

**Almanac:
Society for
Pacific Coast
Native Iris**

**Fall 1976
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**Executive Committee of the
Society for Pacific Coast
Native Iris**

President Francesca Thoolen
255 Manzanita Drive
Orinda, CA 94563
(415) 254-0546

First Vice President Richard Sloan
2716 Winthrop Avenue
Arcadia, CA 91006
(213) 283-0198

Second Vice President Jean Witt
16516 25th NE
Seattle, WA 98155
(206) 362-9206

Imme. Past President August Phillips
567 East Brett Street
Inglewood, CA 90302
(213) 671-5495

Secretary Doris Foster
850 Ora Avo Drive
Vista, CA 92083
(714) 727-0695

Treasurer Charles R. Hopson
9081 East Duarte Road
San Gabriel, CA 91775
(213) 2866438

Editor Olive Rice
1914 Napa Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94707
(415) 526-2853

The Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris is a section of The American Iris Society; membership in the latter is a prerequisite for membership in the SPCNI.

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PUBLICATION STAFF

Editor Olive Rice
Associate Editor George Waters
Consultant Jean Witt

**Dykes Memorial Medal Awarded
For a Pacific Coast Iris**

We have unofficial word that Marjorie Brummitt of Banbury, England, has been awarded a 1976 Dykes Memorial Medal by the British Iris Society. The iris for which the award was made is the pacific coast iris hybrid NO NAME, a yellow flowered cultivar with foliage similar to *Iris Innominata* (innominata means "no name".)

It is the third such medal awarded by the BIS for a non-bearded iris. The first Dykes Medal ever awarded was given to Amos Perry in 1927 for the *I. Douglasiana* x *I. Sibirica* hybrid, MARGOT HOLMES. The second, in 1971, was for the *I. Sibirica* hybrid CAMBRIDGE, also raised by Mrs. Brummitt.

Marjorie Brummitt's dedicated work with pacific coast native iris over many years has enabled her to present many delightful exhibits of these iris at the shows of the BIS in London. Her exhibits invariably feature exquisite arrangements of hybrids of her own raising, with suitably sympathetic foliage and other material, in a variety of delicate containers she collects as another of her hobbies. For the Golden Jubilee of the BIS in 1972 she staged tiered tables full of these arrangements all spread on gold velvet.

The numerous registered cultivars, many with Banbury in their names, are evidence of her enthusiasm for our native iris.

**From the Editor:
A Transition Issue.**

This pilot issue of your new *Almanac* rests on the firm base provided by our first editor, Ed Pasahow, in the initial seven issues. The current edition is an amalgam of articles, photographs, varying typefaces; input from many members over a six month period. It would be good of you to let us know which of these you find pleasing, and which arouse your dislike. We will endeavor to put your ideas into the mix as we get on with the business of promoting the society along with its journal.

Your new president conducts a voluminous correspondence which gives rise to ideas for articles and brings in new people as contributors. No editor could ask for more, nor could anyone ask for more help at home than my husband, George Waters, gives so freely to this concerted effort.

Some prices in the publishing field have risen by fifty percent in the past three months. Among the resources we have to pay for our journal are plant sales and advertising. Let us know how you can help.

Read, react and send your response to me at 1914 Napa Avenue, Berkeley, California, 94707.

Olive Rice

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Subscription price: \$4.00/year

From the President

As our Society enters its fourth year, it may be appropriate to evaluate our progress. From a membership of less than fifty we have grown to over one hundred members. A checklist of species and cultivars of pacific coast native iris was published and made available to SPCNI members. SPCNI became a section of the American Iris Society. Display and test gardens for pacific coast native iris were designated. Standards for judging these iris were established and published. We have had at least four judges training sessions, averaging out to at least one per year. Seven issues of the Almanac have been published. A library has been started; it will include our slide collection.

For the coming year it would be good to enlarge this slide collection. At present we have more than fifty good slides. When photographing the PCI's, please take two pictures and plan to send us one of them; it is more economical to pay for the cost of your second slide than to duplicate it, not to mention loss of quality in reproducing slides. Slides for the library should be clear and sharp. Please contact our slide chairman when you have some to send.

To maintain a complete historical record of SPCNI, please send any pertinent information to our librarian, Gladys Klobberdanz.

As more and more of us grow the PCNI, plan to set up local treks at bloom time.

What about a seed bank to allow us to share seeds with new members?

What can we do to encourage overseas participation? How about slide library branches so that overseas members may rent slides economically?

To have frequent judges training programs we need more judges who are familiar with PCNs. We need volunteers.

How about experimental gardens in the colder sections of the United States and overseas to see which species do best so that they can be bred into sturdy hybrids able to tolerate extremes of climate.



Francesca Thoolen.

For us to grow and prosper we need people. Each of us should make efforts to bring in at least one new member this coming year. Imagine: Two hundred members to contribute their talents!

Is there anyone who is doing bibliographical research on pacific coast natives? Is there anyone who would like to?

Please send our editor, Olive Rice, something to work with. We need articles on every aspect of PCI's, from planting seeds to collecting pods; unusual species in the wild, especially new colors; how they grow and especially, how they *don't* grow; in short, anything and everything about pacific coast iris. We can use someone to index the material published so far. While our *Almanac* is still young, this would be an easy task. Overseas members are also welcome to volunteer.

To be viable a society must have input. Whether it is of a constructive or critical nature does not matter, but the communication does. Your new executive committee, to do its best in serving SPCNI, needs your cooperation. We have already received some suggestions and some constructive criticism which we hope to act upon in the coming year. Won't each of you reflect on how we can make SPCNI bigger and better, and send me your views? You have mine.

Francesca Thoolen

Board Approves Bylaw Changes

Article IV: Elected Officers

Section 3, Duties of Officers:

To be deleted: C. The Second Vice-President shall also serve as Chairman of the Publicity Committee.

To be added: C. The Second Vice-President shall serve as consultant on the staff of *The Almanac*.

To be added: E. The Editor shall serve as AIS Bulletin Representative.

Article VIII: Standing Committees

Section 5, The Publicity Committee:

To be deleted: The Chairman of This Committee shall serve as AIS Bulletin Representative.

Add sentence: Chairman to be appointed.

