

Pacific Iris

Almanac of the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris



Sidney B. Mitchell Medal goes to ‘Foggy Days’



California's Joe Ghio has struck gold again, winning the 2017 Sidney B. Mitchell with his 2007 introduction ‘Foggy Days’. This mid-season through late blooming cultivar won an HM in 2010 and an AM in 2014.



Photographs—Bob Seaman

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.

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Annual, paper	\$15.00	\$18.00
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Use Paypal to join SPCNI online at <http://pacificcoastiris.org/JoinOnline.htm> (SEE NOTE BELOW)

International currencies accepted

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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

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PACIFIC IRIS DEADLINES: March 15 and September 15.

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When you order seeds or extend memberships via PayPal, please send a message separately to the appropriate email address (seedex@pacificcoastiris.org or 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
5885 Cowles Mt. Blvd., 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

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**PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE
FROM THE SPCNI TREASURER**

Prices listed are for SPCNI members in the US.

For out of US, please add \$3.00.

PRINT ARTICLES

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

A Guide to the Pacific Coast Irises

Victor A. Cohen, 1967

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

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

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

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

All three volumes, \$20.00

Diseases of the Pacific Coast Iris

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

Almanac Index, 2005,

includes the following indices: author, subject, species,
hybrids, \$4.00, or download 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.

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 win-
ners, gardens landscaped with PCIs, and culture tips.

Ready to play for individuals or groups, \$9.00

USERS GROUP ON YAHOO:

SPCNI has a users group site at

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

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

Editor's notes

It's a mixed bag in this issue, with a wide range
of articles on different aspects of PCI growing.
President Bob Sussman talks about the
difficulties of growing for commerce in
Southern California, where the dry and hot
climate makes life tough for many varieties.

Garry Knipe tells us of his project to expand
the range for PCI in the opposite direction,
using *I. hartwegii australis*, to increase cold
hardiness. He also reports on this year's crop of
turquoise factor seedlings.

Kathleen Sayce is also interested in using
I. hartwegii australis, and reports on growing this
sometimes tricky sub-species in special grow-
ing conditions in her garden in the Pacific
Northwest.

Kevin Vaughn has had trouble in his Northwest
garden—a wet winter and spring created
havoc. He still managed to flower some lovely
seedlings though—you can see them at the rear
of this issue.

Debby Cole has been fixated on sex—
reporting on the sex life of a salmon colored
Iris douglasiana, and on the fertility of 'Santa
Rosalita'.

Your help is called for in many different ways -
Bob Seaman needs help to create a living
archive of older PCI varieties; you can help
contribute Jean Witt's iris varieties to the
University of Washington Botanic Garden; you
can assist Garry Knipe by growing some of his
cold-hardy seed available from the seed
exchange; you can contribute to the exchange
(more donors are urgently needed) and last—
but surely not least — contributions to *Pacific
Iris* are always welcomed.

Gareth

Pacific Coast Iris Time Again in Southern California

Words and photographs—Bob Sussman

Fall has begun for us in the northern hemisphere and that means planting time and specifically for me it's time to begin planting and dividing Pacific Coast Irises. The "how" of all this works (and fails too) on a big scale is my contribution to this edition. While I do not know all the answers (or even all the questions), I can claim that I have indeed killed more Pacific Coast Irises (PCIs) than any one else.

We have a family native plant nursery in Ventura County, California, just above Los Angeles County and horticultural failure on a commercial scale can be expensive. Our typical temperatures are a good 10 to 15 degrees above those in the PCIs' native range. However, under the right conditions they will grow just fine in this area and a lot of people like growing them in their gardens.

There is a world of difference between growing PCIs in the garden and commercially growing and hybridizing new varieties. To grow them commercially there are two major considerations. Firstly, how do you produce the product in an efficient and commercially viable way? And then what do people want to plant in their gardens?

To produce PCIs requires knowledge of what to do each season. That is, you do not divide them in spring or summer - at least not in this location. Early to mid-spring is when we cross for our new hybrids. In late spring and summer we do not do much of anything to our stock plants except collect seed pods from our crosses and other pods from open pollinations (OP). Many of these OP seeds end up in the Society's Seed Exchange and represent a good chance of finding some interesting plants.. The heavy work of dividing and planting takes place from early fall through mid-winter. This is what the production calendar looks like.

