

For Iris Lovers in the Cold Zones

Aurora

Can-West Iris Society

March, 2008

Volume 2, Issue 1

Update From the Organizing Committee

Thankfully the deep freeze appears to be coming to an end and we can finally start thinking about spring! And, it can't come fast enough. It has been a long, cold winter for most of us and the thought of seeing green growing plants rather than uninterrupted vistas of snow and ice is very appealing.

The Organizing Committee has been working overtime to get things in motion for the first ever CWIS Iris Show and a lot of what is contained herein relates to the show and the events scheduled for the the weekend of June the 7th. You will find articles on selecting stems to cut, preparing and grooming stems, transporting stems to the show, and entering stems in the show. There will be no excuses for not coming out to show the public just what this iris obsession is all about!

You will also find the events timetable, a request for volunteers to help out with the various activities as well as information on American Iris Society judges training which will be offered with AIS Judges Sandy Ives and Maureen Mark from Ottawa ON. These two wonderful irisarians are donating their entire weekend to the CWIS so we hope you will participate as much as you are able. Looking for a few days off and something to do??? Come on out to Winnipeg and enjoy some Manitoba hospitality. We'd be more than happy to have you visit us!

And speaking of working overtime, Debby Nelson reports that the CWIS website is ready to go! She has put in a lot of hours over the winter putting together what we all hope will be **THE** definitive work on growing iris in the cold zones! Check it out at: www.canwestirissociety.info. On behalf of all of us, Debby, thanks for a job very well done. We would appreciate your comments, too. So please contact us with your thoughts, ideas, suggestions, etc.

Also featured in this newsletter is the story of member David Jewell's acquisition of the entire Dykes Medal collection and an introduction to AIS Region 16 Regional Vice President, our own Kate Brewitt. One of the most favorite columns, "Iris Friend or Foe" by Ed Czarniecki will return in the June newsletter. Finally, a sampling of photos of early blooming iris, ones you just might see entered in the show for your viewing pleasure. Every single one of these bloomed prior to the 7th of June in prior years!

As always, the Organizing Committee is looking to you, our membership, to chart the course of the CWIS! If you have any comments or concerns about how the group is being administered let us know. Or, if you'd just like to tell us what a good job we're doing, drop us a line and let us know that, too. We are at your service!



SDB
Heather Carpet
(Chapman, 1999)



SDB
Indian Art
(B. Jones, 2003)

B. J. Jackson - jacksonb@brandonu.ca
Jennifer Bishop - jennifer@dataways.com
Deb Petrie - petrie@mts.net
El Hutchison - eleanore@mts.net

The CWIS Show

Tips on Selecting Stems to Show

*(Excerpts from the Delaware Valley Iris Society newsletter by Vince Lewonski
and adapted by B. J. Jackson)*

So, how do you decide what looks good enough to take to a show?

Start looking at your garden several days beforehand to see which stalks appear to have potential. Mark those with a piece of colored yarn. Some cut their stalks the night before the show, but I wait until the morning of the show so that I can pick ones that have just opened. If bad weather threatens, you may want to cut the stalks and bring them inside.

Ideally, the flowers should have NO faults. This is hard to find, and even harder still to get those perfect flowers to the show. Bent petals, bruised petals, holes from aphids, extra petals, petals pointing in strange directions, and spider webs all detract from the flower's beauty. Tears in the petal are okay as long as they are naturally occurring, and do not deform the petal. Having multiple flowers open is a plus, but not a requirement. You are better off having a stalk with one nice flower than several flowers that are starting to shrivel, have tears, or display other faults. And you want flowers that will look good at the time the judges view them, not just when you see them hours before the show.

If you have a leaning stalk that you think has the potential to be a good show stalk, try staking it a couple days before the show. This will give the flowers time to change their alignment so that they again are pointing upwards.

If the iris has multiple branches, they should all be in the same plane. Even having several nice open flowers might not be enough if the branches are all pointed in different directions. The stalk selected should be free or nearly free of leaf spot. Some trimming to eliminate this is allowed, but if extensive and obvious, it will be penalized by the judges.

