

Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris
ALMANAC



www.pacificcoastiris.org

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Spring 2010

The beauty of Pacific Coast Iris



Some of the many shades of *Iris tenax* »»



Mitchell Medal winner, 2002
Lois Belardi's 1992 registration
«« 'Sea Gal'

PCIs growing in the San Francisco garden of Ryan Grisso »»



See story on page 14

Almanac of the Society for Pacific Coast Native Irises

Volume XXXVIII, Number 2 Spring, 2010

SPCNI MEMBERSHIP

The Society for Pacific Coast Species Iris (SPCNI) is a section of the American Iris Society (AIS). Membership in AIS is recommended but not required for membership in SPCNI.

Membership Rates, SPCNI

	US	Overseas
Annual, paper	\$8.00	\$12.00
Triennial, paper	\$20.00	\$32.00
Annual, digital	\$5.00	\$5.00
Triennial, digital	\$13.00	\$13.00

Life memberships are no longer available.

Please send membership fees to the SPCNI Treasurer.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FROM THE SECRETARY/TREASURER ABOUT DUES NOTICES

Please keep track of the expiration date of your membership printed on your Almanac address label. This date is when your current membership expires, and when SPCNI fees are due. We do not send dues notices on expiration, but do send a reminder notice 90 days later. 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 address.

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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	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	\$450.00	NA
Life, dual	\$545.00	NA

PLEASE ADVISE SPCNI & AIS OF ANY CHANGE OF ADDRESS

ALMANAC 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

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PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE SPCNI TREASURER

Prices listed are for SPCNI members in the US. For out of USA, 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. Len, 1959. Reprint of *Aliso* article 72 pages, \$8.00

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

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., \$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

NEW in 2010: 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.

The SPCNI Website is still located at

<http://www.pacificcoastiris.org/>.

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WELCOME TO THE BEAUTY OF THE PACIFIC COAST IRIS



This new, abundantly illustrated 15-minute PowerPoint CD by Jay and Terri Hudson provides a perfect presentation topic for Garden Club meetings and for anyone wanting a concise overview of the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris and its favorite subjects.

Each of the eleven West Coast PCNI species is shown in various natural and garden settings. Profiles highlight the work of Sidney B. Mitchell, Frederick M. Danks, and Marion Walker - three major contributors to Pacifica iris knowledge. Close-up photographs illustrate 33 named PCNI cultivars that won Mitchell Awards and/or Medals between 1973 and 2009 (the American Iris Society's highest recognition for hybridizers of Pacifica iris). Plantings in nearly a dozen home and commercial gardens between Washington state and southern California suggest ways to use Pacifica iris in landscape design. And gardeners will especially appreciate the numerous experienced tips on transplanting, location and sun exposure, soil types, fertilizers, irrigation, and successful overwintering.

Contact the Society secretary for your copy - \$9 US, \$12 outside the USA.

See some photographs inside front cover.

President's Message

Spring is sneaking up on the northern half of the world, thank goodness. Here in the Seattle area it has been so mild this winter that I have three PCI already waving multiple bloomstalks at me, and there are fat buds on my early SDBs, fully a month early. But we could still have snow and/or a freeze! I have all my fingers crossed against that chance.

As many of you have noticed, this is a good year to renew your membership. And as those who have renewed have found out, Kathleen Sayce has taken over the office of Secretary/Treasurer from our longtime mainstay Terri Hudson. Terri kept this organization humming for thirteen years, through (at least) two presidential transitions, and just went ahead and did, without being asked, so many things that came up. Now she and Jay are retired, just in time support their daughter Janna in her battle with a brain tumor. Do keep the family in your thoughts.

Our PowerPoint presentation on CD, an introduction to SPCNI called "Welcome to the Beauty of Pacific Coast Iris" is now available from Kathleen, \$9 in the US and \$12 elsewhere, postpaid. Both the Hudsons put in a lot of work on this project, which covers PC species, the early hybridizers, the Mitchell Medal and its winners, some examples of Pacificas in the landscape, and PCI culture. It is great for a personal introduction to PCs, but also makes an excellent program for a garden or iris club meeting---and you do not have to send it back! The physical slide set is still available if needed, however.

If you are attending the AIS Convention in Madison WI the first week of June, we hope to see you at the SPCNI program meeting, Wednesday at noon. Come up and introduce yourself! To whet your appetite we will show pictures of some of the PCNs, other wildflowers, and magnificent countryside we plan to see on the 2010 Trek, which is scheduled for June 13-15 out of Roseburg, OR.

Registration for the 2010 Trek will close May 15, with a limit of 48 participants. There is no

climbing or hiking required, only gentle walking, and most iris clumps are at roadside. Information and the registration form are available on page 17 or through the Bulletin Board section of our website, www.pacificcoastiris.org. Bob Sussman has taken over from Terri Hudson as Registrar, so "send your stuff" to him.

