

# Pacific Iris

Almanac of the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris



Pacific Coast Irises of French breeder  
Jean Claude Jacob.



Balanec



Cadrans Magiques



Costume D'Arlequin



Cap A L'ouest



Trésor de Molène



Souvenir d'Iroise

**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>.

Tom Gormley - AIS Membership Secretary, P.O. Box 177, DeLeon Springs, FL 32130.

Phone and fax: 386-277-2057 E-mail: 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
E-membership	\$15.00	everywhere

**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.



## SOCIETY FOR PACIFIC COAST NATIVE IRISES

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President, Bob Sussman  
12142 Alison Drive, Santa Rosa Valley, CA 93012  
(805) 523-8604 e-mail: matilijanurseryweb@gmail.com

First Vice President, Michael Monninger  
4861 Brookhill Terrace, Riverside, CA 92509  
(909) 361-3177 e-mail: regomdm@yahoo.com

Second Vice President, Position open

Immediate Past President, Debby Cole  
7417 92nd Place SE, Mercer Island, WA 98040  
(206) 232-7745 e-mail: dcthree@juno.com

Secretary-Treasurer, Kathleen Sayce  
PO Box 91, Nahcotta, WA 98637  
(360) 665-5292 e-mail: ksayce@willapabay.org

### COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Editor, Gareth Winter  
64 Michael Street, Masterton, New Zealand 5810  
(00646) 377-5373 e-mail: wintergareth53@gmail.com

Historian/Archivist, Richard Richards  
5500 Aztec DR #510, La Mesa CA 91942  
(619) 464-2180 e-mail: mongo2u@cox.net

Recorder, Kenneth Walker  
1391 Santa Clara Ave., Concord, CA 94518  
(925) 825-2350 e-mail: kenww001@astound.net

Seed Distribution, Louise Guerin  
2200 E Orange Grove Blvd, Pasadena, CA 91104  
(626) 808-1986 e-mail: siber@siber-sonic.com

Trek Chairman, Position open

Web Manager, Bob Seaman  
7051 South 126th St., Seattle, WA 98178  
(206) 235-7358 e-mail: kcisbob@leonineiris.com

## In this issue...

### Editor's notes

Gareth Winter 3

### Growing *Iris munzii* outside Tulare County

Kenneth Walker 4-8

### 'Sierra Sapphire'

8

### The PCI Breeders

Steve Taniguchi 9-12

### Out and about among the PCI

Gareth Winter 13-14

### Changes in the wind for top PCI breeder

Gareth Winter 14

### Munz's Iris—*Iris munzii*

SPCNI website 15

### 2019 PCI releases from Joe Ghio

16-17

### Ryan Grisso seedlings

18

### New members

18



Cal-Sibe seedling—photo Gareth Winter

**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 free PDF from the SPCNI  
website.

**COMPACT DISCS**

**SPCNI Photo CD, 2009.**

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

# Editor's notes

This month we have devoted a lot of space to the enigmatic *Iris munzii*, the tallest of the PCI species, and one that has intrigued growers for many years. Hidden away in Tulare County, California, it is an endangered species that has developed a reputation for being very difficult to grow outside its natural domain.

Perhaps the best known grower was Dr Lee Lenz, who cultivated this difficult species at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens in Claremont, California. His work with this species led to some startling cultivars, now largely lost to the PCI world.

I feel an odd affinity with this species—not that I am tall or difficult to cultivate!

In my other life I am an archivist and historian in Masterton, New Zealand, a small town in a valley surrounded by mountains., not unlike Tulare.

I research and write about our community, and have a special regard for those oddball characters that occur in every community, at all times. One of our oddities was a farmer/ auctioneer/ politician/ cartoonist who failed at most things in Masterton in the 1870s and 1880s, before leaving for California, where he ended up as one of the world's most famous 'spirit photographers'. In other words, he conned people into believing he could capture images of their deceased ancestors.

Although he was later resident in Los Angeles and San Francisco, Edward Wyllie started his American career in Tulare, where he acted as the town photographer, capturing the usual range of photographic likenesses of local residents, as well as visits from national politicians. He also spent time in the wild, photographing the redwood forests the region is so well known for.