If at all possible, choose a stalk that has the terminal bud open. If there are multiple flowers open, they should all be the same size. Secondary buds from the same socket tend to be smaller. The spacing should be well away from the stalk. The flowers should be nearly vertical. Pointed in towards the stalk is known as "towing in", and pointed out away from the stalk is known as "towing out". Both of these are faults, and will be penalized. You can help the flowers that are "towing in" or have a petal rubbing up against the stalk by wedging a piece of cotton or cork between the branch and the stalk. This may be enough to keep it in that position by show time. Just don't forget to take out your wedge when you get to the show!

Cut the stem at ground level. It may hurt the first time but think of that first place ribbon with your name on it. And, don't worry, it does get easier as time goes by.

Finally, Label the irises at home as you cut them so there won't be any memory lapses at the show. Do not write on the stalk. If this is noticed by the judges, they may take points off. Instead, write the names on a string tag, which you can loosely wrap around a branch until you are at the show.



MDB Flea Circus (courtesy of El Hutchison)



MDB Garnet Elf (courtesy of El. Hutchison)



MDB Kiwi Capers (by B. J.)



SDB Northern Exposure (by B. J.)



MDB April Ballet (courtesy of El. Hutchison)



MDB Be Little (by B. J.)

Show Weekend - 6 to 9 June 2008 Schedule of Events

Friday, 6 June

- 10 a.m to 3 p.m. - AIS judge's Training - classroom (Pre-registration Required)
- 7 to 9 p.m.- Sandy Ives - Public presentation - St. James Civic Centre

Saturday, 7 June - Show Day

- 8 to 10:30 a.m. - Entries accepted
- 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. - Judging exhibits
- 1 to 4 p.m. - Show open to the public
- 4 to 5 p.m. Take down show and removal of show exhibits
- 6 to 9 p.m. - CWIS members only gathering at Jennifer Bishop's house

Sunday, 8 June

- 10 a.m. to 12 noon - CWIS members only garden gathering at El's
(selection of stems for mock show event)
- All day - CWIS member garden tours, see website for updates

Monday, 9 June

- 10 a.m. till finished - AIS Judge's Training - classroom

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS!!!

With all the exciting events listed above, volunteers will be needed for a number of tasks throughout the weekend. If you are able to spare us some time, particularly on show day, please let the Organizing Committee members know. We are unable to assign tasks just yet but rest assured there will be enough to keep everyone busy.

So if it is within your power to help out in whatever capacity, step up to the plate and give us a hand! We need your help to make this event one that will not soon be forgotten by the Manitoba gardening public.

CWIS NEEDS YOU!!!

