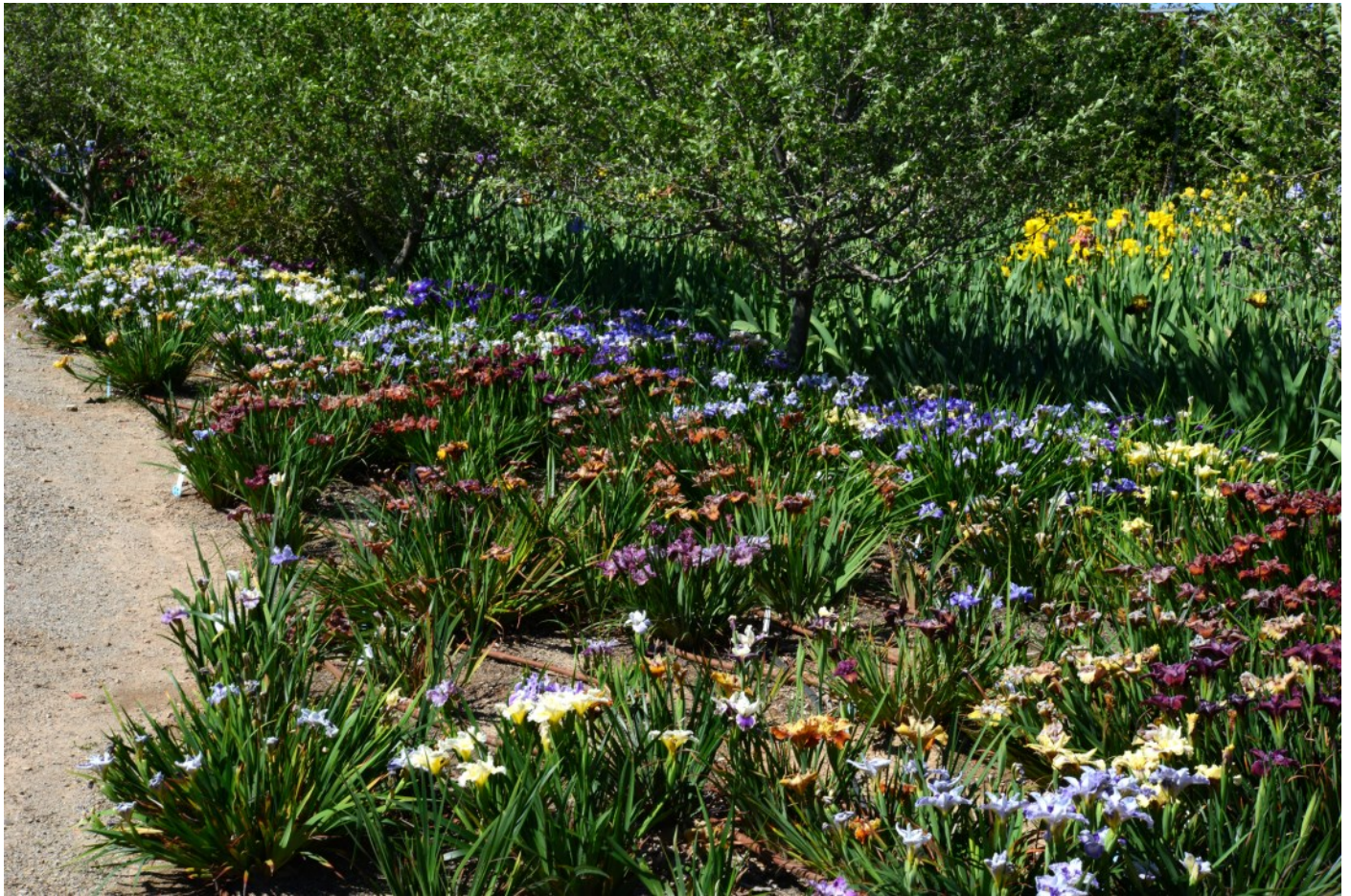


# Pacific Iris

Almanac of the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris





*Two views of John Taylor's Pacific Coast seedlings at Rainbow Ridge Nursery, Australia*

**SPCNI MEMBERSHIP**

The Society for Pacific Coast Native Irises (SPCNI) is a section of the American Iris Society (AIS).

Membership in AIS is recommended but not required for membership in SPCNI.

	US	Overseas
Annual, paper	\$15.00	\$18.00
Triennial, paper	\$40.00	\$48.00
Annual, digital	\$7.00	\$7.00
Triennial, digital	\$19.00	\$19.00

Lengthier memberships are no longer available.

Please send membership fees to the SPCNI Treasurer.

Use Paypal to join SPCNI online at <http://pacificcoastiris.org/JoinOnline.htm> (SEE NOTE BELOW)

International currencies accepted

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM THE SECRETARY/TREASURER  
ABOUT DUES NOTICES**

Members who get paper copies, please keep track of the expiration date of your membership, which is printed on your Almanac address label. We include a letter with your last issue, and may follow this with an email notice, if you have email.

Members who get digital copies will get an email message after receiving the last issue. If you have a question about your membership expiration date, contact the Secretary. Also contact the Secretary if your contact information changes in any way, including phone, e-mail and mailing addresses.

**AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY**

Membership in AIS is not required for SPCNI membership, but it is encouraged and may be of considerable benefit to gardeners new to growing iris.

Send membership renewals or inquiries to the AIS Membership Secretary, or enroll on line at :  
<http://www.irises.org/member.htm>.

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Phone and fax: 386-277-2057 E-mail: [aismemsec@irises.org](mailto:aismemsec@irises.org)

**MEMBERSHIP RATES, AIS**

	US	Overseas
Annual, single	\$25.00	\$30.00
Annual, dual	\$30.00	\$35.00
Triennial, single	\$60.00	\$65.00
Triennial, dual	\$75.00	\$80.00
Life, single	\$1000.00	NA
Life, dual	\$1500.00	NA

**PLEASE ADVISE SPCNI & AIS OF ANY CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

**PACIFIC IRIS DEADLINES: March 15 and September 15.**

The opinions expressed in articles and letters appearing in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views or beliefs of the SPCNI. Remarks about specific irises, companies, products and services shall not be considered endorsements by the SPCNI.

