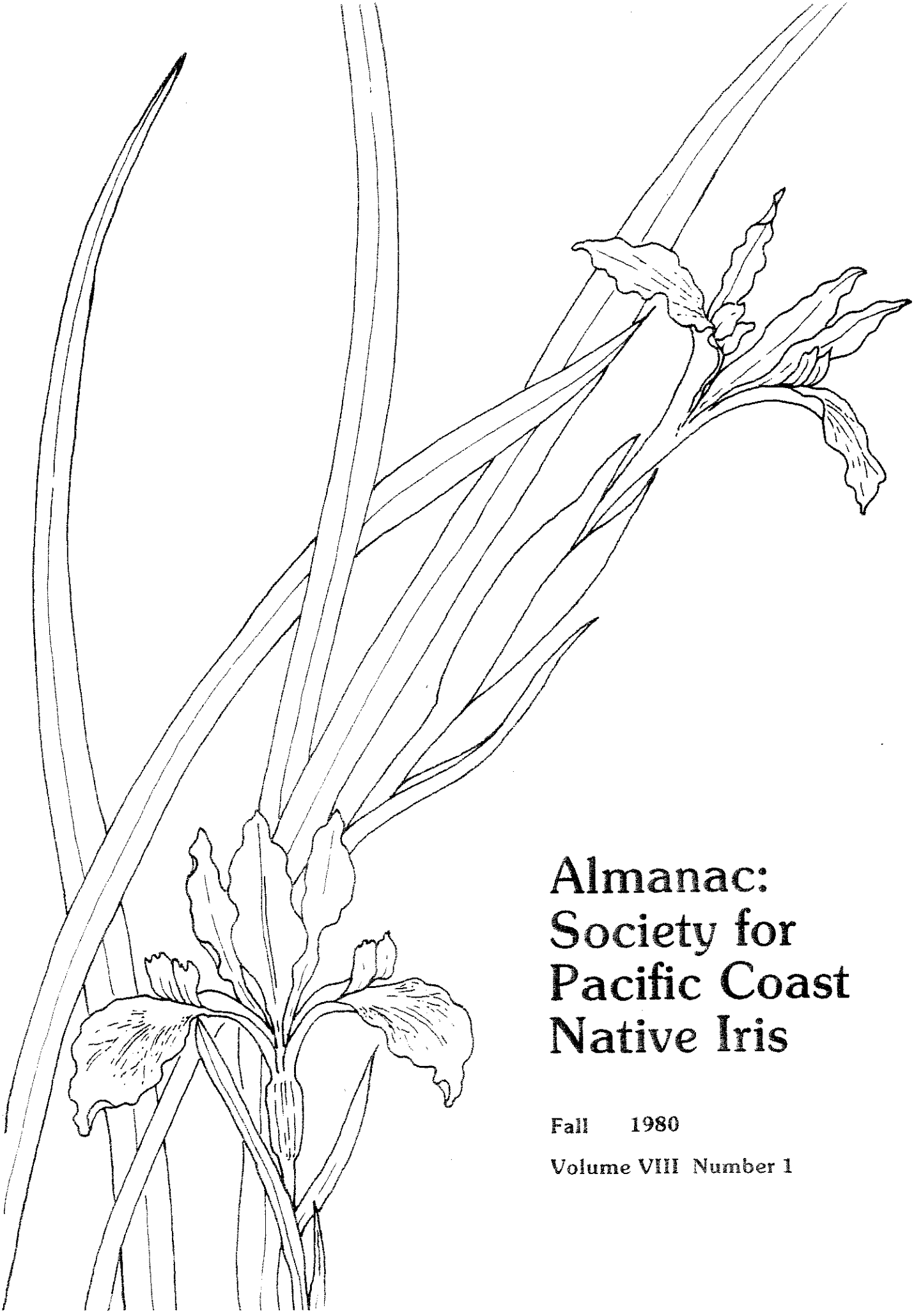
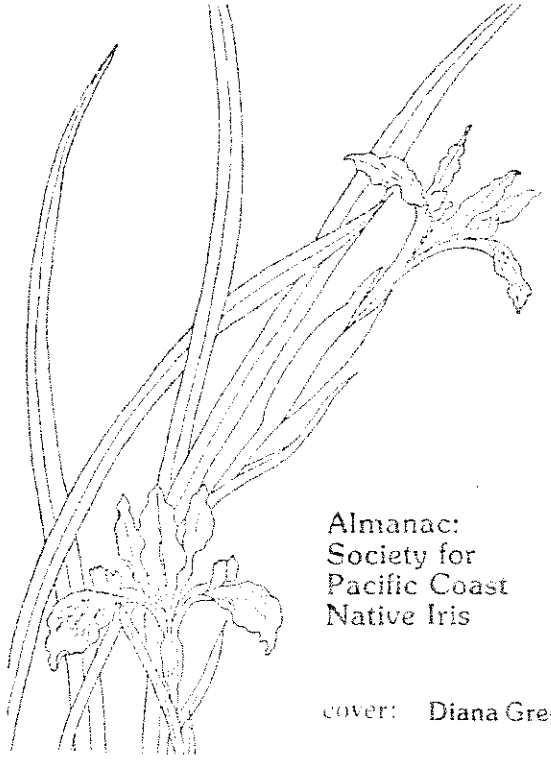