Next time we venture across the Pacific to visit my PCI friends in the US I will have two great reasons to visit Tulare—the brightest blue of the PCI species, and the ghosts of Edward Wyllie are both calling to me.

**Gareth**



# Growing *Iris munzii* outside Tulare County

**Kenneth Walker reports on the extent he has gone to in order to grow *Iris munzii*.**

I'm interested in Pacific Coast Irises and in species irises in general. Very often those of us with that combination of pursuits are drawn to *Iris munzii* ... like moths to a flame. For a PCI, it is a very tall upright plant, only matched in size by a few varieties of *Iris douglasiana*. It displays lovely lavender blue flowers sometimes highlighted with a turquoise blaze. However, *Iris munzii* is a narrow endemic. It grows along seasonal washes, under deciduous trees, only in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada in Tulare County, California.

It is notoriously difficult to keep alive outside its native habitat. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show plants growing in the wild.



These were taken on the 2004 SPCNI Trek to Sequoia National Park. Figure 2 gives a sense of scale. Note that the flower in that photo is over exposed; it is actually pale blue rather than white.



*I. munzii* presents only two real problems for cultivation in my climate. If I water it in the summer, it's killed by pathogens. If I don't water it, its rhizomes eventually die of desiccation. This "unsolvable problem" is amenable to redefinition – forget about "watering". The issue is maintaining the right level of soil moisture through some mechanism. Maintaining healthy soil moisture in the summer is a challenge for PCI's in general, but some of the species, like *I. munzii*, are particularly difficult, at least for mature plants. Seedlings seem more resilient before they mature enough to bloom.



Most of my attempts to grow *I. munzii* are associated with plants at the Rancho Santa Anna Botanic Garden, (RSABG) in Claremont, California. In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dr. Lee Lenz did extensive research on PCI species while working out of the Garden; two of the publications distributed by SPCNI were written by him at the end of the 1950s. During this time period he collected specimens of *I. munzii* and managed to grow them at the Garden. In addition to research, he hybridized and introduced PCIs. His attempts to introduce clones of *I. munzii* itself were unsuccessful; other gardeners could not keep them alive very long.

Eventually *I. munzii* seemed to disappear from the Garden; then about 15 years ago, plants growing in some bushes hidden from the nearest trail were identified as belonging to this species with no evidence of hybrid influence. Figure 3 shows this clump during the 2012 SPCNI Trek in southern California.

In the fall of 2006, the Garden offered for sale some of these plants, along with a rose species that interested me, so I traveled to Claremont and obtained a specimen of each along with some *Calochortus* bulbs.

The iris I purchased bloomed in the spring; I hand pollinated it and obtained seeds. I followed the common wisdom that the species is intolerant of summer water and it died in late summer.

In addition to the seeds I obtained from these plants, the seed exchange of Species Iris Group of North America offered seeds in 2010 and 2012. These gave me an opportunity to experiment. One thing I tried was to grow a plant in a deep container and bottom water during the summer. Neither this nor other attempts succeeded in keeping a seedling alive until blooming.





When the SPCNI offered *I. munzii* seeds from RSABG at the end of 2014, I decided on a new strategy.

Years ago I had heard of a double potting technique that people were experimenting with for growing *Welwitschia mirabilis*, a unique and challenging plant from the Namib Desert in Africa. The technique makes use of the fact that terracotta is sufficiently permeable to water that moisture will slowly diffuse through it.

This is, however, not a new idea for controlling moisture in pots. Plunge beds have been used by gardeners for a long time. They consist of deep beds of sand, either outside or in a greenhouse, with pots “plunged” into them. A wet sand bed will keep the pots from drying out, or a dry sand bed will insure pots dry out quickly after watering. The choice depends on the nature of the plants being grown.

My approach is to place the iris in a large terracotta pot and place that pot in an even larger pot with sand between them. By keeping the sand watered in the summer, it provides is a modest reservoir of moisture to diffuse through the wall of the inner pot, keeping the soil from becoming completely desiccated without ever allowing it to be wet enough to support pathogens. The setup is only a little more complex to put together than a more typical planter and summer moisture control is trivial. Figure 4 shows the sand between the pots being watered. Because it doesn't rain in central California in the summer, I don't need to protect the inner pot from precipitation.



Figure 5 shows the materials I use.