**NOTICE RE PAYPAL**

When you order seeds or extend memberships via PayPal, please send a message separately to the appropriate email address ([seedex@pacificcoastiris.org](mailto:seedex@pacificcoastiris.org) or [orders@pacificcoastiris.org](mailto:orders@pacificcoastiris.org)). More often than we like, PayPal does not send a confirmation message to these addresses.

When you send a separate email, include the date that you placed an order, or the date when you updated your membership. Then the Secretary or Seed Chair can quickly find the missing transaction.

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**PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE  
FROM THE SPCNI TREASURER**

Prices listed are for SPCNI members in the US.

For out of US, please add \$3.00.

**PRINT ARTICLES**

Check List of named PCI species and cultivars, 2005  
Lists species and named cultivars and hybrids to 2005. \$9.00  
If ordering both print and CD checklist versions together,  
\$14.00

**A Guide to the Pacific Coast Irises**

Victor A. Cohen, 1967

Reprint of British Iris Society 1967 booklet, describing species sub-species and distributions. 40 pages, \$8.00

**A Revision of the Pacific Coast Irises** Lee W. Lenz, 1958 Reprint of Aliso journal article 5.5x8.5, 72 pages. \$8.00

**Hybridization and Speciation in the Pacific Coast Irises** Lee W. Lenz, 1959. Reprint of Aliso article 72 pages, \$8.00

If ordering both of Dr Lenz's reprints, \$14.00

All three volumes, \$20.00

**Diseases of the Pacific Coast Iris**

Lewis & Adele Lawyer, 1986. Fall 1986 Almanac, 22 pages, \$4.50

**Almanac Index, 2005,**

includes the following indices: author, subject, species, hybrids, \$4.00, or download PDF on the SPCNI website for free.

**COMPACT DISCS**

**SPCNI Photo CD, 2009.**

Compiled by Ken Walker, this CD includes 423 photos of species and hybrids, neatly labeled. \$9.00.

**SPCNI Almanac CD, 2009.**

All issues of the Almanac through 2007, with Index, also through 2007, and Checklist of species and hybrids, through 2005. PDF formats. \$15.00

**Check List of named PCI species and cultivars CD, 2005.**

Lists species and registered cultivars and hybrids of PCI through 2005; CD, \$9.00.

**Welcome to the Beauty of Pacific Coast Iris CD, 2009.**

A 15-minute presentation with a concise overview of PCN species, early hybridizers, Mitchell Award and Medal winners, gardens landscaped with PCIs, and culture tips.

Ready to play for individuals or groups, \$9.00

**USERS GROUP ON YAHOO:**

SPCNI has a users group site at

<http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/PacificIris/>.

Members are encouraged to join this group, which provides a simple online way to ask questions about finding and growing PCIs among all members. To join this site, you must register with Yahoo, but do not need a Yahoo e-mail account. You may post photos here, check on scheduled activities, and contact other SPCNI members.

**2014 SPCNI Income/Expense  
Statement and Net Worth**

**Income**

Donations	7.00
Dues	1390.00
Publications	57.00
Seed Sales	1119.66
Interest Earned	5.01
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,578.67</b>

**Expenses**

Almanac	669.61
Corporate Fee	20.00
Paypal Fees	76.06
Mitchell Medals	43.09
Postage	577.73
Other Printing	362.75
Seed Exchange	228.00
Web Page	417.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,374.35</b>

Net Income/Expense \$204.32

**Net Worth Statement for 2014--**

**Summary of Accounts**

Cash	0.00
Checking	1854.04
Savings	6820.26
Memorial Scholarship	3562.30
PayPal	2243.48
<b>Liabilities</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$14,480.08</b>

# President's Message

This year the Society is ticking over nicely, with a continuation of the advances we have made in the past few years. Thanks to the increasing presence of social media we can now watch Pacific Coast Irises grow and flower all over the world and in both hemispheres. This creates year round extravaganza of Pacific Coast Iris.

There are many people for me to thank that made things possible.

For a start, we have an outstanding website thanks to Bob Seaman and if you haven't been to the website you need to go to <http://www.pacificcoastiris.org/>

Gareth Winter, our editor, has created another piece of artwork filled with useful information for growers and Louise Guerin has finished another masterful year as our Seed Exchange chair.

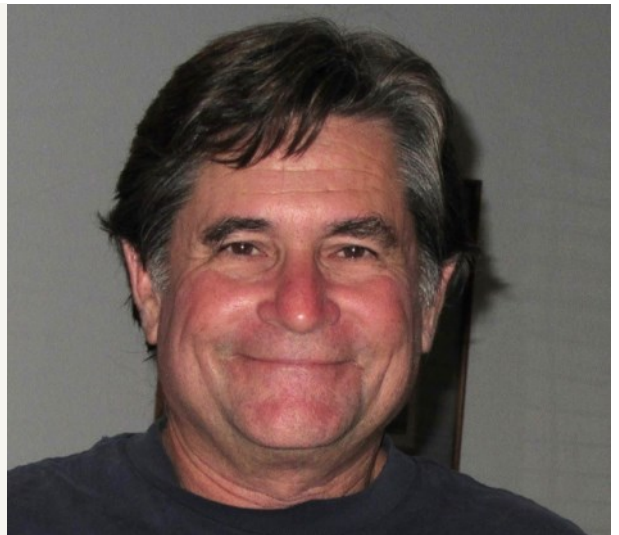
We are the envy of most of the world's governments with money in the bank, thanks to the careful eye of Kathleen Sayce our CFO.

Things for the future! The annual meeting of the American Iris Society is coming up this May and will be held in Portland OR, a great place for both iris gardens and Pacific Coast Irises in particular. Here's the direct link for information on the annual convention, [http://www.irises.org/Member\\_Services/2015\\_Convention.html](http://www.irises.org/Member_Services/2015_Convention.html).

Also, also, also, we need more iris seeds for our Seed Exchange and some of the cooperative projects that we are doing with other organizations. Kathleen is the one that's mainly working on this. So send us your seeds, preferably to Louise our Seed Exchange person who will store them for next year's Seed Exchange and pass the others on to Kathleen. If you don't know how to collect and store seeds there is good advice in this issue!

All the best in the upcoming spring for those of us in the northern hemisphere!!!

Bob



*Above: Bob Sussman seedling, and 'San Ardo'*

# from the editor's desk

This issue of *Pacific Iris* is being produced under a little more pressure and a few weeks earlier than usual, thanks to the co-operation of the many contributors who make the publication interesting to read.