Almanac: Society for Pacific Coast Native Iris

Fall 1980

Volume VIII Number 1



Almanac:
Society for
Pacific Coast
Native Iris

cover: Diana Gregory

Letter From the Editor

Dear friends,

This issue is finally finished: the transition to a new editor has been made. My grateful thanks to Olive Rice for her seemingly endless patience and willingness to answer my many questions. My thanks, too, to Philip Edinger who has graciously agreed to assist and has been called upon considerably in recent weeks.

The response to Panayoti Callas' provocative letter regarding the growing of Californicae from seed was one of interest. Three readers letters, three views, appear in this issue. Since we are linked together primarily by the printed word, such responses are about as close as the membership in general can come to dialogue. May I suggest that we have more?

The most important functions of a publication of this sort are to provide enjoyable reading along with information from which you can benefit. This is *your* publication. I will be glad to consider all suggestions from the membership: ideas about content, format, layout, improvement, change . . . And no editor's message would be complete without the perennial – and thoroughly sincere – statement, "all contributions gratefully received"!

May all your Californicae bring you joy,

Jean Erickson

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

Roy Davidson	Seattle, Washington
Philip Edinger	Cloverdale, California
Dara Emery	Santa Barbara Botanic Garden Santa Barbara, California
Dorothy Hujsak	Tulsa, Oklahoma
Frances Love	Carterton, New Zealand
Trevor Nottle	Suriling, South Australia
Roy Oliphant	Berkeley, California
Dick Sloan	Arcadia, California
Dora Sparrow	Christchurch, New Zealand
Francesca Theolen	Orinda, California
Betty Wood	Red Bank, New Jersey

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

Dues:	Individual	Family
Annual	$4.00	$5.00
Triennial	10.00	12.00
Supporting Annual	5.00	
Life	50.00	

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Minutes of the Tulsa Meeting

The April 30, 1980 meeting of the Society for Pacific Coast Native Irises was called to order in the Camelot Inn, Tulsa, Oklahoma by Glenn Corlew, President at 8:45 a.m. There were 54 people in attendance.

On a motion by John Weiler, the minutes of the meetings in Huntsville and Santa Barbara were approved as they appeared in the *Almanac*. The motion was seconded and carried. Treasurer Charles Hopson read his report which indicated a balance of $652.46 as of April 30, 1980.

Olive Rice announced that the 1978 Cumulative Check List and the '78 and '79 insertion update will be available for $3.00 from any member of the executive committee or herself. She also announced a correction in the commercial listing source for Pacific Coast Native iris: The Cook's Garden address to be 6924 Pacific Coast Highway East, Tacoma, WA 98424.

Glenn Corlew expressed thanks and appreciation to Olive Rice.

Regarding the new Mitchell Award Medal, AIS had requested the overage of money to pay for the engraving of future medals. It was announced that now the AIS is asking that the SPCNI manage the funds for striking and engraving future Mitchell Award medals. Don Johnson moved, John Weiler seconded that we keep the fund and the inventory of medals. Motion carried.

It was noted that collecting SPCNI section dues from AIS has been a problem. It was recommended by Mrs. Charles Hopson that we collect the dues separately from the AIS. No action was taken. After some discussion it was thought that the problem had been solved and the AIS would send checks quarterly.

Glenn Corlew, for Francesca Thoolen, Chairman, read the report of the nominating committee:

President:	Virginia Del Judge
First Vice President:	Duncan Eader
Second Vice President:	LaRue Boswell
Secretary-Treasurer:	Dorothy Foster
Editor:	Jean Erickson

There were no further nominations from the floor. John Weiler moved to accept the recommendation of the nominating committee. Motion was seconded and carried. Their term to end June 3, 1982. Mr. Corlew asked everyone to cooperate with the new editor.

