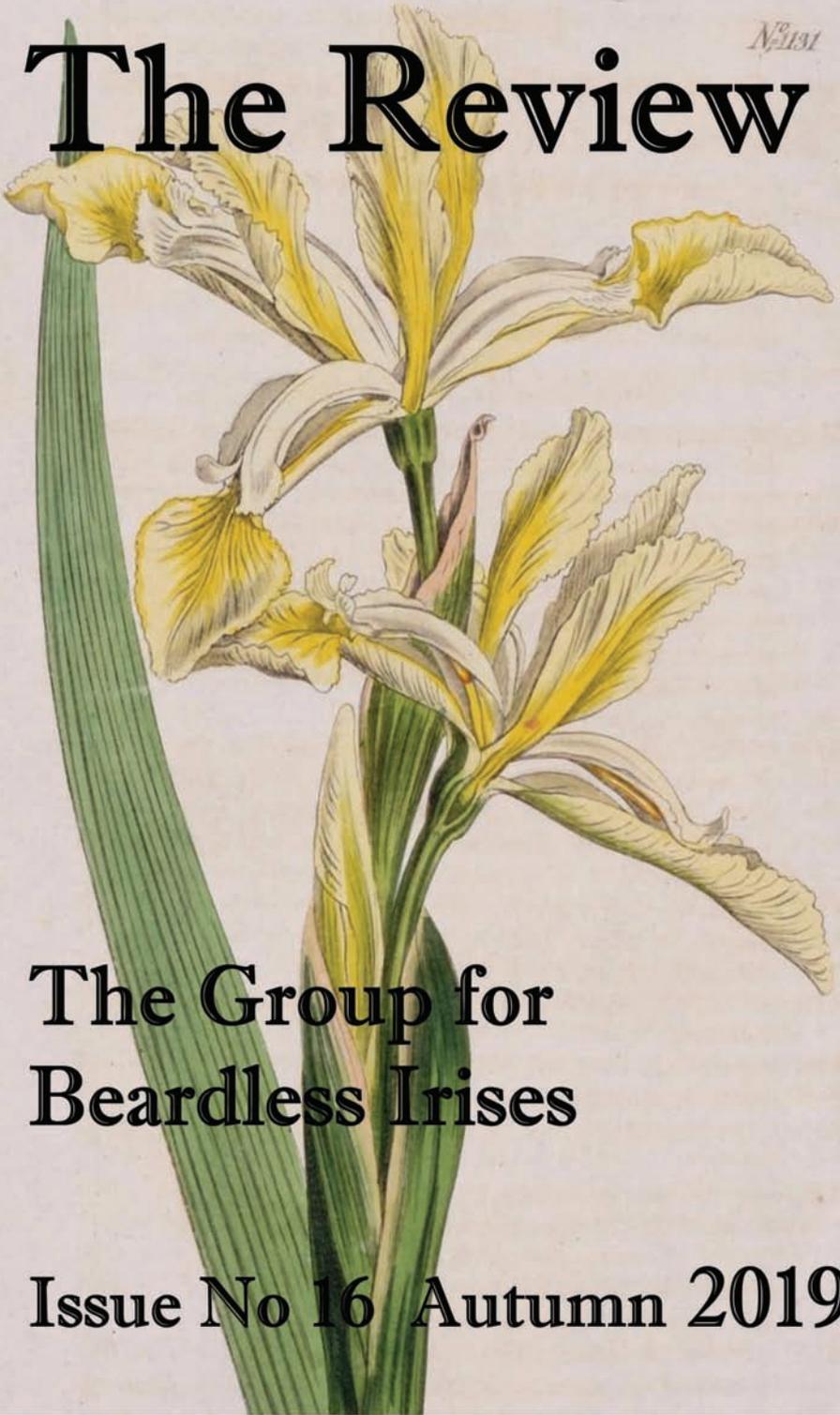


N^o 131

The Review



The Group for Beardless Irises

Issue No 16 Autumn 2019



"Excuse me I'm having my breakfast,"

Spot the iris. The mouse climbed up the canes of the *Evansia* just behind the bird feeder. ©John Mullen



Blackbirds among the irises - weeds were left intentionally for protection - let's hope this doesn't become a habit!
©A & J Whitehead

Front Cover. This beautiful illustration is by Sydenham Edwards at his best showing the creamy yellow version of *I. spuria* now treated as *I. spuria* subsp. *halophila* or as a species *I. halophila* by Russian botanists (including Nina Alexeeva). Please see page 28 for more information.

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Editor's Notes

Brita Carson

Who would want to be a student of geography these days but even worse to be a teacher of it. It used to be a rainforest was a rain soaked forest and a desert was a place without rain and the monsoon started on Monday and finished on Friday. But now the weather is upsetting all the past statistics making it impossible to predict accurately any likely weather patterns. We as iris growers, are doing our best to reduce carbon emissions by putting in new plants and trees but the field next door had an old oak tree felled by the gale force winds last week. I don't know how many new trees that is worth.

We are sorry that Anne is unable to write her usual Notes from the Chair. She is in hospital at the moment and we all wish her well. To fill her space, at short notice, we have included some lovely photographs from two of our members. Please send other photos and I will squirrel them away for a rainy day and there have been plenty of those recently.

Brian is continuing with his Bot. Mags. and we are fortunate this time that they are perfect for beardless iris enthusiasts being the *Sibiricae* and *Spuriae*.

We have Gordon and Chris with their ensatas. We will find out how they get on with neutral to non acid soil in a year or two and what the public think of them. A very unusual nursery to be found in their area.

There are the new introductions from Tomas and Tina Tamberg. These are only a selection so they must have lots more from which to choose. They are mouth wateringly beautiful but probably not available for a year or two so don't get too excited.

Toby and Christine Jarvis had a tour on the west coast of America which gave them wonderful memories. How do I know? We were there this year and I hope to get round to writing about it for next year.

Alun is exploring more of the Irids that grow on Tasmania which we can grow in possibly a protected position or under cover in an unheated greenhouse. If you fancy trying any of them you will find plenty of help in his article.

Philip has some wonderful photographs and even a confession to make. I admit to bullying him to confess to losing a lot of PCIs and how it happened, but I do like his new ideas and think we will all be impressed with new shapes.

Jill enjoys the history of plants and their origins and brings us another story which this time is *Iris histrioides* 'Lady Beatrix Stanley'. It is a lovely little iris with good lasting qualities and an interesting background.

Wendy doesn't know it but she has given me a new idea with the heading – News From the Allotment—for short articles. I think anyone with an allotment might be able to help. Please send in as short articles as you like with some news from your allotment and photos of any seedlings or wildlife. I include wildlife after watching a fox strolling round mine one morning just as it was getting light.

Members photographs. Please email me with your photos and the names of the plants if possible but not essential.



A beautiful seedling from Iris Clarke's garden - pod parent *I.* 'Peter Hewitt' If you know Iris please gently bully her into registering it. It deserves a name.



John Mullen took this photo of Sue Bedwell's *Sisyrinchium* entry 'Devon Skies' at the summer show. And below is a photo of his *Crocus speciosus*. Beautiful photos.



John is going to help us by recording the length of time that his Siberians are in flower from their starting date to the time they finish flowering. Please join us if you remember in time.

Japanese Irises

Gordon and Chris Link

While we have been growing plants on our small nursery for more years than I care to remember, we have concentrated on producing shrubs for most of that time. Recently perennials have crept into our range more and more; they help to extend our selling months after the main shrub season finishes towards the end of June.

Living in a rather out of the way area of south Shropshire most of our plants are sold either at the local market or at specialist plant fairs. We attend about 60 fairs a year. We have also taken the plunge and exhibited at a couple of RHS shows.

Having decided we needed a perennial to specialise in, beardless irises was a possibility as no one else seemed to be currently growing much of a range. We had grown a small number of Siberian and Japanese irises in pots for several years but only in pots on the nursery and not in the ground. Now we are growing both types of iris which gives us another six to eight weeks of flowering and customers can actually see the plants in flower.

After visiting Jill and Alun Whitehead's lovely garden at Aulden Farm and seeing their beautiful irises in flower we were beginning to really get the iris bug and started to look on the internet, it must be said mainly North American websites; I began to really fall for those gorgeous Japanese irises.

Now if we were going to specialise in these plants, where can we purchase them? Up until now we had usually bought bare root plants from one or two specialist wholesale nurseries but they only stock a handful of varieties.

Getting back on the internet I found a possible wholesale supplier on the continent, so we ordered twenty different varieties of *Iris ensata*. We potted them up and waited for about six months. Imagine our disappointment when they started to flower but hardly any of them matched their description on the labels. So after deciding we have to grow our own plants, where were we going to get them? And more importantly would they like our less than ideal growing conditions? Our soil is a heavy, loamy clay for six months of the year and it is better to keep off it, but after a few dry weeks it ends up like concrete.

Another possible problem was that all the online articles on Japanese *Iris* state they must have an acid soil. Our soil has a pH of 7 which is neutral. There was only one way to find out – we planted up our first iris bed at the bottom of the nursery with mainly Siberian, *ensata* and a few Louisianas and a handful of pseudatas. The only soil additives we added was a handful of base fertiliser suitable for acid loving plants and part of a bag of sulphate of iron. Well Spring came, the Siberians flowered followed by the *ensatas* and they looked glossy green and really good. So we started to scour the plant lists of any nursery on the continent which may stock Japanese irises because hardly any varieties were available in the UK. But except for a small handful of nurseries they are pretty rare on the continent as well.