National Trust Garden to Have Native Iris

One of the few National Trust gardens on the west coast, the Filoli estate south of San Francisco's Crystal Springs reservoir, is to have iris plantings. The Clara B. Rees Iris Society has undertaken to prepare plans for a representative collection of iris; native iris will of course be included, and anyone interested in donating them to the project should contact SPCNI member Lois O'Brien at 416 University Avenue, Los Altos, CA 94022.

Filoli was featured in the July 1976 issue of *Pacific Horticulture*, with color photographs of the gardens.

Awards Made by the RHS To Pacific Coast Iris

Following up on my own admonition to record all the facts about our favorite iris, including those from other countries, I recently had occasion to catalog the hybrids of pacific coast native species that have received awards of the Royal Horticultural Society in Britain.

The awards are of two kinds; Those given directly from the show bench usually at either the Chelsea show of the RHS in May, or the British Iris Society Show in June; and the other after the plants have been growing for some years on the south slope of Battleston Hill, the trial grounds of the RHS, in their gardens at Wisley. The Wisley trials are evaluated by the Joint Iris Committee, a group appointed from the officers and judges of the British Iris Society, and the Royal Horticultural Society.

These evaluators meet at intervals during the iris flowering season to observe, over a period of three years, the performance of plants selected for trial under conditions as uniform as possible.

In the spring of 1974 I saw some of the plants in the trial grounds with their awards posted on the labels.

Jemmy O'Goblin AM 1950	Minster Lovell AM 1961
Tranquil Dale AM 1950	Twinkle AM 1960
Banbury Velvet AM 1973	Elfin Motley AM 1957
Banbury Welcome AM 1973	
Crimson Cushion AM 1972	
Banbury Beauty FCC 1967 (W) AM 1960	

AM - Award of Merit
FCC - First Class Certificate
(W) - indicates Wisley Trials

Something of this nature would certainly be an improvement over our present system of making awards to iris in the U.S. One of the criteria should be, as in Britain, that an award should not be given any cultivar that is a near duplicate of an already worthy one.

Roy Davidson

Come Down to Wisley In Iris Time!

ROY OLIPHANT

Berkeley, California

May is a lovely month to visit the Royal Horticultural Society's gardens at Wisley. Tulips are still flaunting their flowers; lilacs have been and are in full bloom; rock plants and rhododendrons are calling 'look at me!' It is too early for tall bearded iris, which should come along in June. May 14th, then, found us entering the gardens shortly before noon, after a twenty mile ride from central London, by Underground and Green Line. We were told that judges of the British Iris Society had been hovering over the median iris test plot that morning, like a swarm of judicious bees, evaluating the medians for possible awards. So, after a hurried lunch at the garden's restaurant, we were off to the trial grounds, only to find that all but two of the judges had flown. Fortunately, one of these two was Miss N.K. Scopes (fortunately because Miss Scopes has tried her hand at hybridizing the PCNs).

Though the judges were not evaluating pacific coast iris, there was a good deal of bloom. In general, these iris had not quite the broadness of fall nor the ruffling of some of the latest efforts of our local hybridizers but they were lovely iris in their own right. I was immediately struck by Lord Skelmersdale's BROADLEIGH PEACOCK, not because of the primrose yellow of its flowers, which I thought a bit muddy, but because of the decided green tint in the flower. It should certainly be tried as a parent. Lord Skelmersdale, who owns the Broadleigh Gardens, a nursery specializing in small bulbs, reports in his catalog that this iris was very popular at the Chelsea show.

BANBURY VELVET (Mrs. Brummitt) rather disappointed me. It is a fine deep purple but I had rather expected more black and less purple in the flower (well, one can dream, can't one?). Miss Scope's PHILIDA was a pleasant and very floriferous iris, with light yellow stan-

dards and deeper yellow falls. BANBURY GEM (Brummitt) I liked though I thought the flowers more of a raspberry than a ruby red as described in one of our catalogs. There was a deeper central zone on the falls. BANBURY BEAUTY (Brummitt) with lavender standards, a purple zone on the lavender falls I found very attractive but I particularly liked Mrs. Brummitt's SUGAR CANDY, a smaller than average flower of bright buff-yellow, with an oval-shaped ribbon of maroon-red in the center of the falls. This was a perkily petite flower of great attraction. Lord Skelmersdale describes his BROADLEIGH ANN as having chestnut-colored flowers with gold markings on the falls, but my slide of the iris of this name in the trials shows a very colorful yellow flower with a red rim to the falls. Perhaps there was a mixup in labeling but, whatever, it was an attractive iris.

May 27th found us back in London, with time to visit the Chelsea flower show before catching our plane for Copenhagen. I searched the three and a half acre central marquee hopefully for an exhibit of PCIs by Mrs. Brummitt but found none. However, on a bench reserved for award winners and for plants selected for trial at Wisley (it was not clear what awards had been won) I found several of the pacific coast hybrids. Lady Drewe's seedling 616 had buff standards and veined rose falls. Mrs. Brummitt's seedling 192 really sent me and I covet this iris! Well formed, it had light copper-colored flowers with deeper brown-veining in the falls. A lovely iris.

Hager's PACIFIC MOON, (exhibited by Mrs. Brummitt) NATIVE WARRIOR and Stambach's PACIFIC CHARMER all on this bench and I can only assume that they were chosen for trial at Wisley. Since I had seen no californicae in bloom from our hybridizers when I was at Wisley earlier, it is good to know that we will be represented.

The Riddle Strain

ROY DAVIDSON, Seattle Washington



Roy Davidson.

In 1930 *Iris Innominata* was described as a new species indigenous to the coastal parts of southwestern Oregon. It is known to gardeners largely through the efforts of Dr. Mathew Riddle, a Portland physician who was also an ardent angler. The Rogue River of southwest Oregon is famous both as a fishing stream and as the home of this iris. Thus the doctor came home frequently with two catches, salmon and seeds or plants of *I. Innominata*, depending on the season, filling his lunch sack.

Under the huge old fruit trees on his property he dug enormous beds in the lawns and filled them with seedlings. From here quantities of seed were sent out, and the plants raised in gardens from this seed came to be known as the "Riddle Strain." At the outset it was purely *I. Innominata*. Walter Marx was probably the first to apply the name "Riddle Strain" and his nursery had a large block of seedlings from which the customer could select. The patch was renewed each year, probably from fresh seed from under the doctor's cherry trees, although some few of the most distinct seedlings were selected by Marx and moved to the display garden surrounding his residence.

