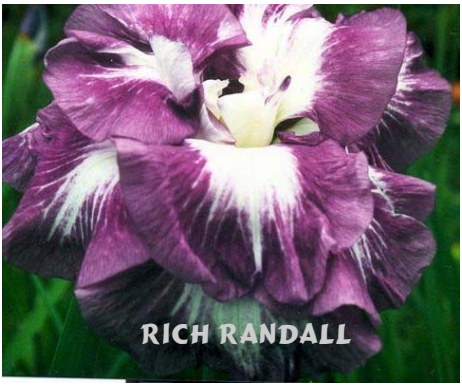
The Review

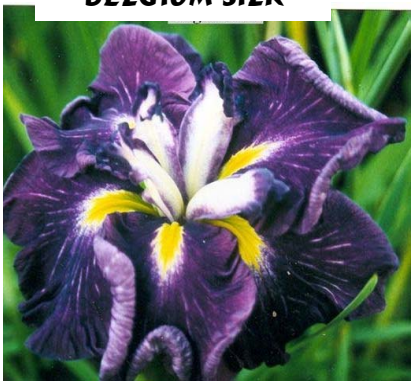
The Group for Beardless Irises

Issue No. 2 Autumn 2005



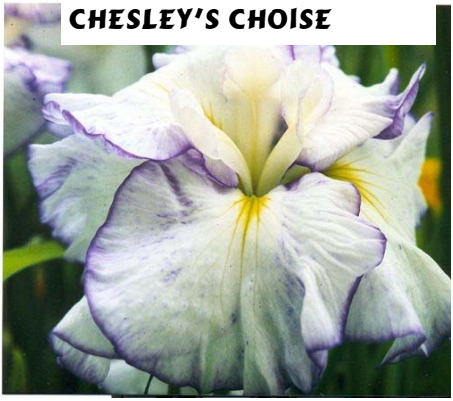
BELGIUM TREASURE

BELGIUM SILK



BELGIUM WARRIOR

CHESLEY'S CHOISE



PHOTOGRAPHS INSIDE COVER

All cultivars on the facing page have been introduced by Willy Hublau, from Belgium, a hybridiser who has been producing new exciting ensatas for over 25 years. Now his huge collection of 450 different Iris ensatas is made up of cultivars, old and new and the many selected seedlings. If anyone is interested in buying any of these ensatas or others please get in touch with Alun Whitehead before the end of the year. We hope to send a combined order to Willy in spring sharing the costs from Belgium pro rata. Not only are they beautiful plants themselves but it is a great way to introduce some new blood into a hybridising programme.

BELGIUM CROWN:Hublau, Willy. Reg. 2002. 97 F5-1 31" (80cm) EM 6 Medium blue, cream rays, yellow green signal; style arms white, top blue C 7 x Midsummer Happiness

BELGIUM SILK : Hublau, Willy Reg. 2002. 2000-01 30" 75cm M6 Deep purplish Bordeaux, small lighter purple rays, deep gold yellow signal; style arms white, dark Bordeaux edge Electric Glow x Mandarin sdlg.

BELGIUM TREASURE: Hublau, Willy Reg. 2002. 99-002 31 80cm M3 S.- purple with darker rays, small silver edge; style arms grey blue; F- grey blue with hint of purple, purple rays, signal yellow with green rays G1 x Gosho Asobi

BELGIUM WARRIOR: Hublau, Willy Reg. 2002. 98H1.6-2 33" (85cm) ML 6 Mandarin purple, dark yellow signal surrounded by blue spot; style arms fluorite purplish blue E 5-1: (Stippled Ripples x unknown import from Japan) x Midsummer Happiness

CHESLEY'S CHOISE: Hublau, Willy 2002, Sdlg. 96E 15-1 JI (6 F) 75 cm M. White with hints of fuchsia lavender, small dark fuchsia purple edge, green signal and rays; style arms white crème midrib, hint of yellow and purple. B22: (3-F sdlg Walk in Beauty) x Silver Cascade. Selected by my USA friend Chesley Poole.

RICH RANDALL: Hublau, Willy, Reg. 2002: Sdlg 98 G 6-3 JI (9 + F.)80 cm ML; Snow White, large old rose edge with white rays, style arms white. Registered in honour of my friend Rich Randall.
Photographs by Willy Hublau

CYLDE REDMOND Claude, Arny, c.1970. 76cm. M. Cornflower blue self, and yellow signal. An easy Louisiana which flowers regularly. In 2005 it was awarded and AGM, Award of Garden Merit.
Front cover, photograph by Alun Whitehead

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Brita Carson

It is always good to congratulate award winners and especially nice when they are members of the Group. Recognition doesn't come easily and those who receive them have put a lot of single mindedness into their achievement. We do admire all the dedication it took to get there. It is a win win situation because we see the fruits of your labours and you have the pleasure of winning.

The Wetland Trials ended this year and Cy Bartlett, Mary Betts, Brian Hersey, Jennifer Hewitt, Tomas Tamberg, Norman Payne and Olga Wells all had entries in the sibirica and wetland trials that were recommended for awards. There was unfortunately no Dykes Medal again this year.

Olga received the Pilkington award for being editor of the Year Book for five years. It is a stressful job making sure everything is correct and working to a deadline. Congratulations on such a good job done.

Alun Whitehead got the Bob Nichol award for all his work for the BIS; the website and for doing the hard work lifting the irises from Wisley and organising the plant sales. It is a very valuable source of revenue for the BIS. It is also an excellent opportunity for our members to acquire new cultivars, accurately named, at very reasonable prices.

The Hugh Miller Trophy, which is awarded annually to the most deserving cultivar of a beardless iris in the Dykes Trial, went to diploid sib. 'Granny Jean' bred by Cy. This iris got its AGM in 2002.

Alun and Jill were righted chuffed to get a Highly Commended for their plant stand at the Spring show at Malvern. These stands are outside and this award is equivalent to third place after gold and silver. Very well done but now we want to hear that it will be silver next time and I'll make a trip down to see it. Can't have them resting on their laurels. They obviously thrive on hard work.

I have apologies to make to Galen Carter and Jeff Dunlop. We are fortunate to have Galen Carter back as our Laevigata specialist after me missing her out of my original roundup. Very sorry about that. I have another apology to go to Jeff Dunlop (and not "Jim" as in the seed list) who has been so generous in sending us seed from USA, of his special crosses. I am very sorry about an incorrect name. (Please do let me know if and when I make mistakes).

The specialists will try to answer any questions you may have about the species and you can contact them by letter, phone or email. You can also send queries to me and I will pass them on.

Continued page 8

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Raymond Bomford

Firstly, I must collectively thank those members who responded with thanks to the Group for the packets of seed which we sent out last time.

Without being accused of repetition ad nauseam, I will again stress that the sowing of seed is the main way of improving the stock of any plant species. Little by little using seed from various sources some slight differences will appear and all plant breeders build upon that. As far as I can see, a mere amateur on such scientific matters, a chance seedling of ours may just equal a seedling that has generations of recorded parentage behind it. After all several prominent and renowned breeders contribute seed. We owe them a great debt of gratitude for their generosity. I can only hope that members do their best with the resultant seedlings.

I usually gripe about the weather as do most gardeners and farmers but the world weather patterns have been horrific this year. Now largely forgotten, by the populace in general, because of the much more widespread and dramatic hurricanes in America and devastating earthquake in Kashmir, but back in June there was a "mini tornado" only eight miles north of here in the southeast of Birmingham. Many streets of houses were left roofless and the inhabitants homeless caused by this weather. A slightly different time scale and wind direction and my own house and garden would have suffered a similar fate.

Was it a unique and one off occurrence or is it to be expected? That is the worrying question for the whole country: but then what can we do? Whatever happens we must plough on, and retreat to our gardens in the same sense that we dive under the sheets when we hear a strange noise in the night. At least I do.

Now a little note about myself. I have been somewhat absent and removed from the iris world this summer. At the end of May, in the dead of night, my car was vandalised, firstly by the removal of two wheels and then next morning after I had discovered the crime, in full daylight the miscreants returned, smashed the rear window and also stole my spare wheel.

Later in the week, whilst still conveniently jacked up by these scoundrels, several attempts were made to smash the front windscreen. The interior of the car is littered with minute razor sharp shards of glass. The window buckled and bowed but is still more or less intact. Full marks to the safety designers of these front windows.

By a somewhat circuitous coincidence this, to what most people would consider a major personal disaster, has been, to me, a great blessing in disguise. Just before the car was wrecked I had been invited to join a small

group of fellow enthusiasts to visit Sikkim again next April. I consider myself very lucky and privileged to be invited.

So I have not had the car repaired yet, not just out of my natural indolence, but by walking approximately two miles to and from the centre of town each day I should, by April, be as fit as I have been for over twenty years and raring to go.

Added to this healthy turn of events, I will have saved a considerable sum by not buying fuel. At my age I realise only too well how very fortunate I am to be so blessed in being able to even contemplate the coming of next spring and the trip ahead.

It has long been one of my ambitions to see one of the great plants of the world, *Rhododendron griffithianum*, flowering in its home forests. It should be a great sight. The inconvenience of being without a car will be of no consequence at all: should all go well. I hope to keep you posted in the future.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Anne Blanco White

It is high time this Group had a new and more energetic secretary. It is many a year since I took over from Joan Trevithick and we are now re-established with a really good team – Ray Bomford, Alun Whitehead, Brita Carson and Philip Allery – but there are always things which don't properly belong to any of them and a secretary is needed to deal with those. A potential candidate does not need to have a comprehensive knowledge of beardless iris groups: it is quite astonishing how quickly the information can be acquired and there are plenty of people to help.

So if any of you would be interested in learning more about these irises and in learning more about your fellow members, do get in touch with me as soon as possible.

