

The Group for Beardless Irises of the British Iris Society  
Newsletter No 46 – Autumn 2001

The Group's Officers

Chairman	Raymond Bomford, The Hills, Tanhouse Lane, Beoley, REDDITCH, Worcs. B98 9AB
Vice Chairman	Mrs. Hilda Goodwin, Room 71 Fornham House, Fornham St.Martin, BURY ST. EDMUNDS, Suffolk. IP31 1SR (Hon. Life Member)
Secretary	Mrs. Anne Blanco White, 72 South Hill Park, LONDON. NW3 2SN
Librarian	Philip E. Allery – see below. Volunteer needed please – see editorial.
Membership Secretary	Alun C. Whitehead, Aulden Farm, Aulden, Leominster, Herefordshire. HR6 0JT
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Seed Distribution	Mrs. M.V. Criddle, 5 Storeys Lane, Burgh-le-Marsh, SKEGNESS, Lincs. PE24 5LR
Treasurer	Philip E. Allery – as above. Volunteer needed please – see editorial.
Honorary Auditor	Mrs. L Wilkins, 17 Lancaster Avenue, ALDRIDGE, Walsall, W. Midlands. WS9 8RE

Regional Representatives

Eastern Area	Volunteer needed please – see editorial.
London Area	Mrs. Anne Blanco White - as above
Midlands Area	Philip Allery – as above
North Eastern Area	Miss Clare Dodsworth, 42 Middleham Road, DARLINGTON, Co. Durham. DL1 3DJ.
North Wales	Volunteer needed please – see editorial.
North Western Area	Volunteer needed please – see editorial.
South Eastern Area	Mrs. Olga Wells, 24 Westwood Road, MAIDSTONE, Kent ME15 6BG
South Western Area	Tim Loe, Landreyne Manor, Coads Green, Launceston, Cornwall, PL15 7LZ.
Scotland	Mrs. Brita Carson, 15 Kellyburn Park, Dollar, Clackmannanshire, FK14 7AD.
South Wales	Mrs. C. L. Derbyshire, 876 Newport Road, Rumney, Cardiff. CF3 4LJ.

(Note: For effective cover and reporting on beardless irises bloom and seasonal activities of members, regional representatives are required urgently for the eastern and north-western areas of England; also for North Wales. - Please volunteer. Ed.)

Specialist Help/Correspondents

Japanese Irises	Mrs Anne Blanco White – as above.
Laevigata Irises	Enquiries to Editor please – see editorial.
Louisiana Irises	Mrs. Ada Godfrey, Hermit Medlar's Walk, 3 Pierce St. (Rte 140), Foxborough MA, 02035 U.S.A. - E-mail enquiry service c/o Editor – see editorial.
Pacificas	Revd.Fr.Philip Jones, Erdington Abbey, 49 Sutton Road, Erdington, BIRMINGHAM. B23 6QJ
Sibiricas	Mrs Jennifer Hewitt, "Haygarth", Cleeton St Mary, CLEOBURY MORTIMER, Kidderminster,Worcs. DY14 0QU
Spurias	E-mail enquiry service c/o Editor – see editorial.

Overseas Contacts

Australia -- Heather and Bernard Pryor, Iris Haven, P O Box 83, Pennant Hills, NSW 1715, Australia.  
New Zealand -- Miss Gwenda Harris, Editor of Spectrum, Newsletter of the New Zealand Species Iris  
Group, R D 12-O, Oamaru, North Otago, New Zealand.

U.S.A.

Japanese Irises -	Mr. John Coble, 9823 E. Michigan Ave., Galesburg, MI49053, U.S.A.
Pacificas-	Mr. Steve Taniguchi, Editor, <i>Almanac, Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris</i> , 3306 Forbes Avenue, Santa Clara, CA 95051, U.S.A.
Sibiricas -	Mrs Judith M. Hollingworth, Editor, ' <i>The Siberian Iris</i> ', 124 Sherwood Road East, Williamston, MI 48895, U.S.A.
Spurias -	Joanne Lee Miller, Editor, <i>Spuria Iris Society Newsletter</i> , 14221 S. Stagecoach Rd. Tucson, AZ 85736, USA

The Group for Beardless Irises is a section of the British Iris Society. Membership of the Society is not a pre-requisite for membership of this Group, but it is fully recommended.

The Society's Year Book, published annually, is an additional source of material on the cultivation of beardless irises, and contains articles by eminent irisarians on a wealth of interesting subjects.

Membership application forms are available from the Editor or from Mr. Clive Russell whose address is 47, Station Road, New Barnet, Herts. EN5 1JD. At £12.00 per annum, (£10.00 if paid before 1<sup>st</sup> March), this is really good value.

## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The Group's aims and objectives are to foster communication between members in Great Britain, Europe and overseas by the exchange of ideas, seeds and plants; to help newcomers with their interests and problems; and to report on new work in hybridisation. The recruitment of younger members is vitally important. A membership application form is enclosed. Recruit a friend to share your love of beardless irises; and/or sponsor a young person who shows interest in irises. **Make this your New Year resolution!**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Society for Pacific Coast Native Irises – The article "Pacific Coast Iris – Where did they come from?" was down-loaded from the Society's website, with prior approval to printing from the Society's officers. The Group also thanks Dr. T. Tamberg of Berlin whose invitation to co-operate in his work is reported in my Editorial on page 5 and whose photographs of some of his new introductions are printed on the penultimate page of this newsletter. **Don't miss this opportunity!**

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## EDITORIAL DEADLINES & SUBSCRIPTIONS

Editorial deadlines have been changed to 31<sup>st</sup> March and 30<sup>th</sup> September. Back issues of the newsletters are available at a cost, inclusive of postage, of £2.00 each (U.K. & Europe) or £2.50 for overseas members. Requests for back copies of newsletters, with payment, to Editor please. Remittances can be added to your subscription payment!

Articles for publication are needed urgently. Without your participation the Group will founder. Prints or slides of photographs of beardless irises would be welcomed, with permission to include them with articles in future newsletters.

The Group has an extensive library of books and newsletters, with current catalogues from several American Iris Nurseries, which is available to members in the U.K. and Europe on payment of postage. An up-to-date list will be prepared once the newsletter is published. Copies will be available. S.a.e. with requests please.

Membership subscription rates for 2002 are unchanged at £4.00 (U.K. & Europe) or £4.50 for other overseas members; payments to Treasurer please. Newsletter publications fell below two (i.e. Spring and Autumn) annually in 1999/2000 due to my ill health. Subscriptions have been adjusted and membership status information will be attached or sent at an early date. Where subscriptions are overdue further newsletters will be withheld until action is taken on the membership subscription reminder. Membership at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2002 will be listed as an appendix to the Spring 2002 newsletter. If there are any changes of address or corrections necessary please advise me as soon as possible.

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE -

I am confident that other members will join with me in expressing our concern at recent international events and our sympathy with our American friends and others whose lives have been irrevocably changed by the events of 11<sup>th</sup> September last. I am not aware of any family loss or injury to any of our members but if it should be that some harm has befallen any of them from this dreadful act of indiscriminate and wanton killing and maiming, our sincere sympathy is extended to them.

Our sympathy is also extended to those who have been distressed or inconvenienced by the extensive outbreak of foot and mouth disease which has ravaged our farming industry and country-side economy. The remainder of this message is written by Philip from notes I left for him shortly before leaving for a four week trip into northern India and Sikkim. I will tell you all about it in the next newsletter.

But first to a matter which is causing me much concern. Despite my plea in the last newsletter nobody has offered to relieve Philip of any of the three important duties that he carries out, i.e. Newsletter Editor, Treasurer and Group Librarian. Surely there must be someone out there who is willing to undertake one of these duties. Individually the jobs are quite manageable; in fact the duties of the Librarian are very light indeed and very little storage space is required. Subscriptions and donations recorded manually have been transferred to computer to ease the Treasurer's work. As you will appreciate, collectively the duties are proving to be quite a commitment from some of which Philip wishes to be relieved as soon as possible and certainly not later than end December 2002. He will then be 82 and thinks it high time for new blood and new ideas, allowing him to spend more time helping to develop the Group's web site.

The proposed May/June newsletter was not supported by as many articles as we had hoped for. Consequently it was deferred and annual publication dates revised to Spring (March/April) and Autumn (September/October) in the hope that this will be far more convenient to members who have care of their gardens or essential commercial interests very much in mind during the busy March/August period.

The season has seen good bloom, particularly with ensatas and I am very pleased to note that Anne has the problems arising in the trial beds at Wisley very much in mind when she makes her regular visits, which we appreciate. It will be interesting to learn the outcome of investigations by R.H.S. staff at Wisley as would-be trial participants may be deterred from sending in their plants unless a solution is found to the watering problem in one of the beds.

I am pleased to learn of Philip's progress in finding new regional representatives and specialist advisers. We welcome and thank them. A special welcome to Miss Gwenda Harris, Editor of the Spectrum and a member of the Species Section of the New Zealand Iris Society and to our new U.K. members Mrs. Carol Coleman, Mrs. Caroline Derbyshire, Simon Harman, Tim Loe and John Thornton.