We planted up our first full *Iris ensata* bed with about sixty varieties in it but had the same old problem — so many were labelled incorrectly. Now planted out we left them to flower and if they didn't match their description we dug them up and tried to find a different source. Having lusted over the beautiful new varieties coming out of North America we finally got the courage to order some, and even with a slight delay at customs most of them have thankfully survived. So these, plus the plants from a specialist iris grower in the Czech Republic, form the basis of our collection. We have been pleasantly surprised at how well they have done here. About 90% increased and flowered this past season.

Here, 2018 was one of the driest years in living memory and which could have spelt disaster for moisture loving plants, especially as they only received two small amounts of water during that hot summer. Having our own private water supply and trying to keep several thousand plants in pots on the nursery alive was in itself quite a challenge. We couldn't really spare too much water for the iris beds. To our surprise we didn't lose any plants in the beds even though the soil had large cracks in it and was extremely hard and dry. Would the lack of water weaken the plants and prevent flowering the next season we wondered? Now 95% of the plants produced at least one flower stem and most had many more.

As I write this article the beds need another weeding before they get the addition of a large pile of well rotted manure for top dressing. At the moment we only have one plant of each variety planted out. We really need another couple of beds as insurance against losses, but that is for the future.

Most gardeners, even seasoned ones, have never seen or grown Japanese irises. We find if we can get our irises to flower in pots they sell rather well, and we hear "Wow I have never seen an iris like that before. Aren't the flowers huge." It's early days but so far, we have been pleased with the way things are going.

But beware - growing irises can become addictive.



'Blue Embers'



'Pinkerton'



'Ruffled White Water'

Photos by kind permission of Bob Bauer and John Coble of Ensata Gardens.

Culture for Japanese Irises **Bob Bauer and John Coble**

No other iris is influenced to as great a degree by culture as the Japanese Iris. Good culture will increase height, branching, flower size, and quantity and quality of bloom. No other factor will be a greater influence than **water** and its quality (pH and/or salts). A lack of moisture will stunt the plants and produce miniature blooms. An abundance of water and manure can produce 4-5 ft tall bloom stalks! JI need six hours of full sun daily to bloom properly.

JI require ample moisture especially up to bloom time, and you will be rewarded with much healthier plants and bloom next year if the plants are kept watered all summer long. We want to say **wet** in spring and **moist** for the rest of the year. **Never let the soil dry out.** Depending on your soil, 1/2 –1 inch of rainwater per week is recommended; older clumps will need more water than new divisions. They do very well near water and where the water is a short distance below the surface, as beside a stream or pond. However they grow successfully in ordinary garden conditions or the perennial border with an adequate amount of rainwater.

Japanese iris prefer a rich soil with ample organic matter to help in water retention as well as adding nutrients. The soil pH should be slightly acid (5.0 to 6.5). Attention must also be given to your irrigation water, which can gradually raise the pH of your soil unless it is rainwater. An indication of too high a pH is the gradual yellowing of the leaves. The soil pH can be lowered by the addition of granular ferrous sulphate (iron sulphate) or agricultural sulphur. Depending on what is available, dig in an ample amount of manure, hay, straw, etc. If using hay or straw, add a high nitrogen fertiliser after the iris are growing to compensate for the nitrogen tied up in the decomposition process.

Japanese iris are heavy feeders. Depending on your soil, a liberal application of fertiliser in spring and just before or after bloom is beneficial. Most soils need more nitrogen and JI like nitrogen. Water soluble acid fertiliser is good for quick action but only lasts 2-3 weeks. The preparation of your iris bed with compost or manure will be a good start for JIs but do not use granular fertiliser as this will quickly burn the roots. Virgin soil (virgin to JIs) will produce your best plants. Try not to replant JI divisions back in the same soil where they have been before. Plant divisions 12–18 inches apart; 18-24 inches if you don't want them more crowded in 3 years. The rhizome should be planted 2-3 inches deep. You can plant them in a depression which will help catch and hold more water; fill the depression with mulch. New roots form above the old roots each year, and by the time the crown grows to the surface and roots can be seen, it is time to dig and divide and replant. Plants under good culture require division every 3-4 years. Your best bloom will be on 2-3 year old clumps.

When dividing, cut back 3/4 of the foliage and plant 2-4 fan divisions. Keep the transplants well watered until they are established. Plant strong divisions with two or three fans. Small divisions take longer to get started and are

more subject to loss. The roots should not be allowed to dry out during transplanting. Soaking the rhizomes and roots in water overnight before transplanting is beneficial. The rhizome should be planted 1-3 inches deep, depending on the heft of the soil. If planted in a depression of 3-4 inches, the depression will help to catch and hold more moisture. Since new roots form above the old roots, planting in a depression will permit the gradual filling in of more soil and compost and help to maintain the plant's vigour for a longer period of time. After planting, keep the soil moist until the plant is established. In spring, if rainfall is not sufficient, give extra water until bloom time. Japanese irises can be transplanted almost anytime from spring until fall if you can **keep the transplants moist to wet** for the rest of the year, and the temperatures are below 90°F for a month afterwards. The best time for you is a combination of your climate and your gardening practices! Mid-spring to right after bloom is the best time for us. Hot or dryer regions may have better luck with fall planting.

We recommend 2-3 inches of heavy mulching all year round. The mulch helps to conserve moisture, keep the soil cooler and reduce heaving of fall transplants. Remove the old foliage after the first frosts with a serrated knife. Destroy the old foliage which may contain borer eggs or foliage trips. These two main pests of JI can be controlled, where warranted, with systemic insecticides. Thrips live between the leaves and cause a rusty colour to develop on the leaves and can devastate a plant. Pull the leaves apart to see if these tiny slender insects are present. Juveniles are white and adults are black. Use a systemic insecticide to kill them. If adults were present a second application must be made 10 days later when eggs have hatched.

Editor

Bob and John wrote this information sheet for their plant catalogues many years ago and I thought it was so useful for new growers of Japanese Irises that I asked them if I could include it here. Not only did they very kindly agree but said I could take any photographs from their website to use as illustrations. I was a kid in a sweetie shop. What a decision: www.ensata.com



'Lady In Pink'
(Aitken, '06)



Japanese Pinwheel'
(McEwen, '88)



'Rings A Bell'
(Bauer/Coble, '11)

Dr. Tomas Tamberg's Seedlings Tomas Tamberg

These are selections that Tomas has made for introduction this year. Not all are named. What beautiful irises they are. It is interesting to know the parents and wonder how the colours are derived from the parents. I don't think the plants are available to buy just yet.



Siberian

Sdlg 1283 This is a diploid seedling derived from Schafer/Sachs varieties. It is rather tall.



Siberian

'Overlay Mother' also comes from Schafer/Sachs varieties, but it is a converted plant and is fertile with tetraploids.



Pseudata

Eyeshadow 2019 is our first own Pseudata seedling. It comes from *I. pseudacorus* 'Gubijin' x *I. ensata* 'R. Giskard'. The latter can have three side branches, up to 9 buds and grows up to 150cm. The Pseudata seedling seems to have profited from these parents.



Siberian tetraploid

Sdlg 1335 comes from a cross of 'Overlay Mother' with a yellow tetraploid Siberian.

Note the seed pod to the right of the flower with the details of another cross tied to a paperclip.



Siberian Tetraploid

Sdlg 1333 is a tetraploid from US seedlings combined with Tamberg seedlings



Siberian Tetraploid

Sdlg 1336 comes from a yellow tetraploid crossed with 'Something Shocking'

Iris Convention in the Pacific North West Toby and Christine Jarvis

At one of the BIS meetings Chris Towers gave a talk about his experiences of attending the American Iris Society (AIS) Convention. He recommended that anyone wishing to do likewise should go when the Convention is held in the Pacific North West as there is now a high concentration of the leading iris hybridisers growing their blooms in Washington and Oregon. The climatic conditions of the area offer ideal growing conditions for irises of all types.

That opportunity arose for us in May 2015 and we travelled to Portland, Oregon to attend the AIS Convention. We were keen to see all the different species and cultivars that America had to offer, many of which are unavailable in the UK. We flew to the USA a few days early allowing us to visit gardens in the area and also to be ready for the hectic Convention schedule. The hotel was located on an island in the wide Columbia river and we were able to get a tram into central Portland from the nearby transit station. The public transport system provided a cheap and convenient way of getting around.

We visited the Chinese garden in downtown Portland, seemingly shoehorned into a space amongst the surrounding buildings. It provided a quiet oasis with traditional Chinese style buildings and paths surrounding a central lake and beautifully planted. Portland is renowned for being a great place for growing roses but we did not have time to visit the famous Rose Gardens on the outskirts of the city. Instead we opted to see the Japanese Garden which is located directly opposite the Rose Garden. The Japanese Garden has interlinked areas showing the different styles of gardening with a viewpoint to the snow-capped Mount Hood in the distance. My favourite part was the Natural Garden with a shallow pond and a background of a waterfall framed by rocks, ferns, conifers, acers and other deciduous trees.