Now that we know what we're doing as far as growing and hybridizing - what types of irises should we grow?

The production process is a lengthy one. Creating a new hybrid and producing enough to sell can take four to six years. If anywhere along that time line the crop/iris fails it is probably a good idea not to regrow that one, especially when others are growing just fine.

Many PCIs grow easily within a 100 mile radius of the San Francisco area but they struggle in Southern California, where we are. After several years of crossing and growing we have several good irises to work with. Note too, we're still sort of within the "growing range" but if we were in Arizona it would probably be better to grow cactus or maybe desert mallows (we grow and hybridize desert mallows too).



Left - Unidentified species-like variety

So finally after several years of ups and downs – early lucky success, then failure, (because our success was beginner’s luck) and then learning a bit about what we’re doing, we will finally have a large selection of new irises for sale for people’s gardens in the Southern California area. There is a wide range of varieties, from species-like forms through to more modern looking types. At this point some are named, but for others we need to come up with a name.

Here are a few with more of a species look....

Many of the species types look like what you’d see in a natural field but these all branch and have two to four flowers per flower capsule. Some are seedlings from named hybrids like ‘Blue Moment’ (below) or crosses like ‘Burnt Sugar’ x ‘Poppy’ (bottom below). The parentage of the variety in the opposite column is unknown.



These species-like varieties tend to be easier to grow with many, slightly smaller flowers. At this stage you might be wondering why we would divide and grow PCI’s that look like wild seedlings? It is because some people like the wilder, more natural look and dividing produces identical plants. This, of course, gives the landscape designer total control over color and structure as opposed to planting out seedlings of unknown attributes.



Here are a few that have more of a more modern look, although some are between the two. They are all unnamed but are the product of seed from named irises.





This variety is 'Spinning Sarah' and has standards that stand straight up - we are using it in other crosses and it seems to be a dominant trait.



This is 'Bonnie Rose', and my educated guess is that it is a 'Canyon Snow' seedling from open pollination.



I am unsure of the name of the blue/purple variety on the previous page but it has a very hybridized background, and is one of the few blues that seems to grow fairly well in Southern California.



The red is 'Dr. Richie'. It has persisted to grow at the nursery in spite of my mistreatment. It is branched, and has two to three big flowers per stem. This iris with big thick flowers grows so well that it is pretty close to what I would call aggressive. Yes, blame it all on our Dr. Richie.

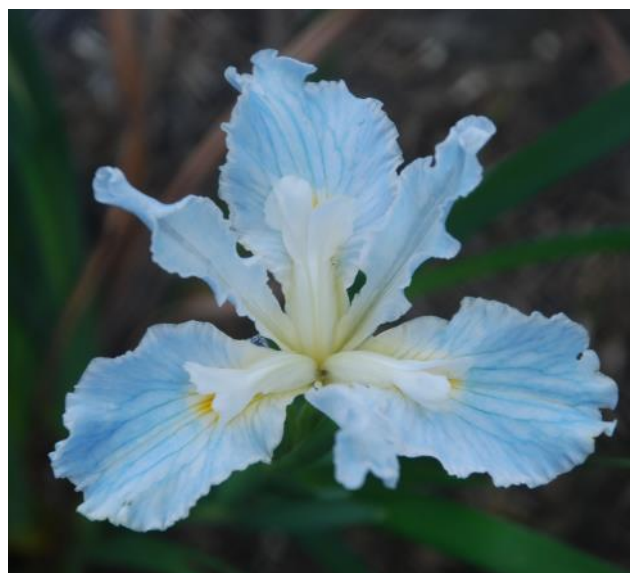
Commercial hybridizing and growing is completely different from hobbyist breeding. For a start, you do not see the first flowers from a cross for two to three years, and then presuming you have an iris you want to grow on for sale, it takes another three years of growing and dividing before you have enough to sell as well as more for the future. At any point in the long process some will sadly kick the bucket but hopefully the ones you're left with will not, once they leave the nursery!

Finally, there are lots of people to thank for making things run at the SPCNI. Thankfully, they all have various talents that I don't.

Best regards

Bob

The quest for turquoise



Garry Knipe's long-term quest to breed PCI flowers with increased amounts of turquoise continues.

He reports that 1410A (top above) has lovely flowers but its stem is slightly too small.

1505 (bottom above) has good light blue veins, a reasonable height of stem, and the flowers did not have trouble opening.