The display at Hollybush Nursery on 16<sup>th</sup>/17<sup>th</sup> June last was a successful publicity exercise, with considerable interest shown in Ken and Beryl MacLeod's attractive display of Pacificas and sibiricas; and blooms of chrysographes, ensata and sibirica hybrids displayed by Caroline Derbyshire and other members. With extensive display boards at the back of the stand it was possible to add to the W.M. Malvern display and include A3 colour prints of photographic slides of some of his new introductions sent to Philip by e-mail by Dr. Tomas Tamberg. Philip will add a few of these as a colour page at the end of this newsletter. Dr. Tamberg's colourful and extensive web site is well worth visiting. Attendance at Hollybush and interest, particularly on the Sunday, was such that Mr. Tim Porter, Managing Director of this Nursery in expressing his satisfaction at the outcome, offered similar facilities for a display next year. The second or fourth week ends of June are provisional dates. We are grateful for his support and that from members of his staff. The Nursery Management gave substantial indirect financial help with free display space, web-site publicity and poster displays; while the staff themselves proved to be extremely helpful in coping with an extra workload. There was no cost to the Group as expenditure was met from Philip's modest plant sales, and printing costs were subsidised from the same source.

The Group is particularly indebted to members who helped with setting up or manning the stand; to the West & Midlands Iris Group members who volunteered support and lent display boards and material, with B.I.S. publications and seed to sell on its behalf. Berney Baughen's generous gesture in allowing the Group to use his publicity layout for recent publications was much appreciated.

I urge all members to give particular thought to the invitation from Dr. Tomas Tamberg of Berlin to join him in a three-year trial of his recent introductions. A glance at the colour page at the end of this newsletter should convince you all of the mutual benefit to be gained from such participation. Advice will be freely available and less experienced members will be able to gain invaluable experience in seed germination.

It is very encouraging to see the cultivation of hybrids of *I. Louisiana* becoming more popular and I wish to thank Sue Pierce both for her article that prompted further enquiries; and for her donations to the Group from the sale of her stock. With advice available from growers in both hemispheres it should now

be possible to have prompt answers to any problems we may experience.

There is still a need for a Spuria specialist. Is Philip correct in thinking that the use of the description "Specialist" deters many modest members with some experience who would otherwise be prepared to help by offering their services to research queries? Do let me know your views. Would the description "adviser" or "correspondent" attract more volunteers? We are very fortunate in having as members Anne Blanco White, Jennifer Hewitt and Rev. Fr. Philip Jones who with their considerable experience are quite rightly considered to be specialists in their own right. Others with less experience could also play an important role. Do offer your help!

I urge you to attend the B.I.S. Convention to be held on 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> May next at the Holiday Inn, Victoria Street, Bristol, if at all possible. Enquiries and registration requests should be sent to Cy. Bartlett at Old Mill House, Shurton, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA5 1QG or to Glyn Roberts, 56 Oakley Street, Belle Vue, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, SY3 7JY. Now is the time to consider selecting a specimen iris for display in a pot or a tub, so on with the thinking caps and select a plant for potting and display at the Convention. Obviously the current international situation is such that plans may have to be modified, but the organisers are optimistic. Up to date information will be included in the Spring 2002 newsletter.

Finally and if you have not already done so, please consider seriously the benefit to be obtained by seeking membership of the B.I.S. (details on front page) as well as joining the Species Group and one or more of the remaining Regional Groups which arrange interesting annual programmes and opportunities for members to meet. Their contacts are –

**Species Group** – Mrs. T.A. Blanco White, *Hon. Secretary*, 72 South Hill Park, London NW3 2SN.

**Kent Group** – Mrs. Thelma Naylor, *Chairman*, 4 Amherst Close, Maidstone, Kent ME16 0JB.

**Mercia Group** – F.J.Webbing, *Hon. Secretary*, 6 Perkins Way, Wokingham, Berks. RG41 2TN.

**West and Midlands Group** – *Hon. Secretary*: Mrs. B. MacLeod, Honeyhole Farm, Bucknell, Shropshire SY7 0BN.

#### SECRETARY'S REPORT –

When all is said and done this has been a Seriously Interesting Year for gardening in general and irises in particular. Gales, rainstorms and, in consequence, a disastrous lack of light reduced any ideas of exhibiting at shows to a non-starter, followed by a fiendish drought! It was simply a case of taking anything that might be in flower. Oddly enough though, the Lophiris (Evansias) I had banished to the garden did splendidly, but with no regard to show dates though I did get some spikes up to Chelsea. Sadly, I never thought to collect a few of the last blooms and take them to Wisley in June for the single flowers class. It was suggested that this might have been a problem for the judges though I can't see why. Certainly we always assume that there will only be TBs in that class, but since judges, particularly, in the beardless classes may have to consider quite a wide range of disparate spikes they should be able to cope with a similar range of single blooms. Incidentally, if you want to bring a candidate plant to the attention of the JIC and don't know how to go about it there are lots of us who can tell you. Please don't be shy about asking - we need lots more new breeders to come forward.

Which reminds me of the newly planted PCI trial which did not bring joy to the hearts of the judges. Mind you, we were only looking at it to see how the plants were doing. Please, if you are sending plants to Wisley or the BIS gardens to be considered for the relevant awards, do send reasonably large pieces of the plant(s). Almost any beardless iris which is being transplanted is liable to lose some of its growing points and if there aren't very many of those in the first place, then the plant will die. In practice, this applies equally to sibiricas and ensatas; less so to the spurias and louisianas which have a natural tendency to wander and to back-fill any gaps in the clump on their own account.

We are delighted to welcome Mrs. Ada Godfrey as our new louisiana correspondent and I hope this will encourage you to try growing these handsome plants. Global warming aside, some forms are a lot more tolerant of our climate than you have been led to expect. After all, *Ii. fulva*, *fulvala* and *brevicaulis* have been grown here for well over a century now. And the best way to get reliable cultivars is to grow what you can lay your hands on and try for seeds which you can grow on again for yet more tolerant cultivars. Oddly enough a pair of seedling LAs have set several pods each, but I needn't worry about them yet. The only named one saw no reason to try. Have fun!

The main irritation of summer 2000 was the enthusiasm of the voles for wrecking my *foetidissimas*: they cut down the leaves, eat the bottom inch or so which is white to pale green and then leave the rest of the debris for me to clear up. All my best clumps were wrecked and though they will come back again there aren't going to be any fancy seeds for sale this year. If anything of the sort happens to you the simplest

thing is to mulch the remains of the clump heavily together with a generous dose of Growmore or the like and leave it to its own devices. You should have a good display again two years later.

#### EDITORIAL –

I am extremely grateful to those members who have supported this edition by the contribution of articles and reports which I hope will be of interest to all members. If our efforts are appreciated such appreciation could take the form of sending me an article and/or offering help with one of the three posts I am currently holding. It is not in the Group's interest for this situation to continue and it would be far better for the posts to be separated. Volunteers please! Why not take advantage of the winter recess from gardening to write telling me of your successes or problems during the past season; and let me have your suggestions for other "companionable plants" – see Jennifer Hewitt's article. If you think the newsletter could be improved in any way please let me have your suggestions – are there any plants to which greater emphasis should be given?

There is another exciting way to play a greater part in the Group's work! - Dr. Tomas Tamberg is looking for volunteers to co-operate in the field of beardless iris hybridisation in order to enhance further development of hybrid groups that have been made fertile by colchicine treatment of originally sterile hybrids (Tetra-Sibtosas, Tetra-Calsibes, Tetra-Chrysatas, Tetra-Versilaevs).

Members should be prepared to cultivate seedlings in a breeding line for at least three seedling generations and to exchange information and breeding results freely. Cooperation could consist of running additional colchicine treatments with the intention of enlarging the gene pool in the respective hybrid group or in growing and intercrossing seedlings for the selection of improved varieties. No specialist knowledge is necessary for iris lovers who decide to enter such a world of new breeding adventures. Young gardeners would be especially welcome. - Dr. Tamberg will provide advice and, depending on the size of future crops, starting batches of relevant hybrid seed. His contact address is: Dr. T. Tamberg, Zimmerstr. 3, 12207 Berlin, Germany

Tel.: 030 712 42 35;

Fax: 030 712 02 946

e-mail: Dr.T.u.C.Tamberg@t-online.de

Internet: <http://home.t-online.de/home/Dr.T.u.C.Tamberg>

This edition's colour page illustrates some exciting new hybrids developed by Dr. Tamberg. Many more can be viewed by surfing Dr. Tamberg's website. Do take part in this wonderful opportunity to help in the creation and development of new irises.

Another exciting development is that I have been asked to advise/comment on the setting up of a Beardless Iris Group in Australia and the Group's newsletter (content not regularity!) is being used as a model. This is why it is so important for you to comment on improvements which you think could be made, and why I want our "model" to be as good as possible. Do remember that I am not a botanist and have not had any horticultural training, which must be obvious to some of you!