A discussion followed regarding the difficulties encountered in growing Californicae in various parts of the country. President Corlew adjourned the meeting at 9:10 a.m.

Jean Erickson
for
Marguerite Hawkinson,
Secretary

From The President

As your new president I extend to all of you my greetings. It is an honor to have been elected the fifth president of the SPCNI and I will endeavor to serve you well as did the previous president, Glenn Corlew, and those preceding him.

I am looking forward to working with out new editor, Jean Erickson, and all the others on the executive committee.

My husband and I have recently moved to a rural area on the very top of the Olympic Peninsula in the state of Washington after living all of my life in Southern California. We love it here but have had to engage in extensive digging and landscaping to provide a good home for our various kinds of irises. We hope to have good luck with the PCNs. I wish for all of you the best of everything–now and in the coming year.

Happy Irising!
Virginia Del Judge

AN APPEAL FROM NEW JERSEY FOR ADVICE

Some of us have tried to grow the beautiful Pacific Coast irises and have lost them the first winter.

Which of the following ways of growing them would most probably be successful?

1. Dig them in the fall and pot them for indoor growth during the winter.
2. Plant them in pots, sunk in the ground outdoors in summer, but brought in during the winter.
3. Grow them entirely as house plants. Sun? Water?
4. Plant many outdoors, leave them to the mercies of winter (with or without mulch?) and hope that one will prove hardy.
5. None of the above.

Advice, sent to your editor or to Betty Wood, 17 Alston Court, Red Bank, NJ 07701, will be submitted for publication in the Region 19 Newsletter.

A Trio on Seeds

In response to Panayoti Peter Callas' letter regarding the propagation of PCNs from seed we received the following:

ON SEED PROPAGATION

Dara Emery

Over the years we have propagated most of the Native Californica iris species and/or their hybrids. The seed germination presents no particular problems; however, keeping the seedlings growing in a healthy state in 3" pots requires attention to details.

Seed sowing is done in the fall, preferably in October. Seed sown then takes about two months to germinate in the lath house in Santa Barbara. The germination rate is usually quite high.

The medium is a mixture of 2 parts washed sand (crystal white #30 or #20 commercially used for sand blasting), 2 parts Canadian peatmoss and 1 part medium grade Sponge Rok. Sponge Rok is included to increase the porosity of the mix. A complete fertilizer is added to this medium. At the present time we are using an all-organic mix composed of blood, bone, cottonseed, and kelp meals, ground rock phosphate, decomposed granite, and oyster shell. Over a period of several years this mix has been quite satisfactory. It was originally formulated to see if there might be an organic fertilizer that could be used instead of the completely inorganic ones recommended in "The U.C. System for Producing Container-Grown Plants," or the organic one using hoof and horn meal. Hoof and horn meal is very difficult to obtain and quite expensive.

The sown and covered seed is watered immediately with Bio-Con's CRC-400 (Plant Super-Charger), a concentrated formula of beneficial soil microorganisms. Its purpose is to introduce a high concentration of beneficial microflora to discourage the pathogenic ones such as those causing damping-off. The CRC-400 works very well.

The seedlings, when 2 to 3" tall, are transplanted to 3" pots. If space is short, flats or trays can be used. In this case some root damage will occur when the plants are cut apart in the next transplanting.

It is necessary to water the newly potted-off seedlings with fish emulsion because the nutrients in the organic mix are not immediately available to the plant roots. Additional applications of fish emulsion are given as the seedlings develop. When in 3" pots the plants are fertilized every two to three weeks.

The seedlings have to be protected from birds in the seed bed and when still small in liners. Small iris seedlings apparently look like grass seedlings to certain small birds that pull them up but do not necessarily eat them. In late winter and early spring it has been found desirable to add an occasional pinch of cut worm and snail bait. Usually this is preventative medicine, but there are always at least a few "bait-takers."

Our main seedling cultural problem has been a nutrient deficiency or unavailability. This has been a problem regardless of fertilizer formulations. The solution has been to add both iron and manganese chelate regularly once a month. If this is not done the new iris foliage turns pale green then cream color. This is followed by leaf and then plant necrosis. Of the various species grown in the nursery, our native iris seem to be the most susceptible to this disorder, or at least the first to show it. To prevent the problem has proven much easier than to cure it. As the severity of the disorder increases, it becomes progressively more difficult to rectify.

