



Twin City Iris Society

News and Views

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President's Notes

Let's talk about membership this month. Membership is a perennial problem for all groups that remain active and follow their reason for being. Our reason for being is the Iris; culture and promotion, primarily. There are other reasons also, the main one being fellowship. Add respect, and even a little of that rare commodity called love, to fellowship and you have a society that no one can harm.

Carl Sandberg tells of the sleek luxury liner in the North Atlantic. A woman tourist has been invited to the bridge by the Captain to view the operation of the ship. As they talk she sees the frightening hulk of an iceberg off the starboard bow. She looks to the ship's master and asks, "What would happen if we were to collide with that massive boulder of ice?" The ship's master replied, "The iceberg would merely continue on its way, Madam."

This is the stage at which we now stand as a society. Our membership varies from year to year, and we should make a concerted drive for new members, although we are far from being endangered. What would be a realistic goal? Two hundred? We can easily support that number. More realistic would be for each of us to encourage all interested parties to become active through membership. Do you remember names like Klapotz, Cipera, McVoy, or Dale? Adah, do you remember them and Mrs. Boguta and Smith? How many past members would be interested in returning to the fold? They are certainly welcome. Take time to read Jim Warren's article in the February "Horticulturist". Here is a source of new members, those retired. In this society no one is old.

Another source of new members is the suburbs. How do we attract the young marrieds? Out-state members are seldom heard from. What method should we use to keep their interest alive? Should we offer an affiliation for other general garden groups? St. Paul is untapped. Shouldn't at least one program a year be given in that area? Junior members at one time numbered over twenty. How about someone to build this segment of membership, as Mrs. Bakke did ten years ago? A new member introduced at the last meeting is returning to gardening because his father was a gardener. My wife gardens because of what she was taught at her grandmother's knee. My children will garden. How about it, parents and grandparents, is there something worth offering in gardening for your offspring? How about it, members, is there some person who can share your love for irises? Let's talk membership this month and every month. (Don't forget your keys, either. It's embarrassing)

- Warren Johnson

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"COME AS AN IRIS"

Come one, come all, to the "once a year" festive occasion of our Twin City Iris Society! Let your imagination go all out, and select an Iris name that will give you ideas to put to work!

There will be first and second prizes for; the most elaborate; most authentic; most humorous; as well as for persons guessing the most correct Iris names.

The evening will begin with our famous pot-luck supper, and end with a color film, with sound, of the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens. Do not fail to participate in this fun fest, or you will be sorry! See you there - March 20, 1969, 6:30PM, at the Guaranty State Bank in Robbinsdale.

- Alice Foss Stenoin

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The ASTRONAUTS went IN ORBIT, HIGH ABOVE the NORTHERN SKY.

A TORCH BEARER of ETERNAL FLAME of GOODNESS to the BRIGHTSIDE of the MOON CREST at CHRISTMAS TIME.

Then came the ARCTIC FURY, sent GLISTENING SNOW from the SKY ABOVE; STORM WARNINGS were anything but BRIGHT FORECASTS.

AFTER ALL it's a REAL DELIGHT to have GOLDEN SUNSHINE over the COUNTRYSIDE.

Now, the SUN MIRACLE will again give us RIPPLING WATERS, a WONDERFUL SKY, and a WARM WELCOME to SPRING CHARM.

It is time for our SPRING FESTIVAL, MINNESOTA GLITTERS, with all the GYPSY JEWELS, CHINESE CORAL and FULL DRESS in the EXTRAVAGANZA that will take place AFTER DARK.

Down in the GREENSPOT of Riverdale, where one can see DESERT QUAIL and PARAKEET, RED GEMS and LITTLE JEWELS, the PATH OF GOLD, in the BLACK FOREST there, SAUCY FLOSSIE will blow the PINK WHISTLE to begin the FESTIVITY.

TIJUANA BRASS are PRESENT with their SWINGTIME.

The SORORITY GIRL is STEPPING OUT, with her BLUE PETTICOAT under her SUNDAY SILK. MADAM BUTTERFLY is a SWEET ONE in her TEA APRON.

The SWEETHEART, MISS RUFFLES and SIOUX MAIDEN are the TOP FAVORITES.

INCA CHIEF, the MEDICINE MAN, FIRE CHIEF and WITCHDOCTOR

STEP FORWARD, as if out of the TWILIGHT ZONE.

As SKYWATCH continues by the FRONTIER MARSHALL, it is a COMFORTING THOUGHT not to see DARK CLOUDS or hear RUMBLING THUNDER, but to see a QUIET SKY, the DAWN CREST and CELESTIAL SUNLIGHT.