**FINANCE-** At 30<sup>th</sup> September 2001 the Group had a balance of £918.92 in its premier account at the local branch of Bradford and Bingley Building Society. The cost of photo-copying the February 2001 Newsletter and publicity material for the Malvern Three Counties Spring Festival amounted to £131.60. Newsletter postage and incidental expenditure on additional publicity brought this expenditure up to approximately £200. The incidental costs of the display at Hollybush Nursery, Shareshill, Cannock, Staffordshire in June were met by me from income from the sale of plants, with a hidden subsidy from the Nursery in terms of free display space, web-site publicity and support facilities.

This newsletter, postage and incidental expenditure, is estimated to cost approximately £160/£180, so it seems that our balances should be sufficient to meet the cost of introducing a colour page into each future issue for the next two years and paying for a web-site host, without increasing the membership subscription over that period.

My failure as Editor to maintain two publications annually in the years 1999 and 2000, due to ill health, has had the effect of increasing the Group's financial commitment to those of us who were paid-up members in those years to the extent of approximately 75% of one year's membership subscription. This would have taken some time to work out; a winter job! Instead our Chairman and our Secretary have agreed that I should apply a flat rate credit of £2.50 to all U.K. and European members and £3.00 to all other overseas members concerned. Please help me by sending me your 2002 subscription, if due, as soon as possible.

MEMBERSHIP –

Changes of address –

**Mrs. Pauline Brown** has moved to Strattons Farm, West Drove North, Walton Highway, Wisbech, Cambs. PE14 7DP.

I am indebted to Pauline for a vividly detailed and interesting account of her move and the logistics entailed in moving family, Suffolk Punch horses and pets from a farm of nearly 100 acres, a house of reasonable proportions and numerous farm buildings, both modern and traditional, in Wescott, Dorking, to a property of 22 acres with three lakes, a large bungalow and a small cluster of “modern” farm buildings, all in need of varying degrees of attention to make them suitable for her horses and her iris operation. Pauline will let me know when she has irises to offer again. With 3” rain in one day shortly before newsletter publication, we hope all is well!

**Mrs. Brita Carson**, our Scottish regional representative has moved to 15 Kellyburn Park, Dollar, Clackmannanshire, FK14 7AD.

**Ms. Sue Pierce** has moved to Trinity Cottage, Moel-y-golfa, Trewern, Welshpool, Powys, SY21 8ET.

**Gary Lewis** is moving to a property having five acres of land near Pontivy, Central Brittany at the end of October. His address will be given in the next newsletter with, I hope, an account of the several micro-climates he will enjoy and to which he will take his collection of acers and bamboos. There is also a marshland area to be transformed into a landscaped pool and surrounds which should be ideal for his collection of some 400 pots of ensatas.

I hope to include a light-hearted item on the problems of moving home and the care of irises you wish to take with you, in the next newsletter.

**Introducing New Members** – Mrs. Carol Coleman, The Old Smithy, Occupation Lane, Broughton-in-Furness, Cumbria LA20 6HD; Mrs. C.L. Derbyshire, 876 Newport Road, Rumney, Cardiff CF3 4LJ; Simon Harman, Lilies Water Gardens, Tam-Hows, Broad Lane, Newdigate, Surrey RH5 5AT; Miss Gwenda Harris, R.D. 12 O, Oamaru, North Otago, New Zealand; Mr. Tim Loe, Landreyne Manor, Coats Green, Launceston, Cornwall. PL15 7LZ; and John H. Thornton, 5 Candler Lane, Harleston, Norfolk IP20 9JA.

**Mrs. Carol Coleman** tells me that she moved from Lancashire to Cumbria in 1990 taking with her a removal van full of plants, mainly rhododendrons, having sold her house with the proviso that no plants were included in the sale. Carol is making a garden on an acre of land, the site of a former Christmas tree plantation, the soil being silt over clay, with a high water table.

Irises come third in Carol's list of loves; Rhododendrons come first, then Hemerocallis. With a third of an acre yet to develop Carol, who admits to being a plantaholic, can indulge herself. Her current project, a pool, was stopped last Autumn when rain stopped work. That part of Cumbria had 32” of rain between September and the end of December 2000.

**Mrs. Caroline Derbyshire's** garden in Rumney of about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> acre, is in a warm and wet Cardiff area overlying underground streams. The soil is between Ph. 6 – 7. Caroline now has over 80 irises, beardless, species and hybrids, including a major planting of sibiricas. In addition to Cal-sibs and Chrytosa which have yet to flower, Caroline has Dykesii, four different Setosa and several Spuria species; Latifolia and Dutch including Tigitalia, Fontenesii and Reticulatas. Most of her irises are water lovers so Caroline has three ponds and seeks to increase her ensatas and versicolors. With *I. fulva* and *fulvala* doing well Caroline is now looking forward to trying the more challenging Louisianas. Caroline's garden also has a woodland area and Junos are being tried in pots in the greenhouse. Her aim is to have at least one variety of iris in bloom for each month of the year. With mild winters and maybe some pot grown irises Caroline can nearly achieve this but October and November prove to be a problem at present. Caroline's offer of help as regional representative for S. Wales is much appreciated and we look forward to her reports on regional activities and visits.

**Simon Harman**, of Lilies Water Gardens, specialises in garden-worthy plants for different water aspects and surrounding areas, including moist herbaceous borders. Simon collects and grows rare and unusual plants. Tudor Rose winners at R.H.S. Hampton Court over many years since 1993, including a Gold Medal for that year, Lilies Water Gardens have a large collection of water iris (*I. laevigata*; *I. pseudacorus*; *I. ensata*; and *I. versicolor*) and over 100 varieties and cultivars of unusual Hardy Waterlilies. Other collections include *Butomus* and *Caltha*. This excellent catalogue is careful to distinguish between invasive and non-invasive plants; helpful to the beginner.

With one copy of Simon's catalogue in the Group Library, I have a few spare copies for purchase on payment of the sum of £1.50 each, including postage, etc. Cheques to me, payable to G.B.I. please.

**Miss Gwenda Harris** is the present Editor of "Spectrum", the Newsletter of the Species Section of the New Zealand Iris Society. Sister of Mrs. Judith Neilson, Immediate Past President of the New Zealand Iris Society, these ladies visited the U.K. during May/June last and toured extensively, meeting some of our members. Gwenda is a Nurseryperson and a keen advocate of landscaping with Siberians. Lined out in open ground in Autumn; a minimum of three fans; these are then potted in quite large pots in early Spring. Most flower and look good all season. It is important to note that both *I. pseudacorus* and *I. foetidissima* are banned New Zealand imports, and with PCIs difficult to establish if imported, Gwenda is forced to rely on seed imports for the cultivation of many attractive beardless irises.

**Jay and Terri Hudson** of Fort Bragg, California, introduced in the last newsletter, subsequently sent me the following information –

"The Iris Gallery", their home in Fort Bragg, is the outgrowth of a love of flowers and nature by its founders, Jay and Terri Hudson. They are located in a micro climate on the north coast of California. Their six and one half acres of redwoods, iris and mother nature sit on a hill, one mile back, but overlooking the beautiful Pacific Ocean. They are constantly absorbing the beauty of this location while watching the frolicking of quail, fox, deer, wild turkeys and occasionally a mountain lion and their other forest friends.

After their son Todd suffered a severe head injury nearly 15 years ago, they searched for an answer to a home business that would allow caring for him and provide a meaningful and fulfilling occupation. Traveling on vacation in the Pacific Northwest, they visited iris gardens in Oregon and came upon a well known hybridiser and grower by the name of Roger Nelson. They ordered iris from him and it all started. Reading everything they could lay their hands on about iris, joining the American Iris Society, and years of trial and error with growing the many types of iris have led to where they are today. The garden is filled with Pacific Coast, Bearded, Siberian, Japanese, Spurias and various species. Jay and Terri tell me their garden is open to the public during bloom season and they enjoy the many guests who visit them from around the country and the world.

At the present time, Terri continues to be the Secretary/Treasurer for the Society for Pacific Coast Iris. Jay held the position of President of this organisation for 3 years. He is also on the executive board of the American Iris Society, holding the position of Treasurer. Locally, Jay is very active with the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens, ([www.gardenbythesea.org](http://www.gardenbythesea.org)) holding the position of Treasurer to this Board also. Jay and Terri and Terri's mother have made a donation to the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens to have a species iris garden developed. The architectural plans are finished; they now see stakes in place ready for a stream bed, pond and mounds. A collection of species iris were generously donated by them and among others, Jean Witt, Colin Rigby, Lorena Reid and Carla Lankow, all of the Pacific Northwest. Plantings of named Siberian and Japanese will supplement the plantings until more species iris have been collected.

In August 2001 Jay and Terri had been married for 40 years. They were expecting their first grandchild from their daughter on their anniversary! As Terri said - "Wouldn't that have been something if the baby was indeed born ON that date". (Editorial Note – P.S. Grandson Morgan Jaymes Middleton was born on 20<sup>th</sup> August. A little late, a first baby's privilege, he weighed in at 9 pounds 2 ounces. Congratulations!)

**Tim Loe** is well known as a contributor of articles to the Species Group Newsletter. He is not so well known to some members of the Beardless Iris Group and I have asked him to write an introductory article. The Group appreciates Tim's offer of help as regional representative for South West England.