Hardware consists of

- 18 ½ inch diameter unglazed terracotta pot
- 22 inch diameter unglazed terracotta pot
- 16 inch square concrete paver used as a base
- Fiberglass screening to cover drainage holes
- Broken pottery (not shown), also for covering drainage holes

Other materials shown include

- Pea gravel
- Rich commercial planting mix with high organic content
- Medium grade general-purpose sand
- Medium grade crushed pumice (perlite or other inorganic material of similar coarseness can be substituted)



The planter should be constructed under a deciduous tree to allow winter sun to reach the iris while providing protection from afternoon sun in the summer. The paver prevents tree roots from invading the planter. The paver needs to be leveled (gravel or sand under it is useful) and the 22 inch pot centered on it.

I like to put a sprinkling of pea gravel between the paver and the pot to insure rapid drainage, although this is probably overkill. The drainage hole in the pot is covered with a large square of screening with a piece of broken pottery over it. I place about four inches of pea gravel in the bottom of the large pot. The 18 ½ inch pot is then centered inside the 22 inch pot. The pea gravel needs to be high enough so the rim of the inner pot is a couple inches higher the rim of the outer pot; this helps prevent water from flowing directly into the inner pot during summer watering.



The pea gravel also needs to be level so the rim of the inner pot is level. Other pieces of screening and broken pottery cover the hole of the inner pot, along with a half inch of pea gravel. Figure 6 shows two planters, back right, that were constructed in the fall of 2018; each contains an *I. munzii* and a small *Iris x noti* seedling. The remaining four planters are awaiting inner pots.

The hodge-podge of English measurements is based on product packaging. These ingredients are mixed thoroughly. This produces enough mixture for one and a half 18 ½ inch pots. As always, the potting mix should be firmed down in the pot before planting. I sometimes use thin layer of ½ inch crushed granite as mulch after the plants are in the pot.



The planting mix for the inner pot should be rich in organic material but very well drained. Most gardeners will have their favorite mix. I'll give mine for reference. The base commercial planting mix I use contains well composted forest products. It also contains ingredients like chicken manure and bat guano. The commercial mix decomposes and compresses too rapidly to be used unaltered in a deep perennial planter. The sand and pumice prevent excessive settling and insure good drainage during winter rains. The medium grade sand I use has larger particles screened out but retains a range of finer particles. The proportions are:

- 1 ½ cu. ft. rich planting mix
- 30 lb. medium sand
- 8 qt. pumice

It usually discourages squirrels from burying nuts and thereby damaging the plants.

Sand fills the space between the sides of the inner and outer pots. The top of the sand is a couple inches below the rim of the outer pot, providing a "moat" that receives water in the summer as shown in Figure 4.

I water the sand regularly, perhaps twice a week, during the period of June until early October. This sand holds and distributes water. The pea gravel below the inner pot assures that no moisture enters through the drainage hole. Water only diffuses slowly through the terracotta sides keeping moisture levels in the pot low but significantly above zero. Presumably, water wicking through the outer pot provides some cooling and protection from soil overheating.

During fall, winter, and spring the iris need regular amounts of water, so I water the potting mix directly during periods with no rain.

I have six clones of *I. munzii* from the SPCNI seeds, identified as A through F. Clone A bloomed in 2017 and Clone C bloomed in 2018. The main clump of Clone A produced three stalks in 2019, see Figure 7, while a small division taken the previous fall produced another stalk. Clone C also produced a stalk in 2019. Mature plants of *I. munzii* have continued to grow well over a number of years using this double potting technique.



I realize that adapting a technique from someone else's garden to yours may require considering climate differences. I live in Concord, California in a Mediterranean climate classified as USDA Zone 9b. We expect some light frosts in the winter, but in "good" years may avoid hard freezes. Summer temperatures occasionally spike above 100 ° F (38° C), although usually only for a few days at a time – we are separated from a frigid ocean by 30 miles (40 km) and a couple of lines of hills.

Prevailing winds are from the ocean. Temperatures over 106° F (41° C) are not expected but are possible in an exceptional summer (the plants survived our record-breaking summer of 2017). We may get a little rain in June or October but expect nothing between them. We expect about 17 inches (43 cm) of rain per year concentrated in December through March.