Our Southern Hemisphere members are winding down their summer, and perhaps we will see some pictures – and some seeds – from their Pacific Coast irises in the months to come. Most of us, however, are just easing into bloom season, and I trust it will be lovely. If you have the opportunity, I hope you will (responsibly) collect seed for the Seed Exchange, of either the species in the wild (carefully record the collection location) or the plants in your garden. To retain species characteristics, garden-grown species plants should be protected from accidental pollination, and carefully self-pollinated by the gardener. PLEASE--the Exchange needs DONORS as well as buyers!

Hope to see you this spring,

Debby



'Pacific Rim' seedling

From the editor's desk

Autumn is just arriving here in New Zealand, with leaves starting to turn, *Colchicums* in full flower in the garden and hundreds of seedlings waiting for the autumn rains so they can be planted out.

This has been a very taxing year for PCI growers. We had a very mild winter, and a delightfully warm early spring which hustled the PCIs into making premature growth. We were then struck with a number of heavy frosts which froze the bud stalks, leaving some new seedlings without any bloom at all, and curtailing growth on many others. The weather gods were not finished with us then either, as we had sustained rain for the entire bloom season. Attempts at breeding were rather desultory as it was so difficult to find pollen and styles both ready at the same time.

In the end we have had a very poor harvest of seed from planned crosses, and had much diminished seed set on bee crosses.

Thankfully we did have seed arrive from the Seed Pool thanks to the good offices of our energetic seed pool guru Bob Sussman.

The New Zealand authorities have become much stricter about the seeds and plants they are allowing into the country, and have prepared a long list of permitted seed. All PCI species are on the list, but there is no specific designation for PCI hybrids, and it seems a matter of luck as to whether the officer who inspects the seed will let it through unchallenged. Usually, the New Zealand members have to write a series of letters explain the complex hybrid nature of PCI, pointing out their derivation from acceptable species, and even then we sometimes fail to get our seed.

It is important for us to get seed from fresh varieties as we have no other access to up to date genetics, and would otherwise be breeding in a very shallow gene pool. I hope to be able to return some seed to the pool next year and will be encouraging some of the other New Zealand and Australian breeders to contribute some too.



Tomas Tamberg tetraploid Calsib

I have been fortunate to receive some seed from the New Zealand breeder Ron Busch. Ron, who is best known in New Zealand iris circles as a breeder of Tall Bearded, is also interested in Cal-sibs and has been breeding from tetraploid material he obtained from Tomas Tamberg. The first of Ron's seedlings has germinated so I am hopeful of working with some of these plants as they flower. With their dose of Siberian genes they will flower later, and of course being tetraploid they are fertile. Ron has also promised some pieces from some of his introductions (mentioned in the last Almanac) so there will be some exciting times ahead.

Looking through Tomas' website it is amazing to see how many different iris species have been crossed with each other, and one wonders whether there could be more inter-specific hybrids based on PCIs.

This Spring Almanac is the first to be produced in full Technicolor - but to take full advantage of the sparkling new layout you will need to join the list of those who have signed up to the new "digital" membership.

Printing costs prevent us making the paper copies all colour, but an easily downloaded PDF file will allow you to share the rainbow of colours in PCI.

