

The Iris Standard

Newsletter of the Ontario Iris Society

An affiliate of the American Iris Society

Volume 13 Issue 1 – Winter 2018

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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

Happy New Year to you and your families! I hope everyone had a pleasant holiday season! As we settle in for the cold winter months ahead I hope you find an article or two of interest in this first newsletter of 2018.

For those of you who spend the winter months perusing the colourful iris catalogues and websites searching for irises you may wish to own, Terry has provided another list of irises for you to consider namely his top ten favourite standard dwarf bearded found in our garden. Check out *President's Pointers* on page 2. Terry also provides a synopsis of the AIS Region 2 Annual meeting in Victor, New York. We had a nice visit with our fellow Region 2 iris lovers.

While you are considering new irises for your garden do not forget to include some rebloomers. Rebloom season is never



the same from year to year...which may be why, for me, it's always thrilling. We had only a few irises rebloom this year but those that did were a welcome sight. A *Rebloomer Recap* of our garden starts on page 4.

'Perpetual Indulgence'

The winter months are also a time when those of us who do hybridizing start to think about preparing our seeds for germination. I found an interesting article on the Internet on germinating iris seeds. Given the author's success rate her method is worth consideration. The light-hearted *The "Cup of Tea" Method for Germinating Seeds* starts on page 5.

As I was preparing this newsletter I read on the AIS' Twitter page that irises were in bloom in Southern California. Can you imagine?! All I can see outside my window at this moment is miles of white winter mulch!

Kate

President's Pointers

By Terry Laurin

At this time of year we are looking forward to spring and the first iris blooms of the season. I thought it a good time to continue with some of 'my favourites'. In previous newsletters I covered the tall bearded (TB) and the miniature dwarfs (MDB), which are the 'first' of the iris season. Another class that signals the beginning of the season is the standard dwarfs (SDB). They grow between 8 and 16 inches in height and begin to bloom just as the MDBs are at their peak. They are quick to increase into a clump, producing a colourful mound of flowers. We grow over 150 of them which make it a challenge to select one's favourites. Just the same here are some that I look forward to seeing every spring.

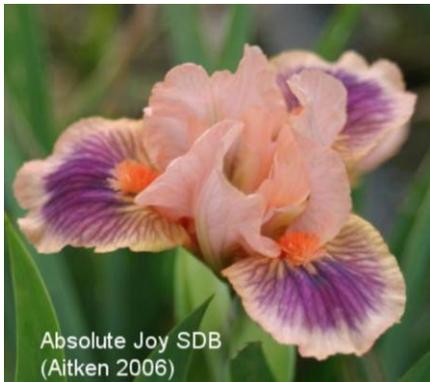
'Eye of the Tiger' (Black, 2008)

When I first saw this iris I instantly knew that I had to have it. I was immediately drawn to the red fall spot that is quit visible from a distance. No surprise it won the Cook-Douglas Medal in 2014.



'Absolute Joy' (Aitken, 2006)

This SDB is a good grower. A purple fall spot contrasts nicely against soft pink falls and the orange beard. It regularly sells out at our sales.



'Awake' (Blyth, 2002)

It's the blue beards and the purple 'eyelashes' on the falls that make this iris an attractive addition to our garden.



'Buster' (Blyth, 2004)

A dark mahogany coloured iris with a cream fall spot which is also dotted in mahogany. The blue beard really stands out against this colouring.



'Cat's Eye' (Black, 2002)

This is a strong grower in our garden. The dark red fall spot has dark veining making it appear almost black. Cook-Douglas Medal winner in 2008.



‘Classic Sunrise’ (B. Jones, 2005)

For me, this iris has unique colouring. The soft rose-orange falls blend into a pale yellow edge.



‘Purple Joy’ (D. Spoon, 2007)

Its dark purple colouring is very close to black. It reblooms reliably in our garden.



‘Green Spot’ (Cook, 1951)

This historic iris is a reliable bloomer for us. It won the Cook-Douglas Medal in 1968. The green colouring of the fall spot can vary in intensity depending upon the season.