Being in Portland early we also enrolled on the pre-convention excursion which included visits to the gardens of Keith Keppel and Kevin Vaughn. This was fortuitous as Keith Keppel's garden was not included in the Convention programme and so we would not have had the chance to see it. The tall bearded irises were in full flower and offered a sample of the glories yet to come. Some of the regular Convention goers were relieved as neither good bloom nor fair weather are guaranteed at these events. We had arrived about mid-season for the tall bearded irises so all was well.

The AIS Convention itself was organised in an impressive manner. The delegates were allocated to groups which were assigned to a coach and that dictated the order of the garden visits. Each morning a fleet of coaches filled the hotel carpark which were swiftly boarded for the day's visits. Then all went their separate ways according to the day's schedule thus ensuring that each venue would not be overwhelmed by hordes of iris enthusiasts at any one time. The coach then conveyed you to the lunch venue, where lunch was waiting and then to the next garden in the afternoon. It was all smooth sailing from a delegate's point of view. Talks, discussions and sales were also available before gathering for our evening meals.

Over the three days of the main Convention we visited six gardens: Schreiner's Gardens, Mid-America Garden (Thomas Johnson), Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden (Terry and Barbara Aitken), Mt. Pleasant Iris Farm (Chad Harris and Dale Grams), Wildwood Gardens (Will Plotner) and Miller's Manor Gardens (Lynda and Roger Miller).

A bonus followed with the AIS Siberian/Species Convention being held after the main Convention had finished. Having travelled so far, we naturally stayed on for this. The number of attendees was much reduced from the previous days; just two coaches were needed to ferry participants to the gardens, but it was still as meticulously organised. Although we revisited many of the gardens that we had seen during the main Convention, this gave us a chance to see things that we missed earlier. In addition to the "guest" irises grown for the Convention and the owner's own irises, there were so many other plants in these beautiful gardens to admire.

For our first visit we crossed the Columbia river into Washington State and headed east alongside the river to Mt. Pleasant Iris Farm, located in the Columbia River Gorge, home of Chad Harris and Dale Grams. It is a woodland garden wrapped around the house with trees and shrubs providing a secluded area. Some ponds close to the house allowed for the planting of the moisture loving irises including *I. pseudacorus* and varieties of *I. laevigata* and *I. ensata*. On another path a fine clump of *Iris pallida* 'Variegata', with a background formed by a dissected purple leaved acer, made a very pleasing combination. Looking out from the front deck, the iris beds were arranged on the wide grassy slope down from the house, and beyond that was uninterrupted views of the countryside.



Looking down the slope a bewildering number of irises of all types stretched in front of us and there was plenty of bloom in the beardless iris beds. Among

the Siberian irises on show, 'Swans in Flight' (Robert Hollingworth, R. '06) stood out with its many large white flowers. Reading about its history, it appears to be a real-life ugly duckling story. In a blog written by Robert himself, he related that he was not looking for a white iris at the time and intended to discard it. In the process of moving his seedlings to a new garden he took the adjoining tall blue seedling but a small piece of the white one tagged along as a stowaway. Both grew well in their new surroundings, but the blue turned out to be too tall and top heavy, so that was discarded and recognising the true qualities of the white one he chose to grow it on. It was much admired at the Convention and in 2016 was awarded the American Dykes Medal which is very rare for a beardless iris to achieve.



'How Audacious'



SPEC-X 'Do The Math'

The Siberian iris 'How Audacious' (Robert Hollingworth, R. '09) has a vivid purple edge around the falls blending into a pale blue, then cream and finally lime-yellow at the base of each petal. The purple and blues appear again in the standards. There was plenty of bloom in the beardless iris beds and a large floriferous clump (above right) of *Iris* 'Do The Math' SPEC-X (Jill Copeland, R. '08) - violet standards, dark violet falls, and a white line at end of signal, signal dull yellow veined dark violet. This iris was the winner of the Randolph Perry Medal for inter-species hybrids awards at the 2015 Convention.



Iris pseudata hybrids

Chad Harris has been growing and hybridising irises for wet conditions for many years, particularly *Iris ensata*. He has also been developing a new Species-Cross hybrid between *Iris ensata* and *Iris pseudacorus* called a “pseudata”. We saw a number of these during our visit and opposite are a few examples of the colours and patterns achieved so far.

Crossing into Washington State, lunch was arranged for us at the Vancouver Military Base now a National Historic Site. After lunch we drove to Aitken’s Salmon Creek Garden which nestled in a quiet residential area of Vancouver, WA. Terry and Barbara Aitken moved there in 1974. The garden covers a large area and was ablaze with colour from the iris blooms. Being one of the larger plots a greater proportion of the “guest” irises could be accommodated together with their own irises, still allowing plenty of space for viewing. Slowly bypassing the tall bearded irises that had been the focus of attention



SPEC-X calisbe *Iris* ‘Rubicon’

just a few days ago we concentrated on the beardless plantings. The first to grab my attention was an iris seedling named ‘Rubicon’ (Carla Lankow, R. ’17). This iris, with its deep red flower, attracted admiring comments throughout the visit and was a runner up in the awards for best iris seedling category.

It was then on to view the diverse range of Spuria cultivars. *Iris spuria* ‘Missouri Morning’ (O.D. Niswonger, R. ’07), the winner of the Eric Nies Medal for Spuria irises in the 2015 Convention awards, one of many iris

introductions by Dave over the years. We also saw a number of other Spurias with his Missouri epithet and all were excellent plants. In particular ‘Missouri Autumn’, overall a caramel brown colour but imbued with yellow tones. Most of the flowers seem to have such vibrant colours, brilliant whites, rich yellows, browns, purples and blues. The oddly named ‘Ode to a Toad’ (Brad Kasperek, R. ’12) was similar in colour to ‘Missouri Autumn’ but



‘Missouri Autumn’ (Niswonger, R. ’97)



‘Falcon’s Crest’ (Jenkins, R. ’89)

had more yellow radiating out from the centre of both the standards and falls and equally desirable.

Again similar in colour but with a subtle difference was the aptly named 'Kiss Of Caramel' (Anna & David Cadd, R. '02). 'Falcon's Crest' (B. Charles Jenkins, R. '89) had a darker brown colour in the standards and falls; the falls being predominantly yellow but edged in brown with brown lines converging toward the signal area.

Amongst the blues, perhaps the most impressive one on show was called 'Line Dancing' (B. Charles Jenkins, R. '07) (right). The blue flowers have a small yellow signal patch at the style arms, blending into white rays that radiate over 2/3 of the petal. A number of flowers appear at the same time and form a spiral round the stem – fitting its name perfectly. I believe that this is available in the UK but I have yet to find a supplier for it. Another fine plant is 'Adriatic Memories' (Kevin Vaughn, R. '09).



The following day we visited Kevin Vaughn's garden near Salem, Oregon, where he continues his hybridisation of many species of plants that he started doing as a young lad with successful breeding and introductions of *Sempervivums*. Spurias were on the menu again and a gourmet selection was there to feast our eyes. 'Ibex Ibis' (Brad Kasperek, R. '12) is similar to 'Adriatic Memories' apart from the purple colouration being a much paler almost pastel purple allowing the veins to stand out in both falls and standards. 'Stop And Look' (Walter Brendel, R. '01) has a lot of yellow in the centres of both the falls and standards but are bordered in white to a greater degree in the standards than the thin borders in falls.



Iris 'McKenzie Bruiser' (Reid, R. '96) *Iris* 'Black Garnet' (Reid, R. '01)
Iris chrysographes hybrids Sino-Sib both hybrids from Lorena Reid.



There were some lovely Louisianas. 'Red Velvet Elvis' (Kevin Vaughn, R. '96) caught my eye, with its very dark red falls and a velvety texture and light ruffling. The flowers are somewhat flat but the petals are quite wide.

Our lunch stop was at Schreiner's Garden located just outside Salem, Oregon. There were extensive display gardens with perennials and shrubs planted amongst the irises. A secret garden round the back of the house with more irises, but what a lovely spectacle it makes driving past fields of irises that can be seen from the road.

After lunch we made the short journey to our final garden of the Convention. The Mid-America Garden is where Tom Johnson raises his irises and together with Kirk Hansen also runs a separate nursery specialising in hostas and other woodland plants on the same site. Paul Black had retired from the running of the business a while back, but is still actively involved with the hybridisation of irises.

Iris 'Missouri Morning' (Niswonger, R. '07) was the first iris to greet us around the entrance area. In the main iris growing beds I think that 'Stella Irene' (B. Charles Jenkins, R. '95) (below right) was one of the most attractive flowers but there were more to rival it.



LA 'Michigan In Dallas' (Jill Copeland, R. '15). An outstanding dark purple and very floriferous iris.

We had a great time at the Convention and found the whole experience well worth doing. So many outstanding plants and great organisation. It all went smoothly for the attendees. Must do it again.

A New Year Challenge? – *Isophysis tasmanica* Alun Whitehead

There is one characteristic which all the Iridaceae share and that is the ovary, where the seeds develop, is situated below the flower parts. Botanists refer to this as an inferior ovary, though nothing judgemental is implied. However, there is the exception of *Isophysis tasmanica*, with its superior ovary which is above the floral parts. How can such a profound anomaly not pique your curiosity? It certainly did mine and I wanted to know more.