Dr. Riddle also practiced some selection of the most distinct plants. I recall seeing two that had been isolated from the rest, one a clear blue-on-white netted pattern; the selection of *I. Tenax* which Ruth Hardy called VALLEY BANNER many years later is the same pattern. The second one, along the driveway into the garden from the street was a red and gold typical "variegata pattern," or would be so called if it were bearded iris.

Almost everyone thinks of *Iris Innominata* as being the Yellow species, when in reality the specimen from which the botanist Henderson wrote his description (called the "type specimen") was purple. In the drainage of the Rogue River it occurs in all sorts of variations and of course the Riddle Strain in gardens reflected this variation. In the south part of the range, however,

extending into California, there are no yellows, and the purples tend to be blue or violet in tone, whereas northward toward the Rogue the purples tend to a reddish (raspberry) cast. The Riddle patch had few violet-colored plants.

The Riddle Strain was famous in its day and was sent around the world. It was one of Professor Sydney Mitchell's favorite stories that Dr. Riddle once sent him a whole quart of seed, and in his capacity as species chairman, he sent it to gardeners everywhere. Among those who grew seedlings were Jean Stevens in New Zealand and Fred Danks in Australia. Mrs. Stevens raised generations of seedlings in various color strains, and Danks grew his along with *I. Douglasiana*, from Fred Deforest's seed which had come to him also through Prof. Mitchell. The resulting hybrids came back to the U.S. later in the development of pacific coast iris. Of recent years it is doubtful whether anything named "Riddle Strain" is purely *I. Innominata*, as these native iris species are so promiscuous.

The Society's slide library is to be expanded into collections which may be sent out for rental. Francesca Thoolen has been handling the initial work of the library, and has appointed Glenn Corlew to be photographer for the Society. Glenn, who has asked for help from the other members, will begin taking pictures especially for the project when the 1977 bloom season commences.



Joe and Jean Witt.

A Portable Display of Photographs

It has been proposed that our society have a portable display of color photographs of the west coast iris for use especially at AIS conventions. Should our display stress the results of hybridizing; the distribution of the species; methods of cultivation; or something else? Write to the president with your own suggestions.

Jean Witt, who prepared such a display for the Median Iris Society, has offered to produce one, but will relinquish the task with pleasure to someone else who wants to undertake it. When completed, a home must be found for it with someone who will bring it up to date now and again; replace damaged pictures and mail it each year to convention headquarters.

Color prints five by seven inches, made from transparencies, will probably be used in the display. These cost about two dollars each and between ten and twenty prints will be needed. The Society's funds will be strained to meet this cost in addition to that of the material for the folding panels. We therefore invite you to donate prints by sending money to the treasurer, in units of \$2.00, marked for the purchase of however many prints you wish to donate to the project.

The Endangered List As it Relates to Iris

◀ Jean and Joe Witt of Seattle have been keeping in touch with proposed regulations concerning endangered species.

Jean says: One of these would forbid commercial selling or shipping overseas of the endangered items. Now this is really silly: *I. tenuis* and *I. gormanii* have been in commerce for years! They are already on plant lists for sale in England and other places. The extinct *Franklinia* — saved by being in gardens — would be verboten under the regulation as worded. So we assume that some adjustment in the wording will be made.

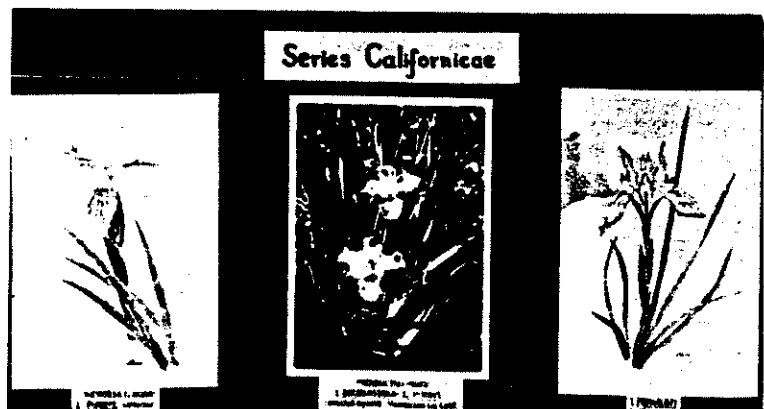
But SPCNI had better be alert to the fact that we might as an organization need to squawk loudly.

I don't know which of the California species of iris are on the list, but would assume several — *I. longipetala*, *I. purdyi* and I think *I. pinetorum*, subspecies *columbianum*. *I. purdyi* as I understand it is being swamped through hybridization by neighboring species — Now there's a jolly little case for the bureaucrats to deal with: We definitely forbid further hybridization by these species in the wild!

Whoever submitted the two endangered species for Oregon didn't have all the facts. *I. tenuis* is not limited to the Clackamas River, but occurs in adjacent watersheds as well and is actually extending its range. *I. gormanii* is not limited to the Vernonia area, but occurs in at least two other locations; it's recently reported that growth of the forest has not crowded it out . . . there is still plenty. *I. tenax* is actually favored by logging.

It should be a function of SPCNI to know which species are endangered and to give some thought as to what can be done to preserve them. This will be difficult because of their tendency to hybridize where they come together whether in the wild or in the garden.

We owe our support to the wild species — without them, no cultivated hybrids!



A portion of one of the many display panels Jean Witt constructed for the First Interim International Rock Garden Plant Conference, July, 1976, Seattle, Washington.

Iris Congress in France Scheduled for May, 1978

Roger Renard of La Valette, Orleans, France, has written us that the International Congress of the Iris is planned for May of 1978. He says that seedlings should be sent by mid-October 1976 to M. Turbat, C.O.M.I.F.I., Parc Floral de la Source, 45100, Orleans, France.

Rules state that preferably three of each variety should be sent; a phytopathological certificate *must* accompany the rhizomes, which should be sent by airmail. Rhizomes should be marked by name or number, or year of introduction; "take much care in labeling and packing.

IMPORTANT! (To avoid difficulties with french customs, please mention it applies to a *free sending* for a floral exhibition."

The exhibition's directors expect more than 7000 iris to be on display at the congress: surely some of these should be our Pacific coast natives.