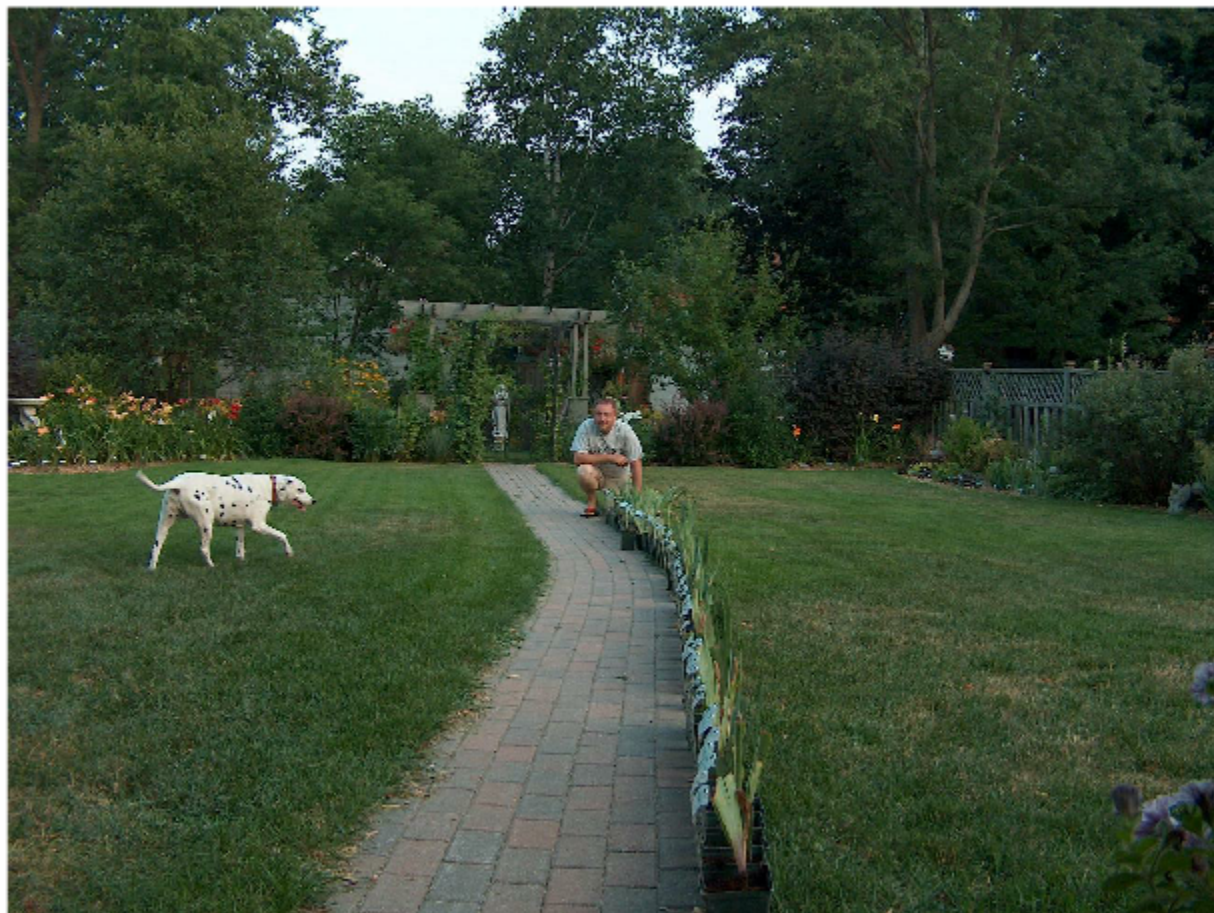
THE DYKES COLLECTION STORY

*By Dave Jewell, Lindsay ON
(Contact: d_jewell@sympatico.ca)*

It was a total shock to me last winter when I had gotten the news from two very special people to me... Anne and Don Martin. Anne and Don had spent years nurturing and collecting a very special group of iris the Dykes medal collection and now they were heading out east to greener pastures and the collection would not remain in tack. My initial impression after the grief was that this was something that needed to stay together and be on display for all to see.

The Dykes medal collection is the cream of the crop when you are talking iris. First awarded in 1927 with the iris San Francisco winning the coveted award. In order to win this award the iris must first win a classification medal and then be chosen the winner within three years. Only AIS registered judges are even allowed to vote on the winning iris. Once a year this honor is bestowed upon one iris, but not every year. Since the start of this award there has been nine years that the award was not given out. In total the Dykes medal collection totals 81 iris each an interesting and distinct plant.

Mid-July I got the call to pick up the plants. All the winners from 1927 through to 2005, Sea Power was not to be included. All the while thinking how am I going to display this amazing collection as well as the big question where? My best friend Jim and I plotted and planned for a couple weeks where the dykes could be planted all the while the plants waited in four larger planters. I would water them and watched as they slowly started to get new growth. Then one night I looked at the plants and in utter terror discovered the names were starting to fade and disappear as the outer leaves started to dry off. That night I spent carefully renaming the iris where the names were starting to fade. The panic over I had time to wait for the weekend. That weekend was spent again with Jim and I potting up and labeling each and every plant. In the end only two of the plants are questionable as to their names. The iris in their pots became a walkway border awaiting a final resting place.



The design work continued and in the end it was decided that they would just not fit and would suck up most of the remaining green space in my yard. What to do? I approached the next door neighbors and before long a lease was in place for 7200 sq feet of their back yard. Truck loads of top soil and manure and a lot of sweat (mostly Jim's) brought forth an iris bed measuring over 45 feet in length and covering over 200 sq feet of my new found garden space. (7000 to go).