He reports that he has made a lot of crosses with this seedling and looks forward to seeing how it does in the future.

Children of a salmon-flowered *I. douglasiana*

Words and pictures—Debby Cole

In 2005 Jean Witt and I were exploring the shore areas of the Rogue River, between Gold Beach and Agness, in southern Oregon. We knew the Agness area was a hotbed of *innominatas*, and that there were *douglasianas* on the coast; but might there be hybrids between the two? There had been a note in the seed exchange material (I chaired the exchange for several years) mentioning yellow-flowered *douglasianas* in the Illinois River drainage, and we were just northwest of there.

For the most part we stayed on the southern side of the river, along Forest Service Road 33, aka Jerry's Flat Road from Gold Beach. However, given the opportunity to get a different perspective, we crossed to the northern riverbank at the bridge where Lobster Creek enters the Rogue. It was early evening, and visibility was fading, but Jean was looking up the road banks and said "Stop!" It took a minute to find a safe parking spot nearby, but then we walked back to the area of interest.

The slope seemed to have been deliberately barked and planted, once we pushed our way above native blackberries, salal and mahonias, but we could see no human habitat nearby. There were multiple sprays of broad iris foliage and a few lavender blooms, but our attention was riveted to a clump with a SALMON-COLORED flower. The light was so poor by then that we couldn't get decent photos, but Jean spotted an old seedpod on the plant and took it home.

Jean planted the seeds from that pod and raised several plants from them, from which she contributed seed to the 2011 SPCNI seed exchange. I finally got some of that seed, and raised five plants from it. The first to bloom was a really poor dark lavender, spidery-formed and unattractive (despite blooming first!), and I discarded it immediately.

The following year saw several blooms on a vigorous light lavender broad-leaved clump (picture #4), two mid-yellow-flowered stalks on a slender-leaved clump (#3), and one stalk on a slender-leaved clump with yellow-veined cream flowers (#2). This year, the third year of bloom for these plants, the lavender and the cream flowered clumps were magnificent, the mid-yellow-flowered clump managed still only two stalks, and the fifth plant finally bloomed—three stalks of light yellow, gold-hearted, red-veined flowers (#1).

I'm no botanist, but the progeny seem to me to be pretty good evidence of *douglasiana* x *innominata* parentage, and fairly well in line with Mendelian ratios. I made some crosses among the cream, the yellow, and the red-veined clumps, as my interest is in the warm tones, but next year I will also play with the lavenders x yellows and see what turns up. Suggestions are welcome. Expect a report in another five years.



Light lavender, picture #4

Further pictures overleaf

An interesting plant

Words and picture

—Debby Cole

One day Jean Witt brought over a plant—actually a pair of plants, although one hardly ever blooms—that she wanted to share with me. She said Ben Hager had sent them to her many years ago, for use in hybridizing for iris with lots of buds and branching, and toughness. I can't check this with her now, but they seem to be douglasianas, possibly with some *I munzii* influence. The one that blooms most years is narrow-leaved, has smallish purple flowers, and this year had three branches with three buds each. See the attached picture. Alas, it was taken at twilight, and the flash obliterated the coloring, but at least the branching is clearly shown. I sent seed to the seed exchange.



Picture #3



Picture #2



Picture #1



Overcoming climate—An experiment with *Iris attica* and *Iris hartwegii australis*

Words and pictures—Kathleen Sayce

Gardening on the coast in the Pacific Northwest, I grow many hybrids and several species of Pacifica iris. The vigour of tall bearded iris is daunting—miss a year to divide and transplant, and my garden is overrun. I had to use explosives to clear areas (Joking! It just *felt* like black powder was more effective than a spade). But a bearded iris did creep into my collection seven years ago.

In 2010, the North American Rock Garden Society's western study weekend was in Medford, Oregon. A tiny bearded iris, *Iris attica*, came home with me. I planted it in the sunny end of a flower bed; it flowered the next year, and then began a slow decline. Four years ago, I removed it from the garden and planted it in a styrofoam box.

In this new container, deep and well drained, tucked under an east-facing eave, *Iris attica* flourished and flowered. Which was when I discovered that squirrels, chipmunks or voles were eating the flower buds as they began to emerge and show color. But the plant was now sturdy and healthy, so despite no flowers, *Iris attica* was thriving in its new home.