All the best from New Zealand

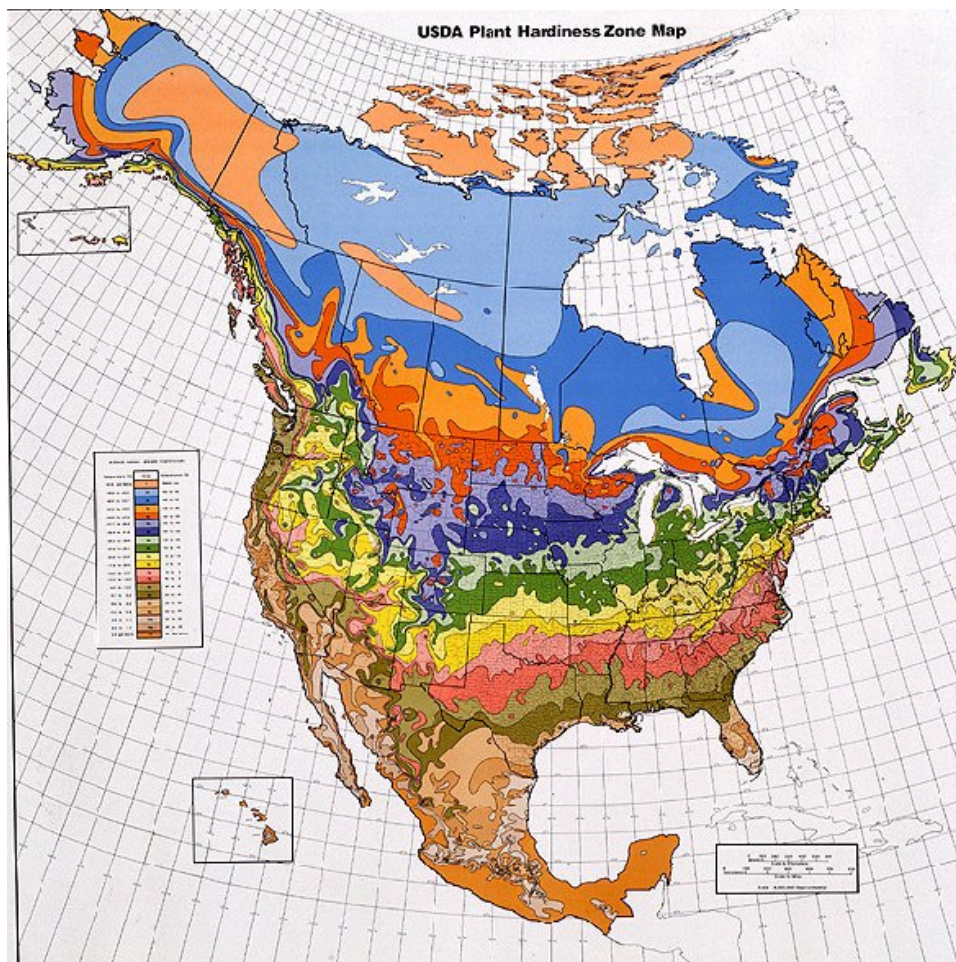
Gareth

Growing PCIs in Different World Hardiness Zones

Hardiness zone maps give us a way to compare growing regions, based on coldest winter temperatures. This is not perfect; season of rainfall, soils, and other growing conditions also determine what plants can be grown where. In its most basic sense, this is the coldest temperature an area experiences, in most years. There are often warmer winters, and less often, there are colder winters.

To help PCI growers around the world to compare growing areas, we would like to start adding this information to the membership database. If you know your area's hardiness zone, please let Kathleen know, either by email or by letter. If you do not know your hardiness zone, you may look on the web at maps, such as at the US National Arboretum website, www.usna.usda.gov/hardzone/ushzmap.html, which has a map for North America, with links to other maps around the world. The Pacific Bulb Society also has world maps for hardiness zones, at www.pacificbulbsociety.org/pbswiki/index.php/HardinessZoneMaps. You may also find other maps by doing an internet search for "hardiness maps."

With your help, we will better define where people grow PCIs successfully, and will report on this in a future copy of the Almanac.



USDA plant hardiness zone map

Treasurer's report

As I work my way into the Secretary/Treasurer position for SPCNI, I appreciate the patience and support that the board gives me. Terri Hudson held this position for thirteen years, and did an outstanding job. It will take me time to learn all the bits and pieces of the job that she did so well.

In presenting the treasurer's report, let me discuss several numbers. First of all, SPCNI had \$2,729.37 more in expenses for 2009 than it had in income. This is due to several factors.

- One, twenty-five Mitchell Medals were cast during 2009, an expense that will not reoccur for 24 years.
- Two, new Invitation to Join brochures were printed, which will probably not be reprinted for 5 years.
- Three, large envelopes were printed for Almanacs, which should last three years.
- Four, printing and mailing expenses have increased steadily, while membership has declined. This is not unusual. All garden societies have seen drops in membership while expenses increase.
- Five, we usually net some income on Treks, but did not hold a Trek in 2009, so total income was lower than in past Trek years.

When these points are considered, our adjusted expenses would still put us in a negative position, but for a few hundred dollars rather than several thousand dollars.

How can we improve the Society's balance sheet?

- Attract new members, particularly new members who get the Almanac in digital format.
- Increase seed exchange donations and purchases.
- Continue to host Treks.
- Encourage donations to the general fund. We have a high percentage of life members. With rising expenses for each issue of the Almanac, carrying these members' costs increases more each year.

While I am sorry to be the bearer of somewhat bad news, I am happy to be a part of SPNCI. I hope to meet many of you on Trek in 2010.

Income/Expenses 1/1/09 through 12/31/09

Income		Expenses	
BACK ALMANACS	16.00	Almanac Printing	1,411.90
Book Sales: CHECKLIST	9.00	Bad debt	32.00
LENZ-PCI	8.00	Mitchell Medal	1618.97
Other	<u>74.00</u>	Office	35.96
Total book sales	91.00	Postage – Almanac	<u>337.13</u>
Donations	450.00	Postage – TOTAL	337.13
Dues	843.00	Printing	631.00
Interest Earned	8.38	Secretary-Treasurer	
Memorial Funds	50.00	Office supplies	<u>190.65</u>
Publications:		Total Secretary-Treasurer	190.65
Alm-Index-Chklist	24.00	Web page	120.00
Photo CD	<u>24.00</u>	Expenses – Other	319.04
Total Publications	48.00		
Seed Exchange Sales	458.00		
Income – Other	3.00		
Total Income	<u>1,967.38</u>	Total Expenses	<u>4696.65</u>
		Total Income/Expenses	-2,729.27

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Sayce

On the Aesthetics of Pacific Coast Native Irises and their Hybrids

Richard C. Richards

This is not a discussion of judging standards for the PCIs, though I will suggest some changes. There is a relatively adequate set of standards for judging, though most actual judging, usually done by judges more acquainted with tall bearded iris standards, is often barely adequate. This is instead a discussion of the goals for hybridization of the PCIs. Such a discussion has rarely taken place in writing, and there are enough issues involved that bringing them up clearly is important. Perhaps more clarity will be reached on what goals are desirable, and more importantly, why those goals are desirable.

