

The Iris Standard

Newsletter of the Ontario Iris Society

An affiliate of the
American Iris Society

Volume 11 Issue 4 – Autumn 2016

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**The Ontario Iris Society has a
Facebook page.**

We hope you will 'like' us then...

- upload your pictures,
- share your experiences
- ask questions.

*It's the visitors to the page that
make it a success!*

ONIS Membership Fees

1-year single: \$10	1-year family: \$15
3-year single: \$25	3-year family: \$40

Check the ONIS website for details
<https://sites.google.com/site/ontarioirissociety/>

Visit the AIS TWIKI

The IRIS ENCYCLOPEDIA of The American
Iris Society, <http://wiki.irises.org/bin/view>

Find information about irises, hybridizers
and different iris societies.

Editor's Message

As I stepped into my backyard one August afternoon I couldn't help but feel I was living in some kind of Hitchcock movie. The foliage on the echinaceas was limp and curled from lack of water. The lawn showed patches of brown wiry grass where it had gone dormant many weeks before. When I walked across it not only did the dust swirl but with each step a cloud of grasshoppers jumped out and flew to a more secluded spot. The cicadas sang their eerie mating call in some distant tree while the sun beat down from a cloudless sky. The air was very still. For a moment I stood and looked upwards as if expecting something to happen...you know, like in the movies! In the end nothing did happen and I retreated to my air conditioned home. The summer of 2016 will certainly be one to remember!

It was also a summer dominated by insects. Not only were we inundated with grasshoppers but we had scale on our magnolias and Japanese beetles feeding on our climbing hydrangea and hibiscus. And the crickets...their chirping still rings in my ears! On the other hand it was the year I was freed from the iris borer! One day I was sitting on our back patio admiring the green, streak-free foliage on our irises. It was at that moment that I said to myself, "I have my summer back!" Since installing a DynaTrap I no longer spend June, July and August borer hunting. I can actually sit back and enjoy my garden...hallelujah!

Inside this edition of The Iris Standard you'll read about a popular iris celebrating its 30th birthday and find pictures of this year's AIS Award winners...just in case you're looking for additions to your garden. You will also read about the ONIS Annual Auction and Sale where this iris lover bought more iris rhizomes than she intended. It truly is "iris fever"!!!!

Otherwise, I'm watching my irises for developing rebloom buds. Better get my camera batteries charged!

Kate

President's Pointers

By Terry Laurin

Getting Ready for Winter

This is the time of year to start your fall clean-up. Here are some steps you can take.

1. Remove dead foliage.

The dead foliage surrounding your iris rhizomes is where the eggs laid by the iris borer moth will overwinter. By removing this foliage, you are reducing the chances of these eggs hatching in the spring.

2. Cut back existing foliage.

Any existing foliage that has yellowed or is showing signs of leaf spot can be cut back. If it is green and there are no signs of damage, do not remove. These green leaves will continue to feed the rhizome until winter sets in.

3. Check for soft rot.

Soft rot can occur when there is too much moisture in the soil or from borer damage. It can also happen when old rhizomes, in clumps of irises that have not been divided for years, start to decay. If you press down on the rhizome and it is soft or spongy chances are it is soft rot. When you cut it the inside of the rhizome will be a yellowish colour. Cut off these soft areas to where the rhizome is hard to the touch and the inside is white. Do this on a sunny day so the end of the rhizome will callous over.

4. Check new plantings or divided irises.

If you have planted new rhizomes or have divided some of your overgrown clumps you will probably find that these are the favourite burying grounds for squirrels. Some iris lovers find that placing a small rock on the newly planted rhizomes discourages these critters from uprooting them. Plus, if you leave the stone in place during the winter it will reduce the chances of the rhizome heaving during the infamous freeze/thaw cycles that are common in Ontario.

5. Reblooming Irises.

If your reblooming irises send up a bloom stalk and there is threat of frost in the forecast, here are a couple of things you can do to prevent frost damage.

If it is a light frost, -1°C/-2°C,

- you can sprinkle water on the plants the evening before the frost,
- cover the bloom stalks with wet newspaper,
- cover the bloom stalk with an old sock.

If it is a hard frost, -3°C or colder, I recommend you cut the bloom stalk, take it indoors, put it in a vase and enjoy! If left outdoors the flower buds will turn to mush.

6. When to turn off your DynaTrap.



Those of you using a DynaTrap to control the iris borer moth can leave it running until the traps are no longer catching moths. I turn ours off the end of October...just to be sure I have caught as many moths as possible.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at tlaurin@rogers.com.



Join the American Iris Society

\$30 US for one year – single
\$70 US for three years - single
(Includes a quarterly bulletin)

A one (1) year electronic membership, or e-membership, is also available for \$15 US.

[Click here](#) to go to the American Iris Society website and a list of additional membership types.



"Dusky Challenger" Turns 30 **Nothin' to it!**

by Schreiner's Iris Gardens



Dusky Challenger (Schreiner, 1986)

A blast from the past...It's springtime 1986. Schreiner's Iris Gardens' *Iris Lover's Catalog* has a new seedling to announce.