Francesca Thoolen says, "For those who may not know, the county agricultural inspectors will not inspect for the federal inspectors so there is no need for going too far out of one's way to have the iris inspected. The original phytosanitary certificate goes inside the package before it is sealed; one copy is mailed to Mr. Turbat; and one copy is kept by the grower."

SPCNI Has Fall Meeting

Doris and Charles Foster of Vista, California, were hosts to the members of the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris at their home on Sunday, September 12, 1976. The two-dozen members attending enjoyed a potluck luncheon served on the screened veranda at the Fosters.

President Francesca Thoolen conducted a business meeting where these reports emerged: There are now 110 members; there are display gardens in Springfield, Oregon, and in California, at Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara and San Marcos. Dick Richards would like to see them in such principal cities as Portland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. It was decided to order stationery for sale to members and others; discussion of auctions-by-mail resulted in August Phillips' offer to handle such a project. Other business transacted is reported elsewhere in this issue. Ray Chesnik led a discussion on culture of native iris. Some of the suggestions were: the best planting time is cold, rainy weather when new roots have formed; divide clumps to prevent their dying out; use decomposed granite, or dolomite in the soil; and don't cut away foliage while it may still be adding to the plant's food supply.

Editor's note: Dolomite is calcium-magnesium carbonate which, added to the soil may raise the pH. Did I hear correctly or can someone confirm this practice?



Executive Committee members at the fall SPCNI meeting at Vista, California. Left to right: Dick Sloan, Francesca Thoolen, Olive Rice, Russ Hopson, Doris Foster, August Phillips.

Santa Barbara Botanic Garden 1976

From my notes at the spring SPCNI meeting

GEORGE WATERS, Berkeley, California

Although our deliberate interbreeding of pacific coast native iris is producing hybrid strains amenable to garden cultivation and in some cases, cultivars which thrive in a wide range of garden conditions, there remains a great deal of variability in the response of species and hybrids to cultivation even by skilled gardeners. Losses are common, even when it seemed that everything was in favor of the plant's survival.

It is not surprising therefore, that the panel of Doris Foster, Dick Richards and Dara Emery, addressing the meeting at Santa Barbara, concerned themselves almost entirely with methods of cultivation. There was a large measure of agreement among them on what is needed for healthy growth and we may soon be able to recommend methods that can be employed everywhere with reasonable success. Certainly we have come a long way in that direction since Carl Purdy, writing in an American Iris Society publication in 1920, recommended handling them all (except the easily grown *I. longipetala*) like Dutch bulbs.

Foster puts all her new acquisitions in pots of Supersoil, and grows them into larger plants first in the shelter of a lath structure. She finds she is less likely to neglect their watering when in pots, while plants in the open ground can be overlooked. Supersoil seems to bring on new growth, she said.

Richards described his plantings on poor soil in the hills at Mt. Baldy. Removing large rocks leaves a hole which he fills with commercial potting soil, oak leaf mold from the back area, sawdust or wood chips, usually with a handful of soil sulphur added to it. "The iris roots" he said, "seem to go for the wood chips." Wood dust or chips is included in most commercial potting mixes like Supersoil, so Richards and Foster seem to agree about the response of newly set iris to this planting medium. Seedlings Richards likes to raise in soil similar to that in which the species is native. To this he will add more soil sulphur because he finds the seeds germinate better in acid conditions.

Dara Emery talked about the methods he uses in the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. "There is a shortage of topsoil here," he said, "and so we make up a modified UC mix that seems a good substitute." It contains sand, sponge rock and peat moss. The fertilizer used with this contains Dolomite. Stock when received from suppliers sometimes has been overheated during shipment and for southern Californians September shipping may be too early.

Plants are multiplied from what Dara called cuttings. These are small divisions which in some cases have roots attached, but often have no roots. Roots quickly form when these divisions are inserted into the soilless mix described, with heating cables below and intermittent water mist above. When growth begins, the water mist is turned off and the plants weaned with bottom heat only. Rootone is used on these divisions before planting but is thought to be unnecessary. (My own experience with these commercial rooting hormone compounds suggests that the small quantity of fungicide usually included in them is of greater benefit to the would-be plant than the hormone.) The rooted plants are transferred to four-inch pots of the same mix for growing on. High nitrogen fertilizer is used on them hereafter, but the intervals between applications can be long or short, "depending on how I feel about them."

In the discussion that followed, Francesca Thoolen mentioned the symptoms of sickness such as yellowing leaves seen sometimes on plants. George Stambach contended that low potassium levels in the soil give rise to poor growth. "If the yellowing is chlorosis, then iron chelates can be used to correct it," said Dara Emery. These are expensive, when bought in small packets at the plant store, but 'Nurserymen's Chelates' can be obtained and are cheaper. Seaweed preparations also may provide what is needed to cure chlorosis.

Transplanting time and technique is a fruitful subject for debate among growers of pacific coast native iris and so it proved here.

Newly arrived plants with bare roots, Foster soaks first. Richards on the other hand won't accept bare-root plants and arranges with the nurseryman to have them put in cans first. In the San Francisco Bay area, roots begin to grow with the first rains, about September, and this is considered by those in that area to be the best time to transplant. Dara Emery agreed that when the new white roots are just emerging from the rhizome is the best time to transplant. Thoolen quoted Joe Ghio as saying that he could transplant in his own garden nearly any time with success. It was agreed that some climates are conducive to successful transplanting. Greatest success seems probable in areas of relatively high atmospheric humidity, such as the coastal region; and least, in the Central Valley.

Mrs. Richards told of a plant of the cultivar AGNES JAMES which was tipped out of its pot repeatedly by a squirrel and had to be repotted each time. The plant nevertheless flourished.

With iris and with other plants a cause of failure after planting is the water barrier sometimes formed at the interface of garden soil and the soil in which a potted plant is already growing. When the texture of the two soils is markedly different, they dry out at different rates. This in itself can deceive the gardener, causing him to believe the soil is moist when that immediately around the roots of the plant may be dry. Worse follows, however, for water subsequently applied frequently fails to penetrate beyond the boundary of garden soil, into the alien texture of that at the roots. To avoid this, a hole considerably larger than the soil ball should be dug. The soil removed is mixed with other ingredients to achieve a texture more like that around the plant's roots. This mixture is used to fill in around the newly set plant, creating a gradient through which water flows more readily from soil to root. Some growers prefer to wash off the old soil from the roots instead.

