

# The Iris Standard

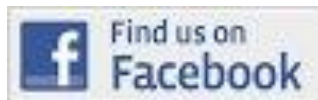
## Newsletter of the Ontario Iris Society

### An affiliate of the American Iris Society

Volume 18 Issue 3 – Summer 2023

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The Ontario Iris Society has a  
Facebook page.

We hope you will join us then...

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

*It's your posts that make it an adventure!*

#### 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,  
<https://sites.google.com/view/ontarioiris>

#### Visit the AIS WIKI

Use this link to access the *Iris Encyclopedia*  
of the American Iris Society,

[WebHome < Main < Iris Wiki \(irises.org\)](#).

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

#### Editor's Message

Our garden had the best display of irises that we've seen in years...and it's not over yet as the Spurias are still gracing us with lots of bloom!

We had an overnight frost on May 17<sup>th</sup>. Irises that were in bloom were reduced to a soggy mess. However, the buds remained undamaged, and went on to bloom successfully. PHEW! It was two weeks later that the effects of the frost became evident. A deformed terminal bloom was seen on many of the irises that bloomed during the last days of May/first days of June. Quite interesting! Mother Nature, once again, reminding us who's in charge!

*IB 'Microburst' – first bloom on May 30<sup>th</sup>.*



Aside from this little botany lesson, it was a glorious bloom season! Our Facebook group was busy as iris lovers shared pictures from their gardens. Thanks to everyone who contributed. It made for an uplifting experience!

Now is the time to add to your iris collections. Our online sale will take place from July 14<sup>th</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Details for participating start on page 3. We are also back at the TBG for an in-person auction/sale on August 13<sup>th</sup>. Terry has provided details in his *President's Pointers*.

Finally, an article on gardening in North Carolina...not so different from us! Enjoy!

Kate

## President's Pointers

*By Terry Laurin (tlaurin@rogers.com)*

I am happy to announce we are returning to the Toronto Botanical Garden (TBG) for our Iris Rhizome Auction and Sale. Studio One is booked for Sunday, August 13 so mark your calendars.

This event starts with the popular Table Sales. Iris rhizomes, donated by ONIS members from their personal collections, are offered at unheard-of prices. The doors open at 12 noon for ONIS members. At 12:30 pm the sale will open to everyone.

Starting at 1:00 pm there is an iris rhizome auction. This year's rhizomes were ordered from Mid-America Garden in Salem, Oregon. We hope to have a selection of TB and Median (SDB, IB, and MTB) irises. Pictures will be posted on the ONIS Pinterest page once we know what will be in the offering. Please arrive early to get your bidder's number and a copy of the auction booklet showing pictures of the irises plus the draw prizes.

Please note, Table Sales will be suspended during the auction but will resume once it's over...so you can keep shopping until the sale is over at 3:30 pm.

### **Donating Iris Rhizomes**

Since the money raised by the table sales is used for the running of the club, donations of rhizomes are greatly appreciated. If you are attending this event, you can bring your donations with you. Please wash, trim, and label them then arrive by 11:00 am to give the set-up committee time to price and sort. Also, if you email me with the cultivar names beforehand, we'll bring some pictures to go with your rhizomes.

If you would like to donate rhizomes but are unable to attend, email me and we'll see if we can work something out.

## **Where Do Iris Come From? Rhizome or Seed?**

This was a hot topic on Facebook this spring. Some people were unaware new irises could come from seed. Dividing an existing clump will give you more of the same cultivar. But, if you want a different cultivar, then a new plant must be grown from seed.

Seed pods form when cross-pollination occurs between two iris flowers. This can be done manually, an intentional cross done by hand, or naturally, by a bee. A successful cross will result in the formation of a seed pod.



*Bearded iris seedpods (L), Siberian seedpods (R)*

If seed pods are developing on your plants, leave them on the bloom stalk until they mature. When the pod splits, your seeds are ready to harvest. Some people put a mesh bag over the pod in case the seeds drop before they get a chance to harvest them.

If the bloom stalk breaks off, not to worry. Stick the bloom stalk, with the pod attached, in the ground and let it mature. I've tried this, and know it works.

Once the seed pods break open, put the seeds from one pod in an envelope. Label it with the name of the parents for example 'Bounce' X bee, for a natural cross or bee pod. What needs to be done to get your seeds to germinate will be explained in the Autumn edition.

## PRICING

It's time for the Ontario Iris Society (ONIS) online rhizome sale. 'The List' of available irises will be posted on the ONIS website: [Ontario Iris Society - Auctions and Sales \(google.com\)](http://OntarioIrisSociety.org/AuctionsandSales) or email Kate at the email address provided at the end of this article.