Isophysis tasmanica 'Mt Eliza', Tasmania
© JJ Harrison – Wikimedia Commons

Being the only 'odd species' in this respect, as you might imagine it is monotypic, meaning there is only one species in the genus. People find it attractive with references likening it to an *Erythronium* (Liliaceae). It is not included in Liliaceae as it has a rhizome (a fattened leaf base) rather than a traditional bulb which would contain the incipient leaves and, if mature, the flower. Alan Gray, an acknowledged Tasmanian botanist, at one time likened it to *Edelweiss*, not by relation, but by being a true alpine gem. An old key to the monocots places it near *Uvularia* (Colchicaceae), but it wasn't always in this group, but in that group the leaves have a distinct top and bottom, whereas in *Isophysis* the leaves

look similar from both sides (unifacial) like an iris. Today we recognise the chemical connections *Isophysis* has to the irids and today its place in our favourite plant family is not in question. The alternative would be to make a family just for one plant!

The leaves form evergreen tufts about 10-30cm tall and the flowers range from pale purple to magnificent near blacks, with an occasional yellow form occurring. A natural question to ask is, how did this species arise? We tend to think of plants evolving in terms of a metaphorical tree, starting at a base and branching out as adaptations evolve. The Monocots form one limb from which sprouts the Iridaceae. So did *Isophysis* evolve from the other Iridaceae or did the other Iridaceae evolve from it? Is it the ancient parent of all our beloved family? The iris family is believed to have its origin in Australasia about c80 million years ago (mya). Some of the 'early branches' occur in this

area making it look likely. At that stage Australia and South America were connected and the plants could migrate over time to nearly the whole world (arid deserts excluded – even irises need some water!). The irises as we know them are basically found in the Northern hemisphere; Africa is a 'hot spot' for other Iridaceae; the libertias found in South America and Australia/New Zealand highlight their joint origins when the land masses were connected.

Kew currently estimates *Isophysis* as appearing about c.66 mya and so it is not *the* ancestor of the other Iridaceae, but a sister. Both evolved together, but the other plants/parents of the *Isophysis* line are now extinct. Is there something special about the endemic Iridaceae in Tasmania? Others that are rarely seen; *Diplarrena*, *Moraea*, *Libertia pulchella* and *Patersonia fragilis* and *P. occidentalis*. *Diplarrena* look slightly strange compared to the iris as we know them. Whilst it has 3 stamens, one is reduced and has no anther. Some people record two species, *D. moraea* and *D. latifolia*. As the name suggests, the latter has a slightly wider leaf, but it might be a natural reaction to its wetter growing conditions. Kew continues to regard them as a separate species, but the Australian National Botanic Gardens do not. *Libertia pulchella* also comes in two forms, historically *L. var. pulchella* and *L. var. pygmaea*. The former grows between 3-18cm tall as understorey growth in the rainforest. The latter is a diminutive 4cm in alpine and sub-alpine meadows. Again, the different cultural conditions would easily explain the differences in height and thankfully they both now appear as simply *L. pulchella*. The final two natives again have a distinct look. *Patersonia* is native to Australia and Asia and the inner petals are either so small as to be



Libertia pulchella
© Kenraiz Wikimedia Commons



Diplarrena moraea
On the show bench



Patersonia occidentalis
© Uleli– Wikimedia Commons

almost non-existent or indeed are non-existent. This gives a very round three-petalled appearance.

Besides the natives there are also intentionally or accidentally introduced Iridaceae in Tasmania. These can be aggressive invaders. *Romulea rosea*, onion grass, from South Africa is a weed of pastures. More serious is *Moraea flaccida*, again from S. Africa, the One-leafed Cape Tulip, which is poisonous to grazing stock. Other irises have popped up as you would expect including *germanica* and *foetidissima*. If you have difficulty growing native Tasmanian plants then these invaders will no doubt prove easier to cultivate – perhaps too easy?

So how are we going to grow the plant we are interested in? At a superficial level, *Isophysis* is from hardiness zone 8 and so should be growable in milder parts of the UK, but there are differences. The climate of Tasmania is oceanic. Cold air comes from the Antarctic, and then travelling a long distance it is warmer when it arrives, but can still bring snow and frost. On the other hand, hot air from Australia can bring a heat wave even though temperatures can dip to -10°C in places such as Mt. Wellington. The sun is at a higher elevation than the UK and makes the daytime temperatures unlikely to remain below zero for too long. The climate enjoys good rainfall, approx. 150cm on the west and about half that to the east. With those conditions, it is natural that it has been suggested growing *Isophysis* on the mild/wet west coast of Scotland. There is an interesting paper on the web by Dianne Gilmour (University of Tasmania, Hobart 2006) where she considered *Isophysis* along with other Iridaceae and Liliaceae for commercial production. The good news is it has been grown successfully in a pot and that its range in the wetter west side reportedly has been from near the coast to the exposed mountains, from rocky outcrops to grassland pastures. So clearly it seems reasonably adaptable there. Germination of seed was good. There was no dormancy mechanism but seed could take up to 6 months to germinate. Light adversely affected in-vitro germination, but as most growers normally sow in compost, there should be no problem. However, pot-grown plants seem loath to set seed or be divided. In-vitro propagation of explants was successful, but the weaned rooted plants suffered c.75% losses after 12 months. As fungal/watering problems seem to arise, a free draining compost seems necessary with as little disturbance as possible. Clive Innes was fortunate enough to see *Isophysis* growing and mentions that the plants he saw did not set seed in the wild. Perhaps it was just a poor season? Clive also queried about its range of habitat. He found it in a mountainous area growing in crevices with a rich leaf mould peaty soil. Recent images on the web show it in those small peaty areas, but a few show it forming more spread out groups.

If you fancy a challenge, a few seeds have been available on the web collected from plants which suffer frost – just search, I have mine already! Nearer to home, Bern Botanical Garden were hoping to acquire it for their Iridaceae collection. Have you seen it growing? In the UK or anywhere else? Please do let me know.

SEED

You may already be aware that the EU REGULATION 2016/2031 will come into force on December 14, 2019. All seed, along with other plant material, entering the EU will require a phytosanitary certificate unless exempted. It is not clear how this will be implemented and what effect, if any, it will have on the Group or even the UK! The UK ministry (DEFRA) website currently shows that seeds other than a few non-Iridaceae remain unrestricted (i.e. do not need a certificate). Let us hope this doesn't change.

On a brighter note, after the sad news last year from Silverhill Seeds in S. Africa, Anthony Hitchcock formerly of Kirstenbosch is now collecting for them and the firm continues. We wish them well.



References:

- *Isophysis* by Clive Innes *The Garden* January 1987 p14
- *Micropropagation and Horticultural Potential of Native Tasmanian Liliaceae and Iridaceae* by Dianne Gilmour's thesis, University of Tasmania, Hobart June 2006

I am grateful for the help kindly given by Sigourney Jacks of the National Gallery of Victoria and the trustees of the Estate of Margaret Stones.

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Margaret Stones

Isophysis tasmanica 1989 watercolour 32.0 x 20.0 cm irreg. (image) 49.1 x 35.6 cm
National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne Gift of the artist, 1993

Image courtesy of the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

<https://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/artist/3742/>

Iris from Curtis's Botanical Magazine Part 2

Brian Mathew

A lengthy introduction to this series of articles giving historical details of the *Botanical Magazine* appeared in the 2018 *Review*. William Curtis's famous journal made its debut on February 1, 1787 and has continued in an unbroken series ever since. It is probably the oldest botanical periodical still being published and is thought to be the world's longest surviving magazine in colour. *Iris* has been a popular subject with the Bot. Mag. over the years with about 150 species featured to date. It would be impossible to cover these in one article for the *Review* so they have been divided into their subgenera and series and they will be reviewed here in these taxonomic groupings. Part 1 dealt with illustrations of the 'Reticulata' irises; this time it is with beardless irises of series *Sibiricae* and series *Spuriae*, giving extracts from the original texts with added comments based on more recent knowledge.



Part 2. Iris from Curtis's *Botanical Magazine*: series *Sibiricae* & series *Spuriae*

Chronological order of publication:

Sibiricae

1. *I. sibirica* Plate 50 (1788) by James Sowerby
2. *I. sibirica* Plate 1163 (1809) by Sydenham Edwards
3. *I. sanguinea* Plate 1604 (1814) by Sydenham Edwards
4. *I. delavayi* Plate 7661 (1899) by Matilda Smith
5. *I. clarkei* Plate 8323 (1910) by Matilda Smith
6. *I. wilsonii* Plate 8340 (1910) by Matilda Smith
7. *I. chrysographes* Plate 8433 (1912) by Matilda Smith
8. *I. dykesii* Plate 9282 (1929) by Lilian Snelling

1. *I. sibirica* Linn., Sp. Pl. 38 (1753). Bot. Mag. plate 50 (1788). Artist: James Sowerby. Text: W. Curtis.