A FAIRY FABLE, the land of MAKE BELIEVE - that is all it is, because it is the Twin City Iris Society FASHION FLING

"Come as an Iris".

- Greta Kessenich

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A suggestion from Julius Wadekamper -

One year the Jackson, Mississippi Iris Show provided a special horticultural section for the variety, MARY RANDALL. Clarke Cosgrove of the American Iris Society Board of Directors has stated that varietal shows, in part, are becoming the thing in the leading Iris Society shows in this country. I think we of the Twin City Iris Society consider our show one of the leading in the country in many respects. I would like to suggest that we take the leadership in another respect, and that is of establishing, at least on a limited scale, some varietal entries or categories in our show schedule. For a beginning and as an experiment, I would like to suggest the naming of 5 or 10 varieties to be used as part of the show schedule for this year. The varieties selected should naturally be those grown most commonly. This would not preclude necessarily their entry in the proper color class, also. The varieties chosen could be determined by common consensus at a meeting or by a specially selected committee. I suggest we take the leadership in this field as well.

— 8th DISTRICT MEETING —

Maple Grove Country Club, at West Salem, Wisc., is the place for the 8th Dist. (Minn. Wisc.) Iris Meeting. The date is Sat. April 19. The cost is \$3.50 for luncheon. If you need a ride, or can give a ride, check with Gus Sindt at the March Meeting.

EARLY SPRING IRIS CULTURE

By G. B. Gable

April first will soon be here. That is the date we usually start removing the hay and leaves from our irises here in the Twin City area. There may be some frost under heavy covering or in shaded spots, but that will soon disappear after the mulch has been removed.

To gather up the residue litter, use a large corrugated paper box. Cut two hand holes in the sides to pass a rake handle thru so two people can shoulder and carry, or to skid along on the ground. Large ones, used to ship upholstered chairs, can be obtained free at furniture stores, or smaller ones from supermarkets, used to ship paper towels. These large boxes will hold many bushels of leaves or litter.

The next thing to do as quickly as possible is to trim off all the brown and dead parts of the iris leaves. If there are iris borer eggs, chances are they will be on those brown parts of the leaves. This is a back-breaking job, so here is a suggestion. Make a small four-legged stool not more than ten inches high. Put 1"x2" cleats under the legs to keep them from sinking into the ground. The stool can be moved along the rows when trimming or weeding and will prevent many a backache.

Next comes spraying, cultivating, and fertilizing. The question is, which to do first. If there is no wind, then spray first, using Parzate (Zineb) for the fungicide, DDT for iris borer, a miticide for red spider, and one heaping tablespoonful of powdered dry skim milk for a spreader sticker for each gallon of water. Fill a fruit jar one half full of water, add the powdered milk, fungicides and insecticides and shake vigorously before pouring into the sprayer. Red spider mites come early. I've seen phlox plants early in April not more than one inch high with warped and twisted leaves damaged by red spider. Spray those phlox and delphinium plants with a good miticide as early as possible and continue spraying at ten day intervals and have green leaves from the ground up. Cut worms love phlox and especially the wild phlox or sweet william. Some folks blame rabbits for their losses. Dust the soil with DDT and no more cut worms. Don't make the mistake I did. I dusted with 50% DDT and nearly burned the plants up. Better use 5% DDT dust.

Fertilizing should be done as early as possible, when the soil is moist. Never apply fertilizer to irises when the soil is dry, or it will burn and destroy the fine hair roots. Bone meal is safe as it is low in nitrogen. Commercial fertilizer, 5-20-20, low in nitrogen, but high in phosphate and potash, can be used if kept at least four inches from the rhizomes. Hoe the irises and loosen the soil up close to the rhizomes, then spread the fertilizer and rake or hoe it under.

An ordinary tablespoon sharpened with a file or emery wheel makes one of the handiest small tools an iris grower can use for scraping out weeds or those pesky elm seedlings up close to iris rhizomes. It beats pulling them out by hand, and it can also be used to loosen up the soil close to the rhizomes. I carry one around in my pocket when working in the iris garden, to have it handy when I see weeds that need be eliminated.

If you grow Siberian irises and want neat clumps or plants, trim the dead leaves with grass shears as close to the ground as possible, before the new growth starts in spring. It is too late to trim after new growth has already started.

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The Minnesota Horticulture Society acts as a clearing house and promoter of all flowers. In their library they have only two books on irises, no slides, no AIS Bulletins. How can we help them promote the iris? Ken Fisher, president, has asked for help from us.

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The Dwarf Iris Society - What Is It?

By David B. Sindt

The Dwarf Iris Society of America is an independent society not formally affiliated with the American Iris Society. Its interest is concentrated on dwarf irises, called Miniature Dwarf Irises in the AIS classification. Standard Dwarf Irises are not considered dwarf irises by either the DIS or the AIS, and are covered by the Median Iris Society, a section of the AIS.