One point of interest is that the plants at RSBG may be self-selected to survive in a climate different from the wild stock they were derived from. Wild-collected seeds of *I. munzii* are rarely available, but I hope that eventually either myself or someone else can try this technique on such plants to see how well it works on potentially more fragile clones of *I. munzii*. I've also started experimenting with growing other PCI species in these double-potted planters. Many of the species I've tried in the past have been short-lived in my garden. I'm hoping they respond to my new growing technique as well as *I. munzii* has.

## ‘Sierra Sapphire’



Sierra Sapphire, introduced by Dr. Lee Lenz of the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens, is pure Munz's iris. It received the American Iris Society's Sidney B. Mitchell Medal in 1977 for the year's most outstanding Pacifica iris.

It was created by using pollen collected from an especially attractive plant at Coffee Camp in Tulare County to fertilize an *Iris munzii* flower already growing at the garden.



# The PCI breeders

## Steve Taniguchi muses on the PCNI breeders he has known, and the effect they have had on Pacific Coast Irises.

What would we do without the people who hybridize the Pacific Coast Native Irises? Although the individual species all have their individual charm, many are very difficult for the average person to grow successfully. Hybridizers have tamed our wild PCI (Pacific Coast Iris) and made them easier to grow. They've also bred brighter colors and new patterns. I've met several hybridizers through my association with the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris. I've written some notes about a couple of them below.

### Bennett Jones

I met Bennett during one of the iris treks (one of the first ones I attended). I was a "newbie" and he was very friendly to me. He told me about his hybridizing and the story about his SDB orange irises – Bennett claimed he was breeding for pink and he kept getting many orange irises.

He only introduced one Pacific Coast Native iris, 'Pacific Rim', but it was a very good one. It won the Mitchell Medal, so that makes Bennett 100% for Mitchell Medals per PCI introductions.



'Pacific Rim'

### Lewis & Adele Lawyer

I first encountered Adele Lawyer when I signed up for my first iris trek (1994). I had all sorts of questions and she patiently answered all of them.

During that trek, we visited many places, among them Joe Ghio's garden (more about that later), and the Lawyers' gardens. They had a huge backyard and I would later learn that Lewis had a schematic of the yard that had the precise location of each of the plants. In the Lawyer's garden I saw many named varieties by different hybridizers and I saw many stunning blue and violet iris that had flashes of turquoise (If you never visited the Lawyer garden, think "Garry Knipe's hybrids"). Most of the flowers with turquoise were Lawyer seedlings but there was one seedling by Thornton Abell labeled "Abell II" that was also amazing.

I started writing letters to Lewis, who was SPCNI *Almanac* editor at that time, and he would always write back. Lewis and Adele were always nice to me and we developed a good friendship. Lewis had a knack with words, and when asked which of his hybrids was his favorite, he picked 'Sierra Dell' because it was named for his wife.



'Sierra Dell'

The Lawyers are most famous for their "Sierra" series of blue *munzii* hybrids. 'Sierra Dell' won the Mitchell Medal.

A look through the SPCNI Cultivar Database shows that several Belardi and Ghio hybrids have 'Sierra Dell' in their pedigrees.

They also produced the first garden-friendly hybrid having the 'Valley Banner' pattern, and named it 'Foothill Banner'. 'Foothill Banner' has been used by many hybridizers, among them Lois Belardi, Vernon Wood, and Joe Ghio.

The Lawyers also had a late bloomer, nick-named "late-doug", from which they would collect the seeds and offer them via the SPCNI seed exchange.



'Foothill Banner'



'Pacific Miss'

### Lois Belardi

Lois was famous for her blue iris. One of my favorites is her 'Pacific High'. It was one of the varieties I selected when I made my first order of PCI. There are much bluer iris now, but there's just something about 'Pacific High' that I like. She invited me to her garden once, and I was surprised to see how little space was used for her hybridizing. She was always nice to me and whenever I would see her, she offered me divisions of her iris plants. My favorite Belardi varieties are 'Pacific High', 'Pacific Miss', and 'Letter Perfect'. Lois won Mitchell Medals for 'Sea Gal' and 'Pacific Miss'.