Anne can be contacted either
Phone: 020 7435 2700
Email: anne@blanco-white.demon.co.uk
Write: Mrs Anne Blanco White, 72 South Hill Park, London, NW3 2SN.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Alun Whitehead

Please let me first of all welcome the new members:
Roy Harris, Woodlands, Huddisford, Woolsery, Bideford, Devon EX39 5QX
Mrs. M. F. Nicholls, 15 Manor Close, Totton, Southampton SO40 9DJ
Mr & Mrs D. Pollitt, Cowsden Green Farm House, Cowsden, Upton Snodsbury, Worcs WR7 4NX
Miss Barbara Sansum, 27 Doncaster Way, Upminster, Essex RM14 2PR
Mrs. Carol Tummon, 44 Ely Close, Feniton, Honiton EX14 3EY
Lawrence Hardisty, 2 Wheatland Grove, Aldridge, Walsall WS9 12OS
Mrs Julie Brown, 100 Field Lane, High Heath, Pelsall, Walsall, WS4 1DN

A full membership list will be enclosed in the spring newsletter and members are encouraged to contact others living in their locality. All plants people are good-natured and keen to share knowledge and so you can be assured of a friendly response. More particularly, for members living far away from large iris displays, this may be a valuable opportunity to see other irises and make new friends.

As Treasurer, I can confirm that our finances are still in good order. Subscriptions, seed sales and plant sales have all made roughly equal contributions in 2005 and there should again be a surplus. A big thank you to Philip Allery for his personal interest and enthusiasm in breathing fresh life into the seed sales.

Income and Expenditure for 2004

Income		
Subscriptions	115.00	
Donations	26.00	
Seed Sales	16.00	
Plant Sales	295.80	
Interest	0.72	
Sub-total	453.52	
Expenditure		
Postage for Constitution Circular		-40.24
Net change in Funds Held		413.28

At December 31, 2004 the balance at HSBC was £1,131.67

These figures are slightly flattering as the cost of the 2004 Review of £151.11 was paid in 2005 and will be reflected in that year's figures.

I am grateful to Chris Towers, the BIS Treasurer, for independently reviewing the Group's income and expenditure for 2004. A copy of his certificate can be sent to anyone interested.

2006 SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE

Please send your cheque for **£4.00** for UK & Europe; **£4.50**, elsewhere payable to: ***The Group For Beardless Irises*** in respect of your subscription for 2006 to: The Membership Secretary, GBI, Aulden Farm, Aulden, Leominster, HR6 0JT.

If more convenient you can pay for 2 or 3 years subscriptions in advance

Please include your name, address, telephone number and email address. We will publish a list of members periodically. Please indicate if you would prefer that your details are not included.

NEW SECRETARY REQUIRED – PLEASE APPLY

There is an old phrase, "wear the old ones out first". Unfortunately, we have succeeded in doing this and so we thank Anne deeply and warmly for the many years of service to the Group. Without her knowledge and good sense, we would have foundered long ago.
We hope that we can rely on her future input and expertise.

So now we must start the search for a new Secretary. What does the job involve? In the strictest sense, very little. The group secretary makes sure that we remain within the new constitution and deals with any general correspondence with third parties. As the group does not currently hire speakers or use venues, there is very little needed in this way. A report on the group's activities has to be produced for the BIS Yearbook. Anne's strengths have been in the clear view she has had of what we need to be doing and has acted as a steadying hand when we have all tried to pull in different directions. Most of the work of the group is concentrated in the autumn with the publication of the Review and in late winter in the publication of the Newsletter. At other times of the year, our own plants must take priority.

Nowadays, due to the many pressures on our time, we need to communicate via email. We can handle the group's business at times that suit us, whereas letters, faxes and telephone calls tend to take more time, though are naturally used if required. Many more images are being shared and this is not possible without email. So a computer is necessary.

So who would this post suit? This question cannot be separated from the future direction of the Group. Plant societies generally are suffering from a falling membership. This may be a demographic change and something we have little control over. However, the group's officers are ambitious and over the next few years intend to give this group the best future prospects possible, no matter what the tides of time throw at

us. Hopefully, you will see from these last two Reviews that the world of beardless irises still offers much excitement and plenty to explore. The bewildering pace of the new technologies should help us to make information much more readily available. So if you are interested and would like to make a positive contribution, want a job that offers no pay, apply today to the retiring secretary—Anne Blanco White or the editor—Brita Carson.

EDITORIAL contd.

This edition concentrates on ensatas and the long accepted conditions that are best to grow these wonderful, colourful irises. Several articles have been written on the soil and how the pH levels affect the vigour of the plant including branching and bud formation. I had not read either C A Swearengen or Max Steiger but found the deductions and conclusions of each not only interesting but started me thinking a lot more about my own soil conditions. We felt that, although not written yesterday, they still hold true to-day. I would be happy to publish any observations or comments that you may have about them.

In the 1959 Year Book, after Max's article, are further notes on ensatas by Jean Cayeux. I liked this quote from her article,

> "The cultivation of *Iris kaempferi* is not difficult, but one can say categorically that the results are never half-way: it is all or nothing. Well looked after, one root should easily produce ten the next year, and after two years I have counted 50 flowering stems from such a modest start. Wide spacing, at least 2-2½ feet between plants, is advisable to allow for this rapid increase, and it is essential to provide plenty of food."

Yes, well, nothing to it really!!

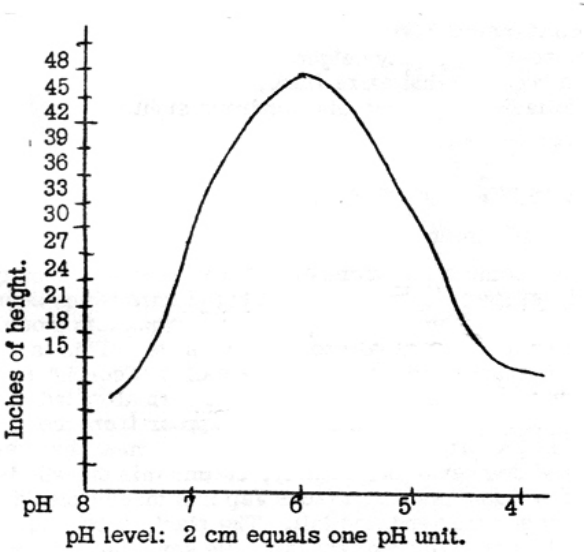
The Wetland Trials finished this summer and continuing the theme the photographs are mainly ensatas. Next year the trials to finish are the PCIs and Spurias. We would appreciate any articles you would like to write for us particularly on these irises.

The Iris Days were not really successful last year, as many suspected, so perhaps you can suggest some other ideas for attracting new members to our Group. The best solution is, of course, personal recommendation which will always produce more sincere and long lasting members. Sharing plants and seed with other gardening friends may also entice them to join. Showing off good looking plants in our own gardens in bloom time might also be worth trying. All new members will be welcome but "perennial ones" would be even better.

SOIL ACIDITY AND ITS COMPARATIVE EFFECT ON PLANT GROWTH

C A Swearengen

This is a report on 35 complete tests where the acidity was the only variable of consequence. Soil was rich clay-loam to which sufficient potash and phosphate had been added to bring the test to “high” for potash and “very high” for phosphate, thirty days after the addition. Only a small quantity was required as the soil had been well treated with well rotted cow manure and compost and the humus content was known to be high. Plants were two years old at the time of the tests and were well established in their respective locations. Plant tissue tests were run at each location to determine as nearly as possible the comparative amounts of nitrogen, potash and phosphate present. The results were very conclusive as to the effect that soil acidity has on the assimilation of necessary nutrients where they exist in sufficient or excess quantities.



A curve was plotted to show the height at the various pH levels and it indicates a desirable range of pH 5.5 – 6.5 with 5.8 appearing to be the optimum level at which greatest growth occurs when nutrition is not a factor. Plants at nine additional locations were also tested where the nutrient level was at the top end of the low range and the pH at or very near optimum. In these locations plants were less

vigorous and from 7 – 10% shorter, but the number of buds was not diminished nor was branching less than under ideal conditions. Where the pH level was changed in the 35 sites the effect was quite noticeable. At pH 6.8 no plant retained more than one branch and no branches were found above pH 7.6. No plants lived past pH 8.0. On the other end of the curve the first branch was lost at pH 4.8 and none were found at the pH 4.2 level. No plants lived below pH 3.8.

It is my conclusion, based on these tests and years of experience, that while plants may live and grow to maturity, poor results will be had unless a pH range from 5.5 – 6.5 is maintained.

No tests were run in the area where the bearded irises are grown but no serious effects were noted where the range was known to be about pH 6.5, nor was there any disease noted but some of this might be due to cultural practices. It would seem desirable that similar tests be run with the bearded irises.

This test was run only with Japanese irises.

This article was first published in the 'The Review' of the Japanese Iris Society in 1964 and we thank them for allowing us to reproduce it here.

ACID AND THE ENSATAS

Anne Blanco White

This is a very interesting article, but it worries me. The Japanese have been growing and breeding these plants for centuries and it is clear that with their taste for having them indoors so much, a standard potting compost would be required and naturally this would be peat based simply because of the texture of peat. Of course, since it is nearly sterile in its own right plenty of fertiliser had to be added.

So it follows that all breeding would result in plants being selected for good results with this type of compost. But this fails to take geology into account. Soils can be surprisingly mixed up and you may well have an acid surface on an alkaline base or chunks of chalk mixed into your neutral clay. In effect an ensata iris in the wild may well appear to be growing in an acid bog, but the water supplies may be suspect. There is a well known bog in northern England which is as peaty as you could wish for, but the waters which supply it are just as alkaline. (I'm sorry, but I've lost the reference so can't give its name.)