There was much more discussion and some of it contained valuable information although only briefly touched on. For example:

Mulching: George Stambach uses olive leaves to mulch everything, even iris in cans.

Convalescence: Where canned iris had been run over by a truck, Richards removed the plants, washed the roots and repotted them with an open-topped plastic bag as a collar.

Planting depth: Emery said rhizomes should be half an inch under the soil. In the Botanic Garden, plants accidentally buried to a greater depth don't do well.

Tip burn of leaves: Is probably caused by high concentration of salts in the soil water. This concentration rises in summer when soil water is depleted. Watering to maintain more uniform soil water levels will keep salt concentration low. Many native iris, particularly *Iris douglasiana* and its near hybrids, will nevertheless survive a good deal of summer drought in coastal regions.

Dividing clumps: Emery cuts rhizomes apart because he thinks the wounds heal more quickly. Richards breaks *I. douglasiana* types and is concerned that use of a knife may spread disease unless it is rinsed in a sanitary dip between use on each plant.

Pulling off brown leaves: August Phillips commented that old leaves are often difficult to remove. Richards won't pull off a dead leaf until, after several years, it comes away easily. He is concerned that pathogens in the soil will enter through the scar tissue.

Branching growth: George Stambach said that *I. douglasiana* is needed to give branching habit to new hybrids. He has *I. innominata* hybrids with branching.

Planting seedlings: Lay them between wet newspapers while lining out. Pacific coast native iris transplant better if kept moist.



Dara Emery and George Stambach at Santa Barbara.



Marlon Walker with a display of his native iris seedlings.

PCN s In My Garden

Conditions in Cloverdale seem to suit pacific coast native iris. Soil (at least in my garden) is well drained and, in many places, rocky; ample rainfall and good irrigation water keep soil PH in the neutral to slightly acid range. None of the several dozen PCN's I have are poor growers; any failures I can attribute to me rather than to the iris. Nevertheless, among those here are several real standouts. Most notable single clump has been AGNES JAMES, Carl Starkers white form of *I. douglasiana* dating to 1935. Many sturdy, branched stems hold aloft the sparkling white flowers, more than I can say for the lovelier but prostrate CANYON SNOW. For mass display the best so far is AMIGUITA. I've had it longer than any other, so I have more of it for mass; each year I've dug some, divided, and replanted to enlarge the area of original planting. Spectacular is the word for it now. Both it and AGNES receive morning sun and high (but complete) afternoon shade from coast live oaks. Among the partially *I. innominata* ones, the most successful so far are OJAI, VIOLET ELF, and NATIVE WARRIOR, and the first two of these are planted where they get about three-quarters-day sun — more than the other natives here. VIOLET ELF is the least interesting color but somehow is the *prettiest*; OJAI probably is the *best* flower; and NATIVE WARRIOR offers up its luscious color over the longest season of any iris in the garden with the possible exception of the old diploid TB THAIS.

When Pacific Coast natives are established, the only trouble I have with them is their seed setting ability. Easily half the flowers set pods, and if I fail to remove them while green I can expect thick clumps of seedlings the next spring.

Philip Edinger, Cloverdale, California

Growing New Varieties

CANYON SNOW (Philbrick 75) planted in February 1976 bloomed six stems, with starchy, white blossoms peering above perky dark green leaves in a neat clump less than a few months old; branching under these circumstances was not, and expectedly so, perfect, but there were two buds in the terminal. If it did so well this year, I expect it to be spectacular next year.

COUNCILMAN (Ghio 76) promises to be another star in the garden next year. It is out of GRUBSTAKE X CALIFORNIA NATIVE; with two such parents one can only expect performance. The surprising delight is the cream self with a violet pattern in the center of the falls, creating a pleasing design. Blossoms have excellent substance; stems are multi-budded; and added to all of this there is also ruffling.

PCNs In The Valley

Californicae or pacific coast natives grow well in the middle of the San Joaquin Valley, situated in some shade. Perhaps a lot more shade than seems necessary would be best for them. The only way to find out which varieties make the best growth (and which do not) is to plant them and very quickly the varieties that are happy will make a good clump.

One can observe whether they are growing or resting; I water as long as they are making good growth. The ground is very sandy and as long as healthy growth is apparent, frequent watering does not slow them down.

Bob Hubley sent me *Orchid Respite* the year of its introduction to see if it would rebloom for me. Sorry: It does not, but it does make an immediately large healthy clump. Hybridizers could cross ones that grow and bloom as well as it does to get the various colors, thus making the home garden grower feel the variety he was ordering would do well in a particular area.

I have a small clump of *I. munzii* pulled up from the roadside near Mineral King about the third week in October; it blooms and looks happy but I have a feeling eight or more hours of shade would suit it better than the afternoon shade it now receives. I do feel that anyone interested in growing the Californicae should plant an assortment of hybrid and natives until they have a collection that grows well in their area, not worrying about those that do so very fine elsewhere but will not grow in *their* home garden.

I have enjoyed the beautiful display at Cordon Bleu Farms and the almost endless varieties in beautiful clumps that Joe Ghio grows; but when bloom time comes around and I have about six weeks' bloom on my varieties (even though the clumps are perhaps one-third the size of those mentioned) I am happy with their performance for me. I always have some to display at the shows in Tulare and Hanford.

Evelyn Hayes, Lemoore, California

RESTLESS NATIVE (Ghio 76) no sooner was planted (also in February) when it sent up a bloomstalk. What I saw, I liked! In our garden it bloomed what I would call a rusty red with a beige base, a brighter VERDUGO in color, with good branching. Blossoms have good substance, large and ruffled. It is indeed a welcome addition to our garden. I look forward to spring to see these three again.

Francesca Thoolen, Orinda, California

Growing the Californians on Long Island, New York

I have tried many times to grow named varieties sent from the west coast but they do not survive for me; I am not sure whether it is entirely because they can't take the shipping or whether it is the climate we have here plus our soil conditions, or a combination of the stress of shipping and the difficulty of getting them acclimated to my garden. I have had quite a lot of success growing them from seed by ignoring all the advice I've had from books and from friendly advice from my west coast correspondents . . . now isn't that an awful thing to say?