"A knockout! Dusky Challenger has caught the eye of many garden visitors. We have been frequently asked when Seedling #1953-AA would be ready for introduction. And with good reason. This silky rich purple gem combines an absolutely gigantic flower with impeccable ruffled form on a beautifully branched stem opening four blooms as once. See for yourself what has caused this commotion in our photograph... This wonder raises the standards for dark Iris to a new level. Destined to challenge all comers and bound for glory. Order early. AIS Highly Commended Award, 1984."

Thus was 'Dusky Challenger' introduced to the Iris world in 1986 in our 61st *Iris Lovers Catalog*. Since that time it has gone on to prove itself a champion, winning the Dykes Medal in 1992.

Like a dark knight rising from an obscure past to the heights of glory, 'Dusky Challenger' continues to glorify gardens far and wide (despite its unknown parentage -- a little mishap that occurs from time to time in the Iris world). Bernard (Gus) Schreiner would have made the initial hybrid cross in the early 80's and was duly impressed in subsequent bloom seasons with the seedling's blossoms. Gus likely consulted with his brother Robert and the two

agreed it would be a good introduction for the 1986 season. Gus' son, Ray Schreiner, impressed with the rich colour and fantastic stature of the seedling, christened it 'Dusky Challenger'. Our very knowledgeable colleague from down the road, Mr. Keith Keppel, has theorized that 'Titan's Glory' must certainly be in the parentage.

'Dusky Challenger' has appeared on the [American Iris Society's \(AIS\) annual popularity poll](#) numerous times, including landing first place more than a dozen years. Iris judges have reported to us that 'Dusky Challenger' and 'Silverado' (Schreiner, 1987) are two iris that judges consider to be "perfect". The popularity 'Dusky Challenger' has enjoyed is a clear indication of its vigor and success in gardens in all regions of the United States. Dawn Mumford, contributor to the AIS blog "World of Irises", included 'Dusky Challenger' in her "super achiever" list. She writes, "My husband and I like to recognize those irises that can always be counted on to bloom well, resist disease, provide beautiful blossoms, make big clumps..." Enjoy the fun read in [her April 25, 2016 post on the AIS World of Iris blog](#).

During a TV interview this year Steve Schreiner compared 'Dusky Challenger' with another high-achiever from eight decades prior, 'The Red



Douglas' (J. Sass, 1934) (seen left), to show the progress made in iris hybridizing over 80+ years. "The flowers are large, with excellent substance. The colour is a deep dark purple. The form is the epitome

of excellence with standards shaped ideally - not open too much or closed too much. The falls are equally admirable in form with slight ruffling, wide hafts. And no sign of fading even in the warm spring weather we experienced this year. The plant is a healthy one, the stalks are thick, and again, it grows well for everyone as far as we know." As one

online review exclaims, "I would not want to have a garden without it!"

So, Happy Birthday 'Dusky Challenger'! May you continue to amaze and delight garden visitors for many a decade more.

"I Had Beautiful Foliage!" **The ONIS Annual Auction and Sale**

by Kate Brewitt

I always look forward to the ONIS annual auction and sale. It means that it's time to 'tidy' the garden. For some reason I take great pleasure in going through our irises and selecting the clumps we will dig and divide for the table sales. It's therapeutic like spring cleaning...out with the old to make room for the new! And I had my eye on more than one iris being offered in this year's auction. Marion Kuhl of Tara Perennial Farm had once again supplied ONIS with numerous beautiful tall bearded irises from her garden.

On the day of the auction the members and guests started to arrive shortly after noon. Having selected their bidding numbers, they circulated the room to peruse the table sales. But there was far more talking going on than shopping. It would seem that the auction/sale had turned into a therapy session for iris lovers. As I overheard one woman exclaim, "Oh I'm so glad I came today. I thought I was doing something wrong with my irises" it became evident that this group had come for an iris rhizome sale but had ended up commiserating about their lack of bloom this year. One person sarcastically bragged, 'I had beautiful foliage!' But despite an uninspiring season, these iris lovers proceeded to scoop up iris rhizomes in the hopes of a better season next year!

When it came to the auction it was standing-room only. Some were there to bid; some were there to watch. After 'Parson Terry' sang the praises of our DynaTrap one more time, the auction proceeded. I had my usual 'bidding war' with the Misson twins, Abbie and Izzy. I remember at one point waving my bidding number at one of them as if to say, "This one will be mine!" However, not clueing in to my less than subtle tactics, she just smiled back and waved her bidding number in kind.

The most exciting bidding war ensued over Keith Keppel's *luminata** iris, 'Volcanic Glow'. In his hybridizer's notes under the description of this iris on the AIS TWIKI, Keith notes:

"All that's missing is the smell of brimstone! Smoky, smouldering hot *luminata*, with aureolin yellow standards flushed brownish red in the central portion. Zanzibar red falls, with a velvety wash overall, carry a narrow aureolin edge, while the white hot heart is edged bright golden lemon. Beards are also golden lemon. Ruffled."