The great name in breeding calciphile irises was that of Max Steiger in Germany. He devoted many years to breeding plants which were happy on chalk or limestones. Initially, of course, he lost a great many seedlings, but

expected that. In due time he raised plenty to play with and the problem was to breed plants which stood comparison with the acid raised forms around. He did that and I have seen some of his later plants. Sadly, his health broke down before he had managed to convince the iris growers of the world that these plants could be useful and I think they have now all disappeared. And it is an awful thought that gardeners finding them growing in alkaline conditions probably thought it wasn't good for them, took them to acid environments and killed them off.

It is important that any of you who breed the ensatas should simply aim for plants which will do well in 'any good garden soil'. They will always need plenty of water from early in the year through the growing season, but they should not need a special acid bed let alone one made from peat.

So, if in the course of garden visiting, you come across ensatas happy in a chalk stream bed publicise their whereabouts. Some people will leave a happy plant alone to go on growing.

LIME-RESISTANT *IRIS KAEMPFERI*

Max Steiger

Six years of enthusiastic work in breeding ten thousand *Iris kaempferi* seedlings yearly has made it possible to succeed, step by step, in an aim that but a few years ago seemed to be wholly out of reach.

Even the most recent publications dealing with *I. kaempferi* state that the first requirement is an acid soil free from lime, which is fatal to the Japanese Iris! This hypothesis has had such a discouraging effect that, in spite of the success which Japanese breeders have enjoyed for centuries, the Tall Bearded iris has wholly outdistanced *I. kaempferi* in popularity.

It is small wonder that most iris-lovers are discouraged if they hear: "Lime is fatal; acid soil and a plentiful water-supply are indispensable!" Places which satisfy all three conditions are rare, and the few gardeners willing to cope with these difficulties in their desire to see the beauty of *I kaempferi* in their gardens have met with nothing but disappointment.

I. kaempferi is frequently believed to be an aquatic plant, and as a consequence it has been frequently planted in ponds or in marshy soil, where, however, the plants either have perished promptly because of the alternate thawing and freezing which occurs in our Central European spring, or, it they survived, were so stunted that their flowers were never able to attain their full size or their true clear colours.

On the other hand the Japanese, masters of the art of growing these irises, provide moisture in spring only, until bloom is over, and, later on,

never flood the ponds, which have been deepened in order to hold the plants.

When, six years ago, in the autumn of 1953, I began to procure seeds and plants of the latest high-grade varieties, the Higo strain from Japan and the so-called Marhigo strain which Walter Marx, of Oregon, USA, had bred from the Higo strain, I was in blissful ignorance of all these prescriptions. At the same time I bought, from various sources in Germany, *I. kaempferi* seeds which came from varieties imported from Japan years ago. The first sowing was done in November in boxes filled with good garden soil, with which the seeds were covered to the depth of about half an inch. After thorough watering these boxes were exposed to the frost for a week and then placed in a warm room. Four weeks later, upon germination, the green of the young plants became visible. With true enthusiasm I inspected the seedlings perhaps a dozen times each day and when spring came had three hundred nice plants, although I had sown three times that number of seeds. Even today I cannot explain why I had such bad results from my first sowing, since in later years over 90% germination has been the rule.

My ignorance was so great that I did not hesitate to transfer these pampered plants as early as the beginning of April into a dry sandy soil. Inevitably, this caused the loss of many, but I was able to save about 150 by replanting in good garden soil with an ample addition of peat, and these thereupon quickly formed a vigorous stock.

Next summer I bought a very large quantity of seed, and in 1954 sowing was done by the end of September, once more, as in the previous year, in boxes which I had made myself from orange-boxes.

Since it seemed impossible to grow such a large number of plants indoors, the boxes were placed outside. The late autumn had been unusually warm, and when, at the beginning of December, I happened to visit the garden, which was about ten miles distant, I was surprised to find the boxes covered with iris-turf at least two in high. Practically every single grain of seed had germinated, and the seedlings showed admirable growth. Thousands and thousands again! Glad as I was to find such a splendid result, I was taken aback by the thought of what I was to do with such bounty if dire frost should set in. The boxes had therefore to be taken into our home, where we placed them in as cool a position as possible. Nevertheless growing did not cease, and since the seedlings were far too crowded in the boxes, disease set in. I was forced to transplant, and in no time every half lighted spot in our living rooms had its complement of *I. kaempferi*, merrily growing and growing! Two large tables crammed with further hurriedly finished planting-out boxes were placed by the windows, and living in the

rooms became hopeless. In spite of all my care thousands of plants were doomed, but I was able to plant out some ten thousand into the open ground in the following spring. All I had was a sandy soil, relatively dry, permeable, and poor in nutritious matter. Thus all I could do was to plant *I. kaempferi* directly by the side of the Tall Bearded irises. Nevertheless, I was relatively successful, the summer being moist and the lime apparently having been largely washed out in the permeable humus-lacking sand. It is true that a great number of plants perished, but thousands had grown strong, although they never reached full flowering size in consequence of their under-nourishment.

In the autumn of 1955 new seeds were once more bought, but for the most part I could by then use some of my own, as that summer I was able to admire the first flowers on the plants I had bought and on the seedlings of 1953. My enthusiasm knew no bounds, but I quickly found out that the Higo and Marhigo seedlings had much better flower qualities than the plants grown from German seed. This observation induced me to cross good varieties only, and the result was such a wealth of seed as I had never seen before with irises. The first harvest, in 1955, comprised about three hundred seed-capsules, and there must have been far more than ten thousand seeds. Some seed capsules from crosses of the most beautiful flowers were sown out at once; after having been soaked for two days, the seeds were cooled down for a week to 32° F., thinly sown out in boxes, and kept at a temperature of 68° F. The first seedlings appeared about four weeks later, and by the beginning of November 1955 I had several hundred vigorous plants. These were potted by the middle of January, the soil being a mixture of one-third loam, poor in lime, one-third peat and one-third rotted cow-manure. The temperature in the hot-house, which I had by then acquired, varied between 68° - 86°F, and growth was tremendous. Every fortnight a 1% solution of an acid artificial manure, free from lime, was given, and the plants were kept well watered. By the middle of April 1956 the plants, now vigorous, dark green and up to 20 inches high, some already with lateral growths, were put into open soil. In the summer 1956, about 50% these plants flowered: that is to say, I had found a way to grow one generation in one year, a process which usually takes two years.

The seed not used for lack of space in autumn 1955 was sown in the following February during a period of warm weather, in rows with a distance of 6 inches between, about half an inch deep, and so that the seeds just failed to touch each other. The sowing was done in an open box with a rich lime-free garden soil, with a pH value of 6.5. This box was always kept moist, and the small lime-content of the sprinkling water did not cause any visible damage. In cold winters germination took place

within 8 to 10 weeks, whereas in warm winters the first seedlings appeared in 6 weeks. Night frosts, here not unusual up to the middle of May, never damaged the young seedlings. These, which by the beginning of July had reached a height of 10 to 15 ins, were then planted direct into the open soil, at a distance of 12 ins apart. Experience has taught me that about 10% of the plants will flower in the first year after sowing, although with shortened stems and small blooms, but nevertheless, even at such an early date, they show their distinct flower-colours and patterns. The following year brings all the seedlings to full bloom, except, of course, for a small proportion of stunted plants useless for further breeding. The growing and planting method described has proved its value, and has always been adhered to in succeeding years.

In the meantime I had learned that essential improvements could be reached by applying suitable doses of manure, and by heavy watering in spring until after blooming. The vigour of the plants as well as the form and size of the flowers was greatly improved thereby. It may be of interest that out of five thousand seedlings originating from seeds collected in Germany from old Japanese stock, not a single plant could in any way compete with the latest Higo and Marhigo varieties. With a heavy heart I came to the decision that the whole of this collection of seedlings had to be scrapped.

In 1956 five thousand plants from the Higo and Marhigo strains and from the 1954 and 1955 seedlings (hot-house grown, second generation) flowered, and out of these only about one hundred plants were selected, as showing the most suitable properties to form a basis for all further breeding.

The finest seedlings from the plants grown in the hot-house in the autumn of 1955, the first generation of my own breeding, served as pollen-parents, while the selected one seedlings mentioned above were seed-parents. Pollination was done by removing all petals, and with the seed-parents the stamens as well, on the evening preceding the expected opening of the flowers. The moist pollen was spread on paper, dried in a room with a temperature of 77° F, and, by the aid of a pair of flat tweezers, put on the stigma of the seed-parent the same evening. Fertilization promptly took place, and very few plants show sterility. For the most part these are clearly evident, either from the lack of pollen or from the deformed stigma. The pollinated flower was provided with a small label giving the number of the pollen-parent. I have found that if, during the night after pollination, rain sets in, fertilization is chancy, and it is advisable to pollinate again on the following day.

New seedlings were planted in fertile and rather heavier soil, with hu-

mus-content enriched. This soil has a lime content of 6 to 8% and a pH value of more than 8.0. Out of about ten thousand seedlings, far more than half wholly perished in consequence of the high lime content, and a large part of the remainder proved to be highly chlorotic and thus of very poor vigour. Nevertheless, some few hundred were found of which a large proportion proved suitable for further breeding. The seedlings derived from these parent-plants, exceeding nine thousand in number, were planted in a field with a fertile clay soil, poor in humus-content. Again about 50% of the plants perished, but more than five thousand healthy plants survived, and fifty-four of these have this year already shown healthy flowers, some of them of great beauty. Those which have shown no bloom so far, originating from third and forth generation, have developed well during the summer, and there is every certainty that in 1960 all seedlings will bloom.

At this point the real sensation comes in: the lime content of the soil on which these five thousand plants have grown is surprisingly high, containing 21% lime on average. This goes to show that, for the first time, lime-resistant plants of *I. kaempferi* have been successfully bred, which no longer need to be grown in acid soil, and do not require special watering.