When Curtis arranged for this illustration to be prepared the species had already been in cultivation in Britain for over 100 years for it was known to Parkinson in 1629 and probably well before this. He notes that it 'is a native of Germany and Siberia and is distinguished from those usually cultivated in our gardens by the superior height of its stems, and the narrowness of its leaves.' Hardly a lavish botanical description but there is no doubting the identity of the plant shown in the beautiful painting by James Sowerby. He

continues to note that it 'is a hardy perennial, and will thrive in almost any soil or situation, but grows most luxuriantly in a moist one.' Most growers would agree, it is really an Iris for everyone.

In these early volumes of the Bot. Mag. it seems to have been the preferred option to limit the text to one page opposite the illustration so there is little more than this, half the page having been taken up with synonyms including Linnaeus' full descriptive name *Iris sibirica imberbis foliis linearibus, scapo subtrifloro tereti, germinibus trigonis!*

2. *I. sibirica* Linn., Sp. Pl. 38 (1753). Bot. Mag. plate 1163 (1809). Artist: Sydenham Edwards. Engraver: F. Sansom. Text: Ker Gawler.

The general policy for the *Botanical Magazine* has been not to repeat the illustrations, after all there are plenty of species in our gardens so repetition is scarcely necessary. However in some cases where there is notable variation it has been the case that species are included more than once. So it is with *I. sibirica* and we find that three 'forms' were depicted in the early years. The attractive white-flowered version was painted by that superb botanical illustrator Sydenham Edwards and is identified as *Iris sibirica* (β). White-Flowered Meadow-Flag. Greek letters were often used to indicate a variant of the more usual form rather than giving a distinguishing name as we do today. In contrast to the previous plate this one has two pages of text comprising two lengthy descriptions, one in Latin and an even longer one in English, extensive synonymy and a rather short section of other information such as a 'Native of Germany, Switzerland, Dauphiny, Siberia...' The letter G at the end of the text indicates that it was written by the botanist John Gawler (1764-1842) who later changed his name to John Bellenden Ker Gawler and is better known in botanical circles as just Ker Gawler. He was a prolific writer and published a work on the Iridaceae: *Iridearum Genera* (1827) as well as a nonbotanical tome about nursery rhymes. He first named and described many species,



many of them were monocots, including a considerable number of *Iris*.

3. *I. sanguinea* Hornem., Hort. Bot. Hafn. 1: 58 (1813). Bot. Mag. plate 1604 (1814). Artist: Sydenham Edwards. Engraver: F. Sansom. Text: Ker Gawler.

For the *Botanical Magazine* this was the third illustration devoted to variants of the Siberian Iris under the name *Iris sibirica* γ *sanguinea*. Mr Hibbert's Iris. It is the handsome relation of *I. sibirica* known to Dykes as *I. orientalis* but now recognised as *I. sanguinea*; in fact Ker Gawler in his accompanying text noted 'Probably a distinct species'. He cites the origin of the plant as 'Introduced by George Hibbert, Esq. about 1790; said to have come from Siberia; but on enquiry, that circumstance appeared doubtful'. Gawler was correct in querying the origin for it is more easterly occurring, in China. The painting by Sydenham Edwards shows not only the rich flower colour but also the distinctive feature of having wholly green bracts unlike the scarious brownish ones of *I. sibirica*.



4. *I. delavayi* Micheli, Rev. Hort. (Paris) 67: 398 (1895). Bot. Mag. plate 7661 (1899). Artist: Matilda Smith. Engraver: J.N. Fitch. Text: J.D. Hooker.

This was the first of the 'Sino-Siberian' Iris species to be featured in the Magazine. It had been formally named and described by the Swiss botanist Marc Micheli only six years after its introduction to cultivation at the Jardin des Plantes in Paris. The material he used for his description had been grown from seeds collected in China by the French missionary Jean-Marie Delavay in Yunnan Province; it was seeds from these plants that Micheli sent to Kew and these flowered in 1898. Impeccable provenance!

The Bot. Mag. illustration does give some idea of the impressive stature of *I. delavayi*, for it is the tallest of the group that includes *I. chrysographes* and *I. bulleyana*. In writing the text to accompany Plate 7661 Joseph Hooker comments on it being a native of marshes and in cultivation it certainly does respond to damp conditions, reaching 2m when growing well.



5. *I. clarkei* Baker ex Hook. fil., Fl. Brit. India 6: 275 (1892). Bot. Mag. plate 8323 (1910). Artist: Matilda Smith. Engraver: J.N. Fitch. Text: J.G. Baker.

This attractive Himalayan Iris was described by the Kew botanist John Gilbert Baker in his comprehensive *Handbook of the Irideae* (1892) and in the same year in J. D. Hooker's *Flora of British India*. It had been seen and collected by several of the botanical explorers of Sikkim in the late 19th Century: J.D. Hooker, T. Thompson, T. Anderson and C.B. Clarke after whom it was named. However it was Sir George King, the Superintendent of Calcutta Botanic Garden who was instrumental in introducing it to cultivation here in 1876. The plant from which the illustration was prepared came from W.R. Dykes' garden at Charterhouse, Godalming. Although the accompanying text is not attributed to a named author it is most likely to have been J.G. Baker who was the Kew Herbarium's 'monocot man' – and particularly Iridaceae – at the time. In the introductory Latin diagnosis he notes '*affinis I. delavayi* Mich. *sed caule solido...*' (related to *I. delavayi* Mich. but the stem is solid.) thus picking out the primary difference between this and the other Sino-Siberians.



6. *I. wilsonii* C.H. Wright, Bull. Misc. Inform. Kew 1907: 321 (1907). Bot. Mag. plate 8340 (1910). Artist: Matilda Smith. Engraver: J.N. Fitch. Text: J.G. Baker.

As with *I. clarkei* which appeared in the Bot. Mag. a short while before this one the text attached to this plate is not attributed but is almost certainly the work of J.G. Baker as he was Kew's specialist when it came to writing accounts of any Irids. He notes that 'The Iris here figured was discovered by Mr. E.H. Wilson in Western China on behalf of Messrs J. Veitch & Sons, and the material on which our figure is based was supplied from a plant which flowered with them in July 1909.' He further observed that it might 'prove a useful addition to the list of garden Irises.' This is certainly the case although unfortunately *I. wilsonii* is currently not a widely cultivated plant, possibly due to the fact that it will hybridise readily with other members of the group unless steps are taken to prevent it. Interestingly Baker mentions another 'nearly



related form which flowered with Messrs. Veitch in 1907, collected by Mr. Wilson on their behalf at Fang in Central China, of more robust habit and with wider spathes which extend as far as or beyond the top of the perianth tube. This stouter form has been distinguished by Mr. Wright as a variety, var. *major*, of *I. wilsonii*, but the venation of the leaves is somewhat different, and it may be necessary, when more ample material is available, to treat this robust plant as a distinct species.' This is perhaps something that would merit further investigation or it may merely be variation within the species. The wild source plants of *I. wilsonii* certainly show some variation, although in depth of the yellow flower colour rather than habit.

7. *I. chrysographes* Dykes, Gard. Chron., ser. 3, 49: 362 (1911). Bot. Mag. plate 8433 (1912). Artist: Matilda Smith. Engraver: J.N. Fitch. Text: J.G. Baker.

This is a good example of how the Bot. Mag. presented recently described plants to the public through the medium of watercolours, for *I. chrysographes* was figured only a year after its publication as a new species. The plant used for the illustration had impressive credentials, having been raised by Ellen Willmott of Warley Place in Essex and sent to W. R. Dykes to cultivate at Godalming in Surrey where it flowered in May 1911. Baker notes that it is 'one of the most richly coloured of those [species] now in cultivation.' Unfortunately Matilda Smith's depiction of it is not the most skilful of illustrations. She painted for the Magazine for 34 years from 1886 onwards and was a cousin of Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker who was both the Editor of Curtis's and Director of Kew. It is of note that Ray Desmond in his superb book



about the Bot. Mag. (*A Celebration of Flowers*, 1987) wrote of Matilda Smith: 'Her artistic talents, it must be confessed, did not rise above average competency, and she was fortunate to have much of her work translated into lithography by the very capable John Nugent Fitch.' W.R. Dykes made an even harsher assessment, noting that 'when the first illustration of it appeared in the *Botanical Magazine* ... it was so badly drawn that the figure was utterly unlike the plant.' However she did give some idea of the rich colour and show a distinctive feature of the species, namely the bold golden marks and stripe along the centre of the falls. It was this that prompted Dykes to choose the epithet *chrysographes*, with gold marks or lines. As we now know, the species is very variable both in these in markings and overall colour from purple to nearly black.