In late June or early July the liners are transplanted to one gallon cans; in the fall they are planted out or sold. For breeding work the liners are sometimes planted directly in the field, providing that they can be watered, weeded, and degophered as needed.

One further comment on iris growing media: The requirements include good moisture and nutrient holding capacity and sufficient aeration and drainage. Any number of natural or artificial materials or combinations may be used with one exception—dirt. To use dirt at all in the container media can be a costly mistake and cause a number of problems. It often contains disease organisms, insects and their larvae, weed seed, extraneous matter such as old bubble gum, beer can pull-tabs and cigarette butts. There was a comment in an article in the summer 1980 issue of *Pacific Horticulture* describing the wonderful results obtained with plants if the propagators "sift and measure and sterilize the dirt." Successful gardeners and plantsmen prefer soil.

A MATTER OF TIMING?

Philip Edinger

My reaction to Panayoti Callas' letter (VII 2:13) was surprise. Why should anyone have difficulty germinating seeds of Pacific Coast Native irises? Here, at least, they usually come up like grass—whether I've planted them

carefully in pots of (presumably) sterile "soil" or whether capsules have opened and shed their crops on decidedly unsterile earth. Ignoring obvious climatic dissimilarities, what is so different about Colorado?

The answer, I think, is suggested by Mr. Callas: timing. The problem is not so much with Colorado (he does mention volunteer seedlings) as with treatment of the seeds by the gardener, i.e. planting them in late winter/early spring. The usual practice is to plant iris seeds any time from ripening of the capsules up into fall, coresponding to the "sowing" of seeds in nature as they fall to earth. This fall planting exposes seeds to a period of cold and moisture during winter, satisfying the need of seeds of many irises for low temperature and the leaching of germination-inhibiting substances. By late winter/early spring, the summer or fall planted seeds are ready to pop.

I have sown seeds of tall bearded irises as late as January, getting very poor to no germination that spring–but–getting fair to excellent germination in spring of the following year. In contrast, I have not noticed such second-year germination from PCN seeds planted in pots. These results have held true both for fresh PCN seeds (seeds produced the year of sowing) and for seeds held in envelopes for several years. It looks as though these irises have only one chance to germinate, once seeds contact soil and moisture, and that to compensate for short-time viability in the ground these irises produce great quantities of seed.

What happens to Mr. Callas' spring-sown seeds? I am only guessing, but I imagine that, lacking the natural requirements of cold, moisture, and day length, the seeds fail to germinate after planting and later simply rot during the summer.

SEED SOWING A L'OLIPHANT

Roy Oliphant

I have no magical formulae for seed sowing. Would that I had, for I have failed to germinate more rare seeds than I like to confess to. I belong to too many seed exchanges, know too many seed sources, sow too many shrub, alpine, bulb seeds, as well as those of iris, to give preferential treatment for optimum germination (temperature, day-length, what not) to any of them . . . even if I knew those requirements. All seeds are treated essentially alike with a minimum of praying over. At that, I have fair results.

All seeds are planted in either new or cleaned, reused terra cotta fern pans (two thirds the depth of regular pots) or in plastic pots. I prefer plastic pots because they do not dry out as fast; all pots are given a preliminary soaking in water made rose colored by the addition of potassium permanganate crystals. This is to discourage damping-off organisms.

Some years ago I ran some semi-scientific tests on various seed planting mixes, found no appreciable difference in their effectiveness and settled on Rod McLellan Company's "Super Soil Potting Mix" because it is easily obtained locally in one or two cubic feet bags. I use the mix "as is" though I believe it would be improved by the addition of more sand. The top layer of the mix in the pot, both under and over the seed, is first screened through a one-quarter inch mesh foundry riddle (a handy tool, this) to remove the large chunks of bark. The filled pots are firmed, watered, seed sown, covered with more mix or not, depending on seed size. Pots are stored on shelves in a protected area out of doors (I never did finish building my greenhouse and my coldframe disintegrated some years ago). The pots are covered with sheets of plastic, which serve to shade the pots, to delay drying out, and, above all, to protect the seeds from the scratching tendencies of birds, squirrels, and raccoons. Shamefully, I water the seeds overhead, as needed.

When germination is first noted the pot is removed from under the plastic and placed in a protected, shady area out of doors to complete germination and to harden off. The pot is finally placed in a sunnier area to await transplanting.