The way is now open to plant these really wonderful flowers in any and every garden, since they can be successfully grown under the same conditions as the majority of other garden plants; indeed, on account of their extraordinary vigour and rude health they are much easier to grow than many other garden treasures such as roses or dahlias. The sight in my garden of *I. kaempferi* alternating with Tall Bearded irises in no uncommon one, and it is quite striking to note how much better these new lime-resistant varieties defy diseases and frost-damage as compared with Tall Bearded irises. Only if in spring there should be a prolonged drought does it seem necessary to recommend watering.

It is only a matter of a relatively short time before the new varieties will have increased to such an extent that they can be offered to the trade at reasonable prices. Iris-lovers will then have the pleasure of enjoying iris-time for a full month longer than hitherto.

Should any BIS members happen to visit Southern Germany, and in particular Nuremburg, at the beginning of next July, they are cordially invited to inspect the flowers of this lime-resistant strain of *I. kaempferi*.

This article was first published in the 1959 BIS Year Book and as Anne says, Max unfortunately died before he could introduce his calciphile irises. The best way we could thank him would be for someone to take up the challenge and continue his work.

JAPANESE IRISES AND ACIDITY

Alun Whitehead

I must admit to cheating – honesty should always be rewarded! In the preparation of this Review I had the opportunity of seeing articles from the Chairman and Secretary, and this is definitely an unfair advantage. However, as the Chairman has mentioned Rhododendrons, I feel happier introducing them in this article and must thank him for triggering a memory. But firstly, I was behind the inclusion of two historic articles in this Review. The first by C A Swearengen from 1964. Many people quote that ensatas are best grown at pH 5.8, but are probably unaware of the origin. I found this article by following a reference in Currier McEwen's book "The Japanese Iris". However, this is not the whole story. We have an even older reference, an article by Max Steiger, who successfully raised seedlings at a pH greater than 8.0. This is a long article, but I feel its inclusion in whole was justified by the wonderful detail given. So we have two articles on the face of them contradictory. Where is the truth?

Before pursuing the ensatas too far, I think a detour into another acid loving plant is worthwhile. Rhododendrons will die if planted in alkaline conditions – most gardeners will agree with this. Unfortunately, life is a bit more complex. If you read the article "*Rhododendrons do grow on limestone*" in The New Plantsman[1] you will see a picture of *R. cuneatum* growing in a pH of 8.4 (anything above pH 7.0 is alkaline and this is probably as alkaline as you are likely to find). Originally, many thought that *all* Rhododendron species needed acid conditions and if they were found growing on limestone that there must be an acidic organic surface layer that the plants were growing in or alternatively that the limestone had a high magnesium content which counteracted the high calcium levels. If you read the article you will see that some species have adapted to alkaline conditions, but more interestingly the problems for the true acid lovers are not caused by the lack of iron or manganese, nor even the excess of calcium. I have not had a chance to find any follow up articles, but I think this is sufficient to show that the situation is very complex and that we should beware of accepted wisdom. Two other points of interest in the article are:

1) That pure rainwater is acidic with a pH of about 5.7 due to the carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. I had always assumed that this acidity was mainly due to pollution.
2) The reduction in rain or water levels in summer caused the pH to rise in these limestone areas.

Despite the hopes raised by the Max Steiger article, I think that Swearengen's findings are principally sound. If you try to grow the current ensata cultivars in soils of a pH greater than 8.0 they are very likely to die.

From experience, I think that some cultivars may be susceptible at a pH only just above 7.0 However, even if the cultivar survives, the growth is likely to be stunted and flowering reduced if grown in alkaline soils because acidity has a greater influence on plant behaviour than nutrient levels. At Aulden we have a neutral soil and have grown ensatas happily, with only the odd chlorosis problem which has been remedied by a watering of sequestrated iron (we use Miracid and the foliage has generally not shown improvement until the following year). The fact that the bud count and branching improved in the pH 5.5 - 6.5 range, seems a good enough reason for aiming for this soil acidity and as we need to have a good show of ensatas for our visitors, we increase the acidity of the beds by applying Sulphate of Iron (available in garden centres).

Max Steiger's aims were admirable and clearly from the article achievable, despite the loss of a large proportion of seedlings. We did not dash to acidify the ensata beds at Aulden because, from a similar feeling, we wanted to know which cultivars performed well with our current soil. I am surprised on reading his article that he was so successful with the newer Higo and Marhigo cultivars of the period. From our experience, these cultivars tend to be more pernickety about conditions than the older (misnamed/unregistered?) varieties found in the trade. It could be that the trade varieties are more adaptable to variations in watering rather than in alkalinity, as I had always supposed. Anyway, Max Steiger's results are very encouraging and no doubt we will have to include an article in the spring Newsletter on making an alkaline bed for ensata seedlings.

This idea also triggers another thought. It is known that ensatas will not establish well in the same soil where ensatas have recently been grown. Is it possible to raise new seedlings in this soil which might produce more versatile cultivars that can cope with being replanted in the same soil? On this point, it is worth noting that Gracieuse (of commerce) replanted in the same soil, did continue to grow but flowered at about half its usual height. Some cultivars don't even manage this in our experience. One last point is that Max Steiger, according to his article, did not water after flowering. Whilst the plants do not need as much water after flowering, we suspect that if they get too dry in our clay soil, the flowering the following year is adversely affected or in the worst case non-existent. So about once a month if there has been no significant rainfall, we give them a good soak until the autumn rains takeover.

Finally, whilst these articles are not included, I would like to say that I found the articles by Thornton M. Abell and Ben Hager in the American Iris Society Bulletin (c. 1970s[2]) very straightforward and a useful quick guide to the Japanese if you get lost in the detail.

[1] *Rhododendrons Do Grow on Limestone,* Anthony J. McAleese, David W.H. Rankin and Sun Hang. The New Plantsman, vol.6 part 1, March 1999. A second article in this edition was by David Kinsman, *Rhododendrons and Associated Plants Growing in Soils Overlying Limestone.* I found his pointer that lime is a term worth avoiding.
Lime can mean:

Calcium Oxide – burnt lime or quicklime
Calcium Hydroxide – slaked lime
Calcium Carbonate – limestone

and it is the last that concerns us. It was also noted that all ericaceous plants lack aerenchyma and cannot survive in waterlogged conditions or anaerobic soils. I know that it is important that ensatas have oxygen at the root, is there a connection?

[2] *Japanese in a Few 'Easy' Lessons,* Thornton M. Abell and *Understanding Japanese Culture,* Ben Hager.

NOTES FROM AULDEN

Alun Whitehead

SIBIRICAS

During the sibirica flowering time, many of our visitors admired Dear Delight (and were cross that we did not have any for sale). The flowers start as pale yellow as they open and fade to white giving a very pleasant effect. Another sibirica, which I noted was On And On, in this case because the flowers were almost all at the same height giving a very flat effect.

On another subject, I have been trying to locate the first British Dykes medal winner, Margot Holmes, for a member in the US. Despite several entries in Plant Finder, the actual plant is elusive. If any member has a piece, I would be grateful if they could contact me. We made a trip to Cornwall in the hope of finding stock, but it was just before the BIS AGM when we went to see Sissinghurst Castle that we came across a large clump labelled as 'Margot Holmes'. We had just seen the garden at Great Comp, which has a number of sibiricas and PCIs, and the two gardens are close enough to make an enjoyable day out. We are hoping to return in the spring to see them both again and hopefully this time Margot Holmes in flower.

I know everyone is busy but please contact us with your requests or write with snippets of news or information that would be interesting to everyone.

SEED LIST AUTUMN 2005: PHILIP ALLERY

THE GENUS IRIS: SUBGENUS LIMNIRIS: The Beardless Irises

SERIES TRIPETALAE

05/001	*setosa*	TH	Canada	
05/003	*setosa tricuspis*	CD	UK	

SERIES SIBERICAE: 28 CHROMOSOME HYBRIDS

05/004	x 'Chilled Wine'	AW	UK	
05/005	x 'Dance Ballerina Dance'	CD	UK	
05/084	x 'Dark Desire'	AW	UK	
05/085	x 'Dear Delight'	AW	UK	
05/006	x 'Fourfold Lavender'	AW	UK	
05/007	x 'Jac-y-do'	AW	UK	
05/008	x 'Little Blue'	AW	UK	
05/009	x 'Mrs Rowe'	AW	UK	
05/086	x 'Nottingham Lace'	AW	UK	
05/010	x 'On and On'	AW	UK	
05/011	x 'Purple Mere'	CD	UK	
05/087	x 'Shaker's Prayer'	AW	UK	
05/088	x 'Silver Edge'	AW	UK	
05/012	x 'Snow Prince'	AW	UK	
05/013	x 'Summer Sky'	AW	UK	
05/014	x 'Swank'	AW	UK	
05/015	x 'Vee One'	AW	UK	
05/016	x sdg. SSTT598 (ex Dr Tomas Tamberg)	CD	UK	
05/ 025	*sibirica,* blue sdg, good branching, long flowering	CD	UK	
05/026	*sibirica*, white seedling, 3 falls	CD	UK	
05/027	*sibirica,* mixed	AW	UK	

SERIES CALIFORNICEA - HYBRIDS

05/089	mixed forms and colours	PA	UK	

SERIES LAEVIGATAE: HYBRIDS

05/028	*ensata*, mixed	AW	UK	
05/030	x 'Blue Beauty' (3 falls)	CD	UK	
05/101	x 'Crystal Halo'	AW	UK	
05/031	x 'Darling' (3 falls)	CD	UK	
05/032	x 'Gypsy' (3 falls)	CD	UK	
05/033	x 'Gracieuse' (3 falls)	AW	UK	
05/034	x 'Katy Mendez'	AW	UK	
05/035	x 'Rose Queen'	AW	UK	
05/036	x 'Rowden Empress' (3 falls)	CD	UK	
05/037	x unnamed (3 falls)	CD	UK	
05/038	*laevigata* dark blue single hybrid	CD	UK	
05/039	*pseudacorus* x *ensata* x 'Chance Beauty'	CD	UK	
05/040	*pseudacorus mzchetica* 2004 seed	CD	UK	
05/041	*pseudacorus* x 'Turnipseed'	CD	UK	
05/090	*pseudacorus* - cream form	AW	UK	
05/042	*versicolor* cross HA-48 x 'Islands Cheer' pinkish	TH	Canada	