The Dykes bed, now ready and planted, is exclusively devoted to the award winning iris each one displayed in order from beginning to end. In bloom an amazing sight to see, you can watch the progression of the iris from the first award a simple yet elegant bloom to the newest blooms of Sea Power and Queen's Circle with their powerfully strong stems and ruffles.

The only other iris to grace the bed sit in an area that I call the contenders bed, a grouping of no more than 5 iris that are poised to take the award next year. If they don't get it then off to the lesser honorable positions in the garden.



The showing of the Dykes Medal collection will be a yearly event next year scheduled for the second weekend in June the 14th & 15th (my birthday if anyone cares to send a rhizome). While there are many historical iris still in circulation out there, the Dykes, as I have said before, are the cream of the crop and an important historical representation of hybridizing efforts over the last 90 years. Because I feel the importance of this I have applied for and have become the first Canadian Historical Iris Preservation Society display garden. It's a very important collection that is rarely seen all in one place and in a single display.

My personality is one that is of collecting and I have acquired one of the greatest collections in the plant world, I am proud to say. Along with my non Dykes medal iris, the garden is alive with color and texture with collections of daylilies, hosta, orchids and a mix of rare and unusual perennials. So, if you are ever in the area feel free to call and stop by and enjoy the beauty of 90 years of iris all together. You might also want to take a peek in the contenders area to see who is getting the 2008 award. My bet is on.... Well you will just have to come and see.

GROOMING IRIS STEMS FOR SHOWING

(Excerpts from the Delaware Valley Iris Society Newsletter by Vince Lewonski and adapted by B. J. Jackson)

Always cut the stalk as close to the ground as possible. You probably will not keep it that length, but you can always cut it shorter, while it is impossible to make it taller. If there are any existing leaves and they are going to end up crammed into the container neck, take the leaves off! Keep any leaf that is attached to the stalk above the container neck. Stick the stalk into the container and step back. Does the curve of the stalk at the base prevent it from standing straight? If so, you may want to trim off a few inches. Does it look top heavy because all the branching and flowers are well above the container? Again, you may want to trim the base of the stalk. Generally, the bottom branch should start a few inches above the neck of the container.

Unstable stalks in containers can be raised up to a level that looks pleasing, and wedge the stalk at that height by putting cotton or a cut section of stalk into the container neck. You can use this same method to hold the stalk in place even if it is all the way down. Make sure, though, that the cotton or pieces of stalk are not sticking up above the neck of the container.

Use a cotton ball to wipe off any fingerprints from the stalk. If there are cobwebs, insects, etc., take these off carefully. Sometimes the tip of the leaves can turn brown or have leaf spot. Use a scissors to carefully trim off the brown area, but maintain the graceful shape of the leaf, and cut off no more than $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. Never, ever cut the leaf straight across!

Flowers that are partially opened at the time they are judged will be marked down, so if you have a bud that is only partly opened, you may be able to speed it along by putting warm (not hot) water in the container, keeping it in a warm room, judiciously using a blow dryer, and, as a last resort, carefully helping it along with your fingers.

ARTISTIC DESIGN ARRANGEMENTS USING IRIS FLOWERS

Although our show will not have a judged artistic section this year, we are very pleased to announce that Susan LeBlanc of St. Francis Xavier has agreed to provide us with some designs using iris flowers to complement the show iris exhibits at the St. James Civic Centre. Susan has been doing flower arranging for many years and has taken home many prestigious awards over the years. For future shows, an artistic division is being considered. If you would like to show us what you can do as well, by all means bring down an arrangement or two for everyone to see. The only rules for this exhibition is that at least one open iris bloom must be used in each arrangement. There is no other requirement and “budding” designers are urged to use their creativity in bringing the designs to life. Other flowers may be used as well as whatever complementary plant material desired. The only limit is your imagination!

Here are some design tips :

The height of the flowers should be in proportion to the size of the container; that is, the height of the flowers should not exceed one and a half times the height of the container.

The arrangement should appear uniform all around. Visualize a circle divided into three equal sectors, and then select similar flowers for each of the sectors.