‘Teagan’ (D.Spoon, 2009)

Always a popular iris at our open garden event in May, the brilliant yellow beards of this iris glow against the soft blue shading in the falls.



‘Indian Art’ (B. Jones, 2005)

Bright, bushy orange beards draw one to this iris. They contrast nicely against the yellow hafts which blend into brown-purple falls. Definitely different!



Some of these irises will be available at our 2018 events. Check ‘ONIS Matters’ at the end of the newsletter or the events page on our website for details.

Notes from the 2017 AIS Region 2 Meeting

Last year’s AIS Region 2 meeting was held in Victor, New York. Our hosts, the Greater Rochester Iris Society (GRIS), did a wonderful job of putting together an event filled weekend.

Friday night we were able to catch up with friends over dinner at The City Tavern which was across the street from the hotel. Afterwards we returned to the hotel for a ‘Dessert and Meet’ with guest speaker Chad Harris of Mt Pleasant Iris Farm in Washougal, Washington. If you would like to see pictures of Chad’s irises this link will take you to his website, www.mtpleasantiris.com

Saturday was an early roll-call as Chad gave Judges' Training on *Iris ensata*. It was good to learn about this type of iris as they do grow well for the iris lovers in New York State. After lunch he gave a presentation entitled 'Water Lovers of Asia'. Sadly we had to leave half way through in order to get home for a 7pm curling game.

Otherwise, congratulations to Kate Brewitt who was awarded the Irwin A. Conroe Distinguished Service Award at the Region 2 meeting. This award is given annually for distinguished service to a member of AIS Region 2. If you would like to know the history of the award click on this link, http://www.aisregion2.org/region2_018.htm

Stay warm this winter! Here's hoping for lots of snow cover to protect our irises. If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at tlaurin@rogers.com.

Rebloomer Recap

by Kate Brewitt

It's amazing how the memory fades. I was sure that the 2017 rebloom season was better than the one before. It started in late September and ended mid November and, as my faulty memory insisted, had more irises bloom than 2016. But looking back I could not have been more wrong. Compared to last year, only a few of the reliable rebloomers bloomed and there was no rebloom on any of our tall bearded. Regardless, it was great to brag about the flowers blooming in my garden. It always elicits a look of puzzlement from those who will listen!

For longevity, this year's star was 'Perpetual Indulgence' (Aitken, 2005). It started reblooming



September 24 and put out its last stalk the first week of November. During that time we enjoyed four bloom stalks each with one or two flowers. On November 6 the last stalk, with its crepe-like flower, was cut to enjoy indoors.

For floriferousness, this year's star was 'Lady Emma' (Jones, 1986). After the rains fell on Thanksgiving weekend this iris gave us one more thing to be 'thankful' for...reblooming irises. She put on quite a show this year, at least a half dozen bloom stalks. On November 6 I cut four flower stalks and brought them indoors. More bloom stalks were discovered forming on November 15 however frost got to these and they turned to mush before forming a bud. We attribute this fabulous display to the fact that last fall we dug and divided the clump and put her in a new, sunnier home.



The iris most widely report by our members was none other than 'Immortality' (Zurbrigg, 1982). Long time members may remember a previous article where I lamented that everyone was raving about the rebloom on 'Immortality' yet we had none. Well, my envy has returned. This year we had neither spring bloom nor fall rebloom. <<huge sigh>>



'Immortality' by K. Lockyear taken from Facebook

Otherwise, in our garden, SDBs 'Ray Jones' (D. Spoon, 2005) and 'Plum Pink' (D. Spoon, 2005) rebloomed for the first time and IB 'Precious Little Pink' (Byers, 1995) made an appearance. So, as you see it wasn't a stellar year but we enjoyed it just the same!

The "Cup of Tea" Method for Germinating Seeds

By Kate Brewitt

Winter is the time of year Terry and I sort through the seed pods we collected the previous iris season to determine which ones we want to prepare for germination. Starting irises from seed can be an exercise in futility as germination tends to be sporadic. However this article offers hope and we think we will give it a try. So, for all you 'seed savers', here is some food for thought. Give it a 'go' and let me know how you do!