Before the central discussion, some ground rules need to be stated. This is not primarily a discussion of what some people like, though that consideration is relevant. It is an exploration of what goals ought to be pursued, and for what reasons. This discussion presupposes that it is possible and indeed necessary, to make a distinction between what a person likes and what that person knows is good. It presumes the ability to say, "I don't like that particular type of aesthetic object, and yet I can judge it to be good." Without such a distinction this kind of discussion inevitably degenerates into statements about what the discussants like, and if they do not agree, why the other side is so incredibly blind and obdurate.

The conclusion for which I will be arguing is that there is room for a number of goals to be sought in the breeding of PCIs, that no one goal is primary, and that we will be richer if we are clear that there is a plurality of goals, no one or group of which renders another goal inferior or defective.

At present the iris world seems to be assuming, for the most part, that the wider the flower and in many cases the bigger the flower, the better the flower is. Tall bearded breeders and judges favor width and size on the grounds that a bigger, wider flower allows more color and pattern to be seen, and therefore more aesthetic impact is possible. At least that seems to me to be the justification stated or assumed for this goal. I find no fault with such a goal and such a reason, but I believe this is not the last word. There are other desirable goals, equally important.



I. douglasiana



I. innominata

Most iris plants, including Californicae species in the wild, show a delicacy and grace that is absolutely charming in its simplicity and appeal. The goal of most hybridizers of all types of irises is to develop width of flower parts, within reason of course. A huge flower on a small plant is usually judged to be unappealing on the ground of proportion, though the aril species sometimes violate this criterion to no detriment that I can see. They have a charm of their own.

Virtually every decision has consequences. In the efforts of the hybridizers to develop width and size, something has been lost. The delicacy and grace of the species have been sacrificed on the altar of width and size. These seem to be incompatible qualities. But it isn't clear that the gain in width outweighs the loss of the qualities of the species

Let's spend a moment or two in the world of dog judging. Though some people have preferences for big dogs, and others for little dogs; though some people like lean, linear dogs and others like great hulks, dog shows have enough classes that all these aesthetic preferences can be expressed. There seems to be no one type that is judged to be superior to the others. People have their preferences, but they can appreciate the qualities of the classes of dogs that do not illustrate these preferences. Indeed the judges are expected to judge how well a given dog conforms to the standards of the class even if the judge does not particularly like the qualities exemplified in that class.

The AIS has taken a somewhat similar approach. Do you like the simplicity of the species and species crosses? There is a class specifically for that kind of iris, such as the miniature tall bearded class. It has standards different from those of the tall bearded class. Yet it seems to me that the MTB class is showing increased petal width and a bit more size. That's fine, but what is happening to grace and delicacy?

That the AIS favors the tall bearded iris over other types is no secret protected by the CIA. More people grow TBs than grow other types. That the AIS includes other types is to their credit. Please don't accuse me of being anti-tall bearded irises. I am a minor hybridizer of the genre. That the goals of the tall bearded hybridizers are influencing the goals of hybridizers of other types of irises is no surprise. This is both an asset and a liability.

Let's change our thinking from dogs to people. We celebrate a wide variety of physical types of people. We have the linear, slender marathon runners. We have the huge, wide, physically imposing sumo wrestlers and professional football players, especially the linemen. Which type is the best aesthetically? The question is not merely rhetorical. If you believe one type is the best, I want to hear your reasons. Liking or preference without good reasons is prejudice.

Or, to change the subject to one that is not particularly politically correct: which is the most beautiful type of woman? Women come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes. Yet for decades the Miss Universe pageant has claimed that it is displaying and choosing the most beautiful women in the world. They were all almost identical, with some variation in hair, eye, and skin color. All of those can now be made more perfect by the advancement of science. The most beautiful women in the world turned out to be almost identical. How quaint.

But maybe there is not one type of woman more beautiful than another. Maybe each type has its own wonderful appeal, and the attempts to standardize our judgments with regard to a woman's beauty is a fairly well disguised attempt to raid our pocketbooks. There is, of course, a whole beauty industry whose goal is to make women look pretty much alike. Are we losing something by taking this goal as the only goal? I think we are.

In the world of irises I think we are gaining something, and more importantly losing something, by our rigidity when we employ standards that attempt to quantify or at least standardize our judgments of aesthetic appeal.

In all fairness I must point out that the Society for Louisiana Irises maintains standards that clearly acknowledge the existence of several types of flowers, based on the variations in the various species that have gone into the contemporary hybrids. It seems to me that such an approach is a reasonable one.

Let me state my conclusion as clearly as possible. The goal of producing flowers that are wider and bigger is a worthwhile goal. Some aesthetic appeal is gained by such a course of action, but some appeal is also lost. Charm, grace, and delicacy are sacrificed, and these characteristics are just as important as the appeal of a flower as are more size and width. As this applies to PCIs today, the goal of most, if not all hybridizers, is size and width of flower parts, as well as new patterns of color of course. This follows the trend of tall bearded iris hybridizers, and that is fine. But the cost of pursuing that goal exclusively, and judging all seedlings in terms of that goal, is the loss of a whole range of aesthetic qualities more likely to be found in the species and early generations of hybrids derived from the species.