Initially six people were interested in this iris however as the price neared \$20 bidders started to drop out. With only two bidders remaining, Garry and Terry, the price rose to \$30 then on upwards to \$35. It was at this point I remembered from past auctions that Garry doesn't give up when he wants an iris. As the perspiration began to form droplets on my forehead, I reminded Terry who he was bidding against and that he was sure to lose! Finally, at \$39, I got the nod and I quickly withdrew our bidding number, leaving Garry the proud owner of this beautiful Keppel iris. Enjoy Garry! You got yourself a stunner!



Thanks to everyone who came out. It is always a lot of fun...and nice to catch up with those people you see only once a year.

** Luminata: falls have a brushed pattern with paler veins and a clear unmarked area (spot) around the beard.*

2016 American Iris Society (AIS) Awards

Here are this year's recipients of the AIS awards as voted by the Society's accredited judges. To view the complete list including the runners-up in each category and pictures, click on the following link,

<http://wiki.irises.org/bin/view/Main/InfoAwards2016>

THE DYKES MEDAL

'Swans In Flight' (Robert Hollingworth)



THE JOHN C. WISTER MEDAL – TB

This award goes to 3 irises,

'Sharp Dressed Man' (Thomas Johnson)



'Haunted Heart' (Keith Keppel)



'Tuscan Summer' (Keith Keppel)



THE KNOWLTON MEDAL - BB

'Meerkat Manor' (Brad Kasperek)



THE HANS AND JACOB SASS MEDAL - IB

'Star In The Night' (Paul Black)



THE WILLIAMSON-WHITE MEDAL - MTB

'Sari's Dance' (Ginny Spoon)



THE COOK-DOUGLAS MEDAL – SDB

'Open Your Eyes' (Paul Black)



THE WILLIAM MOHR MEDAL - ARILBRED

'Brash and Bold' (Paul Black)



THE CAPARNE-WELCH MEDAL - MDB

'Gecko Echo' (Brad Kasperek)



THE FOUNDERS OF SIGNA MEDAL - SPECIES

'Dick Redfield'

(Dick Redfield by Marty Schafer/Jan Sacks)



THE CLARENCE G. WHITE MEDAL - AR and AB

'Xerxes' (Lowell Baumunk)



THE RANDOLPH PERRY MEDAL - SPEC-X

'Who's On First' (Robert Hollingworth)



THE SYDNEY B. MITCHELL MEDAL - CA

'Periwinkle Persian' (Deborah Cole)



THE ERIC NIES MEDAL - SPURIA

'Castor River' (O.D. Niswonger)



THE MARY SWORDS DEBAILLON MEDAL - LOUISIANA

'Blue Mountain Mist' (Bernard Pryor)



THE PAYNE MEDAL – JAPANESE

'John's Fancy' (Jill Copeland)



THE MORGAN-WOOD MEDAL - SIBERIAN

'Ginger Twist' (M Schafer/J Sacks)



**THE FRED AND BARBARA WALTHER CUP
(Most Honorable Mention votes in any category)**

'Good Morning Sunshine' (Thomas Johnson) TB

This iris received 54 votes.





ONIS Matters

In the Months Ahead

AIS Region 2 Annual Meeting

October 14 – 15, 2016

**Fairfield Inn and Suites, 4271 Genesee Street,
Cheektowaga, NY**

Hosted by the Western New York Iris Society.
[Click here](#) for details on the AIS Region 2 website.

ONIS Annual Meeting

November 6 – 11:30 am

Port Perry, ON

The ONIS Board will review the past year and discuss upcoming events for 2016/2017. If you are interested in attending, please contact Kate at oniseditor@gmail.com for details.

Welcome New and Renewing ONIS Members!

M. Powell Perryment – Aurora, ON

R. Purvins – Toronto, ON

E. Slavens – Toronto, ON



Median Iris Reign Supreme in 2017

Median Iris Society Mini Convention

Lafayette, Indiana

May 18 – 20, 2017

The Iris Growers of Eastern Indiana, Indiana Daylily and Iris Society, AIS Region 6 and the Median Iris Society will host a Median Iris Mini-Convention. Over three days, we will visit six gardens. More than 46 hybridizers have sent more than 278 varieties. Over 800 rhizomes have been planted in the six gardens. There may be the best collection of MTBs ever...54 cultivars from 21 hybridizers! The master planting is at Chuck and Barbara Bunnell's garden.

This mini-convention will be anything but mini!

The Rhythm of the Prairie

American Iris Society National Convention

Hosted by AIS Region 21

May 23 – 27, 2017

Des Moines Marriott Hotel

700 Grand Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50309

Website: [Des Moines Marriott Hotel](#)

Convention attendees will tour six Des Moines area gardens, including two public gardens.

Details will be made available in the following months.



Spuria Iris Society (SIS)

Los Angeles, California

May 5 – 6, 2017

Hosted by the San Fernando Valley Iris Society

Details will be posted soon on the SIS website
www.spuriairissociety.org



Youth Matters

For information about the
ONIS Youth group, contact

Jinny Missons at
jojimiss@sympatico.ca

The Iris Standard is published four (4) times a year; Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn. Materials submitted must be received by December 1st (Winter), - March 1st (Spring), June 1st (Summer) and September 1st (Autumn). Submissions may be edited for style and clarity.

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