Last year we rebuilt the cold frame and added a band of heavy 1/2 inch wire mesh about a foot high all around the edge.

This spring, when I saw buds emerging on *Iris attica*, I put the box in the cold frame. The result you can see, sans nibbling, is a planter packed with flowers.

So, you are wondering, what is the link to Pacifica iris?

I also have *Iris hartwegii australis* in my garden. This plant was grown from wild-collected seed, collected decades before it was a listed species, then grown in a garden, and seeds from that collection passed to me. It flowered once and has been declining ever since. It's native to mountains in southern California, which means the long wet winters in my garden are probably wetter than it likes. It might quite like a box under the eaves.

Richard Richards told me the following about its native habitat: "*I. h. a.* grows in its native range in decomposed granite with superb drainage. It gets maybe 15 inches of water, occasionally in the form of snow, from November to April. In the summer it gets a thunder shower about once a month. There are often two or three inches of plant litter, mostly pine needles, above the young shoots in the late winter, and it grows up through this litter."

This spring, I dug up one clump of *Iris hartwegii australis*, and tucked it in a styrofoam planter with a highly porous mix of coarse perlite and potting soil. I added some fresh compost and biochar as well. To help it feel at home, I dressed the top of the planting mixture with granite gravel (chicken scratch), as its natal mountains are geologically old granites of the Transverse Ranges in southern California. Tucked along the eaves, the rainfall is cut to less than 40 inches (102 cm), also more like its home area. This planter is close to a hose bib, and gets half days of sun, when we have sun. Summer soaking to mimic thunderstorms high in the mountains is easy.

My operational theory is that Pacific Coast native seeds planted in these boxes do better than in thin-walled, dark-colored plastic pots, because the soil mix is deeper and cooler. I also grow native *Erythronium*, *Lilium* and other bulbs in these boxes, where they can live for several years without transplanting. PCI seedlings do well too, though their roots will push through the styrofoam if you leave them in there too long. In the winter, the well-insulated walls also protect the roots from freezing—just as in the ground.



After a summer in the box, the transplanted clump of *Iris hartwegii australis* had doubled in size and had many more leaves. I will be watching closely to see if this plant flowers next year—and if so, will know that controlling rainfall in high rainfall areas is another key to good growth.



Meanwhile, I have started making hypertufa planters, from a mix of perlite, cement, water, and a range of natural fibers. So far I have tested peat, coir and fibrous compost from an anaerobic digester: these materials all make good planters. The advantage of using hypertufa planters is excellent drainage for the roots, as these planters wick water out all surfaces and breathe more than clay or plastic pots can. Roots are cooler as well. This kind of planter might work well in warm climates too.

This fall I will be transplanting PCI clumps into the new hypertufa planters, and tracking their performance in coming years. Stay tuned for more information.

New Members

We welcome the following new members to the Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris.

We always welcome news on how our new members are faring in growing PCI, and any challenges they face.

Nancy Biagini, Santa Clara, CA USA

Ginette Chin, Bothell, WA USA

Diana Holmlund, Allyn, WA USA

Rebecca Lance, Sonoma, CA USA

Chris Mackay, Aberdeen, United Kingdom

Gwen McDevitt, Beaconsfield, Tas, Australia

Alexander Mockos, Lake Forest Park, WA USA

Richard Morton, Aalesund, Norway

Donna Thomas, Seattle, WA USA

Cold Hardy PCI

Words and pictures - Garry Knipe

As part of an informal effort to extend the range of the Pacific Coast Iris into colder climates, a handful of our members have been making crosses of potentially cold hardy PCIs and sending seed to folks in Maine, Massachusetts, New York, and other cold winter locations. Over the years, there have been many successes.

As part of this effort, Richard Richards sent me a number of his best plants derived from his crossing of 'Gravitas' x *I. hartwegii australis*. 'Gravitas' is a vigorous modern Ghio hybrid with prominent veining. *Iris hartwegii australis* is a species PCI that grows in the snowy high elevations of Southern California. Richard has been growing these for many years and during that time he intentionally watered them very heavily to eliminate those having problems with wet soil.

This past spring I created lots of seed by crossing many of Richard's plants with a big clump of a seedling from 'Canyon Snow' x *I. tenax* that I have grown for many years. 'Canyon Snow' is known to be a very good grower in various climates from Southern California all the way up through Washington state. *Iris tenax* is the northernmost growing PCI species and has proven to be useful in producing cold hardy hybrids.

