

The Iris Standard

Newsletter of the Ontario Iris Society

An affiliate of the
American Iris Society

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Inside this Edition

President's Pointers.....	2
Rebloomer Recap.....	4
Book Review	5
Youth Matters.....	6
ONIS Matters.....	7



**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

That certainly was a 'roller coaster' of a fall! With temperatures in the double digits one day then below zero the next it was not surprising our irises didn't know whether to go dormant or keep growing. Fortunate for us ours kept growing! We had the best rebloom season we've had in a long time. You can read about it starting on page four.

Now that winter is upon us I look forward to the long winter months. I spend my spare time 'housecleaning' my iris records. I update the garden maps that have gotten ruffled and dirty from afternoons in the garden. I review the pictures I took, deleting the blurry ones and sorting the better ones. I also update the spreadsheets where I annually record the bloom dates of those irises that bloomed; highlighting those that didn't bloom for future consideration. Once I am done I will be ready for the new iris season.

If you are already looking ahead to spring, Terry has put together a list of irises that we have found perform reliably in our garden. If you spend the wintery days perusing iris catalogues, perhaps this list will help you select irises for your own garden. Check out 'President's Pointers'.

Terry also provides a synopsis of the AIS Region 2 Annual meeting in Cheektowaga, New York. We had a nice visit with our fellow Region 2 iris lovers. For the first time in years we were treated to sunny skies for both our drive down and our drive home.

Also in this edition is a book review on a new murder mystery which takes place at, of all places, an iris convention...and you thought iris lovers were a passive bunch! The author is a long-time American Iris Society member and an iris hybridizer.

As I type this I'm watching the snow fall outside my window. It looks lovely and peaceful. Spring seems a long way off though...however I know it will come!

Kate

President's Pointers

By Terry Laurin

When people ask me, which are my favourite irises, I always respond, 'The ones that perform best in my garden.' I say this because not all irises perform the same in all gardens. Having visited many gardens throughout Canada and the US, I have seen some beautiful irises. However, once I try to grow some of these same irises at home I find they perform differently. Major variances include a lower bud count plus fewer bloom stalks...both a result of our shorter growing season. Another variance is that it can take three or more years for them to bloom as they take time to acclimatize. This holds especially true for the tall bearded irises that have been hybridized in warmer climates.

So, for all of you who have asked, here is a list of the better performing tall bearded irises in my zone 5b Ontario garden.

'Stairway to Heaven' (Lauer, 1993)

This iris blooms reliably every year. It also produces show bench-quality bloom stalks. For the last few years it has been in the Court of Honour at the annual ONIS flower show. It won the Dykes Memorial Medal in 2000.



'Durham Dream' (Zurbrigg, 1999)

This blended yellow and violet iris also blooms every year. The large blooms are supported by sturdy stalks. With multiple stems and lots of sequential bloom, it always puts on a good show in the garden. (Picture at the top of the next column.)



'Thornbird' (Byers, 1989)

This iris won the Dykes Memorial Medal in 1997. It is an iris you either love or hate due to its pale ecru/greenish tan colouring. For me the colouring is unique and the deep purple horns add to its distinctive look. It also blooms every year and visitors always stop and comment...good or bad.



'Venetian Glass' (Keppel, 2003)

For those who like soft colours, this is a lacy, pinkish white iris with a bluish white beard. At 33" it is shorter than other TBs, adding to its charm.



The next group of irises are registered rebloomers. They have never rebloomed in my garden however they do bloom reliably every year. Since they carry the rebloom gene they grow more vigorously than the 'oncers'* resulting in more bloom in the spring..



'Again and Again' (Innerst, 1999)



'Earl of Essex' (Zurbrigg, 1979)



'Northward Ho' (Zurbrigg, 1991)



'Quantum Leap' (Sutton, 2004)



'Queen Dorothy' (Hall, 1984)



'Rosalie Figge' (McKnew, 1993)



'Twilight Fancies' (Zurbrigg, 2001)

If any of these irises are of interest to you, some of them will be available at the ONIS Auction and Sale in August.

In future articles, I will cover other classes of irises. In the meantime, let me know what your favourites are! Email me at tlaurin@rogers.com.

**Oncers – those irises that bloom only in the spring.*

Notes from the 2016 AIS Region 2 Meeting

Last year's AIS Region 2 meeting was held in Cheektowaga, New York. Our hosts, the Western New York Iris Society (WNYIS), did a wonderful job of putting together an event filled weekend.

Friday night Vaughn Sayles gave a wonderful presentation on the irises at last year's AIS National Convention in New Jersey. On Saturday Carol

Warner, of Draycott Gardens in Maryland, gave two presentations; one on 'Beardless Irises in the Landscape' and the other on 'Pseudata Irises'. These are a cross between *Iris pseudacorus* and *Iris ensata* (Japanese iris). Afterwards pots of these irises were auctioned off to help raise funds for WNYIS. This year's meeting will be held in Rochester, New York and hosted by the Greater Rochester Iris Society (GRIS). Hope to see you there!