8. *I. dykesii* Stapf, Bot. Mag. 155: t. 9282 (1932). Bot. Mag. plate 9282 (1932). Artist: Lilian Snelling. Engraver: Lilian Snelling. Text: Otto Stapf. For the most recent plate depicting a member of the Sibiricae we move into

the era of the superb botanical artist, Lilian Snelling, who was trained by Henry Elwes and contributed about 740 plates to the Bot. Mag. between 1923 and 1980. It was perhaps unfortunate but maybe unavoidable that some subjects were deemed to be too large for the page size and folding plates were introduced, albeit rather rarely. They were not popular with subscribers as they were inevitably creased and it ruined the effect if put on display. Aside from this it is an excellent painting, but of a plant that has caused controversy. It's origin is in doubt and it has only ever been known as a garden plant. Otto Stapf writes that 'We owe the opportunity of figuring this very handsome species to Mr. Charles T. Musgrave of Hascombe Place, Godalming, who received seedlings of it from the late Mr. Dykes in 1922 or 1923' He continues that 'It is not known whence Mr. Dykes obtained the seed of our plant.' He did not live to see it flower, but from the foliage and the seed he felt convinced that it represented a new species.' In the absence of any similar plants being collected in the wild it is difficult to progress any further in determining exactly what it represents. Christopher (Kit) Grey-Wilson in his useful booklet about the Sibiricae (BIS, 1971) suggests that it might be of hybrid origin.



Spuriae

1. *I. spuria* Plate 58 (1788) by James Sowerby
2. *I. ochroleuca* Plate 61 (1788) by James Sowerby
3. *I. graminea* Plate 681 (1803) by Sydenham Edwards
4. *I. halophila* Plate 875 (1805) by Sydenham Edwards
5. *I. spuria* Plate 1131 (1808) by Sydenham Edwards
6. *I. spuria* Plate 1514 (1813) by Sydenham Edwards
7. *I. spuria* Plate 1515 (1813) by Sydenham Edwards
8. *I. urumovii* Plate 8608 (1915) by Matilda Smith
9. *I. xanthosporia* Plate 853 (1982) by Margaret Stones

1. *I. spuria* Linn., Sp. Pl. 38 (1753). Bot. Mag. plate 58 (1788). Artist: James Sowerby. Text: W. Curtis.

Curtis refers to this as the Spurious Iris, noting that 'Some plants afford so little diversity of character that an expressive name can scarcely be assigned to them; such is the present plant, or Linnaeus would not have given it the inexpressive name of *spuria*.' He comments on the foliage



having a disagreeable smell when bruised and on the hexagonal ovary, which is a feature of the series *Spuriae*. It has been cultivated for centuries but today is seldom seen in its 'ordinary' wild form in gardens as there are so many fine *Spuria* hybrid cultivars from which to choose. Curtis notes that it is a 'hardy perennial, thrives in our gardens in almost any soil or situation, flowers in June, and is propagated by parting its roots in autumn.' Almost dismissive but he obviously liked it enough to have it illustrated in just the second year of his splendid Magazine.

2. *I. orientalis* Mill., Gard. Dict. ed. 8: No 9 (1768). Bot. Mag. plate 61 (1788) [as *I. ochroleuca*]. Artist: James Sowerby. Engraver: Text: W. Curtis

Although this species was well known in gardens as *I. ochroleuca*, and that is the name under which it was featured in the Bot. Mag., it was ascertained that Philip Miller had earlier christened it *I. orientalis*. A pity, as *ochroleuca* sums up the colour very well, a mix of yellow and white whereas *orientalis* implies a species from farther east than its known distribution in southeast Europe and Asia Minor. At the time the plate was published there was some doubt as to the provenance of the species; Curtis reported that Miller wrote in the 6th edition of his *Gardeners' Dictionary* that Dr. Pocock had introduced it from Carniola (mistakenly spelled Carolina!), which is now partly Slovenia. However Curtis expresses some doubt as to the authenticity of this and indeed the only place in Europe it is thought to exist naturally is north-eastern Greece and probably adjacent Turkey-in-Europe.



It is a long-cultivated robust plant and Curtis remarked on this: 'it appears perfectly naturalised to this country, growing luxuriantly in a moist rich soil, and increasing...very fast by its roots.'

3. *I. graminea* L., Sp. Pl.: 39 (1753). Bot. Mag. plate 681 (1803). Artist: Sydenham Edwards. Engraver: F. Sansom Text: J.B. Ker Gawler

The epithet *graminea* means grassy and Curtis, who preferred to have English names for his plants in addition to the scientific ones, published this illustration under the name Grass-leaved Flag. There is no doubt that this illustration represents the 'ordinary' *I. graminea* var. *graminea* rather than the commonly cultivated var. *pseudocyperus* as Ker Gawler notes that 'the flowers have a scent something like that of fresh plums.' This fruity fragrance is absent from the latter more robust,



wider leaved variant. The species has been in cultivation at least since the time of Gerard in the late 16th century and as Ker Gawler says, perfectly hardy and will grow in any situation. Both of the variants are good beginners' 'irises'.

The source of the plant illustrated is given as the nursery of Messrs. Whitley and Co., Brompton, a notable horticultural establishment in the late 18th century that supplied many plants to artists and botanists for artwork and study. One of Curtis's botanic gardens was at Brompton so there was probably a close relationship between the two.

4. *I. spuria* Linn., Sp. Pl. 38 (1753) *α major*.
Bot. Mag. plate 875 (1805) [as *I. halophila*].
Artist: Sydenham Edwards. Engraver: F. Sansom. Text: J.B. Ker Gawler.

Although this illustration was published under the name *I. halophila* it was later amended in a footnote to Plate 1131 – presumably by Ker Gawler – to *I. spuria α major*. He comments that 'We confess that we are unable at present to detect any other distinctions between this and *Iris spuria* (supra 58) than that this is altogether a much larger plant and possesses considerably more rigidity both in the leaves and stem than that; to which may be added a far greater elongation of the outer valve of the spathe; yet there is a difference in their general appearance, though not easily expressed, that makes it difficult for us to consider them as mere varieties of each other; besides that their habitats are widely distant, this being a native of the salt marshy spots of Siberia, the other of the moist meadows in Germany.' He adds that 'it was introduced into our gardens as far back as 1780, by Dr. Peter Pallas.' It is difficult to ascertain exactly to which subspecies of *I. spuria* this belongs. Some of those occurring in central Asia are certainly much more robust than the European variants (subsp. *spuria* and subsp. *maritima*), for example subsp. *notha* or subsp. *musulmanica*, so it is possible that the plant which was being grown here at that time is referable to one of these. It is now generally recognised that the species described as *I. halophila* by Pallas (Reise Russ. Reich. 2: 733, 1773) is the yellow-flowered version of *I. spuria* (see the next plate t.1131) and is usually a plant of saline situations, hence its name, as is subsp. *musulmanica*. The information given above, that the material came from Pallas is therefore in doubt unless he sent this large purple-flowered form as well as the yellow one. If this is the case, and it did come from salt marshes, then I would opt for this illustration representing a dark violet form of the very variable subsp. *musulmanica*.



There is no doubt that this group of irises of Series Spuriae do present problems for the taxonomist; maybe a thorough molecular study would

throw light on the relationships - or not!

It is interesting that three years later Ker Gawler, when writing up the next Bot. Mag. plate (1131) devoted to a Spuriae, provides a list of the varieties he recognises showing that he had done a considerable amount of work on them in the intervening period.

5. *I. spuria* Linn., Sp. Pl. 38 (1753) δ *halophila*. Bot. Mag. plate 1131 (1808). Artist: Sydenham Edwards. Engraver: F. Sansom. Text: J.B. Ker Gawler.

This beautiful illustration is Sydenham Edwards at his best and shows the creamy yellow version of *I. spuria* now treated as *I. spuria* subsp. *halophila* or as a species *I. halophila* by Russian botanists (including N. Alexeeva).

The varieties of *I. spuria* listed and described by Ker Gawler are:

α major (larger plants with bluish flowers).

This is the plant shown in Bot. Mag. t. 875, and discussed above, which may be referable to *I. spuria* subsp. *musulmanica* or subsp. *notha* (*I. notha* of Russian botanists).

β minor (smaller plants with bluish-violet flowers).

This is the variant shown in Bot. Mag. t. 58 and referred to above; it is probably referable to the European *I. spuria* subsp. *spuria* or subsp. *maritima*.

γ ochroleuca (larger plants with creamy-yellow flowers).

The plant shown in Bot. Mag. t. 61, now known as *I. orientalis*.

δ halophile (smaller plants with creamy-yellow flowers).

This is the plant shown in the illustration t. 1131 reproduced here, now *I. spuria* subsp. *halophila* or *I. halophila* of Russian botanists.

ϵ desertorum (flowers with bluish standards and yellowish falls).

From this brief description it is hard to say what this represents but is possibly a variant of subsp. *halophila*. Ker Gawler goes on to say that 'after a scrupulous examination of a multitude of spontaneous [i.e. wild], as well as garden, specimens, we cannot detect the slightest character that can be adduced to discriminate them in any other way than as varieties of each other.' As to the origin of the plant depicted here he makes the following statement: 'We are indebted for the present specimen (the *halophila* of Pallas) to Mr. Donn, Curator of the Botanic Garden, Cambridge.'

6. *I. spuria* Linn., Sp. Pl. 38 (1753) ϵ *desertorum*. Bot. Mag. plate 1514



(1813). Artist: Sydenham Edwards. Engraver: F. Sansom. Text: J.B. Ker Gawler.