To ensure everything runs as smoothly as possible here are some guidelines.

**Please read carefully**

## REQUIREMENT TO PARTICIPATE

Anyone who lives in Canada can participate.

## SALE PERIOD

**ONIS MEMBERS:** as a perk for fee-paying ONIS members, beginning at noon (ET) on Friday, July 14<sup>th</sup>, the sale is open to only ONIS members until noon on July 17<sup>th</sup>.

**NON-MEMBERS:** beginning at noon (ET) on Monday, July 17<sup>th</sup>, the sale will be open to Canadian residents who are not ONIS members.

Sale closes Sunday, July 23<sup>rd</sup> at midnight (ET).

## RHIZOME AVAILABILITY

Some varieties are limited in number so order early. Orders will be allocated on a 'first come, first service' basis. Substitutions are welcome. Mark these in your order with 's' or 'sub'.

## PHOTOGRAPHS

All varieties will have a link to the American Iris Society's Iris Encyclopaedia (aka the IRIS WIKI). Click on the link to view pictures and details. If clicking on the link does not work, copy, and paste the link into your browser.

**NOTE: the indication of ‘rebloom’ is taken from the WIKI and does not guarantee an iris will rebloom in your part of Canada. Varieties classified as ‘historic’ are more than 30 years old.**

Prices are as indicated in the '2023 On-Line Sale List'. Prices do not include shipping.

Fee-paying ONIS members receive a \$1/rhizome discount. If non-members are ordering more than 10 rhizomes, they may want to consider joining our group. A 1-year e-membership is \$10. Other rates can be found on the ONIS website [Ontario Iris Society \(google.com\)](http://OntarioIrisSociety.google.com).

## SHIPPING CHARGES

Shipping rates continue to rise. As a result, we have had to increase our shipping charges.

### Ontario & Quebec residents

1 – 9 rhizomes: \$22.00

10 or more rhizomes: \$22.00 plus \$0.50 for each rhizome over 9.

### Residents Outside of Ontario and Quebec

1 – 9 rhizomes: \$27.00

10 or more rhizomes: \$27.00 plus \$0.50 for each rhizome over 9.

Pick-up available in the GTA area. Let us know and arrangements can be made.

## SUBMITTING YOUR ORDER

E-mail your order to Kate, Sale Coordinator, at [kbrewitt@rogers.com](mailto:kbrewitt@rogers.com) with a subject line of **"ONIS Rhizome Sale 2023"**. Include method of payment plus full mailing address and telephone number in case we need to contact you about your order. Confirmation of receipt of your order will be emailed to you within 48 hours.

## ACCEPTED PAYMENT METHODS

Money Orders or cheques made payable to the ONTARIO IRIS SOCIETY or an e-transfer using the email address provided below. Do not pay until your order is confirmed.

We have tried to make this as simple as possible however, if you have any questions, please contact Kate at [kbrewitt@rogers.com](mailto:kbrewitt@rogers.com).



## Renovating a Summer/Fall Iris Garden!

by Bob Pries

*Even though Bob lives in Roxboro, North Carolina he has similar gardening challenges to us; rabbits, invasive weeds, pets, and an unpredictable Mother Nature. Bob shares with us how he manages to work with these issues while maintain a garden. Bob is the AIS Iris Encyclopedia manager.*

While working on the Iris Encyclopedia I see a great deficit and relatively undeveloped area in the Gardens Web. I have been trying to find images showing beautiful garden scenes and vignettes featuring irises. Perhaps the most difficult images to find are those of Summer or Fall iris gardens. But even Spring lacks numbers of images. If anyone still doesn't know two groups of irises bloom in Summer or Fall: *Iris dichotoma* hybrids (*Iris x norrisii*) and reblooming bearded irises. I would love to be able to capture these irises in garden settings with other Summer flowers. So, when disaster struck my garden over the last couple of years, I saw an opportunity to create a new garden that could create these pictures.

One would think there would be lots of pictures of Spring garden settings. Not! I found only one from my garden, which I offer as an example. *Iris pallida* 'Argentea' growing with pink dianthus in my former rock garden shows what I mean. The wiki would welcome many of these garden scenes. If you have images of "Iris Garden Scenes" you can share them by attaching them to this page on the AIS Iris Encyclopedia: <https://wiki.irises.org/Gdn/PhotoGallery/VariousIrisGardenScenes>. Even though we judge irises for their merit as "garden" plants, we seldom see images of garden scenes. I do not wish to disparage the iris collector's gardens with specimens growing in rows like corn. After all I am a collector myself! Growing irises in rows is

the easiest way to maintain a large collection. However, I suggest there are more gardeners who want irises as part of a perennial border than those who crave a monoculture dedicated to one flowering genus.



