now that they know the way. J.T.)

North West.

Ray Wilson, at this time of the year, has his hands full with the B.I.S. Seed Distribution, so, in future, we will only be hearing from him in the July Newsletter.

West & Midlands.

Jennifer Hewitt and Ian Smith have both written to tell us that Harry Foster, who worked so hard to make the Ebbw Vale Festival a success, is seriously ill in Hospital. We send our prayers and wishes that the treatment he is receiving will prove successful, and that he will be among his Irises again soon.

Around the Nurseries.

Our Member Norman Payne has the only Iris Ensata Nursery in this country. Here is his account of how it all began.

In 1963 I started growing I.ensata, it was hard to find Named Varieties; garden centres were in their infancy, but those I approached, had, in the main, never heard of them, let alone carry any stock. My interest waned for some time!

(Cont).

In 1984 I built a pond in the garden which contained 3,000 gals., just for Koi Carp imported from Japan. When I stocked it my interest in Japanese Irises was re-awakened. My late Brother John had joined the S,S & J. Group, and gave me Joan's address. Up to this time I had thought that I was the only one interested in these plants. I got in touch with Mrs. Lorena Reid in Oregon, and she sold me her plants for 3 years, until she gave up exporting, it became too much for her. By this time I had made other contacts & friends in the U.S.A. They kindly supplied me with plants - Dr. Currier McEwen, Clarence Mahan (Iris Pond) 'Ensata Gardens'. I have imported every year since 1985. In 1989 my first price list was printed, I suppose this was the first in this country! It contains over twenty varieties, I will be increasing this to well over forty varieties, in fact I am actually growing over 100 varieties, but I do not advertise more than I can supply.

I rely upon the 'Cumulative Check List of Japanese Irises' published by the A.I.S. and I send my thanks to Mr. Howard Brookin and his staff who assist, I personally would be lost without it.

I must tell you about one plant which had 3 blooms in June last year, then, in September it bloomed again, and was still there in late October when the frosts came. This variety is called 'Exuberant Chantry' one of Dr. Currier McEwens cultivars. How aptly named it just could not be more exuberant!

I wonder if many of our Members know 'Richmond Park', 2,600 acres, with thousands of oak trees, hundreds of years old. Herds of deer roam free, quite unafraid. Part of the Park (40 acres) have been fenced off as a woodland garden. Here springs feed small streams, which in their turn fill two small lakes, it is called 'The Isabella Plantation', Camellias, Azaleas and Rhododendrons abound, also Magnolias. The streams are mostly planted with sibirica and pseudacorus Iris. Last year I donated 240 Japanese Irises to 'the Isabella'. In a few years I hope they will make a good start, and give pleasure to the many people who can roam the area free. 'The Isabella' dates back to 1841. The Park which contained the Palace of Richmond built by Henry VIII about 1530, was his hunting ground. It is a place of peace and tranquility, yet so close to London.

(Thank you Norman, hope your ensatas do very well. J.T.)

Swanley Village Nursery.

by Pam and Ian Beale.

We started our Nursery 15 years ago. Prior to this I had managed a cut flower nursery. At first we grew lettuce and chrysanthemums, but with 3 boys and a girl, this was just too much, so after 5 years I went to work for the local Parks & Amenities services. These 5 years were more like an apprenticeship. Pam looked after the Nursery and we adjusted our cropping to tomatoes & bedding plants. My eldest son joined us and I started a handicapped & ground maintenance Service. Raising our own summer and autumn bedding plants kept us well occupied.

Irises really caught my eye 2 years ago at Wisley, they were Germanicas- seeds were sown! Last spring we opened our gates to the retail trade, planted up the entrance road. Being a little off the beaten track we wanted something different to attract. We have 5 horses in the stable area, a supply of God's natural abundance has been dug in. Our theme is going to be around the Genus Iris, hope that this will slow me down somewhat!

(All good wishes to you both, and I hope that you have great success with those Iris seeds you have bought. You will find that we have now had more in since you wrote in. J.T.)