If it is argued that we have the species, and we can always grow them, this overlooks the fact that few PCI species grow well outside their native range (*I. douglasiana* may be the exception), and one goal worth pursuing is the production of plants with the species charm combined with more gardenability. True, they won't be as wide or as large as the most recent hybrids, but they will have the grace and delicacy contemporary hybrids lack.

If this is so we should consider to revising the judging standards for PCIs so that they do not restrict our range of aesthetic appreciation. We could use judging standards for Louisiana irises as one model but create our own unique standards. The logical consequence of my arguments is such a revision. We ought to be at least considering that option.



Iris gardens in the Siskiyou

ex “Darlingtonia”, newsletter of the north-west chapter of the California Native Plant Society

Barbara Kelly and Carol Ralph

After gathering at the Patrick Creek Campground, east of Gasquet on Highway 199, and admiring its trail plants and inside-out-flowers, 9 people in 4 cars (to accommodate various departure needs) drove northeast a bit and turned up into the mountains on Little Jones Creek Rd. We traveled good gravel Forest Service roads all day in a 26.4 mile loop, following 16N05 (Jawbone Rd), then 17N04, and then 411, which is French Hill Rd. and returns to 199 at Gasquet.

The group was ready to focus on iris, and the irises were in full bloom. For the first five miles the irises were uniformly buff-colored with yellow central streaks and purple veins on the showy sepals. We had to learn iris anatomy while we studied the characters used to distinguish species: perianth tube length and shape (between the ovary and where the "petals" flare out), style crest length ("ears" on showy, narrow, strap-shaped, petal-like style), leaf width, ovary shape (the green, thick part that becomes the seed pod), stem branching and bracts, spathe shape (short, leaf-like things enclosing flower), etc. Color is one of the most obvious characters to us but is so variable within species it is of secondary importance to iris taxonomists.



Iris bracteata

The four irises we thought we might find were *Iris douglasiana*, *I. innominata*, *I. bracteata*, and *I. chrysophylla*. Armed with diagrams from *A Guide to the Pacific Coast Irises* by Victor A. Cohen; British Iris Society 1967, we studied the stunning, creamy iris along the road up, the multitude of beautiful white, lavender, or purple iris at the lunchtime log deck, and the glowing purple iris along the road down. All were gorgeous. None fit a single species description. None had the very long perianth tube of *chrysophylla*; none had the very short tube of *bracteata*. Many characters fit *innominata*, but broad leaves and triangular ovaries indicated *douglasiana*. And who contributed the long style crests on some? The truth about our Pacific Coast iris populations is that they are still mixing their genes. We may be frustrated that we can not categorize every iris we find, but we get to see evolution in action.

An abundance of variously colored iris prompted our lunch stop at a wide, packed-gravel, old log deck 5.5 miles up from 199. Here we enjoyed the finest variety of serpentine plants I (BK) have ever seen in a single place. It was a paradise of serpentine endemics, many of them rare, surrounded by Douglas fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*), Jeffrey pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*), and western white pine (*Pinus monticola*). Glowing spears of blooming beargrass (*Xerophyllum tenax*) punctuated the low shrubbery; fresh, pink blossoms of rhododendron (*Rhododendron macrophyllum*) decorated the clearing edge. Ground-hugging plants included Siskiyou mat *Ceanothus pumilus*, wedgeleaf ceanothus, *C. cuneatus*, bush chinquapin (*Chrysolepis sempervirens*), huckleberry oak *Quercus vaccinifolia*, and Oregon-grape *Berberis aquifolium*, interspersed with common juniper *Juniperus communis* and a manzanita *Arctostaphylos*. One of the manzitanas supported a dry inflorescence of the root parasitic California ground cone *Boschniakia strobilacea*. Other species in flower or bud included corn lily *Veratrum* sp, Bolander's lily *Lilium bolanderi*, pussy ears, *Calochortus tolmei*, pine violet *Viola lobata*, Klamath arnica *Arnica spathulata*, a *Polygala*, a tiny mat *Galium*, a *Lomatium* (probably *howellii*), and a red paintbrush *Castilleja*.

I (BK) enjoyed looking closely at the arnica while keying it out. It had cute yellow hairs on the tips of its petals. One pleasure of identifying plants is looking closely at them and seeing things you are otherwise sure to miss.

We found another spectacular, species-rich serpentine stop at a wide pull-out where a small, dry, rocky creek went under the road, a bit east of milepost 6 on 17N04. It had a completely different flora from our lunch stop. We saw *Phacelia* (probably *hastata*), *Erigeron foliosus* (probably var. *confinis*, *Triteleia bridgesii*, a *Galium*, a *Lomatium*, *Garrya buxifolia*, Indian's dream fern, *Aspidotis densifolius*, littleleaf montia, *Montia parvifolia*, morning glory, *Calystegia*, *Lilium bolanderi*, *Erythronium californicum*, woolly sunflower, *Eriophyllum lanatum*, azalea *Rhododendron occidentale*, *Hieracium*, *Penstemon*, *Holodiscus*, coffeeberry, *Frangula californica* *Polygala*, and a *Prosartes* here.