And the reason?

Well, it is all to do with our son David, who, despite being raised in a plant nursery, turned to the dark side while at university and became a zoologist. He eventually did a PhD in which he investigated sympatric evolution of Polynesian land snails – surely the gardeners' enemy!

He is now undertaking a post-doctorate fellowship at Arizona State University so Jill and I are taking the opportunity to visit him in Tempe AZ during the New Zealand school holidays (Jill is a teacher). Remarkably the timing coincides with the Pacific Coast Irises flowering in the San Francisco Bay area, so we will detour on the way home and spend some time looking at some gardens, and hopefully even get a chance to see PCIs in the wild for the first time. Garry Knipe has kindly offered to guide us so I am keenly anticipating seeing some of his wonderful blue-flowering plants.

In this issue I have a chat with our Past President Debby Cole about how she got involved in growing and breeding irises, PCIs in particular. It is an interesting insight into her views on the future of our favourite flowers.

The major thrust of this issue is to do with seeds – Kathleen Sayce has contributed some articles on how to effectively save the seed from your plants, and then how to go about successfully drying them. These articles were first published on the American Iris Society's blog and Kathleen should be congratulated and heartily thanked for the work she does for our Society in this and many other ways.

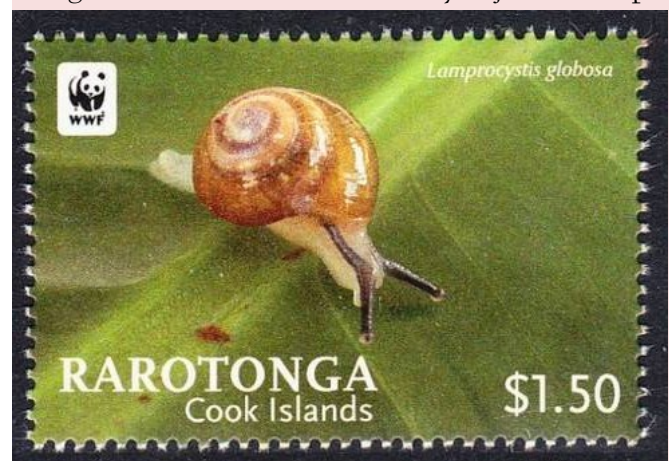
*One of David's Rarotongan snails—  
maybe this is what they mean when they say 'snail mail'.*

Louise Guerin has provided a great report on how the Seed Exchange went last year. In it she says she hopes for lots of varieties of new seed, especially of named hybrids, for the 2015-2016 season, as these are the most popular. It is certainly the best way for us to promote the Society's activities to potential members, so I too ask that you think of saving seed from your newest varieties and making it available to members.

Kathleen has an idea that we should also be striving to help with. The Master Gardeners of Washington would like to sell seeds of PCI at their annual meeting in September, and have offered a 50 cent donation to the SPCNI for every packet sold. Sounds like a great way to help promote PCIs and the SPCNI while also fundraising – a perfect win-win-win as they say in the business world.

Here in Masterton, New Zealand, things have been interesting, with a very dry summer and warm autumn temperatures thus far. Perhaps the weather gods have been getting us prepared for our time in Arizona!

Last year's seedlings are well advanced in their pots in the glasshouse but I am reluctant to plant out until we have had some decent rain, and I have not sown last year's seed yet either. I don't think any of that will get done until we are back from our adventure, so I guess I will need another holiday to just catch up!



# Report on Society Operations, Winter 2015

Kathleen Sayce, Secretary/CFO

**Finances:** The financial summary for 2014 for all SPCNI accounts is on page three. The bottom line is that we are doing all right on income versus expenses, with a net income of \$204 for 2014.

Postage costs continue to increase steadily. We will increase postage fees for seed orders in late fall 2015. Until this year, we could mail seed packets as 'letters' because the small padded envelopes met the thickness guidelines, but no more! Now they have to be sent as packages, at a higher rate per ounce. I anticipate that expenses will rise in 2015, leaving us with either a small positive or negative balance at the end of the year. No change in member dues is indicated for the coming year. We will reevaluate this in 2016.

**Clothing:** We have one very patient member who is waiting for a t-shirt order to be filled. The local t-shirt printer I have used had a bad year in 2014—surgery, broken leg, replaced the printing machine in the fall, then left the Pacific Northwest for southern Arizona a few weeks later for the winter! I hope to fill this order by late spring.

If SPCNI members have an interest in new designs, or new garments with the SPCNI logo, or other designs, please let me know. In past decades we've done jackets, vests, t-shirts, and sweatshirts, with screen prints or embroidery. I don't know if hats have been done, but they are also easy to arrange.

**HIPS article:** I have not had time to work on the proposed HIPS article about PCI that have been cultivated for many decades. I hope to get to this soon, and would appreciate all SPCNI members with information about old selections or hybrids PCI that have survived well in gardens over the decades to contribute information to the article. I'm willing to act as the editor/compiler, but I do not have more than 15 or so years experience, and am looking to those with 20 to 40 years, and with more species, selections and hybrids, to provide information.

At the same time, we should register those selections and hybrids that have been in cultivation for many decades, and are durable garden plants. I'm compiling a list, and welcome any additions.

**Pacifica Iris Book:** With the rise of publish on demand books, if SPCNI is interested, we can now assemble our own book on PCI history, growing tips, etc. and sell this book via Amazon, using print on demand for print editions, and a digital edition for downloads. We have considerable information on the website, a huge photo collection, and of course, decades of back issues of the *Almanac/Pacifica Iris* to review for material. I'm willing to donate time to get this pulled together as the editor, working chapter by chapter, and to find the right person to work with to develop an attractive layout. But I need feedback from members first, that there is interest in such a book. I think that if more than 100 people will commit to buying the book, we could move forward. This would fulfill a long-ago plan made by the founders of SPCNI to produce a book about Pacifica Iris.



**Facebook:** Our Facebook page surged in 'likes' [people who follow it on a daily to weekly basis] in late 2014, with more than 400 by the end of the year. By mid February, it was 466, and by late February, 560. We are starting to see crossover into memberships.



