

Twin City Iris Society

NEWS AND VIEWS

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February, 1959

The next meeting of the Twin City Iris Society will be held at the East Lake Y.M.C.A. on Thursday, February 26, 1959 at 8:00 P.M. Our program committee has arranged a most interesting program on the growing of iris, featuring Mr. Victor Hartkopf who will tell us of some of his experiences in hybridizing. Mr. Hartkopf won the seedling award at the last Twin City Iris show and has produced some beautiful new iris. One was introduced last year by Mrs. Foss under the name of Minnesota Skies and several more are slated for introduction in 1959. He has bred wonderful hardiness, substance and durability as well as beauty into his iris and I'm sure we will learn many interesting things.

The new Year Book is ready for distribution and will be handed out at the next meeting, be sure to be there to receive yours.

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ST. PAUL NEWS - Mrs. K. W. Fisher

A poll of St. Paul Iris Society members left me in the same spot I was before I called. None would hazard a prediction for spring. Mr. Sindt was afraid to think, Mrs. Koempel wasn't too hopeful, Mrs. Taylor felt plenty of cover (hay) and snow even now would help. Mrs. Van Buskirk expects some loss and the head gardener of the Fisher family just moaned when I asked him. Our losses of several years back are too fresh in memory.

At this time of year the garden at our house is definitely mine and thine. When I fuss about weather and what it is doing to the perennials, I get scant sympathy. "Ly" flowers are outdoors, "his" (the glads, dahlias, etc.) are safely stored in the basement. In summer the line is divided another way. The entire garden is his to fertilize, prune and divide and mine to weed, water and best of all out for arranging. It works out to a solution of "we garden" and we love it.

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WEST SIDE - Pat Wysocky

Not too many years ago gardeners grew certain varieties of perennials and shrubs in their gardens because their mothers had grown them in that area and they knew the shrubs would succeed. Some gardeners received their start from a neighbor's surplus -- and those plants would succeed. A few daring gardeners experimented with untried plants with varying success. Today we don't want only the old varieties of ornamentals, we want to try some of the new. We don't want the neighbor's surplus of spirea or "alley" iris for instance. We want the newer varieties of good horticultural specimens. Perhaps we have moved to a new climate which means new species and new culture for them. How does one know which species, which variety, sometimes even which plant, will do well in a particular situation? How can we help desirable plants adjust to a situation that is on the very verge of being deadly to them? Of course I am not writing about having wisteria climb our fences or gardenias and magnolias grow rampant on our terraces. It's the borderline plants and the borderline situations where an adventurous gardener can push the balance of nature to the side which favors the particular plant.

We all do some of this when we use winter protection in any form. We plant a rose of Sharon (Althea) in a sheltered location in this zone knowing it will have a better chance in the sheltered spot than in an unprotected area. There are other trees, fruits, shrubs, and perennials too numerous to mention where a sheltered location and good winter protection is sufficient to insure complete success of what otherwise would be a lost cause.

But for years some of us have been trying to raise plants that are really hardy here but for which special culture is needed: acid soil, clay soil sandy or peaty soil, lots of moisture, sparse water; and we've had as many degrees of success and failure as we've had plants.

At a recent meeting of the Minnesota Peony Society we were shocked to learn that the much recommended aluminum sulphate has a toxic effect on the plants after it has been used for a short period of time. Yet nurseries insist upon advertising aluminum sulphate for use in making soil acid. Those of us who follow blindly began losing our blueberries, Japanese Iris, Lupine, etc.

We asked Dr. Snyder of the University of Minnesota Horticulture Department about this at the Peony Society meeting. He told us the aluminum sulphate we had used, and had recommended to others to use in some cases, was the killer. We learned that sulphur and the new iron chelates are much more successful in acidifying soil, and have no toxic effect. Acid loving plants like humus

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West Side (Continued)

and we supplied humus. They like varying degrees of moisture so we carefully supplied what they wanted. But we killed some of them by constantly adding aluminum sulphate to the soil. How can we know?

Our new arboretum and our present University of Minnesota Horticulture Department have so much to say to all of us who enjoy our gardens. Not enough of us consult the Horticulture Department for knowledge they can already give us. Not enough of us contribute to the arboretum fund to help those specialists employed by the University for research and experimentation to learn more that will, in the final analysis, help all of us to have better gardens. Whether we're commercial apple growers or amateur mum growers the University has already helped us achieve far more than was thought possible even 25 years ago. With the experimental plants they are painstakingly caring for, with the Minnesota made crosses and the resulting hybrids, who knows what can be possible 25 years from now? Imagine having Minnesota grown azaleas just as we now have Minnesota mums - and its not impossible!

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Now is the time for those of you who have potted spring bulbs for forcing to bring them indoors to the warmth and moisture that will result in a beautiful array of flowers by Easter. For those of us who haven't tried this before, now is a good time to resolve that next year we will be among the lucky ones to have an early touch of spring in our homes. Tulips, hyacinths and narcissi are all very suitable as well as the lesser bulbs such as crocus, hyacinths, etc. Just plant several bulbs in a large pot in November in rich potting soil. Sink these pots in a hole in the garden which has been lined with hay to facilitate easy removal of the pots after freezing, cover with more hay and a little soil. No matter how hard the ground freezes it is a simple matter to free the pots and bring into the house whenever desired in the spring or later winter.

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Character is what you are - reputation is what you get caught at.

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Don't forget the meeting Thursday - February 26 - 8:00 P.M.
We would like to see an overflow crowd!!!!