'Letter Perfect'

### Vernon Wood

I met Vernon Wood when Garry Knipe and I interviewed him for the Spring 2001 *Almanac*. Vernon shared a lot of his hybridizing knowledge with us, but what I remember most was his explanation of the use of food coloring. The story is that Vernon put some white flowers in food coloring, and it added color to the veins. He did this for a show, put a "silly name" on it and assumed the judges would know what he did. He ended up having to stop the judges from giving the flower an award! Of course, when I returned home, I had to soak some PCI in food coloring to test the it. Vernon's backyard had mostly TBs, but there was a small area for PCI. He probably wins the award for most Mitchell medals per square foot of gardening space!

When I asked Vernon for his advice on getting an orange PCI, he suggested I cross into some pinks. This reminded me of what Bennett Jones had told me years previous about his orange iris. Vernon let me take some pollen from one of his rosy-pink seedlings. I used it on several of my seedlings.

Vernon won many Mitchell Medals for his irises. My favorite Wood varieties are 'Sea Admiral' and 'Wine and Cheese.'





‘Wine and Cheese’

### Joe Ghio

I first met Joe when I participated in my first iris trek. Joe’s garden was one of the stops. Joe was greeting us at his garden and when I met him, he glanced at my name tag and said “I recognize that name.” I had only made a couple orders of PCI from him at that time and he remembered my name? He should be a politician (Oh, I forgot he was).



‘Osocales’

The PCI in his yard were mind-boggling. There were untold numbers of colors and patterns (there’s a photo under “about field treks” in the SPCNI web site).

There were some “strawberry milkshake” pink seedlings with red signals that I liked. Months later, after my film was developed, I sent a photo of the seedling to Joe and asked if those would be offered later. To my dismay, Joe replied that he didn’t keep that one.

Eventually, I joined the iris society in his area (a 40-minute drive for me) just so I could attend the October meetings to hear Joe’s annual Pacific Coast Iris presentations and to get some of the Pacific Coast Iris that are distributed. I haven’t been able to attend the last five years or so due to my other personal commitments, but hopefully I will be able to attend now.

Joe has a Facebook page that shows his iris and other flowers. The PCIs that are shown there are amazing. I never would have predicted such patterns and color combinations were possible.

He has always answered my questions about hybridizing and I appreciate his taking the time to do so (even though most of my questions are probably made during the time when he is most busy with his iris). Joe’s PCI have won a multitude of Mitchell Medals and other awards,



‘San Andreas’

.Some of my Ghio favorites are:

‘Big Smile’, ‘Eagle Eyes’, ‘Osocales’, ‘Oxymoron’, ‘Face Value’, ‘Marriage Proposal’, ‘Lightning Raid’, ‘Mantra’, ‘Pescadero’, ‘Rare Reward’, ‘Fault Zone’, ‘San Andreas’, ‘Caught In The Wind’, ‘Power Center’, ‘Public Eye’, and ‘Coast Road’.

(This list gets bigger each year, as Joe introduces more and more iris)

### Garry Knipe

I live about 15-20 minutes away from Garry. Every year he invites me to see his PCI and I go whenever I am able. When I visit, he shows me what's blooming and mostly those are the blue ones, but I have seen other colors in his yard. Garry explains what he's looking for in his plants and it is a good reminder to me that I should be looking at more than just the color of the flower in my hybridizing.

When Garry got interested in hybridizing, he needed more space. No problem, he asked the lady next door if he could grow his seedlings in her back yard. So, when I went the tour involved going next door. Garry's blue hybrids bring back memories I have of the Lawyers' blue seedlings I saw in their garden. In fact, Garry started growing plants from Lawyer open-pollinated seeds and crossed those with Belardi and Ghio varieties to develop his own blue iris. Some of his seedlings that I really like are 1503\_3, 1503\_4, 1503\_5, 1503\_6, and 1602\_1. I am most amazed with 1507\_2.

Garry also has a good sense of humor. In 2017, I saw an odd-looking PCI on display at an iris show. It looked like someone had soaked it in blue food coloring. Sure enough, as an homage to Vernon Wood, Garry had soaked one of his lighter colored PCI in blue food coloring and entered it as 'Vern Special'. And, the date of the Iris show was April 1, 2017. How apropos.