**John Thornton** informed our Membership Secretary that he is a complete beginner, rather late in life, and having moved to a new garden is keen to "have a go". John has been asked to send us a little information about himself and his interests. His reply –  
"A novice trying to develop a new interest in a new garden"! I have promised Group support. Ed.

And now some sad news –

### **KEN EDMONDSON**

Ken Edmondson's serious illness was reported in the last newsletter. Ken died at his home in Bewdley, Worcestershire on 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2001 after a long illness, borne with dignity and stoicism. He was in his 69<sup>th</sup> year. Born in Kelbrook, a little village near Nelson and Colne on the Lancashire / Yorkshire border, his youth was spent in Coventry. Ken was educated there, leaving the boy's school where he had shown academic promise to join the Post Office as a boy messenger, the start of a 42-year long career. This was interrupted by two year's National Service in the Military Police Section of the Tank Regiment.

Many promotions later, in 1979, Ken came to Kidderminster as Postmaster of the Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley area. Following Post-Office reorganisation he became Area Manager based at Dudley. This reorganisation gave Ken the opportunity to take early retirement in 1989 to follow his many leisure pursuits and re-kindle his love for wild plants, butterflies and animals.

As keen plants persons Ken and his wife Diana had joined a number of plant societies where, in turn, Ken gave enthusiastic attention to the cultivation of fuchsias, roses and, subsequently, irises. As members of the West and Midlands Iris Group Ken and Diana will be remembered as keen supporters of Group activities, both willing volunteers taking their turns of duty on the West and Midlands Iris Group stand at the annual Malvern Three Counties Spring Gardening Festival.

Ken and Diana joined the Beardless Iris Group in June 1997. Ken then developed a keen interest in the cultivation of *I. ensata* and other beardless irises by an attractive pool in an extensive garden at Long Bank, near Callow Hill, Bewdley, on the A.456. This interest was rewarded with prizes for beardless irises at West and Midlands Iris Group Shows.

There was another love in Ken's life – dancing, which was how he and Diana had met almost half a century ago! Taking it up again following retirement they went on to receive medals in both Latin and Ballroom dancing.

Ken is survived by his wife Diana, sons David and Jeffrey, and daughter Jill. A caring and thoughtful family man, he is sadly missed by his family and friends.

P.A.

**LEWIS OLSON LAWYER** – Born in 1907; a man of many interests, pursuits and talents, Lewis Lawyer's death on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2001, has deprived the iris world and particularly the S.P.C.N.I. of a horticulturist whose hybridizing focus was the Pacific Coast Native Iris.

After graduating from High School, he attended Otis Art Institute in Los Angeles and started work as a commercial artist. Affected by the Great Depression Lewis chose to go to college. After graduating from Junior College in Ontario, California, Lewis entered the University of California at Berkeley, where he changed his major to Plant Pathology from his original choice of landscape architecture, becoming a lifetime devotee of experimental science. His minor was Genetics.

He was an outstanding student and was awarded a research grant by the California Packing Corporation, (subsequently to become the Del Monte Corporation). His work with the Corporation on the control of armillaria, a fungus disease of trees, required an assistant to help with the lab work and culturing. When Adele Schwartz was assigned to him this was the beginning of a life-long partnership. For many years Assistant Director of Agricultural Research Lewis' use of competing soil inhabitants in his research led to his recognition as one of the first successful users of biological control in agriculture.

Watercolours and wood-cuts were continuing hobbies throughout his life until failing eyesight interfered. In photography, Lewis participated in the beginning of colour slides, with landscapes and horticultural subjects becoming a speciality, borne out by the colour photographs in the S.P.C.N.I. Almanac. An interest in lapidary work led to the embellishment of their home; and his interest in music was life-long, ranging from jazz to classical. With keen interest in and support for all members of his family, Lewis

made an invaluable contribution to his family's happy and full quality of life, as well as the many aspects of his professional and leisure activities.

Preceded in death by his daughter, Lori; Lewis Lawyer is survived by his widow Adele whom he married in August 1937; two children, four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

(I am indebted to Terri Hudson for sending me this information. Adele's eulogy is the most heart-rending appreciation of a partner it has been my privilege to read. In October 2000 I had received from Adele and Lewis their permission to use their picture of the P.C. hybrid "Simply Wild!" that was in the Spring 1990 S.P.C.N.I. Almanac. I hope to include it soon.) P.A.

## REGIONAL REPORTS-

### EASTERN REGION -

In the continuing absence of a representative for this region I enclose a report from Nic Cass who was good enough to send me a follow-up on his introduction as a new member in an earlier newsletter. That was almost a year ago but I think members will find it interesting reading -

" My interest in the Iris began in the late 1920'S (he's getting on a bit I hear you say), (Nic's remarks - not mine; being of similar vintage! Ed.) when I moved to a house in Hayes, Middlesex with the average type of garden in those days. It was quite long and one house plot wide. There we inherited quite a large bed of the BLUE FLAG, the roots completely covering the soil, they had been there a long time. We lived there for about 12 years and though the Irises were never touched, neither thinned, fed, dead-headed or picked, every year they gave the finest display one could wish for. That picture has remained with me all my life.

The War years and most of my working life (self employed) left little time for gardening, but I always had a keen interest. After early retirement (on health grounds) in 1976 and moving from Buckinghamshire to North Essex my gardening interests exploded. I then had a 2 acre garden.

In 1989 we moved to North Suffolk with an even bigger plot. My interest in irises was still there and I took with me my quite large collection of Bearded and some Siberica, and my interest grew further on discovering Evansia, Ensata, Louisiana and Tectorum all of which I have and have found very difficult to find in East Anglia. I have had good fortune in discovering Norman Payne, after a long journey in 1998, and I now have quite a few of Norman's varieties. *WATTII* would be nice to get and some other Beardless.

I also have a great interest in other groups of plants. It is the finest job in the world! I am sometimes asked "Whatever are you going to do with all these plants? and I think - "Well you are getting on a bit!. Wouldn't it be nice to have eight days in a week!"

Thank you, Nic. These articles are always welcome, even though not used immediately. Ed.

### LONDON - Anne Blanco White

People do tend to reckon that London is a law unto itself regardless of the content of that law. Sadly, I have to say that our weather was just as weird as everyone else's though we didn't have the same problem with floods. It isn't so very long ago, though, that a winter like this one would have had our local bakery flooded and the baker himself dancing a fandango of rage simply because the drains were blocked yet again. Anyway, the wet dark spring didn't encourage plants to do their best though at least two plants which had been taking a dim view of their cultural conditions actually got round to flowering. The one which really threw me was an *I. versicolor* which had been masquerading under a label suggesting it might be a *chrysographes*. Anyway, the plant was rather spaced out with widely diverging growing points and purple marking at the bases of the leaves. When I first noticed it there was a flowering spike a few inches tall with purple bracelets at the node and an obvious bud. Gradually this elongated and at the next node the 'bud' diverged into two stems with a bud each and nice purple spathes. Well, all this started about ten days before I was to leave home for a while so, as you can imagine, I dashed into the garden three times a day in the hope that it would flower. It didn't, of course, so realising that a second spike was in the offing I cut one of the flower spikelets and took it away with me. Yes, it did open and was obviously an *I. versicolor*. I was displeased, but when I got back to

London and compared this flowering spike with a known *versicolor* there was no doubt at all. The weird plant simply considered its growing conditions to be quite unsuitable and it will have to be transplanted shortly. What's more I'll check up on its antecedents with the provider of the seed. But the real moral of this story is we need to pay a lot more attention to the plants we grow and the way they grow. Sadly, a great many seeds get into circulation which are not from the plants from which they are alleged to originate.

Still, the Evansias not only provided a splendid show of flowers they have also managed quite a good set of seeds. The problem here is that if these plants are grown under glass (and they aren't all suitable for outdoors over winter even with the present global warming) they naturally ripen their seeds earlier in the year. At the time of writing, in the second half of July, these outdoor ones have nice fat, green pods. I shall be away from the end of the month until early in September and the odds are much better than evens that the pods will ripen in my absence. So you may imagine for yourselves pod-bearing spikes neatly wrapped in 'sleeves' of synthetic materials in the hope of trapping any seeds that fall before I get home again.

And talking of that there has been a problem with seed pods of *I. foetidissima*. There is one particular plant, though another is affected too, where I desperately need to see what colour the fleshy coats are. Now the pods are heavy and weigh down the spikes so that the slugs can have a passing chew which exposes some of the seeds. So I staked the spikes when I noticed this only to discover that a lot of the seeds promptly disappeared. I rather think that the unusual number of tits of various species in the garden may be responsible. So the foets have to be wrapped up too.

The main irritation of summer 2000 was the enthusiasm of the voles for wrecking my *foetidissimas*: they cut down the leaves, eat the bottom inch or so which is white to pale green and then leave the rest of the debris for me to clear up. All my best clumps were wrecked and though they will come back again there aren't going to be any fancy seeds for sale this year. If anything of the sort happens to you the simplest thing is to mulch the remains of the clump heavily together with a generous dose of Growmore or the like and leave it to its own devices. You should have a good display again two years later.