I have already sent some of the resulting seed to PCI growers in Washington, Oregon, New York, Canada, and Germany. A large amount of this seed will also be available in this year's SPCNI seed exchange, listed as:

((('Gravitas' x *I. hartwegii australis*) X ('Canyon Snow' x *I. tenax*))

I strongly encourage anyone interested in growing cold hardy PCI to give this seed a try.



'Canyon Snow' x I. tenax — grown and photographed by Garry Knipe

To help us extend the range of the PCI, any folks living in a cold climate who have one or more PCI that have survived a few years are strongly encouraged to make some intentional crosses and then send the seed to the seed exchange to share with others.

By sharing seed back and forth, cold hardy strains will best be created. Growers in cold regions can identify the best cold hardy plants, make crosses, and supply seed to others. Those in warmer regions can grow the progeny under more favorable conditions (acting as a backup for these strains) and making crosses to add new colors, patterns, and other cold hardy genes.

Also, any people visiting high elevation wild PCI populations can help by collecting seed or using collected pollen to create seed with vigorous growers in their own garden.

With a little luck and effort we can develop strains that significantly improve the cold hardiness of the PCI. Thank you to all who have been helping with this project and to those who might like to join us. Keep the seed flowing!



*All images on this page:
'Gravitas' x I. hartwegii australis
Bred by Richard Richards.
Photographed by Garry Knipe*

Plantings in memory of Jean Witt

The University of Washington Botanic Gardens began in 1934 with the establishment of the Washington Park Arboretum. Over the ensuing decades the UW Botanic Gardens has grown to two sites and, with the creation of the Center for Urban Horticulture in 1980, now encompasses 310 acres on the shores of Lake Washington in Seattle, Washington. The Arboretum has one of the largest collections of temperate woody plants in North America. In some garden areas in the Arboretum, such as the Woodland Garden, Witt Winter Garden and Rhododendron Glen, perennials have long been a part of the display. And in recent years, the UW Botanic Gardens has included more perennials in its collections, both at the Arboretum and at the Center for Urban Horticulture.

In the Arboretum, the creation of the Pacific Connections Garden—a collection of five eco-geographic plant groupings from parts of the Pacific Rim with climates similar to the Pacific Northwest—has also resulted in a greater emphasis on perennials as part of a demonstration of the flora from each of those regions. One of those regions is Cascadia, which focuses on plants of the Pacific Northwest. And this has resulted in the inclusion of more iris species and cultivated varieties. The Center for Urban Horticulture also features demonstration gardens, including a perennial garden with several iris cultivars, and more recently a growing collection of Pacific Coast Irises.

Jean Witt had a long involvement with the UW Botanic Gardens, and her husband Joe Witt was the curator at the Arboretum for over 30 years. The Winter Garden was named in his honor after his untimely passing in 1984. Jean's contribution to horticulture and especially iris breeding and promotion was long appreciated locally, nationally and internationally.

A unit of the Lake Washington Garden Club, of which she was a member, continues to volunteer regularly in the Witt Winter Garden. It seems only fitting that we should feature some of her many Iris hybrids at the Washington Park Arboretum. We would be delighted to receive donations of some of her hybrids, which will be planted in prominent locations in the Woodland Garden and Witt Winter Garden and in adjacent beds along Azalea Way.

If you have some of her introductions and would like to donate plants for this effort, please contact me in one of the ways below so we can make satisfactory arrangements. And thank you!

Raymond J. Larson, M.S.

Curator of Living Collections and the Otis Douglas Hyde Herbarium
University of Washington Botanic Gardens

Box 354115, 3501 NE 41st St, Seattle, WA 98195-4115

PH 206.616.1118 FX 206.685.2692 EM halcyon@uw.edu

uwbotanicgardens.org



Iris tenax—Jean Witt

Trouble in Paradise!

Words and pictures — Kevin Vaughn

In September of 2010 I moved to Oregon with the promise of living in a climate in which I could grow virtually any kind of iris with ease and there would be one spectacular season after another. In general, this has been true. Some of the years here have been exceptional.

2017 has not been one of these.

This all started with the rain last fall that seem never to stop until May. Normally we have a drizzle in Oregon; this year it was a deluge at times. In April of '17, I had only three days without rain and by early May we had a rainy season with 45" of rain.