I've had/have the pleasure and honor of knowing several well-known hybridizers and wanted to share a little bit about them with you. With the exception of Bennett Jones, the hybridizers I've listed are/were in my general area and I was able to visit their gardens. If anyone would like to share thoughts about hybridizers from other areas (Southern California, Oregon, Washington, Australia, New Zealand, England, etc.), or about the ones I wrote about, I would love to read about it in *Pacific Iris*.



Garry Knipe seedling 1503\_4



# Out and about among the PCI

There are lots of opportunities for our U.S. members to get out and about among PCI this spring, with open gardens and wild visits planned.

Our President **Bob Sussman** will be leading a tour to the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Claremont CA. This is his report:

“Ten years ago Michael Monninger and a group from the SPCNI visited the Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden in Claremont. The garden is primarily a California native botanical garden, run for many years by Dr Lee Lenz, one of the great botanists of California flora who did a lot of work with Pacific Coast Irises including a lot of early hybridization and selection. Thanks to the garden staff and their recordkeeping, many growing locations though out the garden are known for visitors to see. And that is what we are going to do and you can come along!

My family and friends will be visiting the garden Sunday, April 14th of this year and you are welcome to join us. Meet at the entrance at 10:00, pay your admission and have a fun day at the garden. We'll visit the iris growing locations and I'll act as the best tour guide I can and you'll also get to enjoy the wildflower events taking place that week too. I've received permission to demonstrate how to pollinate some of their rare native irises. The seeds from these pollinated irises will help to sustain their living collection.

We'll be focusing on pollinating the *I. munzii* collection. The species is rare and lives only in Tulare County. The irises are exceptionally tall at more than 30" and the flowers are lavender to blue. Many blue-flowered Pacific Coast Iris hybrids have *I. munzii* in their pedigree. Dr. Lenz produced several such hybrids. The best known is probably 'Sierra Sapphire,' a cross of two different pure *munzii* cultivars and winner of the Mitchell Award.



## Bed of Douglas iris hybrids at the garden

There is some concern on the part of the garden staff that damage from our prolonged drought might make the bloom somewhat less spectacular than previous years but good rainfall this year may make the bloom as nice as ever.

The Botanic Garden also has a really nice nursery shop so you can buy and take home many of the plants they grow (including Pacific Coast Irises) and all kinds of books and other interesting things from your visit. “

If you are attending the AIS National Convention keep an eye out for a presentation by Garry Knipe. He will be giving the SPCNI program at the convention in the San Ramon Marriott Hotel in San Ramon, CA on Weds, April 24, time to be announced. His topic is "Hybridizing Blues." Garry has been working toward turquoise Pacificas for over 20 years, and has some interesting tales to tell, as well as magnificent pictures to show. His talk is free and open to the public; one need not be a convention registrant.



Garry Knipe seedling

If you live a little further north there are two exciting gardens to visit in May. Bob Seaman and Debby Cole will each hold their gardens open to the public, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. on Saturday May 18 in the Seattle area, in celebration of Pacific Iris Day." Both hosts have large collections of Pacific Coast irises and are hybridizing as well. Bob's "Leonine Iris" garden is in the Skyway area of Renton, and has been open every Saturday in May since 2015 - this year "Pacific Iris Day" coincides. Debby's is on the south end of Mercer Island. Contact information for both is on page 2 of this issue .



Leonine Iris seedling

If you are looking for a chance to get out into the wild and see PCIs as they occur naturally, Kathleen Sayce will be leading a wildflower walk on Wednesday, June 5th, at 9 a.m.

It will be chance to see *Iris tenax* in bloom at Ecola State Park. You will hike a section of the Oregon Coast Trail between Crescent Beach and Indian Beach, a round trip of three miles. This is the northernmost known population of *Iris tenax* on the Pacific Northwest coast.

Other species seen on this trail include *Sidalcea hirtipes* and several violets. Entry to Ecola State Park requires a state parking permit.

Start time is 9 a.m. End time is around 1 p.m. We will assemble in the main parking lot at Ecola State Park, just past the park entry kiosk. Wear boots and weather appropriate clothing; bring food and water.

