

The Iris Standard

Newsletter of the Ontario Iris Society

An affiliate of the American Iris Society

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ONIS E-Membership Fees

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

Check the ONIS website for details,
[Ontario Iris Society \(google.com\)](#)

Visit the AIS WIKI

Use this link to access the American Iris
Society's Iris Encyclopedia,
[WebHome < Main < Iris Wiki \(irises.org\)](#).

Find information about irises,
hybridizers, iris societies and more.

Editor's Message

I look forward to October with its cooler temperatures (wasn't the end of September bizarre?) and the hopes of rebloom. 'Precious Little Pink' has already rebloomed once, in early August, and it is now reblooming again. According to the Judges' Training Handbook, this is called a *multiple blooming iris* because it "sends up bloom stalks repeatedly at any time throughout the growing season, spring to summer and fall". Whatever it's called, it is a welcome sight!

And...if you're sitting down, because we certainly had to... 'Immortality' is, at this moment, reblooming in our garden. Finally, after all these years, our patience has been rewarded with a lovely white bloom...proof that all good things come to those who wait. Now the clump is not exactly where we would like it however, since location is everything for this iris, it is going to have to stay where it is. Mother Nature gets the 'win' on this one!



In this edition we look at fertilizing your irises and the results of both our online and August auction/sale. There is an article from Tom Waters on the proper way to designate irises plus a list of upcoming year-end meetings. Region 2 will have their annual meeting on Saturday, October 26 via Zoom. After which Chuck Chapman will give a presentation on broken colour in irises. The next day, on October 27, ONIS will have their annual meeting. Details for both are on page 8.

Hope you will join us!

Kate

President's Pointers

by Terry Laurin

People regularly ask me about fertilizing their irises. Here is some information that you may find helpful.

We have been growing irises in our garden for over thirty years. For the last few years, I have noticed that they are not performing as well, the rhizomes are smaller, and, despite regular dividing, there are fewer bloom stalks. Also, they are not achieving their usual height.

It has always been recommended that using a balanced fertilizer of 10-10-10 is best for bearded and Siberian irises. This should be applied in the spring at the first sign of growth. However, because my irises were declining in performance, last year I decided to apply a 19-19-19 granular fertilizer to see if it would make a difference. I had been warned that one of the dangers of using a high nitrogen fertilizer on irises is that there is a greater chance of soft rot however I was willing to take the chance.

Results

To say to least, the results have been outstanding. The first significant difference was that those irises I had had for over five years that had never bloomed, bloomed for the first time. Also, the overall health of the irises was improved. In general, there was more bloom as rhizomes were larger and they produced more increases. As for soft rot, despite above average amounts of rainfall this summer, there was no noticeable increase in soft rot.

Siberians

For the last five years I had noticed a decrease in the growth of our Siberians. Many were not growing as tall as they used to plus there was a significant decrease in the number of bloom stalks.

I contacted Bob Hollingworth, noted Siberian iris hybridizer, and asked him what I was doing wrong. His recommendation was to increase the level of nitrogen by applying a 47-0-0 slow-release granular fertilizer. Fortunately I was able to find a 46-0-0 granular fertilizer. This is also known as urea. I applied this to my Siberians in the spring.

After two seasons of applying this fertilizer, the Siberians are starting to look like their old selves i.e. they are growing at a more normal height, and they have more bloom stalks. The clumps have grown in size, resulting in an increase in bloom.

If you decide to use a 46-0-0 granular fertilizer, make sure that when you apply it you do not get any on the plant as it could burn the foliage. It is also recommended you turn it into the soil so the plant can better absorb the nutrients.

If your irises are performing well using a 10-10-10 fertilizer as the saying goes, 'If it ain't broken, don't fix it.' However, if your irises are under-performing you might want to give this a try. If you do, I'd be interested in hearing your results.

2025 AIS National Convention

Next year's AIS National Convention is in Billings, Montana. Six beautiful host gardens will be visited during this 6-day convention. Two optional tours are also available for attendees. For details go to the convention website, [2025 AIS Convention – Big Sky Iris Club](#). Registration is now open.



As always, feel free to email me with your questions about irises, tlaurin@rogers.com.



ONIS Online Rhizome Sale

by Kate Brewitt

ONIS established an online rhizome sale in 2020 to fill the needs of iris lovers during COVID. Because the TBG was closed to the public, our regular rhizome sale was cancelled. Most of us were in withdrawal and wanted a way to add to our iris collections without going out in public. Quite a few members took advantage of our offer.