To grow them from seed I have to start them in a cold frame in full sun; keep them in the frame through the whole first year after germination; then plant them in full sun. By doing this I can make them bloom even while still in the frame, and move them freely while in bloom; they have become acclimated. I suppose I lose about half the seedlings over the first year, but the survivors are nice healthy vigorous plants. But I cannot successfully move them after about the beginning of July, and I suspect that this is an indicator of where the trouble lies; they just don't have the time to acclimate here before winter.

I have had plants sent me in spring but in this case they come too early for planting out. Our ground is not fit to work until late April and we can and do get occasional frosts into May although basically we have a mild climate: 10 above zero is our usual winter low, followed by a very wet spring and a high watertable.

I have grown *Iris innominata*, *I. tenax*, *I. douglasiana*, and *I. purdyi* with some success and have had a few hybrids within this group . . . *innominata* regularly sets seed and I have third generation seedlings.

Peg Edwards, Massapequa Park, N.Y.

Seed Exchange: It's of Great Benefit to SPCNI

Members of SPCNI are invited to participate in the Species Iris Study Group's Seed Exchange. To receive your copy of the 1976 list, send a large size, self-addressed stamped envelope to the seed exchange director, Jean G. Witt, 16516 - 25th NE, Seattle, Washington 98155. Donations for the exchange should be sent by October 25th. Both collected seeds and good garden forms are always in demand. Some of our Pacific Coast species have never appeared on the list. We hope SPCNI members can help with this, if not for 1976, perhaps in future years.

J.G.W.

Iris in the Gold Country

Our little village of Rough & Ready is in Nevada County, California, elevation 1800 feet. It is seven miles west of Grass Valley. Many gardens have the tall bearded iris in reasonably modern cultivars.

I have a small irrigated farm, milk a few cows, raise a big garden and sell eggs. I do not have power tools, doing my work either by hand or by one horse power. The back end of my place is very steep, rocky and well tree covered with oak, pine and manzanita. It is full of native iris and countless other native plants. That is how I became interested in iris and joined the AIS, to gain knowledge of our native iris.

While I like all flowers and iris especially, I do not grow any hybrid iris, just natives in their natural habitat. The ninety acres next to me has been sold to a commercial iris grower. They have been busy planting; one of the workers informed me that they had planted 10,000 rhizomes last week! When they bloom we will have something to see and perhaps I will be converted.

My family in Switzerland are all keen growers of *Iris germanica* as they call them.

John Zanini, Rough and Ready, California

Dr. Lenz' Iris Munzii Blues

We felt challenged to visit Dr. Lee Lenz and the Santa Ana Botanical Garden at Claremont, California, when we saw the beautiful *Iris munzii* seedlings he brought, to the Southern California Iris Society's spring show. The seedlings exhibited were from one cross of his BIG BLUE and ALMA ABELL, grown at the botanical garden where he conducts his research on pacific coast native iris. In his fields he had many exceptional flowers in shades of blue, grouped into two series, the Claremont and the Sierra.

The Claremont group we saw has larger flowers with wider falls. Substance is good, tones are clear and deep blue and purple. The blue *Iris munzii* streak is characteristic in the center of the falls. This strain has good growing habits: strong stems produce two or three buds to a socket; they have lower branching.

Dr. Lenz' favorite colors appear in the serene light blue Sierra group, which has many of the same outstanding qualities of the Claremont. The flower is smaller, the stem shorter, but the beauty is made distinct by a light yellow patch of brightness near the haft. Some in each group have been named and Dr. Lenz plans distribution through a commercial outlet soon.

Russ and Jennie Hopson,
San Gabriel, California



Marguerite and Bill Hawkinson.

When we first saw NO NAME in the 1968 Registration list, we bestowed our 'worst name' award on it. It was not until recently we discovered it should have had the 'most clever' name award since *innominata* as we now realize, means 'no name.'

Mrs. Brummit sent a collection of her natives to Bay View gardens four years ago, including NO NAME. There were three plants of it, and it turned out to be the most vigorous of the group.

NO NAME has a parentage of (PACIFIC SPLENDOR x *I. Douglasiana*), has the growth and bloom habits of its namesake, *I. innominata*. A pale to light yellow with a hint of texture veining, it has rounded blooms and is quite floriferous.

It's the second iris of californicae parentage to win the Dykes Medal in England, the first being MARGOT HOLMES in 1927. Forty-nine years is a long time, but that's two more Dykes Medals to californicae than the AIS has recommended for PCN s.

Joe Ghio, Santa Cruz, California



Sunset Features PCIs

The March 1976 issue of *Sunset* magazine had a full page color picture of Pacific coast native iris. Roy Davidson of Seattle called *The Almanac's* attention to the fact that the photographer was given a credit line, but the grower of the iris was not. Investigation showed that a photographer for *Sunset* spent a full afternoon taking pictures of the natives growing in the lath house at the McCaskill's Nursery in Pasadena.

Reported at the September SPCNI meeting was Marguerite Hawkinson's work at McCaskill's in writing descriptions of the McCaskill hybrids, some of which are now being registered with AIS.

↓ Verne McCaskill in his nursery at Pasadena, California.



← A McCaskill seedling, photographed by Glenn Corlew, printed courtesy of *Pacific Horticulture*.



August Phillips accepts the Mitchell award for his 1970 introduction, *Native Warrior*, from AIS Vice President Leon Wolford at Lansing, Michigan, June, 1976.

A Student Researches The Pacific Coast Natives

John McRae, who first joined the SPCNI as a student at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, works six months of each year for the forest service at Ruth, California, in the Trinity Alps area; the other six months he goes to school, most recently at Humboldt State College at Arcata.

His research project using California native iris floundered because of the split year, germination of his iris seeds going well, then losses of seedlings mounting during his tour of duty for the forest service.

Since John arrives in July at his forestry post, he misses most of the native iris bloom, but does see a lot of *Iris tenuissima*. "It has been proliferating for the last several years in the openings created by, ironically, clear cut timber harvesting. This district is starting to do less and less clear cutting, thank God, and I don't think *I. tenuissima* will mind.

"Lee Lenz, in his revision of *The Pacific Coast Native Iris*, reports *Iris purdyi* as growing near Zenia (occasionally misspelled Xenia) where we have a guard station, but neither work nor play puts me out that far west of Ruth and I have yet to see this species. . . nor *Iris macrosiphon*, also said to be growing near here.