Rebloomer Recap

by Kate Brewitt

With the above average temperatures experienced in Central Ontario during October and early November the chance of irises reblooming was looking good. It was after Thanksgiving when the bloom stalks started to appear on our irises. The first was Don Spoon's 2009 SDB introduction 'Purple Joy'. This iris has always been...yes, I'll say it...a source of joy for us. It blooms profusely in the spring and reliably sends up bloom stalks in the fall. This fall we were treated to a total of four bloom stalks.



The next to send up a bloom stalk was TB 'Sugar Blues' (Zurbrigg, 1985). We acquired this iris in 2009. After three years of non-performance we moved it to what we call our rebloomer bed where it gets full sun all day. The move must have done it some good as we had lovely bloom in June plus a bloom stalk in October. As the temperatures rose and fell through the weeks the stalk literally snaked its way skyward, changing direction with the changing temperatures.

Other irises to send up bloom stalks were SDB 'Sky Willow' (D. Spoon, 2005), SDB 'Perpetual

Indulgence' (Aitken, 2005) and TB 'Starring Encore' (D. Spoon, 2008).

In the days that followed our lives revolved around these developing little 'gems'. By day we watched the Weather Network for the night time temperatures and by night Terry covered the clumps of irises with a pail or flower pot securing it with a rock. Albeit unattractive, this method ensured our irises survived the near frosts and the snow which fell around Halloween!



However, despite Terry's due diligence, the day came when the Weather Network let us down. Frost was not in the forecast and night-time temperatures were to remain about freezing. We thought we were 'safe'. Instead there was a hard frost which resulted in some sad looking bloom stalks. Fearing we had lost them, we cut the better-looking ones, brought them indoors and hoped for the best. That was November 11.



Thankfully we were rewarded for our efforts. All the SDBs bloomed within a week. It was nice to have flowers on the dining room table even if they were a bit crepe-y and misshapen. But the real surprise was the TBs. As you can see in the picture above the buds were barely developed when they came indoors. The buds continued to form until they bloomed on November 28.



That's 'Starring Encore' on the left and 'Sugar Blues' on the right. Were they crepe-y? Sure! Were they misshapen? Absolutely! But what a joy to behold! Spring seemed a lot closer!

On Facebook ONIS members shared some pictures of their rebloom! Lloyd

Zurbrigg's 'Immortality' rebloomed for several members as well as MDB 'Forever Violet' (Chapman, 2002) and SDB 'Autumn Jester' (Chapman, 2000)



indoors and waited for them to bloom. After a week, I awoke one snowy morning to this...

It reminded me why we fuss over our irises and give the rebloomers a little extra care.



TB 'Immortality' (Zurbrigg, 1982)



SDB 'Forever Violet' (Chapman, 2000)

But that's not the end of this reblooming story! Despite snow and freezing temperatures, Sky Willow (D. Spoon, 2005) continued to grow. By the end of November there were six developing bloom stalks. On December 2, I brought five of them

BOOK REVIEW

**IRIS RED, IRIS DEAD
by Robert Strohman**



While perusing the various items on display at the Silent Auction at last year's AIS National Convention, I came across a copy of this book by Robert Strohman. Being a book lover I opened it up and read the following,

*"THE CASE OF THE MISSING COMIC STRIP
Some years ago, I ran across a one-panel comic in a magazine. I cut it out and saved it. But now I can't locate it. It was especially appropriate as the preface to this story. The drawing was of a group of editors seated around a conference table at a publishing company. One of them, manuscript in hand, says, "This book has everything! Love, lust, sex, murder, and cats!" So be it. And so, in the absence of the missing comic, I offer...IRIS RED, IRIS DEAD."*

I was intrigued. At this point a gentleman wearing a bow tie strolled up beside me. He introduced himself as Robert Strohman, the author, and expressed his surprise at the amount of the current

bid. The book was not signed so I asked him why he hadn't autographed it. He indicated that some people didn't like writing in their books however it would be an option should the winning bidder desire it. We chatted about the book for a while then went our separate ways. After our conversation, I was tempted to bid so I could get an autograph but in the end, I didn't.

Two weeks after arriving home from the convention a package arrived in the mail. Robert had thoughtfully sent me a copy of his book. I was thrilled! I immediately checked inside for an autograph and sure enough, he had signed it and included a lovely note. I then sat down and read the first chapter. Once again, I was intrigued.

"Iris Red, Iris Dead" is a captivating murder mystery which takes place during the annual convention of United States Iris Society in Louisville, Kentucky. In a local hotel hundreds of Irisarians gather for three days of garden tours to observe the beautiful guest irises planted in the host gardens. Waiting in the gardens is the 'holy grail' of irises; a true red iris. However, before the end of the convention, unsuspecting conventioners will also discover there is a fatal danger waiting as well.