## Mike Starrhill at Leonine Iris Gardens

**SPCNI Web Page:** Bob Seaman completed the uploading of all back issues, and created a members-only page as well in early 2015. All Almanac issues, back to Fall 1973, are on line. The most recent issues and digital scans of our three publications (Cohen, Lenz, Lenz) are in the members-only area. Digital members get the user name and password to access this area. I am very pleased, as this fulfills another long-term project to make all documents available digitally. Thank you, Bob, for helping SPCNI make all its core materials available on our website.

**Membership:** As of mid February, our membership was at 241 with 17 new members listed in this issue. International members are increasing, thanks to ease of access via our website and using online payments and email. US members are staying about the same, with turnover as people come and go.

**PayPal:** When you order seeds or extend memberships via PayPal, please send a message separately to the appropriate email address ([seedex@pacificcoastiris.org](mailto:seedex@pacificcoastiris.org) or [orders@pacificcoastiris.org](mailto:orders@pacificcoastiris.org)). More often than we like, PayPal does not send a confirmation message to these addresses.

When you send a separate email, include the date that you placed an order, or the date when you updated your membership. Then the Secretary or Seed Chair can quickly find the missing transaction.

This came to our attention this year when more than twenty per cent of orders came in without confirmation messages from PayPal. The Seed Chair found these by going through all the transactions to find the missing ones, often weeks after those members placed their orders. The Secretary finds them the same way, by checking quarterly and then annually for missing messages. One very unlucky member had both her membership message and her seed order go in without confirmation messages! If you send a separate message, then you are more likely to get the seeds you wanted, and to have your membership information updated in a timely fashion. Plus, we like hearing from members.

Cheers, and Happy Gardening,

Kathleen

Well-known iris identity Mike Starrhill paid a visit to Bob Seaman's Leonine Iris in Skyway WA. These are some of the photographs he posted to the World of Irises blog.

<http://theamericanirissociety.blogspot.com/>



From top: 'Light Winds', Mocha Melody' and 'Mascara Brush'

# “My love affair with PCI”

A chat with Past-President Debby Cole

*Editor* How did you get started gardening?

My grandparents on my father’s side always had a big flower garden and a good vegetable patch, and I learned some of their joy in gardening when I spent a month with them one summer while my brother was being born. My father’s job kept us moving every year or two, so my family lived in rental housing, which was not conducive to gardening. However, when I was about in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, a man came door-to-door with bundles of zinnia seedlings, and my mother asked me if I’d like to try growing some. That was fun! But we moved again the next spring, and I don’t think I did any more growing until I was out of college and married.



PCI in Debby’s garden in Mercer Island, WA

*Editor* When did you first get interested in irises, and what sorts of irises do you grow?

When my husband got out of the Army we bought our first home. It wasn’t new, and came with established bushes around the house and along the back fence. When the bushes started blooming I realized I wanted a lot more flowers, and started trying things. Our neighbor across the street loved the little white chrysanthemums I had put around the patio, and she had a sky-blue tall bearded iris that I thought was handsome, so we shared with each other. I didn’t take the iris when we moved to Seattle the next year, but after we had a couple of small daughters I saw a poster for an iris show, and decided I wanted to go to it.

The colors, patterns and scents of the bearded iris were stunning, and the show chair could see he had a live one on his hook! I joined my local iris society that day in 1979, and gradually learned that not only were there other sizes of bearded iris besides tall, but also that there were other kinds of iris besides bearded. I love the tremendous variety in irises, with all the different flowers, scents, stalks and foliage, and I live in a mild Mediterranean climate, which allows me a lot of leeway. But I’m a lazy gardener, and tend to avoid iris with demands not easily met in my yard, like Louisianas and Japanese which want a lot of water and food, or arils which want a far drier place. I grow all sizes of modern bearded iris, with at least 50 cultivars of all but MDBs.

I grow at least a dozen different Siberians, some versicolors, some pseudacorus hybrids, several different unguicularis for winter bloom, a few other species, and of course a ton of Pacific Coast iris, both species and hybrids. I grew a dozen spuria iris for about 10 years, but concluded they wanted longer and brighter sun than I could give them. In between the iris and various bushes I've tried out columbines, hardy fuchsias, ferns, hostas, lilies, penstemons, crocosmias, lewisias, and assorted irids.... And there's always something new and interesting!

*Editor: Was it the species that attracted you to Pacific Coast iris, or did the hybrids first catch your eye?*

My love affair with PCI started when a long-time irisarian, only a few years older than I, brought me a few Pacific Coast iris (I think 'Native Warrior', 'Western Queen' and 'Ripple Rock') and said I really should get acquainted with that type, as they were native only to our part of the world, the west coast of the US. Our yard is on a slope and has good drainage even in Seattle's eternal Rain Festival, so they did well for me, and I joined SPCNI to learn more about them.

I went on a couple of field trips with SPCNI and came away feeling uneducated, mostly because I'd been too lazy to learn beforehand about the iris I'd be seeing. One of the closest had been to the mountainous region of southwest Oregon, and part of its planned route had been closed at the time due to landslides.

I wasn't too sure of the timeframe, and didn't know if the roads had been reopened, but ten years ago I talked a friend into going with me in late April to see. We nearly froze to death, but saw some very exciting things, and had time to think and talk about them. That tiny corner of the world has four (maybe five or six) different species of Pacific Coast Iris, and different roads showed different wonders, just as one drove along. How could I not be thrilled?!? And if I were a botanist (I'm not), I'd have been even more excited, and would have learned a lot more, and a lot faster.

When we got home from that 5-day trip, I called up Jean Witt, a fellow member of my home iris society. She's an outstanding, longtime irisarian and a bona fide botanist trained in Northwest flora, but had never much been able to get out in the wild very far from home and family.



*From top; 'Scarlet Woman', 'Susannah Wept', and 'Red Delicious', Debby Cole's 2012 registrations*

Neither of us was ready for tough hikes or climbing, but I'd just learned that one could discover a lot by the roadside and wanted to share those wonders with someone who really needed to see them. Ten days later we were back in southwest Oregon, at what I consider PCI Ground Zero. Already the things in bloom had changed so much that I knew I'd have to return at other times in other years. Jean felt the same, and that began a delightful exploration partnership.