05/043	*versicolor* 04-GL-28 x 'RiopelIe' x 'Islands Cheer' pinkish-purple TH			
05/044	*versicolor* x 'Islands Cheer' x 'Wild Heart'		TH	Canada
05/045	*versicolor* 04-GL mixed colours - vigorous plants		TH	Canada
05/046	*versicolor* 04-29 GL pinkish-mauve hybrids HP		TH	Canada
05/047	*versicolor* 98-32. vigorous late blooming pink. HP		TH	Canada
05/048	*versicolor* cross 'Islands Cheer' x 'Riopelle' HP		TH	Canada
05/049	*versicolor* selected early dark pink OP		TH	Canada
05/050	*versicolor* mixed forms		PA	UK
SERIES SPURIAE - SPECIES & HYBRIDS				
05/051	*graminea* (ssp)		CD	UK
05/100	*orientalis* (ssp)		PA	UK
05/052	*spuria* cvs of mixed forms		AW	UK
05/091	x 'Betty Cooper'		AW	UK
05/092	x 'Blue Lassie'		AW	UK
05/093	x 'Cinnabar Red'	AW	UK	
05/094A	x 'Clara Ellen' x 'Custom Design'		AW	UK
05/095	x 'Gold Mania'		AW	UK
05/096	x 'Imperial Bronze'		AW	UK
05/097	x 'Russian White'		AW	UK
SERIES FOETIDISSIMAE				
05/053	*foetidissima,* yellow fls. (red berries)		PA	UK
05/054	*foetidissima citrina*		AW	UK
SERIES ENSATAE				
05/055	*lactea*		CD	UK
05/056	CM23C = *lactea* x self HP		BCJ	USA
HYBRIDS				
05/057	CM15C = *lactea* x 'Highline Coral' (F2)		BCJ	USA
05/058	CM21A = *lactea* x 'Purple Concerto' (F2)		BCJ	USA
05/059	CM30F = *lactea* x 'Twice Best' (F2)		BCJ	USA
05/060	CM38F = *lactea* x 'Elfin Sunshine' sib (F2)		BCJ	USA
05/061	CN06H = *lactea* x 'Little Splash' (F2)B		BCJ	USA
05/062	CN23A = *lactea* x 'Noble Roman' (F2)		BCJ	USA
05/063	CN31C = *lactea* x 'Perky Blue' (F2)		BCJ	USA
05/064	CN43G = *lactea* x 'Purple Smoke' (F2)		BCJ	USA
05/065	CN49D = *lactea* x 'Sentra' (F2)		BCJ	USA
05/066	CN55A = *lactea* x 'Spring Island' (F2)		BCJ	USA
05/067	CN65F = *lactea* x 'White Shimmer' (F2)		BCJ	USA
05/068	CN69H = *lactea* x 'Zamboanga' (F2)		BCJ	USA

(Note - see the Seed Distribution Officer's report on seeds in this series)

SUBGENUS NEPALENSIS				
05/069	*decora*	CD	UK	
INTER-SPECIFIC GROUP				
05/070	biversata x *versicolor* 04-GL. mauve & white, ML, OP TH(15) Canada			
05/073	x biversata (*versicolor* x *ensata* x *versicolor*) 2n=120, mixed, mostly violet		TH(17)	Canada

05/074 x biversata 99-003, ht. 50-60 cm has flowers with shades of pink, red and white in the same flower pot TH(18) Canada

05/075 x biversata mixed from vigorous selected late blooming plants in purple to violet shades OP TH(19) Canada

05/076 biversata x ensatas , selected 00-146, OP blue TH(20) Canada

05/077 x biversata 03-47, early light pink TH(21) Canada

05/079 x biversata 'Tenue Royale' x versicolor 'Krieghof' HP TH(23) Canada

05/080 New x tetra versata (allopolyploid) 4n=132 ML, vigorous plants Fertile 80% (F2) TH(24) Canada

05/081 New x tetra versata (allopolyploid) 4n=132 ML, F1, OP TH(25) Canada

05/082 New x tetra versata (allopolyploid) 4n=132, F2 selected 94=GL=20, extra vigorous, mixed, OP TH(26) Canada

SERIES HEXAGONAE - HYBRIDS

05/098 x 'Clyde Redmond' AW UK

OTHER IRIDACEAE

05/099 *Libertia grandiflora* PA UK

05/083 *Schizostylis coccinea* – salmon pink shade PA UK

OP—open pollinated; HP—hand pollinated; sdg-seedling

Seeds are **50p** per pkt. (includes postage). Please send your order on the enclosed form to Philip Allery and make the cheque payable to "The Group for Beardless Irises". If members do not wish to have "substitutes" or Autumn 2004 seed a "Not to exceed" cheque would be preferable and the invoice will give details of the charge made. See seed order form. Overseas members -please send your order and pay with a future subscription. Unfortunately we still can't send seed to Canada or USA.

The seed offered has been collected in 2004 and 2005 but seed collected in Autumn 2004 is still viable and will be used as a reserve supply or for "substitutes" unless the member specifies otherwise. Packets of 2004 seed will have extra content to avoid wastage next year."

A generous division of seeds will be made. Orders will be filled as they are received. Any seed in short supply will need to be "rationed". Unless otherwise specified the seed offered has been collected in 2005. No responsibility can be accepted for the results as seeds are received from many different sources and it is not always possible to check naming accuracy.

Please order by number and retain the Seed List for reference: some seed may only be identified by the number on the seed packet. Please list substitutes if acceptable, or tick the box if you do not wish any substitutes. All seed is obtained from members or through their goodwill and sometimes the quantity is very small. The Group welcomes and is grateful for all these contributions and seeks wider support.

I would like members to sow a small batch of hand pollinated seed of *I. lactea* (05/056) and compare the seedlings with those from any grown from F2 hand-pollinated seed of *I. lactea* x various spuria hybrids generously donated by Dr. Charles Jenkins of Arizona. An up-date and supporting documentation will be supplied to all members taking part in this trial.

Most of the seed in the list is open pollinated (OP) - that is by insects which may bring pollen from another plant - so it cannot be guaranteed to come true to name, especially in sections where irises hybridise very readily, such as the Californicae. Where seed has come from a named cultivar, the seedlings will probably not look identical to the parent, but even if they do look alike they must not be called by the parent's name as only divisions of the named plant are entitled to that name.
Some points to note;

1. For the genus and all species, or reputed species, plant names are written in *italics.*
2. Cultivars are enclosed in single quotation marks, with a capital letter and printed in normal type.
3. Where both parents of the seeds are known they are shown and will usually be followed by 'HP' to show that the pod parent was hand pollinated by the grower. The pod parent is written first.
4. Except where otherwise indicated, ie. Dr. C. Jenkins' seed, if an 'x' appears before the cultivar name only the pod parent is known.
5. In general, species forms do not hybridise easily with other species of another series, so that, except where the donor has several varieties of a species in close proximity the 'x' may be left out. In some species collected forms are so distinctive that they are given cultivar names and appear in normal type.

In the list 'c' before a geographic location indicates that the parent plant was collected in the wild; 'dwf' indicates a dwarf form, usually of a species; 'ex' before the name of a place or person shows where the parent plant was obtained from and gives some idea of the reliability of the identification. The abbreviations 'dip' and 'tet' stand for diploid and tetraploid, usually in connection with cultivars and inter-specific crosses. Unless otherwise stated members should regard seed in this list as deriving from diploid plants. Gifts of seed from members will be most welcome. When sending seed for any future Seed List please remember to enclose a list of the seed sent with your donations and include your name, address and telephone number. We would be very grateful to receive seeds or the promise of seed and would like to thank all the donors who have collected, dried and sent seed for us this year. Seed Donors: (TH) is Tony Huber from Canada: and from Arizona is (BCJ) Charles Jenkins and from the U.K. are (CD) Caroline Derbyshire, (PA) Philip Allery and (AW) Alun Whitehead.

IN THE RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

Philip Allery

Your Editor invited me to tell you of my introduction to and work with Japanese Irises. My achievements pale in significance when compared with my mentors and others in Japan, North America and Europe who have become household names in the iris world, but I hope you will find this account of interest.

I joined the B.I.S. in 1975 after taking my late wife Ruby to the Chelsea Flower Show. While admiring the blooms on Kelways' Stand we were encouraged to join the Society. Shortly afterwards, following a letter from Jennifer Hewitt, we joined the West & Midlands Iris Group.

My initial interest in TB's in which Cy Bartlett was already taking an interest, with some outstanding results, led to work in remontancy for several years. So it was not until October 1981 that I bought my first Japanese Iris. A shopping trip to Nottingham and a visit to the Goose Fair gave me an opportunity to call on the late V. Humphrey of Arnold, and his enthusiasm for both bearded and non-bearded irises resulted in my first purchase of an *I. ensata* cultivar. Shortly afterwards Mrs. Pat Foster, then of Newent, Glos. a member of the West & Midlands Iris Group, wrote "A Beginner's Guide to Raising Irises from Seed" which became the basis for the later B.I.S. publication. That was the start!

To add to my good fortune, in 1982 I had attended a B.I.S. Convention at Cannington Agricultural College in Somerset. There under the aegis of Cy. Bartlett we enjoyed an excellent Convention programme during which I met the late Dr. Currier McEwen who on hearing of my interest in Japanese Irises and my subsequent correspondence with Dr. Hirao offered me seed from his extensive programme which saved me at least three years of work. Dr. Currier McEwen had already extended the same practical help to the late Harry Foster in his work with sibiricas.