In 2024 we held our fifth online sale, and it is clear that it has grown (no pun intended) into a popular event. ONIS would like to thank everyone who purchase rhizomes. Proceeds from this sale go towards the running of the club that includes fees for insurance and room rentals. It also allows us to bring in an order from a US iris grower such as Mid-America Garden so our members can bid on newer introductions at our August auction without paying for shipping and phytosanitary certificates.

Here are the top sellers from this year's sale.



BB 'Raspberry Silk' (Spoon, 2000)

Most requested iris was 'Raspberry Silk'. We could have sold an entire field of this one. Sadly, we ran out early in the sale as supply was limited.

'Wench' was requested almost as many times as 'Raspberry Silk'. Fortunately, there were several clumps in the garden that needed dividing.

'Absolute Joy' and 'Helmsman' tied for third place. 'Absolute Joy' is always popular. When we offer it for sale at events, it always sells out. 'Helmsman' is just

as popular with its soft apricot standards and orange lines on the falls. The bushy orange beard brings it altogether for a stunning iris. A personal favourite.



TB 'Wench' (Miller, 1993)



SDB 'Absolute Joy' (Aitken, 2006)



SDB 'Helmsman' (Smith, 2002)

ONIS Rhizome Auction And Sale
A Battle of the Bidding Arms

by Kate Brewitt

One had to have a steady bidding arm to ensure the winning bid at this year’s rhizome auction. Bidding was fierce with rhizomes going for as little as \$10 (I got that one! Woohoo!) and as high as \$50. Even at these prices, they were well below the US retail price. Not only that but there were no additional charges for shipping and phytosanitary certificate.



The top selling iris ‘Gone Viral’ (Johnson, 2023)

Why was the bidding so fierce? Thanks to Thomas Johnson of Mid-America Garden in Oregon, we were able to offer a stunning selection of his 2023 and 2024 introductions plus a selection from Paul Black and Lynda Miller, too. Many people went home with at least one recent introduction.



Table sales (MDBs and Medians) – rhizomes donated form member’s gardens. © C. Edwards

Thanks to everyone who came out and made the day a success. It was a lot of fun. A special ‘shout out’ to those who brought in their unwanted 4” plastic pots. We were able to pot up the excess rhizomes from the table sales for next year’s winter events.



Table Sales – TB rhizomes donated from member’s gardens - © C. Edwards.

ONIS Youth Member
Receives Third Prize in
2024 AIS Youth Drawing Contest.



Abbie M., AIS youth member and member of the Ontario Iris Society, submitted this colourful drawing to the AIS Youth Colouring Contest in the 13 to 15 years category. For her efforts she placed third.

Congratulations, Abbie!

Stamp Out Binomial Abuse!

by Tom Waters

Tom has been growing irises since the 1970s. He's an enthusiastic hybridizer and collector of bearded and aril species. He lives in northern New Mexico. He is currently president of the Dwarf Iris Society and editor of the *DIS Portfolio*. The following was taken from the *World of Irises – The blog of the American Iris Society – March 11, 2024*.

It is said that a little bit of knowledge is a dangerous thing. One manifestation of that pervasive truth is slapping botanical names onto plants where they don't belong. Is it perhaps the urge to seem erudite, or the mistaken notion (propagated in school biology classes), that every organism has a species name, or just unthinking propagation of error, dripping down through the years?



TB 'Absolute Treasure'

Please don't call me I. germanica

I present a list of the four types of irises often identified incorrectly with a botanical species name that does not correctly apply to them. Each of these types is a group of hybrids with ancestry from multiple species. There is no need for a botanical species designation for hybrids of complex ancestry. The tall bearded iris 'Absolute Treasure' is best described with the classification and registered cultivar name. If classification is clear within context,

it can be left out. If one feels more botanically inclined (as might be the case if writing for a technical publication), the correct designation is the genus name in italics, followed by the cultivar name: *Iris* 'Absolute Treasure'.

Identifying a hybrid with a particular species is not just annoying to those of us with a pedantic streak but can lead to real confusion. People who want to acquire actual species out of botanical interest or for hybridizing, for example, can be sent down time-wasting rabbit holes by this practice, and it is even worse when false botanical names end up in published pedigrees and official descriptions.

So, let's look at the major offenders:

1. Referring to all Siberian irises as *Iris sibirica* or *Iris sibirica*. This error is reinforced, I think, because of the similarity of the classification name to the botanical name. Most Siberian iris cultivars are advanced hybrids involving *I. sibirica* and *I. sanguinea*. The 40-chromosome Siberians do not involve *I. sibirica* at all.