Curiously though, in spite of the very wet winter and spring there haven't been nearly as many of the giant slugs around this year with the result that I have had to clean out my slug traps myself. It's a bit unnerving to find a giant slug moving over the trap and tucking into the marinated corpse of a small slug. But as real consolation the garden is hopping all over with what I think are tiny frogs. I'd be happier if they were toads because I like them, but frogs are better than nothing. - Anne Blanco White

MIDLANDS – Philip Allery. The West & Midlands Group has had an enjoyable season of varied activities; visits and displays. Members have also been involved in the planning of the British Iris Society's Convention to be held in Bristol in May next. Despite recent international developments and clashes with dates of other planned Conventions both in the U.S.A. and in Eastern Europe, organisers hope their original plans for the 80<sup>th</sup> B.I.S. Birthday Celebration will materialise. Any modification will be reported in "Stop Press!" otherwise there will be a further report in the Spring 2002 newsletter.

Bloom on beardless irises was generally good, but inclement and un-seasonal weather caused quite marked variations in the quality and quantity of bloom and setting and growth of seedpods.

NORTH EAST REGION – Clare Dodsworth

The question of what to write about for this report has been a bit of a tricky issue. Because of the foot and mouth outbreaks a large number of the gardens in the area have been closed, so I have been unable to visit any of these. Today has been one of the first days where my free time and the weather have actually coincided to allow me to get out into the garden as either the soil has been too wet to walk on, or it has been too cold to venture outside for any length of time. The irises seem to be making progress although they do seem to be a little behind this year. They range from those that have just started to show their new foliage to those that have pushed up a few inches further. Another problem is that a number of my irises reside in the border near a honeysuckle where some blackbirds have created a nest, and so due to their squatters' rights I have left that area well alone. A few of the irises have been nibbled a little but I usually find that unless they are in danger of being totally eaten, once their growing spurt begins this damage becomes insignificant.

I have a few plans to visit some of the flower shows this year – the first being Harrogate Spring Flower Show in just over a weeks time – if time allows I will send a report on what I find there before the newsletter goes to print. I will also be attending Chelsea Flower Show and Hampton Court Flower Show so I ought to have a few to compare! In the North-East there doesn't seem to be a large number of such shows on offer particularly at the time of year when the Sibericae are in bloom (if anyone knows of any then please let me know and I will try and attend and report back).

As I don't have much to report on so far this year I thought I would report on my brief experience of growing beardless irises from seed. So far I have tried a couple of different methods and I keep a log of what kind of yields I obtained from the different methods.

The first method I tried was to sow the seeds in compartmentalised seed trays that sat on capillary matting with the other end of the matting placed in a tray of water (based on some descriptions in Currier McEwens' book). This was kept indoors by a South-facing windowsill. They were sown towards the end of February and the first seed appeared 35 days later (at the end of March). At the end of June seeds were still germinating. The results from this method were good with one of the Siberians reaching 100% germination rate (rather pleasing for a first attempt at growing irises from seed). All of the Siberians seemed to do well via this method as did some of the Spuriae. By August they had been planted out in the garden and were already over six inches tall.

The following year I tried the same method again – this time the seeds were sown in the middle of January and had to be placed by an East-facing window as this was the only one available. The first couple of months after the irises had been sown were very gloomy. The germination results from this were very poor with few of the Sibericae germinating at all. Due to the disappointments of the Spring I decided to try a different method as described by Thomas Tamberg in an earlier newsletter where the seeds are grown on Perlite in kilner jars. Although this method seemed rather fiddly (to the uninitiated anyway) it did provide much quicker results and those that germinated did so much sooner, and those that didn't could be discarded. This provided very good germination rates for some Ensata seeds. The germination rates for the Sibericae was still good but I think it was somewhat hampered by my rather inept attempt at cutting the seeds (harder with the Sibericae as they are so much smaller - I think I could do with some training on this!). This method was good but had the disadvantage that I couldn't sow all the seeds I wanted in one go as I didn't have enough kilner jars (or room in the airing cupboard). I'm not sure which my family have found worse, having half the dining room table taken up for a few months or never being able to find any pyjamas for kilner jars! This year I have made another attempt with the seed trays on the East-facing windowsill and once again have had problems with very little sunlight during the early weeks and so at the moment very little is coming. However the *I. innominata* seeds seem to be germinating well in spite of the problems. As for next year I am currently undecided whether to have another attempt at cutting the seeds (they say practice makes perfect anyway) or whether to have another go with the seed trays but leave the sowing until later when there is more chance of getting some sunshine (whenever that may be!). If anyone has any suggestions they would be gladly received. Once in the garden most seemed to have survived fairly well. A few of the Sibericae flowered the year after sowing, but most flowered the following year. On the whole I have found that the Sibericae do well, the Californicae and the Ensatas seem to grow quite well but as yet I have been unable to get any to flower. We'll have to wait and see what this Summer holds in store.

Just a brief update on the Iris events of this Summer.

This year I managed to attend the Harrogate Spring Flower Show, Chelsea and Hampton Court Flower Shows. I enjoyed them all very much and they offered many interesting ideas, unfortunately I only ever seem to see a very small number of beardless irises. It would certainly be good to see more. I particularly enjoyed the Harrogate Spring Flower Show as it was the first time I had attended and was surprised by the large size of the event and the number of exhibitors (many of which are the companies that exhibit at the large London shows).

The seeds I sowed this year didn't germinate particularly well. Some did come later so it wasn't too much of a disaster, however my thoughts have now turned to what to try next year.

I certainly had some welcome surprises in the garden this year. The Sibericae did very well as always and put on a good display. The highlight however had to be that three of my Californicae seedlings flowered after a few years of waiting. It was definitely worth the wait as they were very pretty - each of them produced several flowers and lasted fairly well.

SCOTLAND – As previously reported Brita Carson, having moved recently, should have better observations of the irises next year. When she wrote to me in August, Brita was sitting in a sea of half-empty cardboard boxes. Brita is publicising the beauty of irises and took many pots of different irises to the show 'Gardening Scotland' held at Ingliston, Edinburgh at the beginning of June for a stand representing the Hardy Plant Society.

#### **SOUTH EAST REGION - Olga Wells**

Very few *I. unguicularis* flowered in my garden this season - probably due to them needing a move to sunnier areas, or having been so moved. Other folk in the south east had bountiful blooms in spite of the incessant winter wet. Mature clumps and second-year seedlings of PCIs mostly survived and flowered in rootier parts of the garden but a complete batch of 'Ring O' Roses' seedlings vanished in a more open and therefore wetter patch. ('Ring O' Roses' (R.'91) is one of Nora Scopes great plants that does well in the most adverse conditions, surviving all kinds of neglect.) I heard Peter Maynard on the south coast mention that some of his PCIs had also completely vanished. (See also Rev. Fr. Philip Jones' report. - Ed.)

Some of the Siberians did not flower well, although they had been given extra fertiliser in the spring to help them get over the leaching effect of all that winter rain. Old favourites like 'Cambridge', 'Silver Edge', 'Mrs. Rowe' and 'Summer Sky' had few flowers and 'Harpwell Happiness' none at all! The non-flowerers have had chunks removed and placed in fresh soil. 'Soft Blue' in the garden and large seedling Siberians clumps on the allotment did their usual best and flowered like mad, but very few "crosses" took. Newer Siberian seedlings had some interesting flowers appearing - some with blue- or violet-veined falls over an ivory or creamy yellow ground. One had the half of its falls at the heart of the flower a deep yellow, the lower half of the fall an Oxford blue. Another was ivory with fall hafts and edges a pale sky blue, six buds on two branches and terminal in its first bloom year but with the most peculiar shaped flowers with every petal edge on the falls rolling under.

Disappointingly, the two spurias I had from Wisley three years ago have still not troubled themselves to flower. 'Janice Chesnik' has not really even grown well on the allotment and I suppose 'Destination' gets a lot of "elbowing" from its neighbours in my "thugs" border. I shall resist moving it and hope for better things next year.

The best "doer" was, again, 'Blue Lassie' apart from some seedlings from Charles Jenkins 'Baby Chick', again on the allotment. These vary from 18in high with two rather indifferent lowers to super four and six-flowered forms anything up to 4ft tall in varying shades of yellow. I thought that was it for the year as far as the "beardless" were concerned until I saw glimpses of colour among the clumps of foliage. They were seedlings of Philip Allery's 'Aldridge Prelude' flowering in their second year; mostly lilac-mauve like their mother but one a delicious pale lilac pink and another a six-fall white. They seem to have done better than I would have expected in open ground; obviously enjoying the winter rains, the mulch and soil containing fair amounts of a powdered gel substance (normally used as granules in hanging baskets and tubs). This has apparently maintained a level of moisture in the soil but has prevented it becoming either waterlogged or too dried out. It was something I started doing in the south east's 'drought years'. Remember those?"

SOUTH WALES – Our new regional representative, Caroline Derbyshire, tells me that South Wales has enjoyed a good iris season, with the right mix of warmth and moisture. This has encouraged good periods of bloom in *ensatas* and *sibiricas*, and with early warmth so essential to *louisianas*, these too have responded. Caroline hopes to contact other B.I.S. members in the South Wales area in the near future. I share her conviction that this area is ideal for the cultivation of many beardless irises and welcome her enthusiastic approach and creative drive.