If you've ever been to an AIS National Convention you will find the setting and the characters relatable. It is a thoroughly enjoyable read. If you are also intrigued, the book is available on-line through Amazon and Indigo.

Youth Matters



It's time to start thinking about making plans for your iris beds next year. You're looking forward to the bloom from the new irises you planted this past year, but most of us want more irises,

so check your garden to see if you have room. You don't want to crowd them because they will not perform well. If you don't have room for more irises, are there some that are not looking healthy? Perhaps these could be replaced.

You could try different types of irises you haven't grown before. These can be very rewarding and lengthen your bloom season. Try some of the earlier blooming irises like the Miniature Dwarf Bearded (MDB). These tiny treasures usually bloom early in May.



(MDB 'Spiderweb')

The Siberian, Louisiana and Spuria irises bloom later and can extend your iris bloom season by a few weeks. These irises come in a range of colours so there should be one you will fall in love with and decide you must have.

One Last Thing: Always check your irises during the winter if there is no snow cover. When the temperature rises and falls during the winter and there is no snow to protect your irises, they can pop out of the ground. This is called the freeze/thaw effect. If this happens you can cover the exposed roots with soil or push the rhizome back in the ground, placing a small rock on it to hold it down.



Iris rhizomes that have popped out of the ground due to the freeze/thaw effect of changing temperatures.

For information about the ONIS Youth group, contact Jinny Missons at jojimiss@sympatico.ca



ONIS Matters

In the Months Ahead

Get the Jump on Spring
Toronto Botanical Garden
 777 Lawrence Ave. E.,
 Toronto.
February 18 - 10 am to 4 pm



Presented by the Toronto Botanical Garden (TBG) in partnership with OHA - District 5.

Admission is free however those making a \$2 donation will be entered in free hourly prize draws!

Beat the winter blues at the TBG's annual festival celebrating horticulture, gardening and environmental issues. There will be live displays, free gardening advice, talks, demonstrations and a floral design competition celebrating Canada's 150th birthday. 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/enjoy/special-events/jump-on-spring or call 416-397-1341.

Scarborough Seedy Saturday
Blessed Cardinal Newman High School
 100 Brimley Road South, Toronto
April 1 - 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!) 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: https://www.facebook.com/SSSGFair/?ref=aymt_ho_mepage_panel

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

May 22 – President's Open Garden

June 4 – ONIS Annual Iris Show at the TBG.

August 13 – ONIS Annual Iris Rhizome Auction and Sale at the TBG.

Welcome New and Renewing ONIS Members!

G. Drew – Lindsay, ON

H. Tengesdal – Little Britain, ON

S. Lex – Toronto, ON

M. Castleton – Cobourg, ON

Garden Shows in Ontario

Seedy Saturday at the TBG
Toronto Botanical Garden
 777 Lawrence Ave. E., Toronto.
February 25 - 10 am to 3 pm

<http://torontobotanicalgarden.ca/enjoy/special-events/seedy-saturday/>

Stratford Garden Festival
Stratford Rotary Complex
 353 McCarthy Road, Stratford
March 2 – 5, 2017

Presented by The Lung Association. Details at www.on.lung.ca/stratfordgardenfestival.

Canada Blooms
Direct Energy Centre, Exhibition Place, Toronto.
March 10 – 19, 2017

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

Peterborough Garden Show
Evinrude Centre,
 911 Monaghan Road,
 Peterborough.
April 7 - 9, 2017

<http://peterboroughgardens.ca/Showhome.html>



Upcoming Conventions



**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

Median Iris Reign Supreme in 2017



**Median Iris Society (MIS)
Mini Convention
Courtyard Marriott
150 Fairington Avenue
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. 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!

Check the Median Iris Society website for details:
http://www.medianiris.com/mis_conventions.html

The Rhythm of the Prairie



**American Iris Society (AIS)
National Convention
Des Moines Marriott Hotel
700 Grand Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa
May 23 – 27, 2017**

Hosted by Region 21
Convention attendees will tour six Des Moines area gardens, including two public gardens.

Check the Convention website for details:
<https://ais2017.wordpress.com/registration/>



NOW IS THE TIME TO JOIN THE AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY (AIS)

From January 1 until October 1, 2017 ONIS is offering to pay part of your new* AIS membership.

AIS Membership Type	AIS Membership Fee in US\$	ONIS Reimbursement**
E-membership	\$15 US	2/3 of fee in CDN dollar equivalent
1-year Single	\$30 US	2/3 of fee in CDN dollar equivalent

**Go to www.irises.org
and
click on the 'JOIN AIS' link.**



* 'New' defined as someone who has never been an AIS member or has not been an AIS member for the past 10 years. Only one reimbursement per 'new' member allowed.

** Reimbursements will be made once confirmation of membership has been submitted to ONIS by the AIS Region 2 membership chair.

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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