A sloped meadow shortly uphill from milepost 3 on French Hill Rd was a third, distinct serpentine habitat. The Jeffrey pines and clumps of native grasses marked it as serpentine, too harsh for the non-native, pasture grasses. Pink flowers of showy phlox *Phlox speciosa* and Hooker's Indian pink *Silene hookeri* were a new treat, seen in the light rain settling in at the end of this day. A diverse meadow including *Calochortus tolmei*, *Triteleia bridgesii*, *Sanicula*, *Iris*, western dog violet, *Viola adunca*, blue-eyed grass *Sisyrinchium bellum*, *Horkelia*, *Perideridia*, *Castilleja*, death camas, *Zigadenus*, *Erigeron*, *Ranunculus*, *Sidalcea* etc., assured hours of fun botanizing in the future.

This day made us understand why botanists love serpentine flora. That toxic soil, overloaded with minerals like cadmium and nickel and deficient in nutrients, nevertheless supports a diverse array of tough and rare plants which could not make it in more fertile soils.

The beauty and excitement of this route was not confined to the serpentine. Wallflowers, *Erysimum capitatum*, yerba santa, *Eriodictyon californicum*, bleeding heart *Dicentra formosa*, three feet tall deer vetch, *Lotus crassifolius*, false lupine *Thermopsis robusta* (an uncommon species), tobacco brush, *Ceanothus velutinus*, fairybells (*Prosartes (Disporum)*), and countless others impressed, delighted, or puzzled us. Bright pink clusters of rhododendron *Rhododendron macrophyllum* flowers decorated a palette of dark, gray, and yellow-greens and amber-colored new growth of the shrubbery.

It was a long day of discovery, unusually rewarding with lots of rare species, beautiful scenes and vast vistas. This route is well worth repeating both earlier and later in the flowering season.

Murder in The Monastery

from “The Review” – The Group for
Beardless Irises, British Iris Society,
Issue 6, Autumn 2009

Philip Jones

One of the problems with PCIs is that in the height of summer they do not appear at their best. After flowering in May and early June all life seems to go out of the plants and they look unkempt. While they were still with us the flowers were undoubtedly beautiful and the variety of new hybrid forms from America was astonishing, but too quickly the memory fades as we contemplate the untidy mess we have to put up with from the beginning of July. And it gets worse. Throughout the summer until the beginning of September, as we return from nurseries and flower shows overflowing with "must have" plants and shrubs we have to face the perennial problem of where to put them. This is the time for ruthless decisions, for making space, for clearing out, and the untidy PCIs may well be the first to go.

In 2009 I decided to tackle this problem. I remember reading - and Brita [Carson, editor] has too, but unfortunately neither of us can remember where - that it is a good idea to give PCIs a short haircut. I cannot remember when this was meant to happen but I have noticed that about four weeks after flowering new foliage starts to appear. However, it does not appear very noticeable among the entangled untidy overgrown mess and can easily be missed. So it seemed like a good idea to experiment.

The PCIs were growing in three long rows in the Monastic vegetable garden. This was their third year and even without the experiment they were due to be divided in the autumn. I was going to give them a couple of weeks after flowering and then select plants to cut back at two week intervals. In the two weeks before the



experiment started, I took a number of photographs of the untidiness. It is the untidiness that needed to be examined. It is the untidiness that I think is the main problem with PCIs.

I had to be careful because I had made sixty or seventy crosses in search of my tidy "all the year round" graceful PCIs. So I was waiting for a few days. During this time I was away. Perhaps I should explain that nowadays I am chaplain to a Carmelite Monastery of enclosed nuns at Dysart. This is thirty miles away from the Monastery in Perth but I usually go into Perth a few times a week.

Unfortunately I was on call for the local hospitals and for these few days had to stay put. It was during these few days that a man in vows armed with a strimmer and with memories of having fought in the Korean War entered the vegetable garden and began to strim. He knew what to do with entangled undergrowth. The irises were cut down to size. They received a number one hair cut.

Not a green leaf to be seen. They'd all been done in, annihilated, cut down in their prime, murdered by a monk with a strimmer. For a brief moment — actually about forty five minutes — I had the thought that if I could find the strimmer

I could do some strimming of my own in the community. However, closer inspection revealed they were still alive - they were just hiding underground for a few weeks.

But my hybridising programme for 2009 had been cut short and my experiment with foliage was no longer to be staggered over several weeks but had been completed in one fell swoop. An interesting result of the new "all in one go" experiment was that one was able to see the new foliage very distinctly - when it eventually appeared. One was able to notice shades of green that reflected the colours of the flowers and the varying narrowness of leaves all of which gets lost when the plants are mixed up with each other. I am now growing the same plants together to form separate clumps.

The irises have been moved. They have a new home now in Dysart in the enclosed Carmel. I feel they are quite safe here. I have not enquired if any of the sisters has a license for a shotgun.