*By Lesley Cox, New Zealand Iris Society (NZIS)
Taken from the Scottish Rock Garden Club forum from
July 23, 2014.*

The "cup of tea" method for germinating seeds is one devised by I don't know who but has been used extensively over a number of years by Lauro, the Convenor of Otago Iris Group of NZIS. She had it from one Jack Scott, a well known nurseryman in Dunedin for many years, specializing in alpines and small bulbs.

A couple of weeks ago, Lauro and I were having a cup of coffee in town and talking about our respective seed sowings. She asked me had I known Jack. "Oh yes," I said, "A grumpy old b.....d." "He was my uncle" she replied. Just as well we're good friends and anyway she couldn't argue about Jack's general disposition. He was a good grower and propagator though.

I was outraged that in all his time on earth, so far as I knew, Jack never let out the secret of his tea method to anyone except to Lauro, when she was about 10 years old. Here it is. It works. It really does.

For iris seeds which take a long time to germinate, including old or ultra dried-out seed, or many known to be precocious or difficult to germinate, place the seed in a small fabric pouch, sown along 3 sides. Add a label with whatever information is required. When you have a handful or however many you wish to sow in a single session, Place the little pouches upright in a small basin or margarine pot and pour onto them, a full strength cup of regular tea, well cooled. Let the seed soak

for 24 hours then drain and add a fresh, cooled cup of tea. Do this twice more so that the seeds have a soaking from 4 cups of fresh tea, each soaking for 24 hours. Then drain the pouches (I place them on a wrung out dish cloth which absorbs the majority of the remaining tea and makes it easy to extract the seeds from the pouches), and then sow the seeds in regular seed pots or however you normally would, covering lightly with whatever medium you would normally use for this, such as a thin layer of seed mix, grit or whatever. Place the pots in a cool, secure place and water thoroughly, then as required.

OK, so what's different except for this extra amount of work? Lauro finds, and so am I now too, that seed which may take 2-6 months to germinate or even a year or more, is starting to germinate in a fortnight. The process is often completed - say 50 seedlings from 50 seeds - within 3 weeks. At the very least, it can knock a whole season off the time a species may take from germination to blooming.

The method works a treat for bearded species and cultivars in general cultivation and I am particularly interested in trying those other recalcitrant bearded, the oncos and regelias. But we know it also works for any species so far tried. We haven't tried junos or reticulatas yet due to a lack of seed material. I'd really like to get some of Alan McMurtrie's seed as a trial. It works with sibiricas, spurias, ensatas, unguiculares, PCs and so on. As a trial, some of our members sowed some of all of these from the NZIS list sent out in May, the seed in June. From the same packets Lauro and I did the tea thing and already have strong seedlings up to 10cms (bearded cultivars) or 4 cms (species) while the other members have no germination at all yet. Seed Lauro sowed in April has already produced seedlings of 30 cms so far.

The problems start though when 500 assorted seeds are suddenly 500 assorted plants all needing potting on or planting out in a hurry. It's really hard to keep up with the demands of the process but given the people to do it and the material to work with as well as the space to store them, it can be hugely successful.



In the Months Ahead

Get the Jump on Spring and Seedy Saturday

**Toronto Botanical Garden
777 Lawrence Ave. E., Toronto.
February 17 - 10 am to 4 pm**



Two great events on the same day! Admission is free however those making a \$2 donation will have their names entered in free hourly prize draws!

Join us for the TBG's annual festival celebrating horticulture, gardening and environmental issues. Or, get involved in the second annual Seedy Saturday (details for contributions are outlined on the TBG website) and go home with a collection of new seeds. There will be live displays, free gardening advice, talks, demonstrations and a floral design competition. Enjoy lunch in the Jump Café, browse the farmer's market, artisan booths and the Garden Shop. ONIS will be there providing information and selling potted irises and seeds.

For more information, visit the TBG website, www.torontobotanicalgarden.ca/events/, or call 416-397-1341.

**Scarborough Seedy Saturday
Blessed Cardinal Newman High School
100 Brimley Road South, Toronto
March 24 - 11 am - 4 pm**

This day is fun for everyone. Over 60 tables will include heirloom seed vendors, green exhibits, bee products, worm composting, backyard gardening, garden associations (ONIS will be there selling potted irises and iris seeds!) and regional organizations such as LEAF, the TRCA and Rouge Park. Bring in your used electronics for recycling! And there will be KIDS events too.