Contact Carla Cole to sign up; her email address is [carlajeancole@gmail.com](mailto:carlajeancole@gmail.com)

## Changes in the wind for top PCI breeder

Fans of the irises bred by Joe Ghio will be saddened to hear that Joe has decided to stop selling irises from his Bay View Gardens— but will also be very relieved to know that Joe is not going to stop working on those wonderful breeding lines he has established. Although he will no longer be producing a catalogue, he will keep wielding a paintbrush.

In the future his bearded introductions will be handled by Schreiners and his PCI's by a yet-to-be-announced nursery. Joe assures me he will be letting the world know who that is shortly on his Facebook page—yet another reason to follow Bay View Gardens on FB!

Joe reports that the blooming season has been held up by a lot of rain, and is about a week behind usual. His FB page features images of his new seedlings as they flower, as well as updates on his introductions, so it is the place to be to keep up with the play of one of our foremost breeders.

Joe will be giving two presentations at the AIS convention. The first is for the Tall Bearded Iris Society on Wednesday April 24 at noon and the second is a talk on Pacific Coast Iris on Friday, April 26 at 8 p.m. Both are free and open to the public. Details at below:

<http://aisconvention2019.org/full-schedule.pdf>



# Munz's iris - *Iris munzii*

**Range:** Endemic to a small region in the southern Sierra Nevada foothills in Tulare County, California. 1,800 to 4,000 feet elevation.

**Original material:** Near Springville, Tulare County, California, 1937



*Iris munzii*, in the Regional Botanic Parks Garden, Berkley CA—photo Stan Shebs

## Key identifying features:

1. Large plants with broad ( $\frac{3}{4}$  inch), long (20 inches or more) blue-green leaves.
2. Tall (2 to 3 feet), unbranched stalks bear 3-5 large lavender flowers in different stages of development.
3. Floral tube short and stout.
4. Spathes separate, open, ovary exposed.

**Flower color:** Pale lavender to reddish-purple.

**Habitat:** Upper foothill Blue oak woodlands with a thick understory of annual grass, subject to winter rains and dry heat of the adjacent San Joaquin Valley summer. Usually beside minor drainages, the bottoms and sides of small creek beds; mostly in the shade of blue oak, live oak, buckeye, tall mariposa manzanita, poison oak or similar trees and shrubs.

**Name:** By Robert C. Foster, for Philip Munz, botanist at the Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Garden and author of several books on California wildflowers.

**Comments:** Munz's iris are the largest of the Pacific Coast native iris - tall, straight, strong and stately, features much appreciated when horticulturists look for desirable characters for hybrid crosses. They typically grow as individual plants, and very slowly.

These elegant plants probably had a much wider distribution during cooler, moister times of the Pleistocene, but now seem to be just holding on in the few remaining areas still suitable for their growth. They are listed as "rare, threatened or endangered" by the California Native Plant Society.



*Iris munzii*, in the Regional Botanic Parks Garden, Berkley CA—photos John Rusk



# 2019 PCI releases from Joe Ghio



Alphabetic Order



Break in the Clouds



Breaking the Code



Eye of the Hurricane



Fire Code



Killer Smile





Ocean Seas



Open my Eyes



Pioneering Spirit



Promo Code



Story of my Life



Patchy Fog (2015 introduction)





Above—Ryan Grisso seedlings

## New Members

We welcome the following new members, and invite you all to spread the word about the benefits of belonging to the SPCNI.

Margie Brandon, Grants Pass, OR

Hilde van der West, Riverside, CA

Loretta Figueroa, Mill Valley, CA

Elle Gleukert, Sacramento, CA

Tom Hobbs, Vancouver, BC, Canada

Susan Hough, Fourmarks, Hampshire, UK

Jancy Lovell, Fresno, CA

Laurie Myers, San Mateo, CA

Katherine Nelson, Menlo Park, CA

Rebecca Norton, Seattle, WA

Linnea Polo, Petaluma, CA

Jennifer Robertson, Los Altos, CA

Stefanie Rosemond, San Francisco, CA

Junichi Seshita, Ichihara, Aoyagi, Japan

Louis Tiffany, Seattle, WA

## Call for assistance

In recent issues we called for someone to fill the position of SPCNI 2nd Vice President.

Unfortunately no one responded to the call so we are asking for your help again.

You will be the president-in-waiting, one step down from the Vice President.

Your task is to make yourself familiar with the society and how it operates, just in case you need to step in.