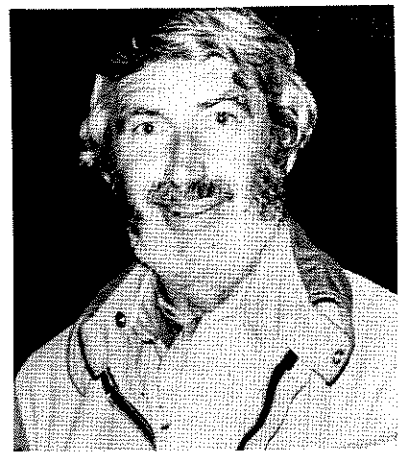
Unless the particular seed is notoriously short-lived, I do all seed sowing in the spring. I have not noticed any conspicuous advantage in sowing Pacific Coast Iris seed in the fall rather than the following spring.

If valuable seeds do not germinate for the first year, I may keep the pots over for a second season but that is the limit of my patience. I have nothing but admiration for those dedicated souls who keep seed pans for five to seven years before discarding, but I do not emulate them. For me, the slight amount of delayed germination is not worth the time or effort.

Pacific Coast Native seedlings transplant well while still small, from the pots to their place in the garden, without much loss.

Albino Californicae in Nature

B. Leroy Davidson



Some of the key breeding irises among bearded sorts have been white, true albinos or "semis" (ice blue fading white). WHITE SWIRL has proven to be the greatest thing ever to happen in Siberian garden breeding; so we might give a thought to the possibility of white PCN as holding something in the way of a great promise.

As found in nature the species of PCN (Californicae in botanical works) are found in every sort of color except white, and it might therefore be of curiosity value at least to enumerate those few white ones which have, nevertheless, been turned up through searches of acres and thousands of wild ones.

AGNES JAMES. This was found by a friend of Mrs. James in southwestern Oregon and shared with nurseryman Carl Starker, who introduced it, first as *Iris douglasiana* alba, registered as AGNES JAMES in 1935. It seems to be the sole pure albino of *I. douglasiana* to have been found growing in nature.

The late Edith Hardin English named PEGASUS but never revealed its origin. It seems identical to AGNES JAMES and her husband did admit that it was not of her own finding (perhaps a seedling from *Iris douglasiana* AGNES JAMES?).

At the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden Dara Emery grew the lovely CANYON SNOW from seed received as *Iris douglasiana* alba; registered in 1974, it was the Mitchell Award winner in 1979.

Many searches for a white *Iris innominata* among the wild yellow population failed to turn up an albino, or even a near-albino, until it "just happened" for Dr. Mathew C. Riddle, that greatest of all *I. innominata* enthusiasts. In the AIS Bulletin #158, p. 52 (1960) Marion Walker pays tribute to his devotion and describes a "small plant with pure white flowers," adding that Riddle said it was "the only white form of *I. innominata* he had ever seen in his many years of collecting and breeding." He was growing others from it.

ROGUE is basically white, though there is a diffuse yellow signal spread through the center of the falls and a faint "spiderweb" of slate-color which soon fades entirely. Marvin Black selected this from a seedling lo. of Riddle Strain.

It was a real "white-letter day" when an iris tour group found not just one, but two in a pasture-clearing up the Pistol River, Curry County, Oregon. The first was spied by Angus Robertson, and it had a few tiny violet spots towards its midsection. Under magnification each of these showed to be an individual cell, looking like tufts of violet wool in an otherwise snow white rug.

Izetta Renton returned to this pasture as the day was fast fading, and white flowers glow at this time of day; she named her prize STARBRIGHT. It was not broad of form but it did breed true and she grew many generations from it. It apparently was never crossed to AGNES JAMES, unfortunately.

It is significant that these two were not found among yellow *Iris innominata* but among the blue-violet form which occurs in Curry County and elsewhere, but only south of and away from the Rogue River, even into Del Norte County, California.

There seem to be no other records of albinos, although certainly there may be others waiting to be discovered. Some yellow-spotted pale ivory *Iris purdyi* or *I. purdyi-douglasiana* intergrades were destroyed by freeway construction in the Eel River drainage. Surely among the Santa Cruz, California irises there must be a snow white, possibly elsewhere amongst the blues and purples. Ruby Bowman of Fort Bragg once brought in some giant *I. douglasiana* from Humboldt County, the form once known as watsoniana; they were said to grow to four feet, and one was white with a blue pattern. The late Ruth Hardy found VALLEY BANNER growing amongst usual purple *I. tenax* in Lane County, Oregon and it gives similar children if left unsullied, white with a precise, veined blue pattern on the falls and similarly colored styles. Some of these children are miniature, "half-pint banners."

Author's note: The above material compiled from many unpublished sources, robin letters, personal letters and from being there; the Bowman plants reported by Elwood Molseed.

