
WNYIS IRIS VIEWS

SPRING, 2016

CAROLYN SCHAFFNER, PRESIDENT

Meeting Notice

Saturday, March 12, 2016 2 PM

Menne Nursery 3100 Niagara Falls Blvd

(just north of E. Robinson St) **Bring your friends!**

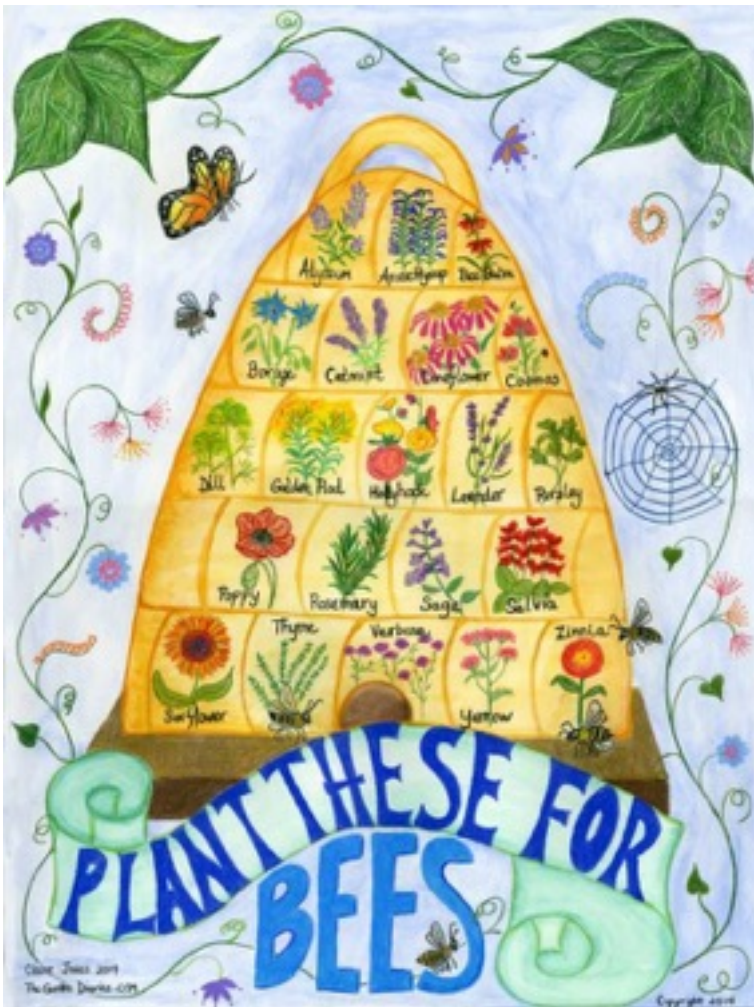
<http://www.2.mennenursery.com/#!events/cktl>

Andrea Locke, WNY PRISM Coordinator,
Great Lakes Center at Buffalo State College
Western New York Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management

Andrea has 12 year experience in developing innovative methods for managing invasive species with the Nature Conservancy and in restoring native woodlands with landowners, not-for-profits and government agencies

The beautiful **YELLOW FLAG IRIS** (*Iris pseudacorus*) has been banned in New York State! What is a gardener to do? What is an invasive species? What other plants are invasive? Are some native species invasive? What does all this mean?





A Canadian Iris Society newsletter tells us:

The laevigatae series all like moisture. For a lot of irises, short dark cross veins are a sign that they do well in wet ground or standing water. The first water-loving iris that comes to mind is the *Iris pseudocorus* or *Yellow Flag*. They can grow in the water but are also at home in drier soil. Here in New York State and in many states in the nation, the *pseudocorus* is considered an invasive species.