Ker Gawler called this variety 'The Sweet-scented Bastard Iris', the latter part of this being the name for all forms of *I. spuria* although it is not clear as to why the species was seen as a 'bastard'. He does dwell on the fragrance of the flowers: 'The bloom of this present variety is exceedingly fragrant, a circumstance in which it differs from the others; but the same disagreeable and peculiar smell is perceived on breaking or bruising its foliage as in the rest.' [i.e. rather like that of *I. foetidissima* – BM]. Its origin was described as 'the sandy deserts of the oriental departments of the Russian empire where it grows on the sides of the larger rivers.' The plant used for the illustration actually came from much nearer home, from the nursery of Mr. Middlemist of Shepherd's Bush. Ker Gawler rated this highly: 'The most desirable of all the varieties known to us.'



From the illustration and the purported origin in 'the oriental parts of the Russian empire,' presumably referring to Uzbekistan, etc., this could be a form of *I. spuria* subsp. *sogdiana* which Chris Brickell and I saw there many years ago and material we introduced to Kew is still cultivated there I believe. Whether or not the flowers are fragrant I cannot say.

7. *I. spuria* Linn., Sp. Pl. 38 (1753) ζ *stenogyna*. Bot. Mag. plate 1515 (1813). Artist: Sydenham Edwards. Engraver: F. Sansom Text: J.B. Ker Gawler.

Five years after Ker Gawler listed his five varieties of *I. spuria* he added another, labelling it ζ (zeta) *stenogyna*, which he described as being a small one with white flowers. The Bot. Mag. drawing of it was made from a specimen sent by James Donn, Curator of Cambridge Botanic Garden and this enabled Ker Gawler to make an observation that contradicted the first naming of it as a species *I. stenogyna* by Redouté. There is a beautiful illustration in the latter's *Les Liliaceae* t. 310 where it is shown as having a long slender perianth tube, hence the epithet. Ker Gawler however suggests that the perianth tube is



actually no longer than normal and Redouté has mistaken the extended tip of the ovary for part of the perianth tube, making it appear longer.

8. *I. urumovii* Velen., Oesterr. Bot. Z. 52: 155 (1902). Bot. Mag. plate 8608 (1915). Artist: Matilda Smith. Engraver: J. N. Fitch Text: Otto Stapf.



Although this species is often dismissed as a synonym of *I. sintenisii* or merely a variant of it there is one obvious difference from the gardener's viewpoint, and that is that the leaves die down in winter whereas plants of *I. sintenisii* are most definitely evergreen.

The material for this plate has impressive credentials, having been supplied by W. R. Dykes from his garden in Godalming; he had raised these from seeds from the illustrious nursery of Vilmorin. Before seeing it Dykes first regarded it as a synonym of *I. sintenisii* but on growing and observing it amended his views and recognised it as a distinct entity. The Hon. N. C. Rothschild, who obtained a plant from the original locality, subsequently agreed with Dykes' view as to its status. Apart from the deciduous nature of the leaves Dykes noted that the leaves and bracts were glaucous and the veins

on the leaves had conspicuous white papillae that added to the greyish appearance. He also considers the perianth tube to be shorter than in *I. sintenisii*.

The species was named by Josef Velenovsky after the Bulgarian botanist Prof J. K. Urumov who discovered it at 'Eski Dzumaja' (now Blagoevgrad?) in south-western Bulgaria in 1901. It is rare in cultivation but does occasionally appear in seed lists and seems to be as easy to cultivate as *I. sintenisii* in a slightly shaded position with leafmould-rich soil.

9. *I. xanthospuria* B. Mathew & T. Baytop, *The Garden* (London) 107 (11): 446 (1982). Bot. Mag. plate 853 (1982). Artist: Margaret Stones. Text: B. Mathew.

This showy member of the Spuriæ is a Turkish native that has now been found in several locations mainly in south and south-western Anatolia. It was described in 1982 from material collected by Prof. Turhan Baytop on one of his many botanical excursions throughout the country. It was however well-known long before this and introduced into the United States where it was cultivated as 'Turkey Yellow' and used in hybridisation programmes. The plants used for the illustration reproduced here came from a collection by Dr. Peter Davis (P.D.13573) in Muğla Province. The only other wild species with deep golden flowers that might be confused with this is *I. crocea* but this has considerably larger flowers with a spread of around 12-18cm whereas in *I. xanthospuria* they are about 9-11cm across. The shape of the lamina of the falls is also diagnostic, in *I. crocea* it is oblong or broadly lanceolate while in *I. xanthospuria* more orbicular or elliptic-ovate. Although in the wild *I. xanthospuria* is usually found in marshy areas it seems easy enough to maintain in quite dry situations, although possibly not quite so vigorous and free-flowering in my experience.



Acknowledgements:

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PCIs 2019 “Starting Again Somewhere Else...” Philip Jones



This year my Pacific Coast Iris article is about starting again - somewhere else. Our editor has the strange idea that I should explain to the reader that this was not a purely free decision on my part. It was somewhat forced upon me after I had managed to lose most of my favourite specimens. This happened four or five years ago. The favourite irises were the result of crosses I had made with *Iris* 'Kinnoull', my starting point which - fortunately - I still have.

The main position I occupy in life is chaplain to the Carmelite Monastery in Dysart, Kirkcaldy, on the drier east coast of Scotland. I wanted the Carmelite Sisters in their Enclosure to have an engaging view of my favourite irises, so I planted them in their garden on a shelf raised up from the ground but also at the edge of a path. I took it for granted that the drainage must be perfect but I was not paying close attention to the fact that the back of the bed was at the bottom of a steep bank facing north and that the drop at the front of the bed to the path was enclosed by concrete slabs. I discovered - too late - that although there was a drainage hole in the front left corner it was blocked.

The surface seemed dry, but the water was coming down through the thick mossy bank and under the dry surface, the soil in the bed was soaking wet. One day I noticed a darkness at the base of an iris leaf, and I took hold of the leaf which seemed strong and healthy, and it came off in my hand. This was not a case of 'but all was not lost.' It was the beginning of the end of all the others – except for *Iris* 'Kinnoull' which was also growing in other areas.

I still have the original plants with which I began hybridising and a few years ago I acquired seed of the main colours of the PCIs which I think may be



Seedlings from *Iris* 'Kinnoull'



flowering next year. And then I can start again, but it will take some years before I am back to where I once was.



In the meantime – Starting Again Somewhere Else.

Recently I have been studying some philosophical ideas concerning plenitude and identity. The human person, your pet dog or your tabby cat, or - for that matter - your favourite Pacific Coast Iris plant, come into your life with a certain completeness or plenitude. Two German women philosophers of the 1920s, Edith Stein and Hedwig Conrad-Martius, wrote about the 'I' and its plenitude. They argued that our first impression of living things from people to plants is of a fullness or plenitude; a wholeness of an individual self-contained. At first sight we receive an impression of a whole - some parts will dominate but they are still parts of a whole, and it is the whole in its fullness of which we remain conscious. This is how we are conscious of each other, of plants and of all living individual things.

This summer one PCI plant caught my eye. A number of irises were already flowering and although I took photos of them there was nothing special about them. But then 'the special one' flowered. It was smaller than the others and 'It' was very neat. Even the foliage was neat for a PCI. And there was space between the different petals. This helped to show off the petal formation. You could say that the spaces are part of the fullness of the 'I' of the special one. Many PCI flowers are clusters of petals that can be very attractive, but they are altogether or overlapping so that there is not much distinctive shape to the flower as a whole in relation to its different parts. In other words, the petal formation is not interesting.

I started to look around and see what other flowers chimed in to the special one. For example, a rather narrow petalled orangey, red flower – a mere curiosity a month ago – now has possibilities. This year I have made many crosses with the special one and selected some others which at first did not appear special but now have something to say for themselves.

The photos will give some idea of the new beginning and you will also see that the 'special one' is now pregnant with new possibilities.

PCIs IN KENT

Wendy Payne

When my husband, Dick, was 60 and had just retired he took on an allotment as well as having a large garden to maintain. We had always grown TBs having discovered them just before we got married. We knew there were other types of iris but apart from Siberians had not grown any. We had a nice selection of TBs that we'd bought from De Jaeger's nursery, formerly Wallace and Barr, and we had shown our garden in the National Garden Scheme in the 1980s. We always chose to show in late May and early June because the irises were at their best. With more time on our retired hands (foolish thinking) I wondered if it would be an idea to join the BIS and so take a greater interest in irises. I applied, joined, and our names were passed to the secretary of the Kent Group, Mary Tubbs, who kindly wrote and told us of the KG activities and that there were two members who lived quite near us - Olga Wells and Thelma Naylor. We went to the meetings and got to know them and Berney Baughen who introduced Dick to PCIs and sold him some seed.

The seed germinated easily and was planted out in the autumn. The plants thickened up the next spring and finally flowered the year after that, by which time Dick had acquired another allotment on which he grew masses of TBs and some Sibbs! The PCIs were planted under fruit trees. The soil on the allotment is extremely rich with a low pH, unlike the garden which is nearby but on the Greensand Ridge and therefore calcareous so most of the PCIs planted there did not survive. There is one remaining plant in the garden which is a pure white one but the clump is not very big. We understand that today PCIs are being bred to tolerate more lime.