"Last year I remember seeing a large number of *Iris tenuissima* on South Fork Mountain along a fifty foot strip cleared of trees for a high voltage power line. I hope to hike in there soon to see how much seed has been set and collect some for the seed exchange."

Michigan Meeting

Each year the SPCNI holds a meeting at the American Iris Society's annual convention. The 1976 section meeting took place Saturday, June 5 at the Olds-Plaza Hotel in Lansing, Michigan. In the absence of the president and vice-president, the editor-elect introduced the speaker, Joe Ghio, hybridizer of native and other types of iris. Joe presented slides of pacific coast iris accompanied by commentary.

There was a lively discussion concerning culture of the pacific coast natives. Remarks ranged from Dorothy and Tony Willott's "We are growing a few, but they need time to adjust (to the Ohio climate.) We suggest shipping in February for our area" to Evangeline Welborn's "I'm just starting and I have a lot to learn." Ruth Messer reported that her seeds were just coming up, and Jim Keithly volunteered cultural notes for Oklahoma.



Ray Chesnik, first president of the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris, and Janice Greene, irisarian from Arizona, were married in Phoenix the evening of June 26, 1976. They will make their home near Cordon Bleu Farms at San Marcos, California.

Photograph courtesy of Barbara Deremiah and the Region 15 AIS Bulletin.

SPCNI Membership List

- ABELL, THORNTON M.**
469 Upper Mesa Rd
Santa Monica, CA 90402
- ACKERMAN, JAY C.**
3535 Waverly Hills Road
Lansing, MI 48917
- ALEXANDER, MRS. GEORGE**
3430 Woodland Way
Carlsbad, CA 92008
- ANDERSON, JOANNE**
20451 Hart St
Canoga Park, CA 91306
- BAILEY, ARDETH J.**
202 Caroline Dr
Omaha, Nebr 68110
- BONYNGE, MRS. THOMAS W.**
576 N. Wilcox Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90004
- BOSWELL, CARL & LARUE**
1821 Gross Lane
Concord, CA 94519
- BOURNE, LILLIAN**
1363 Swigart Rd
Barberton, OH 44203
- BOWERS, BONNIE**
Box 44
San Quentin, CA 94964
- BREWER, LEO**
16 Vista del Orinda
Orinda, CA 94563
- BUNKER, PENNY**
4721 Bancroft St
San Diego, CA 92116
- BROOKS, ROBERT**
418 Buena Creek Rd
San Marco CA 92069
- BURCH, MRS. RAY**
1605 S 5th Ave
Yakima, WA 98902
- CARRINGTON, MRS. N.**
6283 Buisson St.
San Diego, CA 92122
- CHESNIK, RAYMOND J.**
418 Buena Creek Rd
San Marcos, CA 92069
- CLARA B. REES IRIS SOCIETY**
1678 Andover Lane
San Jose, CA 95124
- COOK, DON R.**
5705 Circle Drive
El Sobrante, CA 94803
- COOK, MRS. VERNA**
6924 Pacific Highway, E.
Tacoma, WA 98424
- CORLEW, GLENN & NELL**
2988 Cherry Lane
Walnut Creek, CA 94596
- COSGROVE, DR. CLARKE**
Route 4 Box 365
Escondido, CA 92025
- CRAMER, MRS. YETTA**
9376 Claircrest Dr
Beverly Hills, CA 90210
- DANIELSON, HENRY**
3036 N Narragansett Ave
Chicago, ILL 60634
- DAY, FLORENCE**
609 Mariposa Ave
Sierra Madre, CA 91024
- DENNEY, MR. and MRS. ALAN**
477 Upper Mesa Rd
Santa Monica, CA 90402
- DENNEY, DONALD R**
1234 Stanyan St
San Francisco, CA 94117
- DEREMIAH, BARBARA**
4122 East San Miguel
Phoenix, AZ 85018
- EADER, DUNCAN**
111 W. Magna Vista
Arcadia, CA 91006
- EDINGER, PHILIP**
Box 637
Cloverdale, CA 95425
- FOSTER, CHARLES & DORIS**
850 Ora Avo Dr
Vista, CA 92083
- FRESNO IRIS SOCIETY**
702 East Home Ave
Fresno, CA 93728
- GHEO, JOSEPH J.**
1201 Bay St
Santa Cruz, CA 95060
- GUNTHER, WILLIAM J.**
740 Crest Rd
Del Mar, CA 02:14
- HARDER, LARRY**
Maple Tree Gardens
Ponca, Nebr 68770
- HAWKINSON, MR. & MRS. WILLIAM**
4414 Cogswell Rd
El Monte, CA 91732
- HAYES, EVELYN**
611 S Lemoore St
Lemoore, CA 93245
- HILL, ELEANOR**
1577 E 22nd St
Tulsa, OK 74114
- HOLLOWAY, MARILYN**
673 Acacia Ave
Sacramento, CA 95815
- HOPSON, RUSS & JENNIE**
9081 E Duarte Rd
San Gabriel, CA 91775
- HOWARD, DOROTHY**
226 E 20th St.
Tulsa, OK 74119
- HUBBARD, RATTIE**
16328 25th Ave NE
Seattle, WA 98155
- HUBLEY, MR. & MRS. ROBERT**
2215 W Broadway, No. F317
Anaheim, CA 92804
- JASMIN, AVIS**
2209 Canyon Rd
Arcadia, CA 91006
- JOHNSON, DON E.**
348 Crestwood Ave
Ventura, CA 93003
- KEITHLY, JAMES H., MSU**
Owen Graduate Ctr. E434
East Lansing, MI 48824
- KLOBERDANZ, GLADYS**
712 Brookvale Dr
Modesto, CA 95355
- LEWALLEN, LUCILLE**
243 S. Third Ave
Upland, CA 91786
- LIND, MRS. TED**
1911 N. Cedar St
Tacoma, WA 98406
- McANLIS, JOHN**
414391 Elmhurst Circle
Huntington Beach, CA 92647
- McCASKILL, JACK**
24 S. Michillinda Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91107
- McDONALD, C**
Box 7267
Salem, OR 97303
- McRAE, JOHN D.**
General Delivery
Ruth, CA 95526
- McWHIRTER, JAMES**
22549 Center St.
Hayward, CA 94541
- MEEK, DUANE**
1373 Coventry Rd
Concord, CA 94518
- MESSER, RUTH**
750 Joliet St
West Chicago, ILL 60195
- MICHELIN, MRS. LUCIENNE**
928 Paloma Dr
Arcadia, CA 91006
- MINNESOTA IRIS SOCIETY.**
Joan Cooper, Librarian
212 W County Rd C
St. Paul, Minn 55113
- MT. DIABLO IRIS SOCIETY.**
1821 Gross Lane
Concord, CA 94519
- MURPHY, THELMA**
4832 Graywood Ave
Long Beach, CA 90808
- NELSON, JOHN & IRIS**
19887 Merrbrook Dr
Saratoga, CA 95070
- NO. ALABAMA IRIS SOCIETY**
9610 Todd Mill Rd, SE
Huntsville, Ala 35803
- O'BRIEN, LOIS**
416 University Ave
Los Altos, CA 94022
- OPPEN, MRS. ARTHUR**
604 Clarmar Dr, NE
Salem, OR 97301
- PADAVICH, MRS. FRANK**
Rt 1, 12626 428 Ave SE
North Bend, WA 98045
- PARKER, ROBERT J.**
2649 Longwood Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90016
- PASANOW, MR. & MRS. EDWARD**
6235 Syracuse Lane
San Diego, CA 92122
- PHILLIPS, AUGUST**
567 E Bret St
Inglewood, CA 90302
- PROCTOR, VAUGHN**
420 N D St
Lompoc, CA 93436
- REECE, SAM**
1843 E Brown St
Fresno, CA 93703
- REID, LORENA**
17225 McKenzie Highway, R2
Springfield, OR 97477
- RICHARDS, MR. & MRS. RICHARD**
P.O. Box 433
Mt. Baldy, CA 91759
- ROACH, LURA**
2931 Tyburn St
Los Angeles, CA 90039
- ROCKWELL, MR. & MRS. C**
P.O. Box 70
Fentress, TX 78622
- ROE, BERNICE**
1051 Bird Ave
San Jose, CA 95125
- ROMERO, MRS. NORMAN S.**
5711 N Rocking Rd
Scottsdale, Az 85253
- ROSS, DAVID T.**
2080 Escarpa Dr
Eagle Rock, CA 90041