The daffodils responded with abnormally large and fairly persistent blooms despite this onslaught. The irises were less amused. Some of our local growers had all sorts of rot in bearded iris although I escaped most of that because I grow them in raised beds and/or on a hillside.

The PCNs were less happy. My main planting of PCNs was an 8' x 30' bed on the north side of my house. Although the bed is fairly flat it sits at the top of a hill and in my previous seasons had never been flooded. About the middle of March I noticed that there were patches of standing water even in this bed and then rot/disease began to spread from the middle of the bed towards the south edge. Several hundred plants were dead and many others were looking poor. Bloom in this area of the bed was ~5%.

Amazingly at the north end of bed, which had a bit more slope, everything not only survived but bloomed. Although I had a mix of hybrids from a number of hybridizers, the Vernon Wood plants were consistent survivors and bloomed normally or even more abundantly than normal. 'Sea Admiral' had 12 bloom stalks on a small clump, for example.

Not all was lost for my PCN season. A raised bed of seedlings near my patio bloomed almost 100% in their first season and a longer bed in the yard and planted later, bloomed at ~60%.

Cultivars in the long shade garden along the road all survived and bloomed beautifully.

Oddly, many made almost no seed this year.

Whether this was because of the rainy season or general plant stress, I'm not sure.



*Kevin Vaughn seedling—
more on pages 25-26*

I have left the bed with mass destruction mostly unplanted this summer and added another 2-3" of soil onto the bed and treated the entire area with a mixture of Terrachlor and Subdue fungicides. Before I put more irises in this area I'll also treat the plants with more Subdue to keep things as happy as possible.

With the TBIS and Region 13 groups visiting my garden next coming spring, I'm hoping that we'll have the bloom that we think more typical in Oregon.

Iris hartwegii australis

This issue we have two articles that deal with the southern Californian PCI *Iris hartwegii australis* — Kathleen Sayce has written about the difficulties growing this intriguing variety in her Washington garden, while Garry Knipe has told of his plan to introduce the variety's cold hardiness into the PCI gene pool.

Richard Richards has played a large part in bringing the southern Hartweg's iris to wider notice.



He says the crosses with 'Gravitas' gave the best seedlings— 'Orchid Resprite' crosses were also good but the crosses with 'Blue Sage' were a spectacular failure— one ugly seedling bloomed once.

A "few Junes ago" Richard visited the stands of this special iris in the San Bernardino mountains with Bob Sussman and Ken Walker. These are some of the images that Bob took on that trip.

A chimera among the Kalmias

Words and pictures—Gareth Winter

In my front garden I have a little clutch of seedlings I grew from seed from the SPCNI at least fifteen years ago. According to my immaculate records, three seedlings from 'Magic Sea' grew. One was average, one was good and one was exceptional. Within a few years one of these died – and of course, it was the exceptional one. Murphy's Law we call it.



The good one

Then this season another little strange thing happened – the best of the remaining seedlings threw up a couple of interesting flowers – with a colour change.



The exceptional one

For the next few years the others got forgotten, but somehow survived, despite being swamped by the shrubs that surrounded them. A couple of years ago I attacked the garden, removing the shrubs, and replanting with some kalmias and peonies. To my amazement some of the 'Magic Sea' seedlings reappeared. Needless to say, the very best of them was not one that was miraculously resuscitated.

Fortunately the good one had survived, and has somehow managed to increase slightly over the past two years. It must have exceptional genes for hardiness if not for beauty.



The blue that was such a feature of these seedlings has largely been replaced by white, although the deep blue veining remains.

So what happened?

This kind of change is called a chimera, named after the mythological Greek beast made up from the parts of other animals. However, in this case it is a matter of a genetic mix – a “point mutation” to be precise. This means that at some stage a mutation has occurred, which affects the flowers on that particular stem.



Basically, these plants have two sets of cells which have different genetics, thus the white portion of the flower has different genes to the blue portion. At first that sounds like a fun thing, and a breeder might be interested in trying to produce offspring with this genetic oddity, but that will not occur. When the sexual parts are being formed, only one set of genes is selected, so progeny of point mutations will only have one set to provide.

As you know, when you cross two different varieties, each contributes one set of gametes, and together they form the new variety – all the cells came from the one seed and are identical. All cells in the new variety will have the same set of genes, whereas chimeras have two different sets of genes operating in different parts of the plant.