For more information, check their Facebook page by searching for @SSSGFair.

**Looking for a Seedy Saturday close to home?
Check the Seeds of Diversity website,
<https://www.seeds.ca/events>**

ONIS In Brief

Mark your calendars now so you don't miss these upcoming ONIS events. Details to follow in future editions of *The Iris Standard*.

May 6 – Ontario Rock Garden & Hardy Plant Sale at the TBG.

May/June – President's Open Garden – this year by appointment only. Email Terry at tlaurin@rogers.com.

June 3 – ONIS Annual Iris Show at the TBG.

August 12 – ONIS Annual Iris Rhizome Auction and Sale at the TBG.

Upcoming Conventions

Fleur-de-Gras



Greater New Orleans Iris Society

**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

Silver Siberian Species

Siberian/Species Convention

Society for Siberian Iris (SSI)

Upperco, Maryland

May 25 – 26, 2018

**Delta Hotels Baltimore Hunt Valley,
245 Shawan Road, Hunt Valley, MD 21031.**

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 are posted on the SSI website;
www.socsib.org, on the 'Conventions' page.

Garden Shows in Ontario

Canada Blooms

Direct Energy Centre, Exhibition Place, Toronto.

March 9 – 18, 2018

Details at: <http://canadablooms.com>

Peterborough Garden Show

Evinrude Centre,
911 Monaghan Road,
Peterborough.

April 13 - 15, 2018

<http://peterboroughgardenshow.com>



ONIS Matters

Your 2017/2018 ONIS Board

The ONIS Board met at the Jester's Court in Port Perry for the annual meeting on October 29. Minutes from this meeting and others are available on the ONIS website. Your Board for the upcoming year is as follows,

Terry Laurin, President

tlaurin@rogers.com

Jinny Missons, VP

jojimis@sympatico.ca

Lyn Hickey, Treasurer

lhickey94@hotmail.com

Kate Brewitt, Secretary/Membership

kbrewitt@rogers.com



Youth Matters

For information about the ONIS

Youth group email Jinny

Missons at,

jojimiss@sympatico.ca

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.

ONTARIO IRIS SOCIETY (ONIS) INCOME AND EXPENSE STATEMENT

OCTOBER 1, 2016 TO SEPTEMBER 30, 2017

ASSETS

Bank Balance 01Oct2016	\$ 3,739.96	
Petty Cash 01Oct2016	\$ 163.00	
TD Canada Trust GIC	\$ 5,263.74	
TOTAL ASSETS		\$9,166.70

INCOME

Memberships	\$ 255.00	
Plant Sales	\$ 1,280.00	
Seed Sales	\$ 44.00	
Draw Tickets	\$ 25.00	
Interest Income	\$ 18.40	
Mbrshp Challenge	\$ 6.47	
Donations	\$ 6.00	
TOTAL INCOME		\$1,634.87

EXPENSES

AIS Insurance (\$30 US)	(\$ 40.00)	
TBG Horticulture Fee	(\$ 250.00)	
Region 2 Contribution	(\$ 67.53)	
Rental Fees	(\$ 415.44)	
Iris Acquisitions	(\$ 140.00)	
Supplies/Postage	(\$ 237.00)	
2016 Annual Meeting	(\$ 65.40)	
Show Credits	(\$ 38.00)	
Banking Fees	(\$ 23.40)	
Reg'n Fee MIS Conv.	(\$ 245.20)	
TOTAL EXPENSES		(\$1,521.97)

Annual Profit/Loss **\$112.90**

Bank Balance 30Sept2017	\$3,812.86
Petty Cash 30Sept2017	\$ 184.60
TD Cda Trust GIC 4July2018	\$1,057.55
TD Cda Trust GIC 1Oct2017	\$4,224.59
Total Assets 30Sept2017	\$9,279.60

Please email our Treasurer, Lyn Hickey, at lhickey94@hotmail.com if you have any questions.

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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