As we had so many large clumps Dick dug some to give to other members. He found they did best if the whole clump was moved rather than divided into large pieces. Each year they put up masses of flowers, so much so that they were quite difficult to pick as you could cause damage to some while you traced the stem of the one you wanted down to the base. Of course, few were very special but the show was wonderful with many shades of pink and mauve. Some stood out because they were brown/red, others were redder and there were the buttery/yellow ones as well. One was deemed worthy of note. It was cream with brown striations. Olga Wells named it 'Tumbler's Hill', which is where we live.

These are delightful and quite delicate flowers which are good for cutting. I always try to take a bunch to the Kent Group's Summer Show.



***Iris* 'Lady Beatrix Stanley'** **Jill Whitehead**

As many of you will know I am always fascinated by the people behind the names and this time it is *Iris histrioides* 'Lady Beatrix Stanley' which has taken my fancy. Who was she and how did she manage to get an iris named after her? Beatrix Tylour was born in 1877, the youngest daughter of the third Marquess of Headfort. Plants must have been in her blood as in her 20s she spent time travelling with her mother, her father died in 1894. They travelled extensively in Europe and this would have allowed Beatrix the chance to see plants growing in the wild.

She married the Honourable Sir George Stanley in 1903 at St. Georges, Hanover Square, London, after he returned from the Boer War. At first they lived near Aldershot, where he was based, and it was during that time that she joined the RHS in 1905. The Stanleys were prominent social figures and Beatrix and her infant daughter, Barbara, starred on the cover of *Country Life* magazine in July 1907. In 1908 they bought Sibbertoft Manor in Northamptonshire. This must have been the opportunity that Beatrix was waiting for, a garden of her own. Although the garden was not large, at least not compared to her family estate of some 22,000 acres in Ireland, she did have the opportunity to extend into farmland as her interest developed further. Beatrix immediately started filling it with plants of every description, but always with a particular interest in bulbous plants, visiting all the RHS shows, including Chelsea each year. She was a member of the British Iris Society (BIS) in its early years, enjoying their dinner gatherings, and was well known in the English horticultural circles of her time. Her younger brother Geoffrey was also well-known horticulturally with his garden near Kells in Ireland which had an extensive collection of rhododendrons, azaleas and conifers. Geoffrey also achieved fame (infamy?) when, after inheriting his family title in 1894, he married a chorus girl by the stage name of 'Rosie' in 1901. He was Vice President of the RHS and a member of one of the most prominent Protestant families in Ireland and Rose, apart from being on the stage, was a Catholic. You can imagine what a sensation this must have created in Edwardian London.

Beatrix immersed herself in all aspects of gardening, spending time travelling around the country visiting gardens and nurseries, making detailed notes and careful drawings about her "finds" and plants that she wanted. It all sounds so familiar, as I think we all do just the same nowadays but I suspect that many now take a photo on their mobile phone and even make their notes on it. Personally I still prefer my trusty notebook! Beatrix also kept articles which were of interest to her, pasting them into scrapbooks, and she read widely – anything to further her knowledge and satisfy her enthusiasm.

Among her friends were Amos Perry and E. A. Bowles, who were also early BIS members. Bowles invited her to Myddelton House in 1922 to look at his snowdrops and she enjoyed a special friendship with him. It is said that he did not tolerate ladies in general, and would only consider them as friends if

they had extensive plant knowledge. Beatrix must have passed the test! Bowles and Beatrix both served on the RHS Narcissus and Tulip Committee and they corresponded regularly. Bowles affectionately called her 'Aunt Bee' and she referred to him as 'Uncle G.', as he was known as 'Gussie' to his friends. She was one of the few who were prepared to stay in Myddelton House in the winter with its cold rooms and spartan conditions, especially if she thought a special bulb might well be in flower the next morning. She also accompanied Bowles on plant-hunting trips and again didn't seem to mind the many inhospitable conditions. While staying with Bowles, she was often involved in all the various happenings — opening the fete, presenting the prizes and sharing Bowles' life as well as his enthusiasm for snowdrops. Beatrix was made a CBE in 1920 for services to horticulture.

Beatrix's husband combined his military career with being a Member of Parliament and a British colonial civil servant. While he held the position of Governor of Madras from 1929 to 1934, Beatrix was actively involved in the development of the gardens at their home in Ootacamund (Ooty). She had joined him along with one of the gardeners from Sibbertoft and even Barbara's mare, Susan, accompanied them! Beatrix wanted an 'English' garden around their home, creating twin herbaceous borders in front of the house, growing roses and delphiniums amongst others, as well as creating a bog garden and a fernery. She used the time to explore the flora of the province, revelling in the exotic plants and finding out how to grow them. She sent seeds and drawings of her finds to Bowles and to the RHS. She must have been quite an accomplished water-colour artist. But she still sought help and advice from Bowles who was more than happy to help and nurture her work. In 1931 her paintings were exhibited with the RHS winning her, her first RHS medal. The RHS still hold over 100 paintings within the Lindley Library, each diligently noted with genus and species, locations and dates. Her written output included an article, 'Gardening in India', published in May 1931 in *The Gardener's Chronicle*. Beatrix received the Imperial Order of the Crown of India in 1935, which I think must have partly been for her work in fostering community relations.

In 1932, Barbara married Captain Sir Charles Buchanan, her father's A.D.C., with a wedding reception for 1,200 friends. Beatrix recounted the celebration in her weekly letter to Bowles giving him details of the flowers, such as 200 agapanthus and the informality of the occasion. Bowles had given the couple a very personal present of one of his paintings.

On returning home to Sibbertoft Manor, Beatrix immersed herself further in her gardening and continued her interest with bulbous plants, particularly snowdrops. She and Barbara propagated and distributed many over this period from Sibbertoft. Her horticultural expertise led to her being named editor of an RHS publication *The New Flora and Fauna* from 1938-1940. Lady Beatrix died in 1944 but the family tradition of interest in the smaller bulbs has continued through the generations. Barbara sold Sibbertoft Manor, but took with her many bulbs to plant in her garden at St. Anne's Manor, Sutton Bonington. One of these was a double snowdrop which was named a

after her mother by Richard Nutt in 1981. She also continued selling snowdrops to The Giant Snowdrop Company, and to others at a later stage. The story continues at Hodsock Priory, Nottinghamshire, the garden of Beatrix's grandson Sir Andrew Buchanan and his wife Belinda who developed a renowned winter garden from small beginnings. Opening in 1991 for the first time, they were not expecting many people, but 700 turned up. He has now passed the reins to George, Beatrix's great-grandson, who continues the family tradition today. Hodsock is open every year for its snowdrops, all set within its winter garden which attracts a huge number of visitors each year and the name of "Lady Beatrix Stanley" continues.

The first reference that I can find to *Iris histrioides* 'Lady Beatrix Stanley' is it being shown at an RHS Show in 1935. The AIS registration details show it as 'Lady Beatrice Stanley' as confirmed in the 1939 checklist, but I think this spelling of her name is incorrect. Whereas the Royal General Bulb Growers Association (KAVB), who are the registration authority for bulbs, have the year of registration as 1930 with herself as registrant. But I wonder if it was her daughter Barbara who decided on the name, as it seems very strange for somebody to name an iris after themselves. I must ask the family, and perhaps I might be able to find out – another job to do! It received an Award of Merit in 1977 from the RHS when it was exhibited by Dr J.G. Elliott, so it will be interesting to see how it fairs in the on-going RHS trial of reticulate irises at Hyde Hall, Essex. Last year, it was not doing too well as it had been the favourite choice for the local squirrel population, who obviously have good taste! It was however growing very well in the garden.

Iris 'Lady Beatrix Stanley' is violet-blue with heavily-spotted falls marked with white and with a central yellow ridge. One of the features of *I. histrioides* is the falls are quite broad which tend to give a good show in the garden and they are often found to be more reliably perennial. The advice from what I have seen and read is they are happy in some shade, possibly between deciduous shrubs. And if happy it will spread and make quite a good splash of colour. I was interested to read George Baker's account of collecting the seed and finding over 70 seeds in one capsule. As far as I can establish 'Lady Beatrix Stanley' was a seedling from *I. histrioides* 'Major'. This was introduced by the van Tubergen nurseries and Bowles talks very highly of it in his writings. So perhaps Beatrix obtained the original bulbs from Bowles? However, in Brian Mathew's fascinating article on 'Iris from Curtis's *Botanical Magazine*' (GBI *Review* 2018) I note that 'Major' is a bit of a misnomer, as it is not really larger than other flower forms but was used to distinguish it from other forms of smaller reticulate irises.

This year, Moorcroft Pottery introduced a new pottery collection which was inspired by Beatrix's watercolours in the Lindley Library, together with the iris that celebrates her name. Contemporary ceramic designer, Nicola Slaney, who has been with Moorcroft for over 20 years, designed several shapes, including a vase, an art nouveau loving cup and a panel, 'Sibbertoft'. These all illustrate the iris and other shapes which concentrate on her other

paintings. They are made entirely by hand, using almost unchanged techniques from 1913.

A very fitting tribute to a remarkable woman, who was well known in her day for her many attributes. She was described as being a practical 'hands-on' gardener, a talented propagator and was generous with both her knowledge and skill, sharing unusual plants with other gardening enthusiasts. Surely that is what we all enjoy about gardening?



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Two beautiful seedlings of Philips PCIs. Note the petal shape. And the space between the petals.



Another piece of pottery in the name of Lady Beatrix Stanley