Interestingly, sometime a chimera can give us a little clue as to how the genetic of colour might work. In this case, the absence of blue is accompanied by the absence of the turquoise factor evident in the blue flower, suggesting the two are aligned with each other. It appears the deep veining is not associated with the blue background colouring.

I will keep an eye on the plant next year and report back if it keeps up its chimera display!

Calling all old PCI growers!

Are you an old PCI grower?

Or should I rephrase that?

Perhaps it will sound not ageist if I ask if you grow old PCI varieties.

If so, you can help Bob Seaman of Leonine Iris build up an living archive of older types no longer found in commerce.

The remarkable progress made in creating new forms among PCIs since the mid 20th century has meant many older varieties are not commercially viable, but it is important that someone should gather these older forms together. The archive will allow gardeners and researcher s alike to see a physical representation of the way PCIs have changed in the past 60 years.

If you can help Bob, he is happy to buy or trade for plants. You can contact him at Leonine Iris

kcisbob@leonineiris.com.

Sex in the city—garden

Words by Debby Cole

Santa Rosalita is one of my favorite PCI, blooming early and generously in a color scheme unlike that of any other I have. In all the years I've grown it, I've never found a bee-pod on it. Why not???



'Santa Rosalita' - photograph Bob Seaman

For a long time I just assumed that since temperatures here were usually still pretty cool when 'she' bloomed, the bees probably hadn't yet swung into action. After all, there's another cultivar right next to 'her' that blooms at the same time. This year, however, it was a little warmer and I could see there were bees around, but still no signs of pregnancy.

Then two last buds opened, and I decided to check out the other possibility. After the flowers had warmed and dried for several hours, I looked at them very closely and discovered why the bees were so frustrated: 'her' stigmatic lip, where the pollen has to go to fertilize the flower, is very small and very tightly close to the petal.

Yet, even if pollen got in there, was 'Santa Rosalita' fertile? With my trusty tweezers I nabbed an anther from another cultivar, 'Chualar', nearby. Somehow I manipulated 'her' into exposing her hidden recess and managed to wipe some pollen into it. Then, for insurance, I repeated the process on the other bloom, with an anther from another cultivar, 'Silent Witness'. Then I resolutely ignored them for a week.

Yes, 'Santa Rosalita' is fertile. The two ovaries swelled into modest pods, and the pods eventually ripened and yielded seed, which looks imminently viable. 'Her' two partners should produce attractive coloration in their offspring, and I sent the seed to the SPCNI seed exchange. Perhaps someone will write another chapter to this story in another year or two.



'Santa Rosalita' is a Joe Ghio introduction from 1996, and won an Award of Merit in 2006.

Photograph above of a 'Santa Rosalita' seedling ex SPCNI seed pool, by Kathleen Sayce.

Welcome to the 2017-18 Seed Exchange

Find us online at:

http://www.pacificcoastiris.org/spcni_seedexchange.html

Before placing your order, please read the following information carefully.

Pricing : All seed packets are priced at \$3.00
Postage and handling for domestic orders is \$5.00
Postage and handling for international orders is \$10.00 for up to 20 packets (please pay for postage 2x if ordering more than 20 packets of seeds).

For Example:

* If you buy 20 packets and it's a domestic order you pay \$65

* If it's an international order of 20 packets you pay \$70

Special note: Items on the list marked as S (small) or XS (extra small) are limited to one packet per variety per order .

Two Easy Ways To Place Your Order:

1. **Online** at http://www.pacificcoastiris.org/spcni_seedexchange.html

Members can view the seed list and photos of pod parents; purchase membership or renewal; place an order online; and pay with PayPal. For our international members, please note that foreign currencies are accepted by PayPal. Once you have completed your order, please forward a copy via email to: seedex@pacificcoastiris.org to ensure we receive a copy immediately (PayPal has been extremely slow to post payments from members who do not have a verified PayPal account).

2. **By Mail** - You can still place your order by mail and pay with a check. Be sure to include the following information:

o Item number, name, and number of packets per type . Having both the item number and name reduces confusion in case I can't read one or the other.

o Your shipping address

o A check made out to SPCNI (Credit card payment is available only through PayPal, so please don't send me your credit card number)

o Your email address or a phone number. If I can't read something or have a question this helps me resolve things quickly and correctly. If you don't have an email, try to give me a friend's email address.