The DIS publishes an annual Portfolio, in 1967 running to 73 pages. In the Portfolio may be found articles by dwarf iris experts around the world, the announcement of the Society's annual awards, and its annual Symposium of varieties. A summary of AIS Miniature Dwarf Iris registrations for the current year is also included.

The awards of the Dwarf Iris Society are:

- the Test Garden Certificate, for outstanding seedlings on display in one or more of the official DIS test gardens;
- the Award of Special Merit, a first level award for named varieties, similar to the HM of the AIS;
- the Blue Ribbon Award, a second level award, limited to five each year, similar to the AM of the AIS or its Caparne, Deballion, Morgan, and other special section awards;
- the Walter Welch Medal, first called the Dwarf Iris Society Medal, the top award to one variety each year, similar to the Dykes, Knowlton, Sass, and Cook-Douglas Medals of the AIS.

These awards are given on the basis of the votes of DIS judges, of which there are about forty around the country at present, one of whom is an active Twin City Iris Society member.

The Symposium, consisting of fifty varieties, is similar to the AIS Popularity Poll, but differs in that it attempts to gauge quality as well as popularity. All members of the Society can vote on the Symposium, and rank 25 varieties in five groups of descending quality. The votes are tabulated on a point basis and combined with a distribution factor that takes points off the scores of varieties voted on only a few times. This weighted score is then divided by the number of votes each variety received to obtain a per cent rating. A separate Color Symposium ranks varieties by quality within each of about twenty color classifications. Test gardens have been maintained in Redkey, Ind.; Elmira, N.Y.; Omaha, Neb.; and Seattle, Wash. A series of official display gardens has also been proposed.

An experimental program is maintained, with the purpose of practical investigation of the genetic characteristics of dwarf irises. Carefully planned crosses are made by cooperating members to test theories of inheritance of particular colors, patterns, and other characteristics, and numerous theories have been either proved or disproved through this program. A fine collection of 35mm slides is maintained that is particularly noteworthy for its pictures of species. A library of iris literature has also been gathered by the society, and both the books and the sets of slides are available on loan.

The Dwarf Iris Society was founded in 1950 as the Dwarf Iris Club, growing out of round robin correspondence among a number of dwarf iris enthusiasts headed by Walter Welch of Middlebury, Indiana. It came of age as a Society in 1956, and began its awards program in that year. To the average iris enthusiast, the most important reason that the DIS has not become a section of the AIS is its concern for an adequate awards system voted on by a specialized group of judges. It is a problem that affects other classifications of irises as well, particularly as the number of new introductions of irises other than tall bearded increases.

Membership dues are \$2.00 per year, and may be sent to Mrs. Adda Ayres, Financial Secretary, Redkey, Indiana, 47373. It is a more than worthwhile investment....

IRIS CULTURE

By Greta Kessenich

The Iris is an ancient flower. The word iris signifies "rainbow", and has a long history of floral culture. What other flower grown can give you the variations of color found in these beautiful blossoms? Even more sweet to us, each iris has an interesting and meaningful name, its identity. We should carefully mark and label each planted rhizome. A plant without a label, unless it can be identified, has lost most of its value. To be able to call plants by name makes them more personable and intimate.

We have had three feet of snow over the iris field with two layers of ice sandwiched in between the snow falls. This may or may not be of concern, but the last time we experienced this condition, many gardeners found scorch during the season. The cause of scorch has not yet been determined and I will not delve into what we think, but what we know, at this time. Scorch just seems to appear suddenly in various places in the gardens. Also, we may have had beautiful flowers from the clump. For those who do not recognize the symptoms, the central leaf becomes brown and all rhizomes attached to the Mother rhizome will also turn brown and die back. The feeding roots die. The plant can be pulled up quite easily. It is advisable to cut loose the young rhizomes from the old rhizome during a season, so that if scorch does strike, you will not lose your entire clump. A simple remedy for scorch consists of digging the plant, cut off all the roots, and cut back the leaves. Expose the rhizomes to the sun for 6 weeks or more. This apparently kills the organism. Now be kind to this once sick plant and soak it for twenty-four hours in a fertilizer solution. Dry and replant. It will resume normal growth. You have saved your plant. If left in the garden without attention, the rhizomes will have a stunted growth in the spring and should be removed from the garden.

A few years ago, we lost most of the irises in this area. The protective canopy of the foliage was about all that covered a plant during the cold winter. As long as we had snow the iris was well protected. An open winter brought heavy losses. We learned quickly that irises should be covered with a blanket of hay or leaves as a protection against the unpredictable winter.