*Editor: What excites you about seeing PCI in the wild?*

Hunting them gives me a reason to go places I wouldn't otherwise go. It gets me away from the world people have constructed, and lets me see more of what was here before people. It expands my knowledge of both the iris and other plants, and their interrelations, in ways that neither books nor other media can. It lets me absorb beauty, and realize again the infinite variety of nature. I get to see the survivors of millennia of evolution of PCI, and millions of variants I wouldn't see in cultivation. I used to dream of meeting the Martians; maybe I'll be the one to find the next 'Valley Banner'. Who knows—maybe both!

*Editor: When did you first take office in the SPCNI?*

Colin Rigby, with whom I did the AIS Region 13 Newsletter for 6-7 years, talked me into succeeding him as Seed Chair for SPCNI, in 1999. I had no intention of becoming an officer, but Richard Richards, then president, recruited me and was very patient while I learned how SPCNI worked. I became President in 2006, fronting for our long time Sec/Treas Terri Hudson who continued to do the real work of the Society. When Terri's daughter died of cancer and she really needed to make a life change, I was lucky enough to find Kathleen Sayce to replace her, and Gareth Winter to become Editor when a change was needed there.



*From top: 'Dracularity, a 1998 introduction, and 'Periwinkle Persian' from 2005.*

*Bottom photograph courtesy Jay and Terri Hudson.*



'Egocentric, from 2007, features a yellow cream signal with a wonderful red halo, a characteristic passed on to its children.

By 2006 Bob Sussman, who had volunteered to succeed me as Seed Chair and then Vice-President, was willing to ascend to the SPCNI throne, and I retired to the past-presidency and mere Board membership, with occasional Trek leadership.

*Editor: Do you have a favorite form, something you would describe as the ideal form for PCI?*

I've thought about that a lot, and probably the AIS judging program has refined my thinking somewhat. In the wild---no. I'll take what I get. In the garden---I'd like a neat clumper, with stalks strong enough to hold the flowers up out of the mud and foliage that's attractive year-round and

doesn't sprawl too much in late summer. As to flower form, as long as it has poise and personality and general iris configuration, I'm happy. Anything from broad and ruffled to thin and spidery is good.

*Editor: Do you have a deliberate breeding program with specific goals? Are there specific colors or patterns that interest you?*

I'm a terrible dilettante. I don't know why, but the warmer end of the spectrum just makes me happy---yellows, oranges, reds---so I started with those colors. When an interesting pattern came along in mauve, I started playing with that. I'm always open to a new pattern or a new combination of colors. I was delighted when the 'Valley Banner' pattern got translated into new colors, and then combined with the plicata pattern. If a particularly personable seedling comes along in what I had previously considered a boring color, I don't throw it out.

As you can tell, my hybridizing has no particular goals beside my own pleasure. In fact, I'll even confess to having started out hybridizing for border bearded iris. But since our planet seems to be on a warming trend, it would definitely be advantageous to the future of the PCI for hybridizers to favor heat- and drought-tolerant seedlings.

I'm divided on the idea of inducing tetraploidy. Tetraploids would seem be stronger and sturdier, but much harder to nudge into recessive colors and patterns. Cal-sibs, those hybrids between PCI and 40-chromosome Siberian irises, don't seem to be particularly tolerant of heat or drought. I know that PCs will cross with Louisiana iris, but not enough work has been done in that area to have any data on the tolerance of the results.

Jean Witt always advocates trying wide crosses (many times), and bringing new species into the gene pool. Look how exciting the new pseudatas (*I. pseudacorus* x *I. ensata*) are! There may be something equally wonderful involving Pacific Coast iris just over the horizon. What if.....

# Going to seed

Kathleen Sayce



*Iris douglasiana* has green pods with three valves. Bag and save upright pods, not the sprawling stems. You will find the mature pods more easily later if they are upright.



The longest ripening period is that of *Iris douglasiana*, which can take up to nine weeks to mature.

## Firstly, save your seed

All irises have pods with three valves that open and spread when seeds are mature and pods are dry. Open pods toss seeds a few feet, shaking seeds out in the wind and opening a bit more from day to day. Iris pods often open at inconvenient times, usually on hot sunny days when I'm away from home. This was a frustrating reality for me when I started crossing plants and saving seeds, because I'm often hiking in mid summer, away in the hills when those pods pop open.

I began collecting iris seed by designating small paper bags for each variety, adding pods to the bags day by day and week by week, cutting off the pods when the color started to change from green to brown. But inevitably, some slip past, and open on their own. Tracking seeds of choice hybrids was tough: several times the pod opened and seeds slipped out, and were scattered in the garden in less than 24 hours. When you've hand pollinated the flowers after growing the parent plants, losing the seeds at ripe pod stage is tough.

*Iris douglasiana* is the most widely grown Pacifica Iris, and its pods are ripe about nine weeks after flowering. Some species ripen a bit earlier, like *Iris innominata*, which has lovely yellow flowers; in five to six weeks the seeds are mature and ready to gather from this species. I learned this the hard way, going out weeks too late to bag what I thought were green pods and finding only the pod sections, brown, dry and open with the seeds long gone.

There is a solution: organza party bags, AKA seed pod bags. These days I check plants a few weeks after flowering, cut off flower stems on plants whose seeds I do not plan to save, and put mesh bags over the rest. For my original purchase, I got green bags, thinking green would blend in better over the summer. Not bad, but I now find bags all winter, even in spring, that were overlooked the prior summer!

When the pods are ripe, I cut the stems off, tie them together, label the bunch, and dry the pods still in the bags. If they open and shed seed, great, this saves me time prying open each pod. If they don't—and some late flowering *I. douglasiana* plants often do not open their pods — I slice each pod open along one side and pry out the seeds.

If the seeds are going to a seed exchange, they go back into a clean mesh bag, labeled, and air dry for a couple of weeks. If I keep seeds to plant, I plant them immediately outside.

I live in a summer dry, winter wet climate, which Pacifica Iris prefer. Seeds go into styrofoam boxes, in a well drained mix, covered with a thin layer of fine granite gravel (chicken scratch). A fine wire mesh cover goes over the top, to keep voles, chipmunks, jays, crows and other animals from eating germinating seeds. The seed boxes stay outside all winter, no matter the weather, and in the spring the next crop of Pacifica Iris seedlings emerge.

I'd like to know what other iris growers think of using mesh bags, and what color of bag you recommend. I need to order more. I'm thinking red or orange or should I go wild and order bags to match the pod parent flower?