The seeds germinate easily and can spread easily downstream. *I. pseudocorus* is a very strong grower and is winter hardy to Zone 6. The plants grow to 1.20 meters high when planted in water and the flower stems

can be 1.75 m. or more. In an ordinary flower bed they will be lower. The species flower is yellow, but there is also a white cultivar (*Alba*). Most of the other cultivars have a bit of brown or purple in the flowers. We tried them in our flower beds but soon moved them to our ponds because of their enthusiastic growth habit and the fact that they soon became taller than everything else

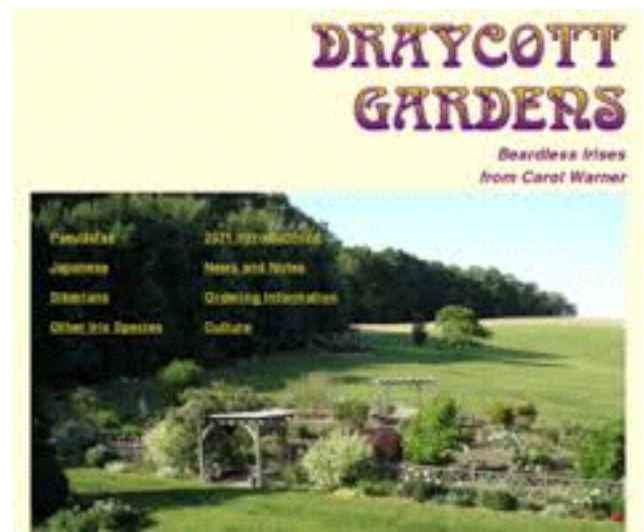
All this information is prelude to the AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY REGION 2 ANNUAL MEETING held in WNY, on October 14 & 15, '16, hosted by WNYIS with assistance from Southern Ontario Iris Society. At the Fairfield Inn and Suites (Marriott), 4271 Genesee Street located directly across from the Buffalo Niagara International Airport.

SPEAKER
Carol Warner

Owner,
Draycott Gardens,
Upperco, MD



Lorem Ipsum Dolor



2016 Calendar of Meetings:

March 12, '16 — at Menne's — **INVASIVE PLANTS (Andrea Locke)**

April 17, '16 — at Marilee's — **IRIS IN THE HEDGEROW GARDEN**
(Maria)

May 14-15, '16 — at David's — **VIEWING EARLY SMALL IRIS**

June 4, '16 — at Menne's — **IRIS SHOW**

July TBA — at Joanne's — **VIEWING BEARDLESS IRIS**

August 20, '16 — at Botanical Gardens — **IRIS SALE**

September 24, '16 — **ANNUAL MEETING**

October 14 & 15, '16 — **2016 AIS Region 2 Annual Meeting**

Call Carolyn Schaffner (837-2285) or eMail (drsnooks@twc.com) to volunteer or ask questions

THE IRIS SHOW — June 4, 2016

VENUE — Menne's 3100 Niagara Falls Blvd.

DESIGN PORTION THEME - *Land of the Free*

Volunteer opportunities

IRIS BLOOM Exhibits (call for Show Schedule)

DESIGN Exhibits (call for rules)

EDUCATION Exhibits

PLACEMENT Personnel



ORRIS AND IRIS



Above, left and center: Blue-white orris and deep purple iris blooming simultaneously in Bonnefont Cloister garden. In the Middle Ages, the aromatic rhizomes of orris (*Iris germanica* var. *florentina*) were exploited for their fragrance. The purplish juice squeezed from the flowers of *Iris germanica* was mixed with alum to make a green used in manuscript illumination. Right: The beautiful and sweetly scented *Iris pallida* blooming in Trie Cloister garden.

And I must not pass you by, my iris, in silence.
Latin, that rich and eloquent tongue, has given you
The name Gladiola, made from its word for a sword.
For me at the start of summer you put forth
The beauty of your purple flower. . . .

. . . With your help too
The laundryman can stiffen his shining linen
And scent it sweetly.

—Excerpts from the Hortulus of Walahfrid Strabo (ca. 808–849), translated by Raef Payne.

Due to the extraordinarily warm temperatures in early April, many plants bloomed as much as a month early this spring, and out of their usual sequence. Some plants that ordinarily bloom in succession bloomed simultaneously, including our beautiful bearded iris.