In late fall the fans are cut back, thereby doing away with all affected foliage which may harbor leaf spot spores and borer eggs. Now, to the age old question of defoliating irises soon after blooming. It is advisable to keep the leaves growing, as nature maintains a balance between the roots and foliage which gives strength and food to the iris rhizomes. Do cut off the bloom stalk flush with the rhizome immediately after blooming.

The bits and pieces that are written about culture of irises are from actual experience in the garden; planting, roto-tilling row after row, hoeing, observing and examining the healthy and the sick. There is much to be learned about the culture and habit of irises. Most of us do not have the scientific knowledge, but we do have the experience and the privilege of working with plants, the soil, and a group of dedicated people, interested in the same flower - the iris. Instead of just planting and waiting for that plant to bloom, why not observe, experiment, improve your soil, save your infected rhizomes, move a plant to a different area if it fails to produce, as it may not like its location. Take notes.

Here is a great challenge to you. What can you contribute?

* * *

"At the source: upland ridges. Woods. Red barns. Forget-me-nots. Cool freshlets. Ponds. Ducks.

At the end: Slimy flotsam. Garbage. Oil scum. A flowing desert, a Styx."

from - "Ol' Man River Keeps Rolling Along Toward More Pollution" by

Sid Moody, Nov. 17, 1968 Minneapolis Tribune.

A DISSERTATION on the relative merits of bonemeal and other mineral fertilizers and their place in the fertilizing program for the iris garden...

Raw bones contain considerable fat and protein material along with the calcium phosphate of bone. When ground the bones are sold as raw bone meal which is difficult to buy today. Raw bone meal contains from 3.3 to 4.1% total nitrogen (N) and 20-25% total phosphate (P_2O_5); the availability of this phosphate is quite low - perhaps 3-5%.

If the raw bones are first boiled and steamed to remove fat, and then steamed under pressure to remove gelatinous protein material to make gelatin and glue, the resulting product is called steamed bone meal. About half of the nitrogen is removed by the steaming treatment but the total phosphate is increased as well as the available phosphate. Steamed bone meal contains from 1.65 - 2.5 % total nitrogen (N) and from 22-30% total phosphate (P_2O_5). Most steamed bone meal on the market is guaranteed at 2% total nitrogen and 11% available phosphate - or in fertilizer terms 2-11-0. Note that the total phosphate may be as high as 30%, but the available phosphate by government standards is 11%. In other words 19 of the 30% total is in a form not very available to plants.

The steaming process improves the physical condition of the bone and it may be ground finer. It keeps well as a dry powder. Ground raw bone is usually coarse and apt to be somewhat sticky and smelly.

The high fat content of the raw bone meal impairs decomposition of the organic fraction resulting in a slow release of the nitrogen. The steaming process removes the fat and while the total nitrogen is decreased, there is apparently a more rapid release of the nitrogen that does remain. In addition the availability of the phosphate in the steamed product is improved.

The improved physical quality is also an advantage to the home gardener. The steamed product can be stored without smell and it spreads more easily.

Bone meal as a fertilizer for farm use has been discontinued long ago for several reasons. It is expensive. It is low in analysis. Being low analysis it costs more to ship it and there is more handling and more labor.

If a 40 lb bag of steamed bone meal of analysis 2-11-0 costs \$4.45, then 100 lb would sell for \$11.13. If we compare the bone meal with ammophos (11-48-0) where the ratio of nitrogen to phosphate is not too different, we find the bone meal is very expensive indeed. 100 lb of 11-48-0 ammophos would cost about \$8.00. In ammophos we have 11 plus 48 or 59 units of available plant food. In steamed bone meal we have 2 plus 11 or 13 units of plant food. The ammophos with 59 units costs \$8.00/100 lb of fertilizer; the bone meal with 11 units of fertilizer costs \$11.12/100 lb. For a similar fertilizing effect you would have to apply five times more bone meal than you would the ammophos.

I have used ammophos 11-48-0 as an example here because the ratios are relatively the same. But the same economic picture could be had if you compared the bone meal with 20% superphos or 46% treblesuperphosphate.

None of these fertilizers contain potash. It is just as likely as not that potash should be used in fertilizers for iris. The 11-48-0 or bone meal might be OK in clay soils high in potash. But you might need a 5-20-10 on a loamy soil or a 5-20-10 on sandy soils which are low in potash.

Yes, bone meal is old-fashioned and expensive, but it is safe to use and that is why so many home gardeners prefer it. It doesn't burn. However, chemical fertilizers used discriminately won't burn either and will do as good or better job at a much more reasonable price.

-from CANADIAN IRIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER, #38, 1969 - Associate Prof. T. J. Heeg