***Iris pallida* 'Zebra' with dianthus (left) and *Iris norrisii* in container (right)**

Unfortunately, I do not have a blank palette to work with. My former summer garden which used to contain about a hundred sun coleus and a few choice perennials was decimated over the last couple of years by large trees falling on it. The first tree to fall was quite charming. It pulled partly out of the ground and "lay" suspended at a forty-degree angle over the back of the flowerbed. It was a pine tree that did not die, but continued to grow sideways such that it appeared as a giant bonsai. It was very picturesque. The root ball half out of the ground made a large mound that became covered with moss, and it looked like a three-foot hobbit's house. Overall, the effect was quite magical. This fairy tale-like setting lasted perhaps a year, but then other trees began to fall from different directions. Soon this crisscrossed pile was a mess stacking a good 10 feet tall. Unfortunately, my health declined, and the tree pile would have to wait until I felt better. Immediately Scuppernong Grapevine took hold and tied the branches altogether. Through this incredible



**"Hobbit House" of moss from roots of fallen tree.  
Since tree is now cut, the 'house' is sinking.**

structure blackberries and Japanese honeysuckle rose up. The blackberries made it nasty with their thorns and the crowning touch was *Smilax rotundifolia* (common name: Greenbrier).



**Greenbrier coming through hosta.**

If you do not live in the South, you may not know the potential of *Smilax rotundifolia*. It is an edible asparagus relative. If you have read the "Uncle Remus Tales" with Briar Rabbit and Briar Fox, you may have a clue as to how nasty this plant can be. The mature stems are a bright green but quite woody, sometimes with inch-long thorns. It is said to develop large tubers deep underground from which it can send up stalks that may rise several feet in a week. When we first moved here, we tackled a large briar patch with a large piece of equipment that could grind up trees to create roads through the forest. But unfortunately, I did not want to create a road to

and through my flowerbed. Because of the risk of copperheads, I did not want to attack this tangle until winter. Late this winter I began removing big tubs of plant material each day. Now only a small corner of "the pile" still exists. But it is time to plant so work on the bed has shifted.



**The corner of the tree pile remains about one third of its original height**

I plant everything in my garden in large pots (usually 5 gallon). This allows me ...in theory... to move things around. Filled with moist soil, each potted plant can weigh up to 45 pounds wet. Thus, moving plants around rarely happens. I also plant in pots because many locations in my yard have less than an inch of soil before hitting rock. They do not call the town Roxboro for nothing! As the plants grow, they hide the pots, and the bed looks like a normal flowerbed. Well almost! Plants are less hardy above ground in a pot, but placing many together improves hardiness. Irises and many perennials have little trouble overwintering. I think a few perennials may do better because they are well-drained during the winter.

I also use annuals for an early summer punch of colour. The collector in me comes through because I strive for over a hundred varieties of sun coleus. I love the tapestry many varieties create much like a Persian carpet. But in years past, I grew them in one-gallon pots. If not reliably pinched back, by the end of summer, they can become too tall for the best effect, and





#### Sun coleus last year making colorful tapestry

it will be a challenge to get them to look just right when the *Iris norrisii* is in bloom.

Another ongoing challenge I face is rabbits. I try to surround the garden with rabbit fences, but it only deters them. It does not keep them out. Sadly, the fencing also makes it difficult for me to walk through the garden. My wife complains that she cannot pick up the flowers without good paths. But the paths make it easy for the rabbits and our Wolfhounds love to inspect the garden during their walks. They can easily jump over the fences. But I dare not create a dead-end path because the dogs will plow right through the plants to continue out.



#### Dogs are a potential garden hazard

I thought I would be clever and plant some poisonous plants so the rabbits would find the area unattractive. Butterfly weed, *Asclepias tuberosa*, is a beautiful plant that attracts and feeds Monarch butterflies; so of course it was first on my list. The milky sap should be distasteful and yet as it came up, I found plants

that the rabbit had trimmed back. This species of butterfly weed comes in bright yellow ('Hello Yellow') and the normal intense orange.



#### *Asclepias tuberosa*

Marigolds are supposed to smell bad. Personally, I love the odor. They provide bright color and if they don't stop the rabbits at least they may discourage a few bugs. So, of course marigolds would be an annual I would want in the garden.

The summer garden is also my wife's cutting garden and she loves to pick daisies. Marigolds are in the daisy family along with zinnias, tithonias, rudbeckias, echinacea, shasta daisies, coreopsis, cosmos, etc. I try to incorporate all of these into the garden. I try to include as many perennial daisies as possible. Ordering a hybrid cultivar Rudbeckia (Gloriosa Daisy) may cost \$16 US each. I am fortunate to live within driving distance of Big Bloomers nursery where I can find seedlings in 4 packs for \$4 US. If I was industrious, I could sow the seeds myself but without a greenhouse it is difficult to get them started early enough.