At that time I was about to retire from a senior post in the Department of Chief Executive and Town Clerk, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council and as Office Manager had responsibility for several sections, one of which was that for the Mayor's Secretariat. Following an earlier visit to this country by author, Mrs Akiko Takami from Tokyo, I was asked to help her in her research for a book on "The Three English Nurses". To thank me for my help she arranged with a leading hybridist of his day, President of the Japan Iris Society, the late Dr. Shuichi Hirao of Zuchi, Kanagawa, to send me Japanese iris seed. In February 1983 I received six packets of seed; two selfed of Bejewelled Mogul pedigree (a large single white and a large single violet); 'Popular Acclaim' by Payne, U.S. A. (white falls with violet standards); 'Kozasa-Gawa' selfed, a medium light blue; and '

Hanadayu', a medium sized purple single with white veins; both introduced by Dr. Hirao; and 'Minowano Sato' a violet single introduced by Yoshie. Helpful and friendly correspondence ensued, with visits from Japan and to North America where I maintain contacts to this day.

So I had been fortunate in being "in the right place at the right time" and I was able to benefit from a meeting of Eastern and Western cultures, minds and practices with these wonderful Japanese irises.

HYBRIDS OF *I. PSEUDACORUS* WITH *I. ENSATA*

Akira Horinaka

Originally there was no yellow *I. ensata* to be seen, so some enthusiasts wished to have yellow to widen the variety of colours of *I. ensata*. They tried to add the characteristics of *I. pseudacorus*, which was from Europe and widely grown in Japan, to *I. ensata*. Probably they thought they would be able to have a yellow flower by crossing a white cultivar of *I. ensata* with a yellow one of *I. pseudacorus*.

In 1972, Dr Tomino and Sakurai wrote a monograph about the hybrids of *I. pseudacorus* and *I. ensata* and gave it to me. The monograph also dealt with the chromosomes of these flowers. However, in the same year, Osugi brought the flowers of their hybrid to Hanashobu-Tenjikai (Japanese Iris Show) in Nagoya, which caused great surprise as Dr. Tomino told me. Osugi named the hybrid 'Aichi No Kagayaki'.

This was the first hybrid of *I. pseudacorus* with *I. ensata* introduced ever. Some other hybrids were produced after this, but since 'Aichi No Kagayaki' is most vigorous, it has been most commonly sold in Japan and in the United States.

All hybrids following 'Aichi No Kagayaki' were creamy yellow. They seem to be hybrids of yellow *I. pseudacorus* and white *I. ensata*. However if you use *I. ensata* of other colours, you can gain more colour variety such as lavender. Ichie, who will be mentioned later, produced 'Sayo No Tsuki', a beautiful white hybrid with the marking peculiar to *I. pseudacorus* on its falls. (picture: Currier McEwen, 1990, *The Japanese Iris*) In 1971, Ueki bred 'Kim Boshi'. According to Shimizu, in 1986, Noguchi in Tokyo introduced 'Tamanishiki', which had yellow falls with reddish brown marking, and later Fukka En in Aichi introduced another hybrid in 1988. Shimizu also got information about Ichie's hybrids including the years when they were introduced, such as 'Kinkei' (1987), Hanazukiyo (1988), Kikoushi (1988), 'Minori No Aki' (1988), Hatsuho' (1989) Rakujitsu' (1991), 'Sayohotaru' (1993), 'Kinkan' (1996).

Shimizu himself selected the best clone from numerous plants gained from seeds of *I. pseudacorus* of the BIS and SIGNA, (Species Iris Group of

North America). He started to cross it with various *I. ensata* in 1999, which resulted in many new hybrids, in 2001. I saw some pictures of those hybrids, though many of them do not seem very fine. As mentioned above, Ichie, using embryo culture, produced about ten cultivars; with shapes improved but the petals were not a good clear yellow, which were introduced by Kamo Hanashobu En. Furthermore, he obtained some tetraploids using colchicine, and recently they were introduced by Kamo Hanashobu En as 'Yombaitai Sayo No Tsuki' (2003), 'Yombaitai Kimboshi' (2004), and 'Yombaitai Hatsuho' (2004).

Maeda in Osaka, who was not specially interested in *I. ensata* itself, succeeded in making 'Sakai No Ogon', a clear yellow cultivar. He exposed 1,000 seeds of a hybrid of *I. pseudacorus* and 'Kyokusui No Uta' (ensata) to 3,000 rd γ ray. Only 100 of the seeds germinated, and bloomed in 1995, and only the nicest one was finally introduced as 'Sakai No Ogon' in 1998. This is one of the best hybrids ever, most vigorous and beautiful, and is very expensive. It should particularly be mentioned that one stem of this cultivar can make 20 or more flowers. The picture of this cultivar is on the web site of Kamo Hanashobu En. Those who would like to have this cultivar could contact me.

I told Prof. Shakudo, in the department of breeding in the faculty of agriculture in Kyoto University, that I was interested in studying irises. This motivated him to have Yabuya, one of his graduate students, study irises. After Prof Shakudo passed away, Prof Yamagata, who succeeded Prof Shakudo, followed his practice, letting Yabuya keep on his study in Irises. Yabuya is a Professor at the faculty of breeding in Miyazaki University. He crossed the tetraploids of *I. pseudacorus* and the first tetraploids of Japanese *I.* 'Raspberry Rimmed' that I obtained from Dr McEwen and gave to Yabuya. However, none of these hybrids grew normally. I hope this article is of interest to readers.

Dr Tomino is a professor of the faculty of education in Mie University. K. Tomino & O. Sakurai, in 1972 crossed *Iris pseudacorus* L. x *I. ensata* Thumb. *Bull Fac. Edu. Mie Univ*. T. Yabuya and Yamagata 1980. Elucidation of seed failure and breeding of F1 hybrid in reciprocal crosses between *I. pseudacorus* and *I. laevigata* Fisch. *Japan Jour. Breed.* Yabuya was a graduate student at Kyoto University and is a professor at the faculty of breeding at Miyazaki University, and wrote many monographs in English so that you can read them.

A FEW BRIEF WORDS - SIBIRICAS

Jennifer Hewitt

There is little to say, I'm afraid, of Siberians in my garden this year. Flowering on a number of plants was absent or sparse (I put this down to a cool summer in 2004 but must admit competition from weeds played a considerable part). Some vigorous reliable performers did do well: 'Banish Misfortune', 'Pennywhistle' and 'Salamander Crossing', all diploids from Marty Schafer and Jan Sacks, and Tomas Tamberg's 'Sibirische Nacht', a tetraploid. Edmundas Kondratas's seedling LT/K 98/8 and my 'Peter Hewitt' were also satisfactory tets. There has been no rebloom to date (end of September) so it is very unlikely now.

The West & Midlands Group visited the National Collection at the Lingen nursery of Kim and Maggie Davis where, as usual, most varieties were flowering though even here some flowered less well than usual. Kim had been sent one Siberian new to me, 'Dream on Dream' (Robert Barker, USA) which came via Holland. The 1999 registration states it is of unknown parentage with no indication whether it is diploid or otherwise though it could be tet from its robust appearance. Very ruffled, the flowers are silvery white with some violet infusion and a yellow signal.

Thanks to the kindness of Ken MacLeod and Sidney Linnegar I was able to accept an invitation to attend a JIC judging of the Sibirica Trial at Wisley. There was concern over the poor state of some plants which the RHS staff attribute to frost damage but other causes seem possible. A number of cultivars had flowers just below the leaf tips, and I wonder whether this was a permanent fault or whether the dry/wet/cold/hot weather had brought them into bloom before the stems had attained their normal height. The 2002-5 trial was planted near the top of the field and the next one will be at the bottom of the slope where they have done better in the past. Maybe it is a bit damper there: we must hope the plants, which include some being given a second chance, will show what they can do.

Several recommendations for AGM were made. Confirmed (because they are already in commerce) were Tomas's 'Hohe Warte' and 'Viel Crème', 'Simple Gifts' (Bob Hollingworth), 'Shaker's Prayer' (Carol Warner) and British-bred Sino-Siberian 'Tiki Bird' from Brian Hersey. Three more recommendations should be confirmed when they reach the market: 'Spencer' (Cy Bartlett) and 'Wealden Butterfly' (Olga Wells), both registered this year, and 'Peter Hewitt'. Apologies if I have omitted any others – as I'm no longer a JIC member I have to rely on my intermittent memory!

GROWING LOUISIANAS IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Margaret Criddle

As Seed Distribution Officer for the BIS I have always felt I should grow as many different types of Iris, or Iris related plants as I can, so that I have first hand knowledge of their requirements.

A GBI member, Ada Godfrey from America and Sue Pierce from Britain gave me several different Louisiana plants to see how they would do in Lincolnshire. For 3 years they all struggled and I felt I was fighting a losing battle. Then I needed a new shed and decided the best spot would be where the Louisianas were growing. So I moved them all down the garden by about 12ft. This was obviously what they wanted, and they have never looked back. They have a tall brick wall behind them (on the north side) for shelter, a pergola above to give them overhead shade, and face south to get sun to midday. The water from the shed drains straight into where they are planted and so far I have never given them any water.

I. fulvala has multiplied 100 fold and flowered for several weeks. *I. fulva*, not quite so happy, flowered but not so vigorously. However *I.* 'Dixie Deb' did me proud, a lot of flower which lasted for weeks on end, one of which exceeded all expectations by having 6 of everything, a magnificent flower in 2 tones of yellow. I just hope it does it again this year.

And I was told you can't grow Louisianas in Lincolnshire.

mc.iris@mailbox.tv

PACIFIC COAST IRISES

Philip Jones

Due to bereavement and bad health the last twelve months of gardening have not been very fruitful. However, I did try to make some crosses. It was quite a challenge. The two questions that exercised my mind were what plants to cross with each other and how to go about it.