'Katharine Hodgkin'

Please don't call me I. reticulata

2. Referring to all reticulata irises as *Iris reticulata*. Yes, there is a species, *I. reticulata*, sold in the bulb trade and grown in gardens. However, the horticultural group known as reticulata irises includes hybrids and cultivars from a range of species, including *I. histrio*, *I. histrioides*, and *I. bakerana*. Many of Alan McMurtrie's colourful recent hybrids involve *I. danfordiae* and *I. sphenensis*. Once again, I think the fact that the common name

for the whole group ("reticulata irises") is so similar to the species name *I. reticulata* is largely to blame for the confusion.

3. Referring to all dwarf bearded irises as *Iris pumila*. Although the species *I. pumila* is important in the background of modern dwarf bearded irises, most cultivars are advanced-generation hybrids involving *I. pumila* and tall bearded iris cultivars in various combinations. Modern standard dwarf bearded (SDB) and miniature dwarf bearded (MDB) irises are far removed indeed from the species. I think part of the problem is that pumila is the Latin word for "dwarf," so people believe they can just translate the term "dwarf iris" to *Iris pumila*.



MDB 'Beetlejuice'

Please don't call me I. pumila

4. Referring to all tall bearded irises, or sometimes even all bearded irises of any type, as *Iris germanica*. Tall bearded irises are advanced-generation hybrids involving many species, most prominently *I. pallida*, *I. variegata*, and various tetraploid plants from the Eastern Mediterranean, such as *I. mesopotamica*. Botanists have differing views about how to apply the name *I. germanica*, which is unfortunate since it is the type species for the genus *Iris*. The plant given this name by Linnaeus is a natural hybrid of the intermediate bearded (IB) type. The approach taken by Warburton and Hamblen in *The World of Irises* is to regard this as a cultivar, not a species (thus 'Germanica'), and to avoid using the term *I. germanica* entirely. On the other hand, Mathew in

The Iris broadens the term to encompass an assortment of similar plants, including many identified as distinct species, such as *I. cypriana*, *I. trojana*, and *I. mesopotamica*. Even taken in this broad sense, however, *I. germanica* does not include the modern tall bearded hybrids. Given the confusion around using this species name, the best practice is to avoid it in favor of more specific designations for particular plants and populations. Sadly, the use of *I. germanica* for tall bearded hybrids has become entrenched through generations of misuse, and it is continued by nurseries worldwide.



Nursery tag with incorrect naming of TB 'Skyfire'. Also, according to the AIS Iris Encyclopedia (WIKI), this is not a registered rebloomer however the nursery is selling it as one.

As a final aside, names that look like species binomials are sometimes used for groups of hybrids. For example, hybrids of *I. domestica* and *I. dichotoma* are referred to as *Iris xnorrisii*, and *Iris xhollandica* may be used for Dutch Irises. Note that the "x" is a necessary part of these names. Furthermore, the Latin name for the hybrid group should never be identical to the name of some particular species.

Be wary of these widespread but incorrect uses of botanical names. They not only make it difficult to identify plants correctly but also add to a general confusion concerning the hybrid nature of popular groups of garden irises.

Additional Misnomers

by Kate Brewitt

Various nurseries are using terms that are not part of the AIS registered name for the iris. It is suspected that this is a marketing strategy to make their irises more appealing to customers. Two commonly seen strategies are as follows.

‘Dinner Plate’ Japanese iris – In the 1950’s, hybridizer Walter Marx promoted his iris as ‘dinner plate size’ Japanese iris. Recently new cultivars with names that are prefaced by ‘Dinner Plate’ are appearing in nurseries. These newer cultivars have yet to be registered with the AIS. See the AIS WIKI for more information plus a list of names, [JiDinnerPlate < Ji < Iris Wiki \(irises.org\)](#)



‘Peacock Butterfly’ Siberian iris – The words ‘Peacock Butterfly’ have been added in front of existing cultivar names, but it is not part of the AIS registered name. It is a trademarked marketing strategy. See the AIS WIKI for more information on this topic, [SibPeacockButterfly < Sib < Iris Wiki \(irises.org\)](#)



Forcing Reticulata Bulbs

Anyone can force reticulata bulbs. All you need is a pot with drainage holes and saucer, some potting mix...and of course, some reticulata bulbs.

I did this a couple of years ago and plan to try it again incorporating the lessons learned. Here’s what to do.