We grow three types of bearded iris in the medieval gardens. They usually bloom in progression, from early May through early June. The bluish-white orris (*Iris germanica* var. *florentina*), grown in the bed devoted to aromatic plants in Bonnefont garden, is ordinarily the first to flower. The orris is followed by the deep violet iris (*Iris germanica*) grown in the bed dedicated to plants used in medieval arts and crafts. *Iris germanica* is a very variable species, and some botanists consider this ancient garden flower to be a fertile hybrid that arose many centuries ago.

The German irises are succeeded by the lovely, large, lavender-blue flowers of the pale iris (*Iris pallida*) in the millefleurs garden in Trie Cloister. This year, the late-blooming pale iris opened with the other two, and is the only iris still in flower in mid-May.

All three of these irises have the same flower form, although they vary in color. The irises described or depicted in medieval sources range from light to dark and from blue to violet. Named in antiquity for the Greek goddess of the rainbow, the variability of the genus has resulted in an incredible range of color in modern hybrids, although a true red iris has yet to be developed. (A white orris on a red ground was the symbol of the medieval city of Florence, but the colors were later reversed. The [Giardino dell'Iris](#) in Florence, the largest iris collection in Europe, hosts an [International Iris Competition](#) every year and awards a special prize to the iris that most closely resembles that of the city's coat of arms. For more about flowers used in coats of arms, see Theo Margelony's post, "[The Garden in Heraldry](#).")

The rhizomes of all three of our medieval irises are so similar in appearance as to be virtually indistinguishable once they've been dug and dried. Although the crushed petals of blue or purple irises was mixed with alum to make an 'iris green' used in medieval manuscript illumination, it was the rhizomes of these iris species that were economically important. They were exploited for both their scent and their medicinal properties in antiquity. [Orris root](#) was preferred in perfumery and was the basis of a number of famous unguents. The rhizomes of all three kinds seem to have been used interchangeably in the Middle Ages.

Although orris is the most strongly scented of the three, *I. germanica* and *I. pallidawere* and are used as adulterants in the trade. Orris is still of economic importance and is an expensive commodity, as anyone who has purchased the powdered root for use as a fixative in potpourri knows. The fresh rhizomes of iris, which are at least three years old before they are dug, do not develop their characteristic scent of violets until they have been dried and aged for at least two and up to five years. The rhizomes are then distilled, and a thick, oily compound known as iris butter is produced. Iris perfumes are still made today, although the natural product is often synthesized. For a number of fascinating posts on the history and chemistry of iris fragrances, visit <http://perfumeshrine.blogspot.com>.

The origins, history, uses, and meanings of the iris are too complex to be addressed in a single post, but the following links provide more information on knowing and growing these ancient and beloved garden plants: [American Iris Society](#); [British Iris Society](#); [Italian Iris Society](#).

—Deirdre Larkin

Sources:

Anderson, Frank J., ed. "Herbals through 1500," *The Illustrated Bartsch*, Vol. 90. New York: Abaris, 1984.

Grieve, Maude. *A Modern Herbal*. 1931. Reprint: New York: Dover Publications, 1971.

How to Do a Soil pH Test at Home

DEBBIE WOLFE AUGUST 21,2015

It's no secret that **soil is the most important part of the garden**. Not only does it create healthy plants, or lead to their demise, but it is also full of information that can help us grow a better garden. This at home soil pH test will give you a general idea of the pH of your soil. If you want to find out the exact pH level, you will need a **test kit**.

Materials:

- Distilled Water (because it has a neutral pH. Use can use regular water, but it could affect the outcome)
- White vinegar (an acid)
- Baking soda (a base or alkaline)
- A bowl and spoon

Let's Test Soil!

Scoop up a small amount of soil from an area in your garden.

Mix in a bit of water to the soil: enough to make a loose mud.

Pour a little bit of vinegar to the bowl. If it fizzes up, the soil is alkaline. As you can see, no fizz in my soil pH test which would suggest my soil is acidic.