*Mesh bag on green pod—unobtrusive, discrete, and could be easily overlooked in a few weeks when the seeds are ripe.*

## Then when the pods are ripe ...

Some species irises shed seed by early July in my garden, including *Iris tenax* and *I. innominata*. These species often grow at high elevations in the wild, flower in May or June, and have ripe seed by mid July to early August. They waste no time cranking out the next generation. Other species take more time to ripen seeds, nine weeks instead of five to six weeks, including *I. douglasiana*. Pods often go through a color change as they ripen, from green to gold or yellow. Even when not opened, a yellow pod has mature seeds inside, ready to collect.

Mesh bags or nylon stockings are good devices to use to contain seeds and ensure that a gardener's work in crossing specific parents isn't lost at the seed collection step. Saving even a few seeds from a choice cross can be important in a hybridizing program.

I cut the stems and collect the pods, still in their mesh bags, to dry before taking out the seeds. The stems can be tied together with a wire tie or string, hung in a dry shady place, out of the sun and away from direct heat—just as you would dry herbs or flowers, or put into paper bags in a warm dry spot. After a few days, any pods that can open, have done so, and the seeds are ready to clean and package.

Normally the valves separate from the pods, and the seeds break off and scatter. Occasionally pods stay closed or only partially open. Either the tip will not separate, or the sutures along the edges do not open. When this happens, I use a knife or razor blade in a holder to cut the tip off, or cut along a suture line, being very careful to keep my fingers intact, and to not cut into seeds. Then I gently peel out the seeds.

Seeds go into a bowl. Use a large bowl that you can swirl seeds around in. This lets you blow or toss seeds outside to separate seeds from chaff and pod fragments. I also use a sieve to shake out fine bits if the pods are dirty. I clean the seeds and remove all non-seed bits and pieces, insects, et cetera. Separating seeds from chaff is a very old process. Humans have been doing this for thousands of years. And it's fun!

After the seeds are clean, I put them in a clean bag (mesh or paper), to continue air drying. The label moves with them. I save seeds for seed exchanges, such as Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris, and Species Iris Group of North America. I learned the hard way to not put fresh seeds into glassine or plastic bags—they mold. The mold doesn't kill the seeds, it's just in the seed coats, but it looks terrible, and when it's really bad, all the seeds are encased in a dense whitish mold into one solid lump. Ugh! If there's too much mold I scrub the seeds with a plastic scrubby to clean them, then rinse and re-dry the seeds. Let the seeds dry thoroughly before packaging each seed lot. I'm not naturally a patient person, so this is hard. Wait ten days, at a minimum. More is better. Only when the seeds have dried indoors, in a clean mesh bag, and I have let the days slip past, do I then put the seeds into an envelope, label it, and set it aside to send to a seed exchange. I also share seeds out to gardening friends, and this is when those seeds are mailed.

Labels need to include what, when, where, and any details of the plant or flower that are important.

List: Pod parent, pollen parent if known, the flower color on the pod parent if it's a species or unregistered new flower, likewise any characteristics of the pollen parent that were important to note, or bee-pollinated, if open pollination was used. If you use crossing codes to track garden crosses, write down those codes too. This helps you and others track the parentage of your seeds.

Another task is to take all the used mesh bags, wash them in warm soapy water, rinse, dry, and then freeze them for at least two weeks. Why freeze the bags? If any invertebrate eggs are in the bags, this will kill them. Washing, drying and freezing helps ensure that the bags are clean, and ready to use again next year.

## It's drying time again

When I first collected Pacifica iris seeds, I learned the hard way to let them dry thoroughly before packing seeds into envelopes. Several packages of fresh seeds developed mold!



*Iris pods are opening all over the garden during summer, when the mesh bags come into use. Here, all pods in this cluster have opened, the tips are spread on the upper two, and the bottom one has valves spread to show the seeds inside.*

Seeds need ten days to two weeks of patient drying time from pod to package. Gardening is not only a creative physical and visual practice, it's a constant practice of patience—and a lesson I keep returning to again and again, apparently I'm a slow learner when it comes to patience.

I quickly learned that no matter how dry the pod, the seeds needed their own drying time once they were decanted. The images on the page opposite show the transition from fresh, damp seeds to dry seeds that can be packaged safely.

Seeds are usually light brown as they come from the pod; they can be greenish, yellow, gold, or even pink. These seeds will feel damp in your hand. If you are planting Pacifica Iris seeds right away, skip drying and plant them out. Pacifica Iris seeds can live when stored cool for several years, so if you plan to store them, then take the time to dry them first. Seeds ripen as they dry down, are more resistant to cold, and last longer in storage.

As the seeds dry, they darken and develop patterned coats. The partially dry seeds will still feel slightly damp in your hand. They are still too damp to store. Be patient. Let them dry a few more days to a week.

Thoroughly dry seeds are light, feel dry to the touch, and are medium brown to dark brown to black in color. The seeds in the bottom photograph on the opposite page right are dry enough to put in envelopes and store, or mail to a seed exchange.



Another hard lesson was that not all seeds are needed by seed exchanges. One year, I hand cleaned eight to ten ounces of seed by the time I was done. The seed chairman that year cheerfully used the seeds as extras where those ordering wanted vigorous species-type seeds.

Nowadays I count pods and aim for at least 10 pods of each variety, which will usually give 100-120 seeds. On the low end, I aim for at least 4 pods, or 40-50 seeds, as a minimum donation of one variety, unless it's something I know only a few people will want. Fewer than this, I keep the seeds back.

If you save seeds for seed exchanges, think about how many seeds to send. Seed chairs typically want to send out at least five seeds in an envelope of each variety, and if they get only 10 seeds of anything, then only two orders can be filled. On the other hand, 40 orders for one kind of seed is not unusual, which means a minimum of 200 seeds. My goal for 2015 is at least 400 seeds per lot for the Master Gardener's seed sale—more is better—along with the usual number of seeds for SPCNI's seed exchange. Think about joining the seed donors group this year, and save your seed pods for SPCNI.

Extra seed pods can be removed and composted when young, or seeds tossed out in a rough meadow. I am planning a mixed meadow of native grasses and irises, with Pacific reedgrass, red fescue, and a mix of Pacifica Iris seedlings.

Seeds are a promise of plants to come. Every time I collect seeds, plant them, and grow new plants, it feels like a blessing from nature. When those new plants bloom and set seed in turn, it's the great wheel of life turning in my own garden, year after year.