Support the flowers to keep them in place. One simple approach, which avoids the use of props, is to use the flower stems themselves for support. By placing each flower into the container at an angle, you can form a grid or web that will hold the design together. The only flower that should be inserted straight up in the container is the center flower. This flower cannot stand without the support of the other flowers and should be placed in the container only when the grid has taken shape.

TRANSPORTING STEMS TO THE SHOW VENUE

*(Excerpts from the Delaware Valley Iris Society Newsletter by Vince Lewonski
and adapted by B. J. Jackson)*

Transporting entries to the show is the trickiest part. Try putting wine bottles in a box or bucket making sure that they are spaced far enough apart so that no petals hit one another or any car parts.

Other techniques are used as well. People make holders out of wood with PVC pipe mounted at an angle. There are caps or corks at the bottom of the pipes. Others use chicken wire in a 5-gallon pail with water in the bottom. Still others put the stalks in containers, and then lay the containers down with the stalks resting on the edge of a cardboard box with "V"s cut into it to hold the stalks in place.

Be very, very careful driving to the show. Corners and stoplights are not your friends!

AT THE SHOW (AKA SHOW TIME!)

Bring scissors, cotton balls, a sharp knife, Q-tips, a container with extra water and a pen. Make sure that you get to the show in plenty of time to unload (carefully!), make out tags, and do any last minute touchups or adjustments. You don't want to be caught short of time.

Every stalk entered needs a tag filled out. These can be picked up and filled out when you arrive at the show hall. To fill out the tag, you will need to know the registered name of your iris, and the type (miniature dwarf, standard dwarf, etc.) You will also need to know the division and section codes for each stalk. These can be found in the show schedule that will be sent out to members prior to the show and that will also be available at the show hall.

If you are not sure of the name of your iris, please don't guess. Label it a mystery iris or unknown, and enter it in the Unidentified Class. It is helpful to have a supply of return address labels handy, as it is quicker to put a label on than to fill out your name and address on a whole lot of tags. Make sure that you fill out the tag completely! The bottom portion is folded up and tucked in so that only the name of the iris and the class show. The tags are attached to the stem holder with a rubber band that goes through the hole in the top of the tag and around the container.

Stem holders have graciously been donated for our use by the Manitoba Regional Lily Society and will be provided to all entrants. If you wish to, you may bring along your own container, particularly if showing very small iris. Alternate containers include wine bottles, bud vases, etc.

Your iris is now ready to be placed by the show committee. Except for the people assisting the judges, no one is allowed in the area once judging starts. After all judging is finished the show is opened to the public, you may go into the show area and see how well your entries have done.

Note from B. J. Jackson (Show Chair):

Notwithstanding everything else written, the Show Committee doesn't really care if your stem isn't perfect or that it leans just a wee bit off true. This is our first ever show and we want as many as can to participate as much as they can. The only way we can learn what to do and how to do it sometimes is to just do it to the best of our ability.

So please come on down and show us your stuff and your iris. We're looking forward to welcoming you to our show and to the Can-West Iris Society, a great family of iris lovers!

American Iris Society (AIS) Region 16 – Canada **New Region Vice President (RVP)**

(By Kate Brewitt)

Editor's Note: CWIS member Kate Brewitt was recently appointed AIS RVP for Region 16 (Canada) and I thought this would be an excellent opportunity to introduce Kate and the AIS to our membership.

BJ asked me to write a brief article on my new role as RVP of AIS Region 16 but BJ should realize that iris lovers are never brief in what they have to say.

First I would like to clarify a confusion regarding who AIS Region 16 is. The American Iris Society (AIS) is currently made up of 24 regions. These 24 regions represent various sections of the United States with Region 16 representing all of Canada. Within each region there are Affiliate Societies, or Local Clubs, representing smaller sections. For example, within Region 16 there is only one Affiliate, the Toronto Region Iris Society (TORIS). Other Regions have as many as seven Affiliates.