SOUTH WEST REGION – The Group is fortunate in having Tim Loe, a new member, willing to act as a representative for this region. We look forward to his future reports. Having attended a grandson's wedding in Bournemouth earlier in the year I decided to extend my travels into Dorset and Cornwall, visiting Group members where convenient. Of particular interest to members will be the proximity to the Eden Project and the Lost Gardens of Heligan of a new member, Mrs. Patricia Howard of Hidden Valley Gardens, Treesmill, Nr. Par, Cornwall PL24 2TU, (Tel: 01208 873225). The Eden Project near St. Austell is within ten minutes drive from Mrs. Howard's home and developing nursery. Comfortable B. & B. facilities enable visitors to start early in the day and so avoid or lessen waiting in the lengthy queues which this Project inevitably attracts towards mid-day onwards. Well worth a visit! – Ed.

## BEARDLESS IRISES ON WHICH MEMBERS HAVE REPORTED –

Ensata report. (Anne Blanco White)

After one of the wettest winters in living memory, the Ensata Trials at Wisley were very odd indeed. You will remember that there are two beds at the top of the Portsmouth Field and they have under-surface irrigation. Well, the top bed, which was probably planted first by a considerable margin, did very well – no ants nests, no chafers or the like. But the lower bed was a disaster area and we don't know why. The only cultivar to take off like a Concorde was Jack Ellis's 'Chance Beauty'. Now, as I recall it that plant is 99.9% *pseudacorus* and there is an awful possibility that it has got its roots into the irrigation pipes and has simply cornered all the water supplies. Wisley is to investigate because there may be a fault in the irrigation system and 'Chance Beauty' has just taken full advantage of the wet winter. All the same, it is curious that none of the other cultivars could have naturally followed suit. Next year we judge the current trial for the last time and it may be a very difficult situation where a lot of plants have to be replanted for a second trial because their performance this time wasn't their fault.

Some of you will remember that I keep some of my ensatas in a storm ditch which was exposed to a lot of trouble over the last winter. Sadly, they have suffered more than any of the other irises in that ditch. Even a Louisiana flowered satisfactorily. But the unfortunate ensatas were all in a group on a stretch of bank about 6' (2m) x 3' (1m) and far more of the debris got dumped on them than I realised. I did clean them up early in the spring and weeded them thoroughly around late May, but by mid-June they were completely overwhelmed again with weeds - nettles and goosegrass predominating. Still since there were clear signs of leaves at the earliest clean up, I think it is likely that if I have a blitz during August I shall find quite a promising show of life.

One of the oddities of this summer has been plants springing into active life which have just quietly sat and sulked in their flower beds. And one of mine was an ensata which I have been hoping was still alive for over a decade now. It is in the London garden and has all too clearly taken a dim view of its cultivation situation. The only trouble is that I think it is a species form. There was plenty of pollen and I did my best to act in place of the bees. The first flower opened towards the end of our drought when the weather was very dry and temperatures around 25°C (around 75°F). As far as I could see the pollen didn't set and it still looks like a wasted pod. The second flower came as the weather broke, though it was still hot, and I have hopes that this time it may have set. It would be interesting too hear from readers if they have noticed that ensatas in this country expect a conventional English summer in order to set seed. It may be that I should have had a small, battery operated fountain near the plant to keep the local humidity up.

### Iris ensata 'Gracieuse' and its siblings – Alun Whitehead

As 'Gracieuse' was the first ensata to raise our interest in this specie, it seemed a good starting point from which to explore breeding. 'Gracieuse' is distinctly early to flower. The first flower was about 14<sup>th</sup> June this year and the clumps were in full flower by 19<sup>th</sup> June. This is almost two weeks ahead of the other ensatas in the garden and if its offspring are similarly early they will give welcome additional early colour to the iris beds. Accordingly, in September 1999 I sowed some open pollinated seed from our plants and the seedlings were pricked-out into 9cm pots about May 2000. Initially, plants were left in the polytunnel until established and then moved outside. They were left like this to over winter and in the Spring 2001 they were potted-on into 1 litres. Nearly all of the seedlings flowered in the last two weeks of June.

'Gracieuse' is a 3-fall white with a violet-blue edge that fades into the white of each petal. From the appearance of the 45 seedlings, the seed appears to have been self-pollinated (not surprising as the other ensatas were mostly not in flower) and all are white with various variations. For instance, the edge can be narrower or broader than its parents. About a tenth had 6 falls showing that 'Gracieuse' contains the doubling gene (a lower ratio than predicted by Mendel's Law, but this is a small sample). Sometimes the edge is a good raspberry colour, in other cases it is similar to its parent. It is too soon to say if any of the seedlings will be any good, but several have been selected to grow on.

I should point out that 'Gracieuse', like many other ensatas in commerce in Europe is not registered and the name 'Gracieuse' in any case would not be valid. Jennifer Hewitt kindly advised that Iris 'Gracieuse' was a Tall Bearded registered in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and accordingly the name cannot be given again to another cultivar. Jennifer also advised that an 'ensata Gracieuse' was noted in commerce in France in the 1920s, but this was a double and our Gracieuse is single. By using

[www.irisregister.com](http://www.irisregister.com), I see that other ensatas in commerce such as 'Emotion', 'Fortune', 'Loyalty', 'Royal Banner', 'Ruby King', 'Sensation', and 'Signal' are also using names that have already been taken by TBs. It would be interesting to research the origin of names such as these and see what validity or history there may be for them. If anyone has done any work in this area, I should be pleased to hear from him or her.

Foetiidissima Report – It was sad to note from Anne's London report that she will not have any "fancy" seeds for sale this year. I have at least three members interested in such seed variations and there is no doubt that they cause considerable interest at a time when autumn's approach is confirmed. Tim Loe was good enough to send me a few seeds and I hope the seedlings will be available to those members next year. Ed.

Laevigata Report – The retirement of Norman Bennett as the Group's Laevigata representative was a sad loss. I am pleased to say that when I visited him this summer I found him active and well. Norman's vision in creating an extensive six acre water-garden from quarries at Chickerell, near Weymouth put him to the forefront of international water-lily culture and development. His son John now runs the business and several cultivars of *I. laevigata* hybrids and other water-loving irises are available from the shop. Ed.

Louisiana Report – When I read Anne's plea for a Louisiana Specialist in the last Newsletter I approached Bill and Ada Godfrey of Massachusetts and told them of the Group's need. They were most helpful but pointed out that their commercial commitments during the months of March to July annually left them little time to do much else. Ada's comments at that time were -

"We're still very unsure about taking on a job with such an imposing title as Louisiana specialist because all we do is grow them. If they die, we don't replace them. It's a shame Sue Pierce had such an unfortunate experience - keeping plants in pots or buckets to monitor the water would get on my nerves, too; especially with such low returns.

Louisiana irises (LA's), in their native habitat, the bayous and swamps of Louisiana, are gorgeous and thrive. They have very mild winters and summers, which begin in April, are very hot and humid to this northerner. Of course, we live in a different climate. Here in Massachusetts within 50 miles of Cape Cod, we have extremely cold winters and very hot summers compared to Britain's. For example, this past winter, we had drops in temperature to 15 below 0 (fahrenheit, that is) and it can get colder, especially with the wind chill factor. Snow arrived in November and we didn't see soil again until last week (March!). Summers can and do reach into the 90 and sometimes 100 degree range.

A few years ago, we'd gone on a garden tour in the western part of Massachusetts and Beccy Wong, one of the garden owners, asked the group if anyone would like to try Louisiana's. A few of us said yes and she gave us these long snaky looking rhizomes. There was a low spot in the garden, she explained, where water tended to accumulate and they grew well there.

Black Gamecock was its name and everyone should be lucky enough to grow this one first. It's a beautiful midnight blue with a gold signal in the middle and it's extremely rugged. In our ignorance, we grew it in an ordinary raised bed along with other bearded irises and some Shasta daisies for a while and it did fairly well, not marvelously but it bloomed. We had good friends who gave us advice on how to prepare beds to hold water-loving irises. Dig down about two feet. Line the bottom with plastic. We can buy a roll of it here, about 25 ft for \$5. Put plenty of manure or good compost in the bottom and fill with good loam, remembering that LA's are acid loving.

We prepared this bed between two concrete pathways then bought some black plastic edging which you use here to keep back the lawn from the beds, cut it up into strips to reach from path to path, and laid these strips about 4' - 6' apart. This bed, now, was about 60' and we'd bought a few more LA's by this time.

The reason for the black strips is to prevent the Louisiana irises from walking or stealing into each other's space. They're notorious for becoming entangled with each other and it's almost impossible to sort out which is which when they're not in bloom.

We planted them with the long rhizomes facing the way they'd be spreading so they wouldn't spill into the

next space too quickly. We found they can climb over black plastic too! They need to be planted about 2" below soil level with their rhizomes covered as the sun can scald them and they'll rot. We ran a sprinkler hose down the middle and left it on overnight. We had some pine bark mulch which looked very attractive and spread that over the top.

Anything will do as a mulch, including pine needles, hay, leaves (paper underneath is good as it rots away eventually). The mulch is to conserve moisture. We watered, perhaps, once a week with a little more often during the really hot days, town restrictions permitting. Last, we put in labels and made a note of where each one was to put on our computer.