The Group Library.

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(Any correspondence please send S.A.E.)

Publications.

- Alphabetical Table and Cultivation Guide to the Species. (B.I.S.) (56gr.)
- Cult of Irises. (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 Society). (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.) (2 copies).
 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.)
 Prof. Dr. N.A. El Emery's Papers on I.pseudacorus and I.Germanica var Alba.

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 Irises. (U.S.A.) (Twice a Year.)

All Back Numbers of the S. S. & J. Newsletters since 1976.

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 Kohlein. (Germany, English Translation.) (990gr.)
 R.H.S. 'Irises' by S.Linnegar & J.Hewitt. (Gt. Britain.)
 'Irises' by Harry Randall. (Gt. Britain.)
 The Iris by N.Leslie Cave. (Gt. Britain.)

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INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st. DECEMBER 1992.

	£		£
17.1.92 Postage & Stationery.	14. 16.	Subscriptions	190.
25.2.92 Newsletter & Postage.	131. 45.	Donations.	5. 55.
6.3.92 Postage	5.	Interest.	4. 32.
20.3.92 do	5.	do (Res. A/C)	1. 70.
9.4.92 do	5.	Seeds Sold.	66.
1.5.92 Postage & P. on Pcls.	10.	Plants Sold.	149.
19.5.92 Postage.	5.	Lit. & N/L.	11.
23.7.92 Newsletter & Postage.	136. 90.	<u>Stock.</u>	
21.8.92 Postage	5.	N/E's	48.
11.9.92 B.I.S.Publications.	10. 80.	Covers	6.
18.9.92 Postage on Parcels.	10.	Leaflets.	11.
16.10.92 B.I.S.Seed envelopes.	16. 08.	B.I.S.Lit.	8. 40.
23.10.92 Postage	5.	P.C.I.Lists.	5.
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	374. 39.		505. 97.
surplus.	<hr/> 131. 58.		
	505. 97.		
Accumulated Fund	357. 05.	Interest.	4. 32.
surplus.	131. 58.	Cash in Bank.	322. 64.
		Res. Interest.	1. 70.
		Cash in Reserve.	81. 57.
		N/Ls.Covers. Lit.etc.	78. 40.
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	488. 63.		488. 63.

Cash in Bank £ 326. 96. In Reserve. £ 83. 27. Total £ 410. 23.

signed Adrian Whittaker.

The Following Back Numbers of the Newsletters are available:-

Original 1976.(20p). Feb.1982.(40p). Feb. 1985.(50p). July 1986, Feb. 1991. and Feb. 1989, July 1988. are all at(50p) July. 1990, Feb. 1991, July. 1991, Feb. 1992 are all(75p.)each. We also have B.I.S.Publications.

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Almanac.

* Please note the New Editor of the Spuria Newsletter.

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 Marked (vs.) very small quantity, (s.) small, (m.) medium, (p.) plenty. Alternatives on (vs.) please.

LAEVIGATAE.

I. laevigata blue (vs). I. laevigata Alba (vs). I. laevigata blue & white mxd.(s). Semperflorens
 I. pseudacorus (p). I. pseudacorus (p). Cream Forms (p). 'Primrose Monarch' (vs). 'Ilgengold'(vs)
 E.Turnipseed (p). 'Golden Queen' (p). 'Sulphur Queen' (vs).
 I. versicolor (p). Var. Kermisina (p). 'Cat Moussam' (p). 'Rosea' (vs). 'Claret Cup' (vs).
 'Rougette' (s). White, lavender veins (vs). Pale Blue (vs). versicolor mixed (s).
 I. virginica (vs). 'Gerald Darby' (vs). I. shrevei (vs).

Specials at 30p. per packet:-

I. versicolor Assorted (vs). I. versicolor 'Murrayana'(vs). I.v.'Murrayana x 'Little Rhyme'(vs).
 I. versicolor 'Mysterious Monique', you will find the entry at the foot of Page.7.