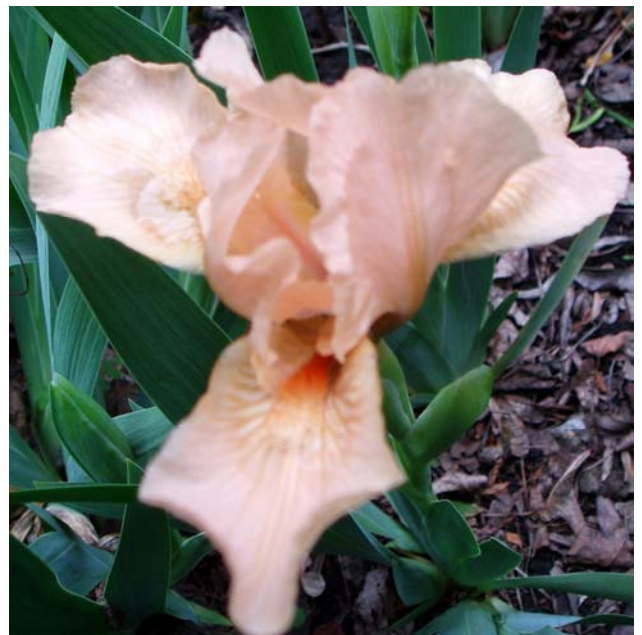
After going to an AIS Convention in Portland, Oregon I discovered that the AIS is a tremendously enthusiastic group of iris lovers. They come from all walks of life (one man I spoke with was a Medical Engineer) and are all ages, from twelve to well over 80. Yet despite our obvious, and not so obvious, differences we all had the common bond of 'iris' and boy, did we have stories to tell...about iris and otherwise.

My goals as RVP are simple. I hope to raise awareness of Region 16 in both Canada and the United States, bringing iris lovers from east and west, north and south together so we can share ideas, challenges and even our favourite stories...iris or otherwise. I'm currently working on an e-newsletter that will advise Region 16 members of upcoming events and Canadian iris sources plus provide information on Judges' Training. I'm also working on a website that will be released with the e-newsletter.

If you are interested in becoming an AIS member, you can contact me at just1moreiris@gmail.com or you can access the Membership Information section of the AIS website, www.irises.org/member.



MDB Stripling (by B. J.)



SDB Dazzling Dominique (by B. J.)

AIS Judges' Training

*Facilitated By: Can-West Iris Society
June 2008*

PLEASE NOTE THAT PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED BY 15 MAY 2008

Outlined below is the content that will be covered by Sandy Ives and/or Maureen Mark during the AIS sanctioned Judges Training sessions to be held on Friday, 6 June and Monday, 9 June 2008 at the rural property of El Hutchison near Ste. Anne, MB. It is required that participants obtain a copy of the AIS Judges Handbook in advance of the sessions as indicated below:

The Handbook for Judges and Show Officials, Seventh Edition - \$15.00 US

Quoted price includes postage/shipping.

How to order:

Send/communicate your order to:

AIS Storefront - John and Kay Ludi, PO Box 956, Sandy OR 97055

telephone: 503-826-8808 | fax: 503-826-8808 (or) e-mail: aisstore@irises.org

Payment in US funds via International Money Order or VISA/MasterCard. Include VISA or MasterCard number, expiration date, address, phone number and name on credit card with your order.

Synopsis of Individual Sessions to be Conducted (not necessarily in the order given)

1. Awards and Ballots (2 hours)
2. Tall Bearded. (2 hours) (chapter 6 and 13-15)
3. Standard Dwarf: (1.5 hours) (chapter 10)
4. Intermediate Bearded: (1.5 hours) (chapter 8)
5. Siberian: (1.5 hours) (chapter 19)
6. Spuria: (1.5 hours) (chapter 21)

In all cases garden judging, by far the most important, will be emphasized but show judging will also be included.

To register:

Please send your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address as well as your current American Iris Society status to: jacksonb@brandonu.ca

You will then receive the other information you will need to have a wonderful iris experience!



*SDB
Blue
Pools
(B. Jones,
1972)*

**Come Join Us
for a Great
Iris Weekend,
June 6-9, 2008**



*MDB
Spot of
Tea
(Black,
1988)*