1. Gather materials needed:
 - a. Potting mix available at hardware stores.
 - b. Decorative pot with drainage holes and saucer. Pot should be 6” deep. You can use a nursery pot, but it won’t look as nice.
 - c. Reticulata bulbs...up to 10 in a pot. If you are adventurous, add some muscari or crocus bulbs to make a fuller display.
 - d. Decorative or glass stones – optional.
2. Half fill pots with potting mix. Position bulbs with pointed end up.
3. Cover bulbs with 3” of potting mix. Put pot in drainage saucer.
4. Water until it comes out the bottom of the pot. Drain excess water from the saucer.
5. Place pot with saucer in the fridge for eight weeks of cold storage. Mark your calendar.
6. After eight weeks, remove pot and saucer from the fridge. Put in a warmish room (60°F/16°C).
7. Once green starts to show through the soil, arrange some decorative or glass stones in the top of the pot for a prettier display.



In the Winter 2023 edition of *The Iris Standard*, you will find instructions with pictures, [Ontario Iris Society - The Iris Standard \(google.com\)](#).



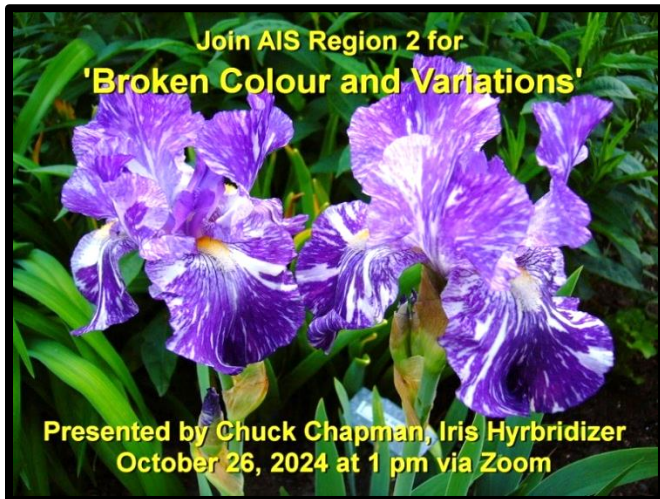
ONIS Matters In the Months Ahead

2024 ONIS Annual Meeting **Sunday, October 26 at 11:30 am ET** **Jester' Court, 279 Queen St., Port Perry, ON**

Join us for our annual meeting when we review the events of 2024 and discuss events for 2025. Afterwards, ONIS members who attend the meeting can enjoy a complimentary lunch. For more information or to RSVP, email Kate (kbrewitt@rogers.com) before October 15.

2024 AIS Region 2 Annual General Meeting **Saturday, October 26 at 11:00 am ET** **Presentation at 1:00 pm ET – 'Broken Colour and Variations' by Chuck Chapman**

At this Zoom meeting affiliate and committee chairs will give their annual reports. Members will vote on nominations for officers. Then, at 1:00 pm, there will be a zoom presentation by Chuck Chapman, iris hybridizer and owner of Chapman Iris. The topic of his presentation will be 'Broken Colour and Variations'.



The business meeting starts at 11:00 am and should end between 12:00 noon and 12:30 pm after which there will be a break. The presentation will start at 1:00 pm so if you are joining us for only the presentation, please log in 10 to 15 minutes before 1:00 pm so the presentation can start on time.

This meeting requires pre-registration. If you are interested in joining us for the business and/or the presentation portion of the meeting, use the link provided below then login at the appropriate time, 11:00 am for the meeting or before 1:00 pm for the presentation.

Deadline for registration is October 17, 2024.

Meeting pre-registration link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0rcOCt rzlsHtbH773ekHUUX5wzT12ZHyBE>

If you have any questions, email Kate at just1moreiris@gmail.com.

Welcome New & Renewing Members!

- M. Benz – Cobourg, ON
- D. Brinac – Iona Station, ON
- J. Damiano – Belle Ewart, ON
- L. Kirik – North Bay, ON
- C. MacDonald – Edwin, MB
- A. Manalo – Markham, ON
- B & D Murphy – Mitchell, ON
- B. Weldrick – Point-Claire, QC
- Y. Yoshita – Newmarket, ON

AIS Matters

November 2, 2024 **AIS Fall Board Meeting**

This year's business meeting will be a hybrid meeting. You can attend in-person (in Dallas, Texas), or you can attend via Zoom. Watch October's AIS News & Notes for the registration link if you wish to attend via Zoom.



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: IB 'Rififi' Photo: K. Brewitt.