I have never had problems growing PCIs from seed in the past but when I moved into Dysart last Christmas I seemed to lose the plot. I was a bit short of space but I thought that an unused passage-way at the bottom of a flight of steps near my front door would be ideal for growing PCIs from seed. This was a mistake. Although it looked up to the sky it was too dark and too wet. The seed trays were too shallow and although there was good germination a lot of them damped off. Even after transferring some seedlings into pots they still continued to throw in the towel because I think everything was too wet. However, seed that was planted in a larger and deeper seed tray grew well - rather, one half did. I think there was a slight slope because in the bottom end hardly any seed germinated at all.

I am beginning to realise that the reason there was no problem in the past was probably because there was always good light and good drainage. I am now starting to grow some of the species and I will have to be extra careful. I will be using mushroom boxes which are deeper than the usual seed trays. I think this is important

because the very slender roots can be quite long and I want them to be free of the bottom surface. I will be adding plenty of grit and also, I think, plenty of light, fresh air and drainage. In the past I tended to plant seedlings out when they were quite small. Once they are growing in well drained soil with a mulch round them I feel they can weather the storm and the sun. As I say the roots go down quite a long way. However, leaving nothing to chance I will still try two or three options and see how we get on without fear of the strimmer.

WEB SITE UPDATES

There are a few new updates to the SPCNI web site. The front page now highlights the Society's new Power Point presentation "Welcome to the Beauty of Pacific Coast Iris"; a Bulletin Board announcement calls attention to the three new CDs (the Power Point Presentation, the Almanac Index, and the Color Photo CD); Kathleen's photo of *Iris tenax* and cow parsnip on Saddle Mountain that used to be on the front page is now in an "additional photo" page under Wild Iris > *Iris tenax*.

Further changes are in progress. Anyone who spots an item on the website in obvious need of updating should contact Website Manager Steve Ayala with the information

FULL COLOR ALMANAC



To see this wonderful Diane Whitehead photograph of a Ryan Grisso seedling in full color, take up the offer of digital membership.

Report from our Eastern U.S correspondent: David Schmieder

I sent out a request to all (a dozen or so) members east of the MS River for any comments they might not mind sharing in the upcoming issue. I was very pleased to hear back from three of them, and am forwarding what they said. We have no idea of what is of general interest and are not eager to use up space with notes of what is just enjoyable to us, but do want to contribute whatever might fit into the scheme of things.

Susan Lambiris, Raleigh, NC: "I am holding my breath hoping that a large order of new iris (at least by my standards) from Bay View Gardens will come through their dangerous first winter in better order than usual. We had an unusually large amount of snow and some good low (though not too low) temperatures, which I think may be good when new iris are trying to get established. NC winters often oscillate between spring-like warmth and hard cold snaps. Such a rapid alternation of temperatures does not seem to damage established clumps but makes the new ones all too susceptible to rot. Fortunately, this year we have not had that, and to date I think I have only lost one new iris. Of course I can't be sure until we get past mid-April--but there have been many years when I had already known all my new iris were dead by the beginning of March.

Best wishes to all my fellow iris-lovers who struggle to introduce the Pacificas--both species and hybrids--to the 'right coast'!"

James Harrison, Asheville, NC reports that his other activities, now including politics, have been limiting his involvement with the PCI. "However, I have germinated and successfully grown some. Attached is a photo of a beauty that bloomed for the first time in 2008. It is very likely a Ghio seedling, and I will be curious to see if it is still here this year."



James Harrison's seedling

Al Bullock, northern VA: "I have/had a couple dozen PCN's, planted in two different areas of the yard. One group is under a tall willow oak in the back and the other is beneath a dogwood in the front. I have yet to have any blooms, but as the Cubs fans say, 'Wait till next year'. We had a total of 36 inches of snow from two storms in early February. The group in the front seems to have come through the snow pack very well. Here's hoping!"

David Schmieder, Concord, MA: "I have been growing only seedling PCIs for many years now, and my attrition rate has been pretty high. So during what I thought was a much too cold and wet spring and summer of 2009, I was pleased to see several new seedlings blooming, as well as what appeared to me as improvement in the bloom of older clumps that had been moved. Our favorite new seedling (05SP-PA3-1) came from seedlings from SIGNA seed (thought to be mostly from *I. tenax*) and their progeny. It seemed to have coloration (but not form) similar to 'Bubble Gum' as pictured in the Spring, 2002 issue and a Ryan Grisso seedling from 'Bubble Gum' pictured in the Spring 2009 issue.



New favorite 05SP-PA3-1

Our favorite clump that had been moved (99-JW-2) was one of several plants brought to the AIS Region I hybridizers' meeting at our house in 2000 by John White. He had germinated SPCNI seed from crosses between *I. tenax* and 'Mantra' or 'Night Editor' that winter. In 2003 I gathered seed from some of those, and the seedlings that resulted were crossed with some close relatives of 05SP-PA3-1. In 2009 06PA-3-3&5 were the first of those to bloom, in a converted LA bed by the driveway.