SPCNI Membership list

ROSS, VIRGINIA
525 Dudley Dr
Roseville, CA 95678

RUBEY, MR. & MRS. ALEX
3636 Cogswell Rd
El Monte, CA 91732

SANTA BARBARA BOTANIC GARDENS
c/o Dara Emery
1212 Mission Canyon Rd
Santa Barbara, CA 93105

SERDYSKI, BARBARA
3433 Laclede Ave
Los Angeles, CA 90039

SLOAN, RICHARD
2716 Winthrop Ave
Arcadia, CA 91006

SMITH, ROBERT R.
447 Orange St. No. 46
Oakland, CA 94610

SPILLER, CAROLINE C.
Box 476
Kentfield, CA 94904

STAMBACH, GEORGE
1480 N. Allen Ave
Pasadena, CA 91104

STANLEY, ALICE
3714 Collister
Boise, ID 83703

STAYER, MRS. LARRY
7414 E 60th St
Tulsa, OK 74145

STINSON, WYNNALENE
2035 Alhambra St
Dallas, TX 75217

STIRBIS, MRS. JOHN
3816 Triana Blvd SW
Huntsville, AL 35805

STOUT, FLORENCE
150 N. Main St
Lombard, ILL 60148

TEARINGTON, MR. & MRS. JOHN
13902 S Manor Dr
Hawthorne, CA 90250

THOOLEN, FRANCESCA
255 Manzanita Dr
Orinda, CA 94563

VOGT, DOLPH
5101 Fegenbush Lane
Louisville, KY 40218

WALKER, MARION E.
2751 Poli St
Ventura, CA 93003

WEAVER, MRS. WAYNE
1224 NE Meier Dr
Grants Pass, OR 97526

WITT, JEAN.
15216 25th NE
Seattle, Wa 98155

WATERS, GEORGE & OLIVE RICE
1914 Napa Ave
Berkeley, CA 94707

Foreign

COLE, GILBERT
1 Douglas St
Millswood, So Australia
AUSTRALIA 5034

JAPAN IRIS SOCIETY
Mandhidani 8-7
Nishinomita City, JAPAN

JUDD, MRS. A.
Pauatahanui
Wellington, NEW ZEALAND

NEW ZEALAND IRIS SOCIETY
c /o Mrs. H.E. Collins
R.D. 1 Cambridge Rd
Tauranga, NEW ZEALAND

SPARROW, MRS. RONALD
16 Idris Rd, Fendalton
christchurch 5
NEW ZEALAND

TILLEY, MRS. E.
Girrahween, 47 Magnolia Rd
Ivanhoe, Victoria 3079
AUSTRALIA

Judging Session For Californicae

Glenn Corlew will chair a session on judging standards for Pacific coast native iris Saturday, October 30, at the El Rancho Tropicana in Santa Rosa, California. The program has been designated a judges' training session; care and culture of the californicae will be discussed. To be held in conjunction with the Region 14 AIS Fall meeting, the program will follow an 8:30 to 9:30 dutch treat breakfast in the Steak Ranch room of the hotel. Adjournment will take place promptly at 10:30 o'clock to allow another judges training session on tall bearded iris, led by Dr. John Weiler, to begin.

All irisarians are welcome to attend the events. The registration fee of \$5.75, which includes luncheon, should be sent to Jackie Norton, 1929 Contra Costa Drive, Santa Rosa, CA 95405; telephone (707) 528-3284.

For hotel information and special iris meeting rates, correspond directly with El Rancho, Tropicana at 2200 Santa Rosa Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95401; telephone (707) 542-3655.

Treasurer's Report

July 1, 1976		
Balance on Hand		643.20
Dues		230.00
		873.20
Disbursements		
Slide Library	5.62	
Stamps	13.62	
Library Fund	15.00	
Balance on Hand	34.24	838.96
Sept. 1, 1976		

Russ Hopson

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Olive Rice, Editor
1914 Napa Avenue
Berkeley, CA 94707 USA

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