They are voracious feeders as Sue found out. We put them on a three week feeding program - acid food of course - for the summer, with the last feed six weeks before first frost (which is supposed to be about the third week in September in our area).

They had full sun all day and around the time when the mid to late tall bearded were blooming, they came into bloom. There were real red ones, Red Echo, and Red Dazzler, Little Miss Sims in Raspberry purple with thin gold signal, a sky blue one which tended to lie down - a bad habit which some of the older ones have, yellows, and wine reds, purples, and lavender pinks.

During November, we bought hay or straw from the local farm supply store and placed about 3 - 5" over them with the leaves poking through.

Ours are beside a swamp, now, and the ice is so thick in mid-winter you can skate on it. (This is the place that was in Christine Rossetti's mind when she wrote, "In the bleak mid winter, frosty wind made moan".) When the snow has gone and the weather has become a little warmer, we'll take the straw off and leave just the mulch, adding a little more after a week or two when the sun has been able to warm the soil.

Incidentally, another good friend, Ernie Brodeur, told us that he'd found throwing LA seeds into a fish tank helped them to germinate. Well, we don't have a fish tank but I've put them in a margerine plastic tub, with the lid on, on the kitchen windowsill, shaking it now and then. This helped the seeds to germinate. You can plant them when they've germinated. These seeds, I understand from more knowledgeable LA growers need to be started off the first year or they are slower to germinate."

Editorial notes: In this and subsequent correspondence Ada Godfrey warned me that Louisianas can be sun scalded, causing the rhizomes to rot. It seems that at all times they must be covered with at least an inch of mulch. The impact of Sue Pierce's article and Anne's plea for a Louisiana Specialist has had several developments, this report from Ada Godfrey being one. There is also the possibility that there will be at least two nurseries in England; possibly three, which will list Louisianas in future catalogues.

'Black Gamecock' was included in a parcel sent to me by Bill and Ada Godfrey. It is also included in Simon Harman's catalogue and will probably feature in Alun & Jill Whitehead's stock in the future.

This exciting development has had the added benefit of introducing me to many interesting, unusual and rare plant species associated with the water garden; a happy reminder of sunny carefree days of my childhood, spent in visiting and dapping the local ponds and clay-pits of Cheshire, or fishing for gudgeon in the Rivers Cam or Granta in Cambridgeshire. If members would appreciate the inclusion of a feature on members' water gardens in a future newsletter please let me know.

PACIFIC COAST IRISES – Report Spring/Summer 2001 – Rev. Fr. Philip Jones

Last Spring I started growing the Species from seed. The seed was from America from the Society for Pacific Coast Native Irises (SPCNI). It is at least more than a year old. I was advised to sandpaper it; give it a dose of hot water; and not to expect anything to happen right away. However, some are beginning to germinate. I am concentrating on *I. innominata* and *I. tenax*. I am looking for smallish plants with narrow grassy foliage - my garden is very small and every few years I have to break up the clumps and replant in order to make some space. I have sown other species as well and we shall have to wait and see which of them intends to take up residence in Birmingham.

In the Fall 2000 edition of the Society's almanac there is an interesting article by George Gessert on breeding hybrids with *I. chrysophylla*. This, he says, is a modest iris, it flowers only a few inches above the ground. However, it crosses effectively with *I. tenax*. Even in the wild there are hybrid swarms in Lane and Douglas counties. The most notable example is 'Valley Banner' that was discovered by Ruth Hardy growing in a field twenty miles south of Eugene. She registered it in 1958. Irises resembling it are referred to as Valley Banner type hybrids. Many of these have dark vein patterns on pale backgrounds.

Where *I. chrysophylla* has been crossed with *I. innominata* other characteristics sometimes appear; broken vein patterns, dots and dashes in many configurations. First generation hybrids almost always have narrow flower parts but these disappear when crossed with broad-petalled garden hybrids. Photographs can sometimes be misleading but from the picture in The Almanac the first generation hybrids of *I. tenax* and *I. chrysophylla* have a certain charm. Some of the flower petals look like long teaspoons. It might lead to some interesting results if this characteristic was developed rather than replaced with something else. I have sown some 'Valley Banner' type seed and await developments.

In her report Anne Blanco White refers to problems at the Trials Ground at Wisley. The poor showing there with P.C.I.'s gives an impression that P.C.I.'s are difficult plants. This impression was unfortunately confirmed when I shared my own P.C.I.'s last Autumn with many friends. Wherever the drainage was poor the small plants have not survived the wet winter. I would suggest that growing them in clay pots would be a practical alternative.

**PACIFIC COAST NATIVE IRIS (PCNIs or PCIs) – WHERE DID THEY COME FROM?**  
(Re-produced from the S.P.C.N.I. Web-site with prior consent and grateful thanks! –Ed.)

<b>Family:</b> Iridaceae (irises and their relatives).	<b>Genus:</b> <i>Iris</i> (true irises)
<b>Subgenus:</b> <i>Limniris</i> (the Beardless irises; 13 series)	<b>Series:</b> <i>Californicae</i> (the Pacific Coast Native Iris)

**Beautiful wild irises form part of the exceptionally rich spring and summer flora in Washington, Oregon and California. Where could they have come from? And how did they get there?**

Asia and Europe host almost all of the nearly 300 recognized wild iris species. Only a couple of dozen, all members of the "beardless iris" group, somehow reached and still flourish in North America.

Botanists classify the wild beardless irises into several "series". Those growing along the Pacific Coast are members of the **series Californicae**. Their nearest relatives are probably among the Siberian irises (**series Sibericae**) ranging today between Japan, China and France. The Pacific Coast Native irises and most Siberian irises share the same count of 40 chromosomes.

Ancestors of today's Pacific Coast irises, like those of the other seven native American iris groups, probably reached the New World across the Bering Strait at various times during the Ice Ages when lowered sea levels left a broad land bridge between the two continents. Under favorable conditions, they extended their ranges eastward to the Atlantic shores and south at least into northern Mexico.

Glaciers periodically blanketed much of the northern hemisphere, making huge areas uninhabitable. Surviving iris populations must have spent thousands of years isolated in favorable places. When the frigid barriers retreated during the interglacials, some of the plants came once again into contact. But over time they had adapted and changed, and many retained their new distinctive appearance and choice of habitat. This story was repeated over and over again during successive Glacial / Interglacial cycles.

The isolation must have lasted long enough for irises from different areas to look and act differently, but not enough for them to become mutually infertile. When the ice retreated and their ranges once again overlapped, many were still able to cross and form hybrids. This seems to be the condition for all the PCI

species; they can even produce hybrids with some of the Siberian irises (although Cal-Sibe hybrids are almost always infertile).

### OTHER NEW WORLD NATIVE IRIS

With three exceptions, the only wild irises in the western United States are all members of the *Californicae* series. The other beardless irises growing wild in North America are:

<u>SERIES GROUP</u>	<u>IRIS SPECIES</u>	<u>GROWS NATURALLY</u>
Evansia	<i>Tenuis</i>	western Oregon
	<i>Cristata</i>	southeastern & central U.S.
	<i>Lacustris</i>	Great Lakes region
Longipetalae	<i>missouriensis</i>	Rocky & Sierra Nevada mountains
	<i>Longipetala</i>	lowland western California
Hexagonae	<i>Fulva</i>	lower & middle Mississippi Basin
	<i>Brevicaulis</i>	lower & middle Mississippi Basin
	<i>giganticaerulea</i>	lower & middle Mississippi Basin
	<i>Hexagonae</i>	lower & middle Mississippi Basin
Laevigatae	<i>Nelsonii</i>	lower & middle Mississippi Basin
	<i>Versicolor</i>	New Brunswick to Georgia
	<i>Virginica</i>	Indiana to Louisiana
Prismaticae	<i>Prismatica</i>	Maine to the Carolinas
Tripetalae	<i>Setosa</i>	Alaska, eastern Canada & Maine
	<i>Tridentate</i>	Florida, Tennessee, the Carolinas
Vernae	<i>Verna</i>	Kentucky & Georgia

SPURIAS – The Group has yet to hear of a volunteer “specialist” or “correspondent” for the Group to fill the existing vacancy, although I am enjoying corresponding by e-mail on a non-related matter with Nancy Nies of Bakersfield, CA who is the grand-daughter of the late Eric Nies, after whom the AIS award for Spurias was named. During a search for the web sites of the various North American Iris Groups I came across a very interesting web site facility for sorting out cultural problems. If a member has a problem it is published on the web site and comments are invited. It works! If any member of G.B.I. has a problem with spurias do let me know and I’ll publish the question and answer(s) in the next newsletter. Ed.

### COMPANIABLE PLANTS –

This article has been contributed by Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt who kindly responded to my request for such an article. This followed an article in the A.I.S. Bulletin from the world renowned Ed. Schreiner, of T.B. fame who kindly allowed me to develop his theme, but in this case applying it to beardless irises. Members are invited to send in their suggestions for mixed border or water feature plantings and these will be printed in a future newsletter.

