

The Iris Standard

Newsletter of the Ontario Iris Society

An affiliate of the
American Iris Society

Volume 12 Issue 4 – Autumn 2017

Inside this Edition

President's Pointers.....	2
The Laking Garden at the RBG	3
ONIS Auction/Sale.....	4
ONIS Matters.....	6



*Terry discussing irises with Keith Keppel
in his garden in Salem, Oregon.*

*Keith's irises were the most popular at
this year's auction.*

See pictures starting on page 5

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/>

Editor's Message

For many years we've had rabbits in our backyard. We've enjoyed watching them as they feed on the creeping phlox and the clover that has become our lawn since the pesticide ban. This year they were quite bold; staring back at us with their big black eyes as we sat on the patio. Initially there were three generations. Then the fourth generation arrived and 'the enjoyment' ceased! They fed on everything, foliage, flowers and the odd weed. They even started to feed on the iris foliage. They were now treading in dangerous territory!

Interestingly though, given the over 500 irises in our garden they chose to feed on only 'the best of the best' i.e. our Dykes Medal collection. After decimating 'Mesmerizer' they moved onto 'Celebration Song'. By this point I was not celebrating. Mrs. McGregor came to mind but fortunately for 'bunny' the thoughts of rabbit pie turned my stomach. So we let them finish out the summer in our garden and hope next year they develop a liking for something less 'valuable'.

This summer we also had more monarch butterflies than we've had in years. We let a single milkweed plant flourish in our front garden however I doubt this single plant was the reason for the increase in sightings. Whatever the reason it is great to see these winged beauties return to our garden.



Inside this edition of The Iris Standard you'll read about a trip Terry and I took to the Laking Garden at the Royal Botanical Garden in Burlington. It had been too many years since our last visit. There is also a report on our Annual Auction and Sale with pictures of the popular sellers. And as always, Terry has provided some pointers. Hope you enjoy! Kate

President's Pointers

By Terry Laurin

Every year presents its challenges. This year was no exception. Above average amounts of rain during the spring and summer resulted in an increase in the occurrence of two iris diseases; soft rot and leaf spot. Here are some pointers to help iris growers deal with these problems.

1. Soft rot.

Soft rot occurs when there is too much moisture in the soil. It is a very smelly, soft, mushy bacterial rot which affects the rhizome and the base of the fan. A way to test for this problem is to press down on the rhizome. If it is soft or spongy to the touch, chances are it is soft rot. You do not need to dig up the iris clump unless the clump is overgrown and in need of dividing. You can simply cut out the soft rhizome to the point 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.

2. Leaf spot

Iris leaf spot is a common disease caused by a fungus. Infection is usually confined to the leaves, however stems, flower stalks, and buds may occasionally be infected. The fungus overwinters in plant material infected the previous year. It appears as small watery ovals on the leaves. They may develop reddish borders.*



In our climate, leaf spot regularly occurs on irises in late summer/early autumn. Getting it at this time of year does not adversely affect your irises because they are starting to shut down for winter. However, this year, due to the excessive moisture, it started earlier. Getting leaf spot in the spring can zap the strength of the plant and causes weak leaves and blooms in addition to being unsightly.

Control: Since there is no known cure, regular garden maintenance will control the spread of the disease. This includes removal of dead leaves from iris beds in the fall and/or winter. Do not compost but rather discard with your yard waste. This will also help with the control of the iris borer as the borer moth lays its eggs on the debris surrounding your irises.

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



* From www.irises.org.



Visit the AIS Iris Encyclopedia

The IRIS ENCYCLOPEDIA of The American Iris Society, is a great resource for information about all things irises. Recent upgrades have made it better than ever. <http://wiki.irises.org/bin/view>

Learn about hybridizers, view articles, books and catalogues in *The AIS Hager/DuBois Memorial Library*, watch videos from *The Iris Video Library* and much, much more!

Join the American Iris Society

Annual Single: \$30 US / Dual: \$40 US
Triennial Single: \$70 US / Dual: \$85 US
(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.

The Laking Garden at the Royal Botanical Garden (RBG)

by Kate Brewitt.

Every year Terry and I talk about going to see the irises at the Laking Garden, and every year iris season comes and iris season goes and our 'outing' never materializes. This year however, after travelling to the Median Iris Society convention in Layfayette, Indiana, we were in 'road trip' mode and eagerly worked a trip to the RBG into our busy schedules.

In my naivety, I thought we were there for a leisurely stroll through the gardens to admire the irises. I soon found out differently. Once I descended the concrete stairs and stepped into the lush gardens I found myself being directed; take a picture of this one, take a picture of that one, did you get this one? It was at this point I realized I was in the company of the AIS TWIKI photo manager, aka Terry, and we were on a photo shoot! Good-bye leisurely stroll, hello sore knees!



It turned out to be one of the hotter days in early June. The tall bearded and Siberians were at their peak allowing us to admire an abundance of different irises. The gardens have a good selection of old and new introductions. They are grouped into various categories with the Dykes Memorial Medal winners in one section and Siberians and Species in another. They are also planted by decade so one can see how the iris form has changed over the years. The most interesting part for me was the Canadian section. These beds featured many of the irises hybridized by Canadians between 1930 and 1980. Most of the irises I had only read about

in iris journals and had never actually seen them in bloom. That said, here are pictures of a few of the irises.



'Laura Secord' (Henry Groff, R. 1936)

Henry Groff was a banker from Simcoe, Ontario. He started hybridizing irises after his retirement and registered only one iris before his death in 1933. The bulk of his work was registered posthumously by his heirs.