A basket of treasure: Ripe pods in paper bags, ready to dry indoors



Ripe Pacifica Iris pod with moldy seeds, right from the garden. This whitish mold is in the seed coat, not the seed. The seeds will germinate despite the mold.



Fresh seeds, right out of the pod: Smooth and light colored, these seeds need to dry for a couple of weeks



Partially dry, these seeds are starting to darken.



Finally dry enough to package and send to the seed exchange.

# PCIs DOWN UNDER 2014

## Jim Morris

The American Iris Society President Jim Morris, of Missouri paid a visit to the Southern Hemisphere last fall, at the height of the iris flowering season. He reports on the Pacific Iris he saw on his journeys in New Zealand and Australia.

While touring Australia and New Zealand in October/November 2014 during their spring bloom, my wife Jean and I were able to meet many PCI enthusiasts. They ranged from Australian hybridizer John Taylor and Carmel Niland (then president of the Iris Society of Australia) to Kiwis Alison Nicoll (NZIS president) and hybridizer Mary Barrell.

Attending both the ISA and NZIS conventions in Leura, Australia and Hamilton on the North Island of New Zealand, I had expected to meet *Pacific Iris* editor Gareth Winter at one or the other. Imagine my surprise and disappointment when I didn't. I had wanted to tell him personally how much I enjoyed his publication. When asked about it by email he sheepishly admitted that he wasn't a member of his local or national groups – even though his grandparents were founding members in November 1950. Well, he should have been there for the convention tours as they were largely about species and PCIs.



Seedling at Craignish garden, Leura, Australia

PCIs were everywhere from the Blue Mountains in New South Wales to the coastal and mountain gardens in Victoria, Australia; from the farm and town gardens on the South Island of New Zealand to the suburbs and mountain gardens on the North Island. We were privileged to see many, many gardens, most of which were overflowing with temperate and subtropical genera along with colorful annuals and perennials. Included were camellias to clivias; azaleas to rhododendrons; and waratahs to proteas. There were dogwoods, Japanese maples and lilacs and many iris species including *I. gracilipes*, *I. japonica*, *I. innominata*, *I. setosa*, *I. verna*, *I. virginica* and *I. wattii*.



Unknown seedling in an Australian garden

The PCIs included species, species crosses and hybrid seedlings. For the most part the PCIs were unlabeled making one wish to be a taxonomist or at least to have their knowledge of species. Seeing the PCIs in their adopted natural state in Australia and New Zealand gardens reminded me of the PCI treks in Northern California and Oregon in America.

The only named clones or numbered seedlings we saw were in the Blackheath Iris Show in NSW and the large garden of Mary and Clive Barrell in Cambridge, NZ. The annual Blackheath show was delightful with numerous entries of single blooms and spikes as well as collections of three, five and multiple spikes.



*John Taylor seedling 13-39*

Along with Thomas Johnson of Mid-America Gardens in Oregon, Jean and I judged the show. The best PCI in show was John Taylor's seed-



*John Taylor's seedling 10A2—'Magic Falls'*

ling 10A2 'Magic Falls'.  
 In the Barrell garden in Cambridge, NZ, we were impressed with 'Karapiro Princess' (M. Barrell R. 2011). Its standards were cream, flushed orchid and edged mauve; falls wine banded orchid with lemon hafts; lemon styles; red signals with a thin gold dart at the ends. Very showy. I have included several seedling pictures from her garden and unknowns from everywhere else. Down under in spring was quite



*Top three seedlings—Mary Barrell  
 Bottom seedling—John Taylor*

# Seed Proposal from Washington Master Gardeners: We need lots of seeds!

Kathleen Sayce



Master Gardeners in my home state of Washington have proposed selling Pacific Coast Iris seeds at their next annual meeting, which is September 17-19, 2015. They are willing to shell pods, dry and clean seeds, count and package the seeds into small lots, complete with 'how to germinate and care for Pacifica Iris', labels, and color photos. Their goal is 50 different varieties of Pacifica Iris seeds, the widest color range possible, with at least 500 seeds in each lot so that they can produce 50 packets each with 10 seeds per packet. More seeds would be better. Their annual meeting has about five hundred people attending, so to do this well, they need a lot of seeds! The project is being organized by the Pacific County Master Gardeners Foundation.

There are several local gardens where the group can collect pods from large PCI plants in late summer, and work through from pods on stems to dry seeds in packages. They will learn to harvest, shell, clean and dry seeds, and package them for their sale.

To make this work, however, the group has to have 100s of seeds in a wide variety, and would like to have 50 different seed lots. This means, gentle reader, that we need as many pods from as wide a range of Pacifica Iris as we can get for this project. Older seeds are all right too. PCI seeds that are 2-5 years old germinate readily.



*Bags filled with freshly harvested seed—ideal for Master Gardeners*

Think about this: If we share seeds to this project, then we are promoting Pacifica Iris seeds to hundreds of new gardeners. This is one of the main goals of SPCNI. If you have a few dozen extra pods on nice Pacifica Iris plants, and are thinking of tossing them, then toss them my way instead and I will pass them to the MG seed sale project group.

This summer, I'll be bagging every single pod I can find, and checking local gardens for additional likely plants—I spotted one last week at a friend's garden, a large lovely *I. douglasiana*-type plant. The owner told me that it flowered over a very long period, lavender with white veins, and that I was welcome to gather all the pods I wanted. Come next summer, I'll be giving him a few dozen mesh bags to enclose the ripening pods. Which means of course that I have to order more mesh bags, as I already use all of the 400+ bags I have each summer. The first time around, I used mossy green bags. Now I find them all over the garden, having missed them when collecting pods late last summer. So the next bags will be red, pink, orange, and much easier to spot.

Remember to take photos too. The MG group plans to print labels with color photos for each packet, and include basic 'how to germinate and grow Pacifica Iris' notes, with links to our website pages on this topic. They are also open to getting mixed lots of seeds by color, such as a mix of yellows, or a mix of lavenders and purples, or a mix of whites, et cetera. Species seeds are welcome too.

Remember, Pacifica Iris are new to most Master Gardeners, so what might seem boring to you from long familiarity will be pleasing to them. For once, I'm looking forward to saving all the seeds from some of my plants, instead of cutting off most of the pods.