Jennifer writes - “Although there are (have been for many years!) good intentions of moving more sibirica cultivars into my general herbaceous/mixed beds, the majority, together with the other beardless irises, are still in two areas of the back garden devoted almost entirely to Irises. Here and elsewhere, by accident or design, I have found some plants which like similar conditions, complement the irises in form and/or flowering times and generally make good companions.

The accident bit has come about because of an incurable habit of acquiring plants without having the ‘right’ place to put them just then and not wanting to leave them in pots forever, i.e. until the ideal spot is ready which it rarely is. So quite a few ended up popped in between the iris clumps for the time being and have mostly stayed there. There are also seedlings which have put themselves into the beds; I would never have expected sedums to survive there but some have and one has even proved to be different enough to be listed and named by a nursery. *Campanula persicifolia* is of course a very tolerant plant but even so has seeded around since the double ‘Hampstead White’ (syn. ‘Gawen’) was found a temporary/permanent home.

With heavy clay soil in a cold situation, plant interests have naturally tended to favour perennials which will flourish here. Top of the list for me are pulmonarias, nearly as much of an addiction as irises. They provide cheerful flowers from late winter onwards and the silvery leaves, whether spotted or almost all-silver, make clumps around the irises’ feet for many months. To give some height in the centres of the beds I am adding another love, thalictrums which have mauve or purple flowers (those with yellow flowers I prefer to grow elsewhere). Their foliage, too, provides a good contrast with that of the irises and they flower at the same time or later. The leaves mostly have a similarity to those of aquilegias which are

another good companion plant, though I prefer species or forms of *A. vulgaris* with small flowers and don't grow fancy hybrids.

Astilbes and hostas I find better in the damper parts with the versicolors, and hybrid hellebores provide interest in early spring but need to be where the drainage is better, at one end where the shrubs grown on the other side of a path draw off moisture.

A mixture – yes; a muddle – well, that too; it could all do with better planning rather than the ad hoc arrangement which has largely happened. And there have been failures but I won't go into them. There are other plants I'd like to try such as *cimicifugas*. What works here may well not succeed elsewhere; in drier gardens the sunny spots beloved of the irises might be unhappy ones for the pulmonarias, for example. But if I ever do get round to re-planning and –planting the general beds there are some ideas from the iris ones. I've even managed to forget an irid, *Schizostylis coccinea*, which has added itself in its normal scarlet and also a pink form so there is something extra in the iris beds into late autumn."

- Jennifer Hewitt

SEED LIST – One way in which the Group and its irises can be publicised is for members to undertake an energetic seed-sowing campaign and give the seedlings to friends and neighbours. Why not include a packet of iris seeds with your Christmas cards to friends and relatives, especially the younger generation, who you know to be interested in gardening? Another is to grow irises in your front garden so they can be seen and admired by neighbours and passers-by. In both instances growing seed can be a starting point. To encourage this here is a special offer of old seed to get you started before the B.I.S. list of the new season's seed is available. Most of it was harvested in the year 2000. Seed which is only one year old is still viable although germination may take a little longer, so it should not be wasted. Most of it was left over from the West and Midland Iris Group sales from its stand at the Three Counties Spring Gardening Festival at Malvern and this Group's display at Hollybush Nursery in June last.

Ref. No.

Ref.No.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. – <i>I. cretensis</i> ;  | 17. – Mixed <i>I. spuria</i> cultivars ex C.G.Iris Garden; |
| 2. – <i>I. ensata</i> – x 'Springtime Snow';  | 18. – <i>I. versicolor</i> ;                               |
| 3. – <i>I. foetidissima</i> – blue flowered form;   | 19. – <i>I. versicolor</i> x 'Between the Lines';          |
| 4. – <i>I. forrestii</i> ;  | 20. – <i>I. versicolor</i> x 'Silvington';                 |
| 5. – <i>I. magnifica</i> – (juno iris);   | 21. – <i>I. xanthospuria</i> .                             |
| 6. – <i>I. orientalis sulphurea</i> – a good form;  |  |
| 7. – <i>I. pacifica</i> (Pacific Coast) hybrids – mixed colours;  |  |
| 8. – <i>I. pseudacorus</i> hybrids – x 'Beuron';  |  |
| 9. – <i>I. pseudacorus</i> hybrids – x 'Mzchetica';   |  |
| 10. – <i>I. pseudacorus</i> hybrids – x 'Rocapina';   |  |
| 11. – <i>I. pseudacorus</i> hybrids – Yellow flag coll. Denmark;  |  |
| 12. – <i>I. setosa</i> (various forms);   |  |
| 13. – <i>I. sibirica</i> – blue (species);  |  |
| 14. – <i>I. sibirica</i> cultivars – (a)'Coronation Anthem'; (b)'Silver Edge';(c) 'Summer Sky'; and<br>(d) 'Sweet Surrender'; |  |
| 15. – Mixed <i>I. sibirica</i> cultivars, incg. ex Iris Garden at Chiswell Green;   |  |
| 16. – Mixed <i>I. sibirica</i> tetraploid cultivars;  |  |

(Note: It is safer to assume these seeds have resulted from open pollination, unless otherwise stated).

Cheques to the Treasurer please – 5 packets for £1.00; 10 packets for £2.00; 15 packets for £3.00 inclusive of postage and packing in all cases. Please order by ref. Number and include substitutes. Those who have not already purchased this publication are recommended to send an extra £1 to cover the cost of the B.I.S. publication "Iris Guides No. 2 – Raising Irises from Seed"

The Group is indebted to Mrs. Margaret Criddle, B.I.S. Seeds Officer, and to Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt, West and Midlands Iris Group, as well as the original donors, for seeds now on sale; also to Cy. Bartlett who has sent recently harvested seed from his own tetraploid *I. sibirica* seedlings; and to Norman Payne who has sent this year's seed from cultivars of *I. ensata* hybrids. It is hoped that this recently harvested seed will help Group publicity and recruitment following proposed web site development advertising seed for sale with notes of germination and cultural requirements, illustrated by pictures of the type of plants new members can expect. This special seed is available to members at a cost of 50pence per packet of ten seeds, including postage and packing. Requests and remittances to Treasurer please, U.K. postage stamps acceptable for small orders.

50p.



Tetra-Calsibe hybrid SSTT759



3/4-1/4 Tetra-Sibtosa hybrid SSTT541



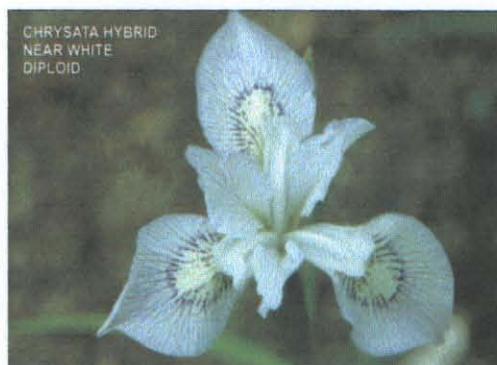
Tetra-Calsibe hybrid "New Start"



Chrysata hybrid (Diploid) SSTT221



3/4-1/4 Tetra-Sibtosa hybrid SSTT698



Chrysata hybrid - Near white diploid

Here are just a few of Dr. Tamberg's many new introductions. There are many, many more exciting hybrids. They include Calsibe; Chrysata; Chrysographes (Sino-Sibirica); Sibirica and Versilae, both diploid and tetraploid; in addition to Chrytosa; Chrysmatica; Chrythenica; Pseudacorus; Sevigata and Sibcolor hybrids.

These can be viewed by surfing <http://home.t-online.de/home/Dr.T.u.C.Tamberg>

Don't miss this opportunity to take an active part in the field of beardless iris hybridisation and contact Dr. Tamberg without delay. It's up to you!

## Stop press!

Plants for sale – I had intended to offer several named *I. ensata* plants, including some gifted by Dr. Currier McEwen, ex Wisley Trials, for sale this autumn, with profits to the Group, to be applied to our website development. Unfortunately this was delayed but I am now in a better position to help with the display planned at B.B.C. Gardeners' World Exhibition at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, in June next if provisional arrangements are confirmed. (See below). If members have any particular requirements I shall be happy to reserve plants for them, but would appreciate early notification.

Members' requests – Mrs. Margaret Criddle, our Seeds Officer, wishes to add A.I.S. Bulletin 289 (April 1993) to her library. If any member is able to help please contact Margaret direct. Address on front page.

Convention celebrating British Iris Society's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday – Bristol, May 2002. - The organisers are still hopeful that this Convention will go ahead as originally planned. Do remember to make your reservation before the 31<sup>st</sup> December.

B.B.C. Gardeners' World Exhibition, N.E.C. Birmingham, June 2002 – I understand that the Executive Committee of our main body, The British Iris Society, is considering the possibility of manning a stand at the B.B.C. Gardeners' World Exhibition to be held at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham, from 19th to 23rd June next. If so it is likely that Group members will be asked for help both in manning the stand and in providing quality plants in sufficient quantity to maintain the display over a five-day period. Details are awaited and if they arrive in time they will be printed here. This will of course affect the timing of the weekend display at Hollybush Nursery which it had been hoped would take place in June, 2002. Further details will be included in the Spring Newsletter. – Ed.