ENSATA.

I. ensata mixed (s). American Hybrids (vs). Diploids mixed (vs). I. ensata 'Banners on Parade'(s)
 I. ensata 'Agrippine' (vs). I. lactea (s). For more Ensatas see under C. McEwen's sp. List.

SERIES SIBIRICAE.

I. sibirica Tetraploid Hybrids.(s). 40. chromosomes mixed (s). I. sibirica 'Alba'(vs). 'White'
 Mixed Diploids (vs). Mixed Red Diploids (vs). Large Blue Tetraploids (vs). Wild Form(vs). Mxd.
 'Avon' (vs). 'Belfast' (vs). 'Clee Hills' (s). 'Cleeton Buff' (s). 'Castle Grace' (vs). 'Caesar'
 'Acuta' (vs). 'Dance Ballerina Dance' (s). 'Dreaming Yellow' (vs). 'Etagon' (vs). 'Fourfold
 White' (s). 'Hubbard' (vs). 'Lavender Bounty x (s). 'Laurenbuhl' (s). 'Orville Fay' (s). 'Mrs.
 Rowe' (vs). 'Fanny Heidt' (vs). 'Rejoice Always' (vs). 'Remember' (vs). 'Silver Edge' (p).
 'Soft Blue' (vs). 'Sole Command' (vs). 'Teal Velvet' (vs). 'Tealwood' (vs). 'Papillon' (vs).
 'Tropic Night' (vs). 'Wiltrud Gissel' (vs). and 'My Love' (vs). See also Currier's List.
 I. chrysographes x chrysofors (s). chr. 'Black Knight' (vs) I. delavayii (s). I. sanguinea (vs).
 I. dykesii x clarkel(vs).

SERIES SPURIAE.

I. aurea (vs). I. orientalis (s). I. crocea (vs). carthalinae Alba(vs). halophila (p). kernariana
 sintenisii (s). musulmanica (s). sogdiana (s). graminea (vs). S. mixed yellow brown & reds (s)
Hybrids. 'Adobe Sunset', 'Abo Ob', 'Bali Bali', 'Baby Chick', 'Barbara's Kiss', 'Border Town',
 'Color Focus', 'Countess Zeppelin', 'Easter Colors', 'Eleanor Hill', 'Gentry', 'Irene Benton',
 'Struttin & Struttin', 'Pieces of Eight', 'Universal Peace', 'White Summer', and many more...

SERIES CALIFORNICAE.

'Rhett's Memory' (vs). 'Las Olas' (s). 'Western Queen x Night Messenger' (vs). 'Banbury Pageant' vs
 I. douglasiana x. (vs). I. innominata x douglasiana (vs). 'Agnes James' (vs). Peach (vs). Mixed(p)
Currier's Special Collection at 30p. per packet:-

Sibiricas. 'Ever Again', 'Blue Forty', T88/9 x Purple Tet. T88/1 early Tet. T75/83 1st with
 gold edge, Returning Tide x, 89/108 Handsome pinkish Dip. 'Violet Joy' x.

Ensatas. 89/2(2). 'Spring Time Snow x self. 87/41 Pink Dip. 89/19c Best Pink Dip. 92/52
 Excellent Pink Dip. 92/50 Cross of 2 excellent Dips. 92/81 Seisynogon x unknown x Kiri Gasumi'
 89/21 Excellent Pink Dip. 85/20 Best marbled blue Dip. 90/177 Miniature. Selected ensatas.

(We have a rare opportunity here to try some of Curriers latest cultivars, and we do thank
 him for the privilege. Most of them have only a few seeds, so it is on the usual basis
 that they will be sent out.)

Once again, no room to include extracts from your letters, so it will be the July N/L. Thanks
 for all your efforts, and for the seeds. We have not had many plants sent in this year, but
 there have been so many other demands. Perhaps I could ask you to remember us when you are
 dividing your plants later on please. We return your Postage as usual.

Bye Bye for now. Joan.