I have always tended to assume that Pacific Coast irises will all cross with each other but in fact some of the species do not naturally hybridise. Apart from *I. douglasiana, I. bracteata* and *I. innominata* the species are divided into two groups, according to the length of the perianth tube and spathe formation, and it has been found that the plants that belong to the short-tubed group don't necessarily cross with the long-tubed group. In his booklet *Hybridization and Speciation in the Pacific Coast Irises* Lee W. Lenz says that no hybrid swarms have been found between *I. hartwegii* and *I. macrosiphon* even though they may be growing within a few hundred yards from each other. He also says that *I. bracteata* which has a short perianth tube but a different spathe formation apparently does not

hybridise naturally with the long-tubed *I. chrysophylla*. However, in his *A Guide to the Pacific Coast Irises,* which appeared printed nine years after Lenz, Victor A. Cohen mentions that he had collected seed from hybrids and that they were flowering. However, it is worth keeping in mind that when one sets out specifically to cross one plant with another there may be factors at work that make the cross difficult.

I found the task of hybridising difficult because I seem to have a problem with near vision. I was unable to see whether the pollen had actually been deposited on the stigma. However, I divided my irises last year and so I have quite a few plants of each variety and therefore I was able to make a number of crosses and hope that some of them will take. There has been plenty of seed but whether this is due to me or to the local bees we shall have to wait and see.

The walk into the unknown was trying to decide which plants to cross and give the reason why. What exactly is one trying to achieve? I mentioned before that I have a violet purple plant that is the first to appear and the last to leave and I naturally want to see if this robust quality could be imparted to other irises. That seems a fairly obvious idea. But I also have a most elegant tall orchid pink iris with rather small flowers which is my favourite. I have tried to cross this with other colours but I suspect it will take a lot of crossing and re-crossing before I can capture the same elegance in violet, white and yellow.

There is, of course, a much easier way to arrive at something special. It was pointed out at our last meeting at Aulden Farm that one can buy a large packet of seeds from John J Ghio and stop worrying whether the bees got to the flower first. A good thing about the hybrids is that they flower within a couple of years from sowing. The species seem to take ages. *I. tenax, I. douglasiana* and *I. innominata* are now on their third year here and not a flower in sight.

TIME TO READ?

Philip Allery

Here are two books which I think you might enjoy if you have time to spare during the winter months. Ask your library to obtain a copy.
"Irises - A Gardener's Encyclopedia" by Claire Austin, published by Timber Press. ISBN 0 7112 22630
"The Natural Gardener (The way we all want to Garden)" by Val Bourne, a well known gardening writer.

SPURIAS AT WISLEY

Alun Whitehead

I would like to mention the good colours of the spurias in the current trial at Wisley. This trial ends next year and the end of June/beginning of July 2006 should be the best time to see them. I could mention many, but a taster would include:

Falcon's Crest – Brown standard, yellow falls edged brown
Hickory Leaves – a pale yellow orange, but well covered in flowers
Missouri Autumn – living up to its name – a light reddy brown mix
Sunset Colors – love at first sight for me with light fawn standards and pale egg yoke yellow falls.
La Belise – an older smaller variety of a good blue and narrower petals, but giving a good show.
Love of Leila – Blue with a brownish thumbprint.
Lucky Devil – Deep blue with a deep yellow signal – one of the deepest blues I've seen.

Many of these entries came from Clive Russell and he deserves the credit for entering them into the trial.

AN ELUSIVE LITTLE SPURIA

Brita Carson

I've been a trifle worried about my sense of smell in the garden. Am I expecting too much? Many years ago I got my first whiff of burnt sugar on a *Cercidiphyllum* tree. When I moved to this house and saw one growing in the garden I was out sniffing it in all seasons, in hot sun, falling leaves and every time I passed. It was only some short time ago that I read that not all of them give off this strong aroma; of course, obviously depends on the specie! Why didn't I think of that?

And so I've found another plant which has no smell. My flowers of *I. graminea* which should smell tantalisingly of plum tarts don't because they aren't. They aren't pure *I. graminea* but are *I. g.* var. *pseudocyperus* which is a larger and more vigorous plant. This I read in the newsletter for the "Species Group". When I checked up in "A Guide to Species Irises" it also suggested what a waste of precious space to plant it in a raised bed. Got it wrong again! However, it is reassuring to know my nose is still OK.

So my request is to anyone who has any seed of *I. graminea,* the true smelly one. Could you please spare me a few seeds.

Please send me **your** requests to be included next time.

SOUTH-EAST REPORT
Olga Wells

A very mild and dry winter brought all the spring growth forward by weeks. Even though the BIS Reticulata Show was scheduled for January 29th, exhibitors were hard put to fill the show benches as most of the little bulbous iris had already been and gone. Even so, there was a good display put on by a number of stalwarts, and exhibits of *I. unguicularis,* seedpods and artefacts added to the general spring atmosphere. It was rather a murky day weather wise but Wisley, as were gardens generally in the S.E. was featuring spring blossom, massed snowdrops and cyclamen. It was a really satisfying day and surprising numbers of visitors came to the show.

Early February's weather continued in the same vein and garden and allotment work pressed on. The irises were showing signs of growth. There were mutterings from the water boards that there may be water restrictions later in the year due to the lack of rain. The BIS had a stand at the RHS show at Westminster mid-month, which won the Society a Silver Gilt. Berney Baughen was responsible for this achievement as it was he who set up the stand and forced all the reticulatas on display himself and transported the bulk of it, with the help of borrowed transport, up to London as well. No mean feat. By the 23rd February, Kent temperatures had begun to drop and there were falls of snow. This would disappear during the day only to be followed by more later. We were lulled into a false sense of security by this, thinking it would soon pass. The hellebores were raising their heads again and the crocus were valiantly pushing spears of blooms through the snow and opening wide every time a gleam of sunshine came their way. On March 2nd it snowed hard all day without pause and then froze with chill factors of -7degrees. Chaos ensued. As a result the first batch of post received since then arrived 5 days later on 7th March. Snow lay on the garden for days but the roads soon ran freely and eventually the council men gave up gritting the roads for long enough to empty the rubbish bins that had been forlornly hanging about for days waiting to be emptied. Most credit goes to the milkman who still managed to deliver his bottles of milk in the dark and these horrible conditions.

Most, but not all, Kent Group members managed to escape from hibernation to attend our meeting on March 5th where we heard a most interesting lecture on Yalding Organic Gardens and organic methods of gardening generally. Yalding was to be the base for one of the collections of guest irises for the 2007 Convention and it would have been interesting to see the result of growing irises organically as opposed to conventional methods. Unfortunately, due to a change of personnel, Yalding decided they could not cope with this large number of irises and they all had to be retrieved and a new venue found. Please note, GBI members, that there

will be Siberians and spurias in the convention beds as well as beardeds.

April warmed up a bit and by the end of the month *I. missouriensis* was flowering well and provided blooms for the Dwarf Show along with Siberian 'Soft Blue'. Two other sibs were also coming into bud at the beginning of May. The new PCI seedlings are taking a while to settle and produce an abundance of flowers. Hopefully they will perform well next year. Encouraged by the rising temperatures seedlings of all kinds were planted out on the allotment. Following this there were several consecutive nights of frost, plus a fierce wind blowing from the north and all the seedlings lay down and hugged the ground, quite understandably. I'd have done the same if I had had to endure such cold. Many bearded seedlings, about to bloom for the first time turned to mush.

June found me in other parts of the country and, though hardly south-east news, I saw excellent PCIs, Siberians and, in the wild, large masses of *I. pseudacorus* looking absolutely magnificent all over the Isle of Skye. Someone told me these were planted there deliberately to purify the water, but I did wonder if they have just done a take-over as this plant has done in New Zealand. Back in Kent I was pleased to see the Siberians and the spurias flowering so much better than last year and put this down to giving them at least a certain amount of mulch in the early spring to retain what little moisture there was. In the Siberian trial at Wisley it was encouraging to find that 50% of the entries that gained AGMs had been raised by British breeders.

Mid-summer and the small amounts of rain since last autumn resulted in the inevitable hose-pipe ban. Sadly, this looks like being an annual occurrence, and in the south-east we will have to rethink our gardening. It's no good it being warm enough to grow bananas and cannas if there is no water for them. Will I be reduced to growing just the bearded irises? I hope not.

WEST MIDLAND REPORT

Philip Allery

The West Midlands scene is still full of activity and interest with the Group's programme including events of wide-ranging interests, with talks and visits to suit all iris tastes. Unfortunately age-related problems of health and vision have prevented me from attending many of its functions as I no longer drive and the "lifts" which I previously enjoyed have not been available. The real loss, apart from contact with the friends I have made over the past thirty years, is that of attendance at and reports on the Spring Show at Malvern and the Gardeners' World Show at the N.E.C., both of which are well worth attending and merit comment.

After initial disappointments in the 1980s, I was helped recently by Terri Hudson, Seed Distribution Officer, wife of Jay Hudson, then President of the North American Society for Pacific Coast Native Irises, who sent me seeds from their extensive collection several years ago. This year has seen the flowering of an exciting range of at least eight different forms and colours, from which a mix of open pollinated seed is offered in the Seed List. My efforts have been rewarded not only by a very colourful display of Pacific Coast hybrids, but followed by some striking Sibirica cultivars and Versicolor hybrids. My Ensata cultivars gave good bloom but the indifferent weather patterns of early cold spells and rain reduced the set of seeds quite dramatically. Louisianas grew well but "Dixie Deb" was the only cultivar to bloom.

However my garden is becoming more difficult to maintain, due to age related health problems, to the standard that I would wish during the past year and I have decided to reduce this commitment. Consequently next year I shall have many plants to dispose of. Any profit from sales will be shared between charities I support and the GBI. Please send for a list.