Many new echinacea, rudbeckias and coreopsis are making their ways into the "Big Box" stores. Coreopsis especially has undergone wonderful transformations at the hand of Darrell Probst. Darrell is also an iris hybridizer. That part of his work does not support him like his world-famous coreopsis. But I hope his *Iris norrisii* will be an important part of this summer garden. I have a few on order from Joe Pye Weed Gardens that should arrive in July.



**Coreopsis****Iris norrissii 'Butterfly Magic' (left) and 'Spooky World' (right)****Iris norrissii 'Mandarin Lady' (left) and 'Pastel Parfait' (right)**

So presently I am trying to get this collection of plants into large pots for the garden. Fortunately, I was able to pick up some reblooming irises in pots at our local iris show. By carefully moving them into larger pots and babying them with water and fertilizer I hope to get them to bloom for this Summer/Fall.

Work has also ground to a halt in the back of the middle of the garden. A Carolina Wren has built a nest in one of the pots in front of the brush pile I want to remove. Carolina Wrens are a strange bird that likes to be in the middle of things. For several years we had them build nests in the wreath hanging on our front door. When you opened the door, they would explode out from

the wreath. If you opened it too fast, they were likely to fly into the house rather than away from it. One year they kept slipping through our screen door and built a nest in a light fixture on the screened-in porch. Unfortunately, we had no clue until we turned on the light and the fixture burst into flames. Fortunately, the babies had already fledged. My present wren bursts off the nest when I get within a couple of feet so temporarily, she owns that part of the garden until her babies are grown.

**Carolina Wren**

I think the best part of gardening is dreaming about what could be. I hope I will be successful at creating some pretty garden pictures. Yet I can already hear another nearby tree creaking that could become another calamity for the garden. Or perhaps the rabbit will suddenly acquire a taste for another garden plant. But maybe I will win for a change and bring forth some great images of irises in the garden. If you would like to help me out, add some of your own images to the garden page listed in this article.

**Last year's Iris norrissii 'Hello Yellow'**



## In the Months Ahead

### **Online Rhizome Sale**

**July 14 (noon) – July 17 (noon)**

**ONIS Members ONLY**

**July 17 (noon) – July 23 (midnight)**

**ONIS Members and non-members**

Back by popular demand! Details for ordering are on page 3. A list of available irises will be posted on the ONIS website, [Ontario Iris Society - Auctions and Sales \(google.com\)](https://www.ontarioirisociety.com). Or email Kate at [kbrewitt@rogers.com](mailto:kbrewitt@rogers.com) for a copy.

### **ONIS Annual Iris Rhizome Auction and Sale August 13 - 12 pm**

**Toronto Botanical Garden 777 Lawrence Ave. E., Toronto.**



### **12:00 to 12:30 pm – Table Sales**

Fee paying ONIS members receive priority selection.

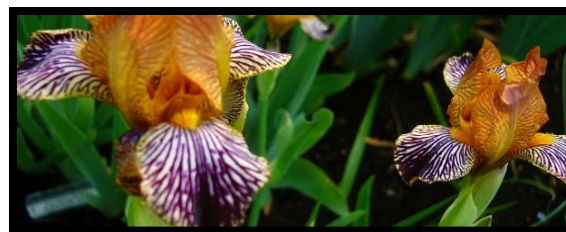
### **12:30 to 1:00 pm – Table Sales**

Opens to non-members.

### **1:00 pm – Iris Auction**

### **2:00 pm-ish to 3:30 pm – Table Sales**

Questions? Contact Terry ([tlaurin@rogers.com](mailto:tlaurin@rogers.com)) or Kate ([kbrewitt@rogers.com](mailto:kbrewitt@rogers.com)).



### **ONIS Annual Meeting**

**October/November**

Details to be announced in the Autumn edition. Everyone is welcome to attend.

### **2023 AIS Region 2 Annual Meeting**

**Saturday in October - Date to be Announced.**

Plans are being made for Region 2's Annual Meeting. It will be a Zoom Meeting, making it more convenient for everyone to attend. The exact date has yet to be determined but we are looking at a Saturday in October. An online presentation will follow the meeting. Complete details will be announced in September.



## Welcome

## New and Renewing Members!

R. Cassim – Windsor, ON

M. Curry – Whitby, ON

W. & A. Fillier – North Bay, ON

S. Hossain – Richmond Hill, ON

D. Hubert – Ottawa, ON

M. Lepa – Collingwood, ON

I. Smith – Aurora, ON

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