'Ballet in Blue' (William Miles, 1953)

Originally from England and a friend of W.R. Dykes, William Miles hybridized irises on his farm near Ingersoll, Ontario. He and Henry Groff collaborated on many of their iris hybridizing efforts.





'Seymour Blue' (Fred Dyer, R. 1958)

Fred Dyer hybridized a handful of irises at his home in Richmond, British Columbia.



'Sheila Barbara' (Fred Burr, R. 1961)

Fred Burr, from Windsor, Ontario, hybridized irises during the 1960s.

Once our photo-op was over we found a shady spot to sit and cool off. I scanned through the images on my camera I found there were over 400! Our photo shoot had been a success. All that was left was to select the best pictures, vet them (garden signs do get moved) and upload them to the AIS Iris Encyclopedia.

If you get a chance to visit the Laking Garden during iris season you will not be disappointed. Details can be found on the RBG website at www.rbg.ca/lakinggarden. If you would like to read more about Canadian hybridizers [click here](#) for an informative document originally published in the March 2015 edition of ROOTS, Journal for the Historic Iris Preservation Society (HIPS).

How Far Would You Travel for an Iris Auction?

by Kate Brewitt

They came from eastern Ontario and they came from western Ontario. They even came from Winnipeg, Manitoba for this year's auction and sale! Well, not exactly. A family from Winnipeg was visiting Toronto and happened to be at the TBG. When they saw our signs they decided to drop by! So, it was more of a coincidence than a planned trip...but it makes for a good story!

Up for auction was a wonderful selection of newer introductions. We had irises from Barry Blyth, Tom Burseen, Thomas Johnson, Keith Keppel and Schreiner's to name but a few. Not only did we have the irises from the dig at the garden of Helen Tengesdal and Jim Hall but additional irises were supplied by Marion Kuhl of Tara Perennial Farm. Terry and I had spent a hot, humid day in the garden with Lisa, her daughter. Lisa helped us with our selection, pointing out the ones their customers liked as well as a few of her own favourites.



Tara Perennial Farm, Tara, ON

The parking lot at the Toronto Botanical Garden (TBG) was full to capacity by the time the auction started. It was a beautiful sunny day, one of few this summer, and people were out enjoying the gardens at the TBG.

We got off to a slow start. A 'rebooting' laptop delayed the slide presentation however this allowed visitors to the TBG to wander in and join the fun. Many got caught up in the excitement and found themselves bidding. And, one lucky bidder went home with this year's Dykes Memorial Medal winner! 'Montmartre' was one of the irises dug at

Tara Perennial Farm. As Terry auctioned it off he predicted a Dykes Medal win however I figured he was just trying to tantalize the bidding crowd. When it was announced on August 15 that this iris was in fact the winner of this year's Dykes Medal I could have kicked myself for not holding up my bidding arm a little longer. Congratulations to Karen, the lucky bidder!



'Montmartre' (Keppel, 2008)

There were no bidding wars this year however it was clear that our bidders were attracted to the hybridizing efforts of Keith Keppel as his irises were the most popular. Of course, after sixty years of hybridizing, and seven Dykes Memorial Medals, Keith has learned a thing or two about irises!

The following are pictures of the top selling irises. As you can see bidders had a passion for oranges, yellows and dark purples



'Mango Queen' (Kerr, 2013)



'Ringtone' (Keppel, 2011)



'Sorbonne' (Keppel, 2009)



'Volcanic Glow' (Keppel, 2012)

This was a repeat appearance for 'Volcanic Glow' and it was just as popular this year as last. This year though Terry knew when to withdraw his bidding arm!

Thanks to everyone who came out. As always, it was a lot of fun. We're already looking towards next year's auction! Hope to see you there!



ONIS Matters

In the Months Ahead

AIS Region 2 Annual Meeting

October 20 – 21, 2017

Hampton Inn and Suites, Victor, NY

Hosted by the Greater Rochester Iris Society. Chad Harris of Mt. Pleasant Iris Farm in Washougal, WA will be our guest speaker. His presentation "Water Lovers of Asia" will look at iris ensata, iris laevigata and the new species-cross, "pseudata". Check the AIS Region 2 website for details. http://www.aisregion2.org/region2_013.htm



'Violet Swallows' (Harris, 2016)

ONIS Annual Meeting

October 29 – 11:30 am

Port Perry, ON

The ONIS Board will review the past year and discuss upcoming events for 2018. If you are interested in attending, please contact Kate at oniseditor@gmail.com for details.

Fleur-de-Gras

**American Iris Society National Convention
and the**

Society for Louisiana Irises Convention

Hosted by Greater New Orleans Iris Society

AIS Convention: April 8 - 13, 2018

SLI Convention: April 12 – 14, 2018



Convention hotel is the Hilton New Orleans Airport Hotel, 901 Airline Drive, Kenner, LA 70062

Details will be available on the convention website: www.2018irisconvention.org

Siberian/Species Convention Society for Siberian Iris (SSI) Upperco, Maryland May 25 – 26, 2018

This convention is being hosted by the Francis Scott Key Iris Society. Visit six host gardens to view the latest in Siberian iris hybridizing efforts.

Details will be posted soon on the SSI website; www.socsib.org

Welcome New and Renewing ONIS Members!

C. Bohme – Toronto, ON

A & J Missons – Courtice, ON

H. Tengesdal – Lindsay, ON



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!



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.

All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is prohibited without written permission from the editor, oniseditor@gmail.com

Title page: Aurora, ON. Photo: K. Brewitt, Editor,