In the last report I spoke of a minor earthquake in the area. This year has seen two mini tornadoes about ten miles from my home, so there is no doubt in my mind that "climate change" is with us and may well affect our future iris growing patterns. Is climate change an established fact? Has any member reached a conclusion on its impact on irises?

SCOTTISH REPORT

Brita Carson

This has been a good year for flowering irises. The weather has behaved well with no severe frosts at the wrong time, rain but not too soggy and a sunny summer. Although very hot at times the ensatas have been happy under a good mulch, the sibiricas enjoyed a midday siesta in the shade, and the rest of the beardless are still in seedling stage and needed to be watered regularly anyway. I don't know why you don't all move here to enjoy these ideal conditions. If we are lucky we even get plenty of frost to stop the grass growing and kill off a lot of the bugs.

I did a spot of hybridising this year. Not that I chose plants for their graceful elegance or any other particular characteristic. In fact, not even for their colour but just because they were in flower at the same time and the pollen was plentiful. I'll promise not to get hung up on my first prodigy but instead to be ruthless, well fairly ruthless. Is there a home for the less than beautiful?

Holidays are soon over but not forgotten and we had a lovely week between Devon and Dorset. There are so many gardens in this area it is

very difficult to make decisions where to go. Somehow I found plenty of National Collections creeping into the itinerary. Marwood, of course, was high on the agenda for their collection of ensatas. It was my turn to drive and what a stressful drive, along narrow roads with extremely high hedges.

Marwood was lovely with a spectacular setting for National Collections. The Collection of Astilbes was excellent, well grown and labelled, but the collection of ensatas was looking forlorn, newly split and replanted in the same area. The plants were small with just an odd leaf. On round the lakes were some beautiful large clumps of ensatas in flower but they had no names which is so frustrating for someone like me who goes especially to put names to faces. It will be at least another couple of years before they perform well and are worth visiting. It was also disappointing not to be able to buy an ensata to remember my visit. When you go to see a National Collection it would be nice to buy, not the rarest, but something a little more unusual.

Has this year been 'early' or do we need to reconsider when it is the best time to visit in the far south? The first fortnight in July was too late this year. However we were delighted to see there were still some real beauties in flower at Aulden Farm. Alun and Jill Whitehead have built up a wonderful collection of ensatas but as Alun sensibly reasons it means a lot of extra work to keep a National Collection in top class condition. Anyway we need his expertise much more than the NCCPG. He is also busy with the BIS and received the Bob Nichol trophy at the AGM in September. We warmly congratulate him on this annual award given for service to the BIS over the year. Jean Nichol donated the trophy which is a watercolour of some of the tall bearded irises that her late husband, Bob had raised.

On the way back home we stayed with Philip Allery and over a drop of his rather nice single malt, got up to date with his garden and his iris introductions and as the evening went on, the world in general. A lovely relaxing time. As a bonus we came back up to Dollar to find 'Aldridge Snow Maiden' was in full bloom. Philip is in charge of the seed distribution and I hope that you had the same success as I did with seed germination. The seeds were kept under optimum conditions but it was about 90% success rate. Was this due to older seed that had had a natural dormant period? Perhaps it was because Philip had chosen very special donors for us. Whatever the reason, don't miss out getting seed this time.

Billy Carruthers, the other Scottish member has promised to write a report on his trip to the Iris Convention in New Zealand which takes place in early December. He has also been pleased with the growth and flowering of irises at the nursery this year. He has planted out the south facing walled garden which goes steeply down to the river. Do pay him a visit if you should be anywhere near Edinburgh next year.

PHOTOGRAPHS BACK PAGE - COMPLIMENTARY CD

On the back page are six photographs chosen at random from the complimentary CD which is enclosed with your copy. Over 100 photos have been taken at the Trial grounds at Wisley throughout the trials and we have received permission to print them here and to send them on to you for reference. We would like to thank the staff at Wisley, especially Alison Cundy and Wendy Wesley of the Trials Office. Anyone who wants to use them must approach the Trials Office for permission.

Hybridisers of all abilities will be able to see which other modern varieties are being produced and where current trends are going. Most of us can only make a trip to Wisley occasionally and we felt you would appreciate this great chance to have a record of the beardless irises. All those in favour say "aye" when paying your subscription.

If you do not have a computer many local libraries have facilities that would enable you to view the wonderful photographs on the CD.

Photograph details

HEGIRA; Innerst, Sterling Reg. 1985 1892-1 36in 91cm M 6 White, heavily striped deep blue, gold signal; slight spicy fragrance. 934-1: (Frostbound x Stippled Ripples) x Woodland Brook. Innerst 1986 Available HM: 1988

Photograph by Alun Whitehead

HARUMADO-NO-YUME; This was entered into the trials by RHS Wisley, probably one received by them from Japan and not yet registered in the west.

DIOMEDES; Innerst, Sterling Reg. 1991 3044-1 40in 102cm M-L 6 Light blue, 3/4 in. dark blue edge, light yellow signal. Centre of Interest x Reign of Glory The Iris Pond 1992 Available EC: 1991, HM 1995

FRILLED ENCHANTMENT Marx, Walter Reg. 1958 42in 107cm M 6 White, narrow borders of bright rose-red, ruffled edges; styles same. From two Higo sdlgs. Marx Gardens 1959 Available

Three Photographs above by Wendy Wesley

PETER HEWITT; Hewitt, Jennifer. Reg.2003 Sdlg. TE969/B1. SIB (tet), 37" (94cm), M-L. S. violet-blue (RHS 90A), lightening to 92A, veined darker violet; F. deep blue-violet (close to 83A) ageing to violet-blue (89C), bluer around deep gold signal, gold edges; style arms turquoise, edges and crests brownish-lilac ageing to medium violet. (a) 2, (b) ¾. Flower 2¾ " (7 cm) high, 4¼" (10.5 cm) wide. S. flaring, F. semi-flaring to arching, style arms slightly fimbriated. Fragrance absent. 'Coronation Anthem' x 'Golden Edge'.

VERSILAEV HYBRID; Tamberg, Tomas. It is ¾ laevigata & ¼ versicolor. No. 57 in the Trial.

Two Photographs above by Alison Cundy

Website**:** The Group for Beardless Irises**: www.gbi.org.uk**
Website**:** The British Iris Society**: www.britishirissociety.org.uk**

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Louisianas: volunteer needed please

THE ALDRIDGE INTRODUCTIONS

Philip Allery

In November 1989 I was able to send nine seedlings for trial at Wisley. From January 1992 R.H.S. revised and simplified field trialling to try to eliminate the confusion which had arisen between awards for a "good garden plant" and those granted for exhibition at the Society's Shows. In the trials ending in Autumn 1996,three of the seedlings I sent had been recommended for the Award of Garden Merit. However these awards were not published because trial awards cannot be confirmed until the plant has been named and registered then made available commercially. Of this process I must place on record my thanks to Clarence Mahan of Virginia, U.S.A. for checking my spelling of Japanese iris cultivar names and earlier registrations, awards, etc., and to Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt for her subsequent help with the registration of my seedlings, up to the present day.

Many seedlings and years later, after the Wetland Iris Trials which concluded this autumn, I am pleased to tell that a further two of my seedlings, 'Aldridge Visitor' and 'Aldridge Snow Maiden', have received an Award of Garden Merit. A further seedling, named, and submitted on my behalf by Alun Whitehead, whose considerable help is acknowledged, is now beginning its 3 year spell of trialling.

On the facing page are photographs of the Aldridge introductions. Photographs by Alun Whitehead

ALDRIDGE PRELUDE Allery, Philip E. Reg. 2002. WY4 36" 91cm M 3 S. imperial purple (RHS 78A/B) blending to violet centre, base white; style arms creamy white midrib edged pale violet, darker crest streaking; F. violet (87B) paling (87C) to edge, paler around white signal with deep yellow centre and veins, white central line extension; upright S., flared to horizontal F Kozasa Gawa x H6/83AY series sdlg. From Hirao seed. Aulden Farm 2002

ALDRIDGE RUBY Allery, Philip E. Reg. 1999. WY5 37in 95cm ML 3 S. chalk white (RHS 155C) splashed violet (87B); style arms white (155B); F. chalk white, canary yellow (9A) signal; S. near vertical, F. strongly flared. H6/83AY white, seed from Hirao x Kozasa Gawa Payne's Japanese Irises 1999

ALDRIDGE SNOW MAIDEN Allery, Philip E. Reg. 1999. WY1 37in 94cm ML 3 S. chalk white (RHS 155C); style arms white. Cream rib; F. chalk white, canary yellow (9A) signal; S. near vertical, F. flared and arched H6/83AY white, seed from Hirao X self

ALDRIDGE VISITOR McEwen, C. by Allery, P. Reg. 1999 . 84/66(3) 35in 89cm ML & RE 6 Inner F. violet purple (RHS 89A) tinged purple (77A); outer 3F. violet purple (77A); violet blue (89A) halo surrounding bright lemon yellow (13A) signal with deeper (14A) rib; style arms violet blue (89C); lightly ruffled Sib to Exuberant Chantey

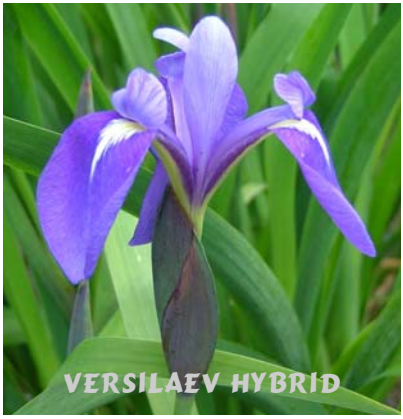
ALDRIDGE SNOW MAIDEN

ALDRIDGE RUBY


HEGIRA


PETER HEWITT


HARUMADO-NO-YUME


VERSILAEV HYBRID


DIOMEDES


FRILLED ENCHANTMENT