What's in it for us, besides gaining new members? Well, they are offering, for each packet they sell, to donate \$0.50 to SPCNI. That's a very generous offer.

Right now, before summer arrives in the northern hemisphere, think about participating in this 'mass seed gathering' experiment. If this works, we'll be open to doing it for other groups too.

Please let me know by email [ksayce@willapabay.org](mailto:ksayce@willapabay.org) if you are willing to participate, so that I know who to expect seeds from come late summer. Send the seeds to me, in labeled paper bags, by mid August, 2015. My address is in the front of every issue of Pacific Iris; here it is again— PO Box 91, Nahcotta WA 98637. You may call or email me if you have questions; my email address and phone number are also posted. And do send me the flower photos too, via email.

Please don't forget our own seed exchange! As in past years, 100 to 200 seeds of each variety are preferred, and clean dry seeds in labeled paper bags should be mailed to Louise Guerin, our seed chair.



*Seed pods that could be harvested and used to benefit both Washington's Master Gardeners and the Society!*

# Seed exchange report

Louise Guerin

The 2014-15 seed exchange distribution has just concluded (the last six out-of-country orders shipped out Thursday, 2/26). In all, there were approximately 65 orders (about the same as last year). The list went live on 12/4/14. Distribution began before January 1st (as all items were in place to get distribution started by December 20th). As was true last year, approximately 40% of orders were placed by overseas members. There were some glitches with the order page, but, fortunately, these were resolved.

Bob Seaman, our web master, has made some suggestions for a better transition to get the order pages up and running. I hope to be able to work with him to better assist with his needs.

For the just completed year, we had a few more varieties available to distribute. However, the number of seeds received was slightly reduced overall. We offered the items with the fewest total number of seeds as an "extra small" item (with 3-5 seeds per packet). That was fine to increase distribution, but probably not the best way to ensure that the members will have seed germinate. For 2015-16, the minimum number of seeds per packet will be six. It will mean fewer packets are available, so everyone is encouraged to place their order as soon as possible.

I'm actually looking for feedback for ideas on how to better distribute the seeds. For instance, should there be a limit to the number of packets a person can purchase if there are only small packets available? SPCNI President Bob Sussman and I discussed the issue recently. We never reached a conclusion, but it was good to open the discussion on the topic. If anyone has an opinion that they'd like to share on the topic, please feel free to email me at [seedex@pacificcoastiris.org](mailto:seedex@pacificcoastiris.org).

There was also a change at the USPS (United States Postal Service). For 2014-15, any out-of-country orders with more than 20 seed packets were required to purchase additional postage and the seeds to shipped in two or more envelopes. It was a fine solution for the most part; however the padded envelopes used to distribute seeds are not being accepted as "large envelopes" by most postal offices. They are considered "packets". As such, all out-of-country shipments may require a customs form and additional postage - unless I can find a way to use an envelope that does not have bubble wrap. I may test using two sheets of thin packing foam in a plain manila envelope to see if that will be accepted. If not, we'll need to raise the shipping fees for out-of-country purchases to \$10.00/order. I've been trying to avoid that as it means a much longer period of time at the post office (as each "packet" has to be registered and addresses have to be typed in to the computer by the person at the counter).

The biggest obstacle will be keeping the envelopes under 1/4" thick but very flexible so it meets the rules for a "large envelope". If the foam test doesn't work, everyone will see the change to the order form in December. It may delay shipments somewhat (as I have a number of established happenings at work that take up extra hours from winter through spring). I'll certainly continue to find ways to streamline processes. As of now, all in-U.S. orders have shipped for less than \$3.00 per packet, so there should be no change in those shipping fees.

As mentioned above, the varieties of seeds increased very slightly this year. However, I'm sad to say that overall donations are down. We have fewer members saving and donating seeds to the exchange.

I've contacted the seed bank at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden and lifetime member Bart O'Brien up at Tilden in Oakland. Both have advised that they'll see if they can supply any seed in 2015. I will also contact other gardens to see if they can help us. We got our first Canadian-supplied seeds into the exchange this year (thanks so much for your perseverance Diane Whitehead and Kathleen Sayce). Hopefully we'll have more seeds from Canada in coming years. If you are able to collect seeds that you would be willing to donate to the exchange, please do so. As long as the material is dry, you wouldn't even have to clean the seeds. Just be sure to keep mixed varieties in their own sealed bags or envelopes. Anyone wishing to donate seed from outside of the U.S. should contact Kathleen Sayce to get instructions and necessary documentation.

Open-pollinated hybrids are still the most popular, and I'm hoping that we'll have a great variety of new seed for 2015-16. It is always great to hear from members when they've received their seeds. I hope that we all have success with our seeds. My work will conclude (probably) this week once all the reports are finalized and sent to Kathleen and Bob to review.

Happy growing, everyone!

Louise



*'San Felipe' at Leonine Iris Gardens.  
Photograph: Mike Starrhill*

## Social media

The young, and increasingly, the not so young, have enthusiastically adopted social media as a way of constructing new on-line communities of common interest. This can be a threat to established groups, including ours, so it is important that we embrace this new technology and use it to serve ourselves and our members.

Many of us have joined Facebook, perhaps reluctantly and only in order to keep in contact with our children and grandchildren, but this can be a powerful tool for spreading the word about who we are and what we do. If it did not work so well, why would so many advertisers be clambering to take part?

If you are already a member of Facebook, and you have not "liked" the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris page, just go online and pop our name in the search bar, and up we will come. Like the page and you'll receive updates whenever anyone posts anything to the page.

Just think— all autumn long you can be seeing photographs of the season in the southern hemisphere, and come spring, you'll be able to share some of your own photographs with other members of the group.

I encourage all members to get online and join the 500 or so other members. While you are at it, also join the "Iris lovers" group. There are over 6,500 members in this group, and they discuss their gardens and all manner of irises and share wonderful photographs and videos. Most of us have an interest in other types of irises so it is great to see them, but it is also a way for us to reach other iris lovers who have yet to discover the beauty of Pacific Coast Iris.

Gareth Winter

## Autumn 2015

### New Members List

We welcome the following new members:

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*Sometimes having the blues can be beautiful—John Taylor seedlings from 2014*



*A range of wonderful yellow and gold shaded seedlings that flowered in 2014 for Australia's John Taylor.*