To double-check the results, grab another scoop of soil, wet it with the water and mix again. Then sprinkle baking soda in it and mix. If it fizzes, the soil is acidic.

On the second soil pH test, my soil did fizz up which means the soil is acidic.

You certainly do not have to perform both tests to determine if the pH of your soil: just one will suffice but you can try both to confirm the results if you like. To be honest, I already knew my soil is acidic, but in the name of garden science, I had to confirm!

Now that you are armed with this basic knowledge about your soil, you can use it to do cool things like **change the color of your hydrangea!**

Organic Borer Busting

Thuricide bt contains spores of the bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt)*, which, when ingested by many species of caterpillar, kills them by disrupting the pH of their digestive tract. The iris borer is the larval stage – a caterpillar – of the iris borer moth.

Adult moths can be seen flying and laying eggs in April and tiny borers may hatch out on buds and bloom spathes, and eat their way down the bloom stalks.

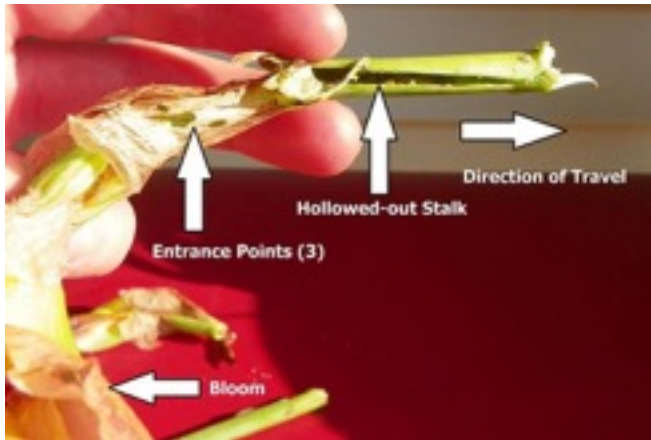
Mix up the *Bt*, and start spraying once at the very end of March and again the third week of May and perhaps spray again after that.

Using the liquid concentrate as a spray, instead of the powder, will allow better coverage of the foliage and saturation of exposed rhizomes. Time the first application to coincide with borer emergence: when daytime temperatures first hit 70 degrees in the spring. The borers must ingest the *Bt* in order for it to work, and that is most easily accomplished before the borer enters the fan or rhizome. Work the sprayer wand down into the clump to douse all surfaces thoroughly – especially the bases of the fans and the crevices between leaves. Reapply once a month, or more often depending on the amount of precipitation that occurs. Continue through August.

A pint of concentrate runs about \$10, and is probably plenty to cover the average person's needs for at least a year. Like any borer treatment, *Bt* will not

prevent borers the next year. Remember, the adults are moths and can fly into your garden from anywhere, so unfortunately, you can never be rid of them forever.

Avoid spraying *Bt* on those plants that are hosts to caterpillars of other species, such as dill and fennel (host to swallowtail caterpillars) *Asclepias* (milkweed) (hosts monarch caterpillars). Adults on nectar-producing plants that feed butterflies and moths are not affected. *Bt* is not toxic to pets, bees, birds, etc., is not likely to harm non-target species when applied properly, does not leach into groundwater or require a hazmat suit.



ONE MORE THING:

The AIS Region 2 Annual Meeting on October 14 & 15, 2016, 2016 features a SILENT AUCTION. A clump of 'SUSHI' (photo below) will be available in the SILENT AUCTION. Other pseudata (crosses with *Iris pseudocorus*) will be available in a LIVE AUCTION at lunchtime on Saturday.

'Sushi' (Jill Copeland, R. 2013) Sdlg. T-1. SPEC, 39 (99 cm), Early midseason bloom. Standards and style arms white (RHS 155B); Falls cream to very light yellow (3C to 4D), signal lines violet (83A-83B). *I. pseudacorus* X self. Ensata 2013. Donated by David Baehre, WNYIS