Favorite clump 99-JW-2

Seed that I ordered from the 2009 SPCNI seed exchange included 'Canyon Snow', which reputedly grows well everywhere, a mix from Debby Cole's garden, and some more *I. tenax*. I am hoping genes for some more modern forms might be included, and look forward to seeing if they will mix nicely to produce some more outlandish survivor PCIs. I recently read someone's opinion that the plants manipulate us rather than the other way around. That's OK with me - they will have to survive here if they want to take over gardens everywhere in the Eastern U.S. And along the way to better survivability and plant habit I get to enjoy their endless variation in performance, form, color and pattern!"



06PA-3-3



06PA-3-5

Pacific Coast Iris sources

Aitken's Salmon Creek Garden, 608 NW 119th St., Vancouver, WA 96985. (360) 572-4472, fax (360) 576-7012, website www.flowerfantasy.net, e-mail: aitken@flowerfantasy.net. Catalog is \$3

Bay View Gardens, 1201 Bay Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060. (831) 423-3656 (call after dark, Pacific Time) fax (832) 423-7610, e-mail ghiobayview@surfnetusa.com. Catalog is \$3.

Wildwood Gardens, 33326 S. Dickey Prairie Rd. PO Box 250, Molalla, OR 97038-0250. (503) 829-3102, e-mail: gardens@molalla.net. Catalog is \$3 – includes color pictures of PCI

Broadleigh Gardens, Bishop's Hull, Taunton, Somerset, TA4 1AE, England, website: www.broadleighbulbs.co.uk (EC sales only)

Cascadia Iris Gardens, PO Box 2520, Woodinville, WA 98072-2520 (425)-770-5984 e-mail: Patrick@CascadiaIrisGardens.com website: <http://www.cascadiairisgardens.com/default.asp>

Pacific Rim Native Plant Nursery, Paige and Pat Woodard, 44305 Old Orchard Road, Chilliwack, BC V2R 1A9, Canada (604) 792-9279, fax (604) 792-1891, website: www.hillkeep.ca PCI species. Mail order worldwide. No printed catalog. Garden and nursery visits by appointment.

Oregon Native Plant Nursery, Douglas Chadwick, PO Box 886, Woodburn, OR (503) 981-2353, e-mail oregonnativeplant@yahoo.com for comprehensive plant list. Retail sales at nursery by appointment and mail-order United States customers only.

Sunshine and Dirt, Heidi Blyth, PO Box 1097, Pearcedale, Victoria 3912, Australia. 0359-786-980, e-mail heidib333@hotmail.com



Iris 'Broadleigh Ann' from Broadleigh Gardens

New SPCNI Members Spring 2010

Beth Berry
2391 Welcome CT
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Jennifer Garcia
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Tyler TX 75705
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Brian White
445 Trowbridge ST
Santa Rosa CA 95401
brianwhiteinsonoma@gmail.com

One new member chose not to be listed.

COPY THIS PAGE!

SEE PHOTOS PAGE 19 and 20

SPCNI Trek 2010

SPCNI will sponsor a Trek in SW Oregon on Monday and Tuesday, June 14-15, 2010. It will be headquartered at The Windmill Inn in Roseburg, about a 3-hour drive south on I-5 from Portland. Buses will depart the hotel at 8:30 am and return by 5 pm each day.

Participants will see *innominata*, *innominata-tenax* hybrids, *tenax*, *tenax-chrysophylla* hybrids, and *chrysophylla*, plus exciting geology and lots of other wildflowers. No banquet or program is planned; dinner space will be reserved at local restaurants.

Deadline for registration is May 15, 2010, and registration is limited to 48 participants. If you're in search of roommates, please say so and specify number of roommates desired. The registration fee includes excellent box lunches for both days.

Trek leaders Jean Witt and Debby Cole welcome interested SIGNA members, Native Plant Society members and friends to a maximum of 48 participants.

Registrations should be sent to:

Bob Sussman, Trek Registrar
12142 Alison Drive,
Santa Rosa Valley, CA 93012

phone: (805) 523-8604
e-mail: matilija@gte.net

Yes, I want to Trek with SPCNI in 2010

(name) _____

(address) _____

(phone) _____ (email) _____

and so does my friend:

(name) _____

(address) _____

(phone) _____ (email) _____

I enclose a check for \$105.00 per person.

(The above information will not be sold, traded or disclosed to outsiders)

Please inform SPCNI of any dietary restrictions.

Contact The Windmill Inn for reservations, 1-541-673-0901 or rosgm@windmillinns.com and be sure to mention SPCNI. Our group rate will be \$78.40 per night, which includes a generous continental breakfast

***If you would be willing to be a driver of a 12 passenger van, please contact Bob. Your registration fee will be waived.

***Biologists/Botanists: If you would like to share your expertise on the companion wildflowers we see, please let us know here.

TREK STARS

Long stemmed *Iris innominata* »»



«« *Iris tenax*

Iris chrysophylla »»



«« *I. tenax* x *I. chrysophylla* with *I. tenax*
Johnson Mtn Road south of Powers OR

Just some of the wonderful iris species to be seen on the SPCNI 2010 Trek

TREK STARS



«« *Delphinium* species and *Aquilegia formosa*



Erythronium species »»



«« Big Deer Vetch, *Lotus crassifolius*

A few of the wildflowers to be seen on the SPCNI 2010 Trek