Optional: You can send me a list of substitutions in case I run out of something. This happens a lot. When this happens, I will make substitutions from your list, give you more of other items you've ordered or send you available items. If you prefer not to receive substitutions, let me know. Your unfillable orders will become a donation to SPCNI.

Please note that we have a large number of varieties that have a small quantity of seeds (S and XS). We anticipate that many of these varieties will sell out quickly, so please limit how many are ordered.

Send your order and payment to.

SPCNI Seed Exchange
c/o Louise Guerin
2200 E Orange Grove Blvd
Pasadena, CA 91104 U.S.A.

Order Deadline : The deadline to place your order is January 31st, 2018. Orders will be filled in the order they are received so get your order in early.

Except as noted in the Special note, orders for multiple packets of the same seed lot will be filled, based on availability. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions about your order or if your order does not arrive by March 1st for domestic orders and March 15th for international orders.

How To Read The Listings :

This year's seed list is divided into two sections. The first section is **NAMED CULTIVARS** and includes registered and unregistered hybrids, named species selections and their progeny. This is where the complex hybrids are listed.

The second section is **SPECIES AND SPECIES TYPES** and includes both wild-collected and garden-collected seeds of PCI species, natural hybrids and near species plants. Remember that any garden-collected seed in either section is open-pollinated and the listing name is for the pod or seed parent only.

The first column is the listing number and includes the year it is being offered. For example, 110 means listing number 110 from the 2017 seed exchange list.

In the second column you'll see the letters L, M, S, or XS. This refers to the quantity of seeds that we have available. In an effort to share each donation with as many people as possible, the number of seeds included in each packet will be based on the quantity available and the number of orders for that item. (XS packets will contain at least six seeds total.)

The third column includes the description and name of the pod parent or the cross that produced the pod parent. Names within parentheses identify the parentage of a single parent. Descriptions are taken from the AIS Iris registration, if available. **All seeds are open-pollinated unless otherwise noted.**

At the end of the third column, you will find the initials of the seed donor along with the year the seeds were submitted.

Seeds from the same source plants donated in multiple years are grouped in a single listing with donation year indicated. For each year listed within an item, we've listed what size packet would be available if the most current year seeds sell out. Plants grown in different gardens, even though the same species or cultivar, are still listed separately. The freshest seed in each seed lot will be distributed first. **Remember that PCI seeds remain viable for many years.**

A BIG Thank-You to all who donated seeds! Donor participation makes the SPCNI Seed Exchange possible.

Happy growing,

Louise Guerin, Seed Exchange Chair
Email Address: [seedex\[AT\]pacificcoastiris.org](mailto:seedex[AT]pacificcoastiris.org)
(replace [AT] with @)

YOUR HELP NEEDED

The future viability of the SPCNI is linked to the sustainability of the Seed Exchange. Many of our new members join to gain access to the wide range of seeds we can provide for them. This is especially the case for those who garden outside the confines of the West Coast of the United States.

This year's Seed Exchange has only had a small number of donors. We need more members to save seed from their gardens and contribute it to the Exchange so that the Society can continue to provide this essential service to its members.

Please consider becoming a donor and help spread the word about the beauty of Pacific Coast Native Iris.



*SPCNI seed exchange seedlings –
photograph Gareth Winter*

Muted praise .. and its opposite

Words and pictures by Gareth Winter

It must be something in my make up that leads me down pathways not trodden by most, both literally as I scramble through the forests that cover the mountains to the west of our town, but also metaphorically, as I find my garden tastes veering toward subtle shades.



A muted mauve seedling in the reselect garden.

Not everyone will agree with my predilection, but I have obviously been subconsciously selecting more and more subdued colours among the seedlings I am keeping. It can best be illustrated by this issue's cover photograph – a seedling with light creamy flowers with a hint of green, and delicate veining. A reselect, it has flowered very well this year, its good branching ensuring an extended season. It joins other muted plants in the reselect bed.

On the other hand—I have been intrigued by Garry Knipe's work with turquoise, and had one strong turquoise wild seedling appear in the gravel on my driveway. I crossed it with a few of my seedlings, and most of the plants were awful, but one this year had a double dose of turquoise.



A seedling from the driveway wild seedling.

Of course, it is still nothing like Garry Knipe's 1410A (below)



Kevin Vaughn seedlings



More Vaughn seedlings