Gold in the Snow?

Philip Edinger

CANYON SNOW X RIPPLE ROCK. It was the sort of cross a novice tall bearded breeder might make: put together two large, broad flowers, ignoring all other qualities, and expect good seedlings because they, too, should be big and wide. When I made the cross in 1976 I think I had vague ideas about CANYON SNOW done in yellow, but nothing more.

For reasons now forgotten, germination was poor—only six seedlings from twenty-nine seeds. Probably damping-off. The six remained in the seed pot for two years before being planted out, so spring of 1980 brought the first chance to see what my whim might produce. In early April I was sure that four were producing stalks, and soon after I noticed that one had aborted. Four years after the cross I was to see half of a small progeny!

The first to show color revealed bright yellow. So did the second . . . and the third. I was intrigued, and when each opened: delighted. All were full yellow, slightly on the tawny side; one had the suggestion of dark "whiskers" in the signal area, one had an outpouring of golden yellow onto the falls, the third was essentially a self. And in form they all tended to be "CANYON SNOW done in yellow."

Not immediately but several weeks later it dawned on me: no hint of color segregation . . . all three were about the saturation of RIPPLE ROCK. A larger progeny might have shown some deviation, but why weren't the seedlings cream or light yellow—intermediate between the parents? Then I realized I was thinking in tall bearded terms: you cross a yellow with a white—a *dominant* white—and you expect creams. Could CANYON SNOW, despite its large gold signal, be an albino recessive from normally blue *Iris douglasiana* breeding, thereby allowing plastid yellow full expression without dilution? Is it, in effect, a blank pallette on which other colors can be painted without alteration? Now I'm eager to see what CANYON SNOW X CLAREMONT INDIAN will bring. I wonder if others have had similar experiences?

Taking time out for the Natives at the Region 14 summer auction in Santa Rosa, California are: left to right; Dorothy Foster, Jean Erickson, Glenn Corlew, LaRue Boswell

A South Australia Experience

Trevor Nottle

Living physically and horticulturally at the end of the earth seems like an enviable romantic notion to many pen-friends in America and England. The idea that Australia is still in a state of challenging the wilderness and one of the last frontiers where man may confront himself with the ideals of self-reliance, liberty and independence is a captivating one but one that is far removed from the truth. The wilderness was converted long ago and on every side may be seen the trappings of an utterly conventional Anglo-European culture . . . even in the Outback there is colour T.V. and air conditioning; and everywhere there are gardens made or attempted.

South Australia, where I live, was first settled in 1836 and was firmly established by the 1850s, just in time to catch the horticultural fever which was raging in England. The latest books by Mrs. Loudon and others extolled the virtues of the "gardenesque" style, where gardens became instructive as well as decorative . . . the functional garden of vegetables, etc., being well tended but kept strictly out of sight; each garden aspired to have representatives of the many new plants which were being introduced every year by the great hunters Hooker, Veitch, Douglas, et al. The discovery of extensive copper lodes and a thriving wheat and wool export industry created sufficient wealth to allow wealthy graziers and merchants to indulge their taste for the full trappings of that period . . .mansions, servants, large estates, travel and the conscious display of their worth. An aspect of this lifestyle which interests us is their gardens. Surviving catalogues from the period are delightfully illustrated with line drawings but it is the range of plants available which is truly astounding by today's standards; no modern nurseries sustain such a wide choice of plant material. Among the items to arouse the most profound envy are *Iris susiana* @ 1/6 (15 cents), *Iris tuberosa* @ 6 pence (very scarce here and expensive at $1.00 each), juno iris (now unobtainable unless raised from imported seed), kaempferi iris, 20 named sorts (now held by only one perennial nursery), *Lilium auratum,* etc., etc.

I live in the hills behind Adelaide, near the top of our state's highest mountain, Mt. Lofty, and in one of the longest settled areas in the state. It is also the area that has the highest rainfall, which is important in the driest state of the driest continent on earth; we have about 40" of rain per year. Most of the rain falls between April and November. Mostly it is rain but where we live there is also hail, sleet, frequent fog and low flying clouds and occasional snow flurries. The soil is fair acid loam. This area was very soon developed by the wealthy citizens as an escape from the heat of summer on the Plains. When daily temperatures hovered around 100°F for weeks on end, the desirability of a cool mountain retreat became only too obvious. In the late 1850s many large mansions were built in the valleys between the ridges leading up to the summit of Mt. Lofty. With names such as THE PINNACLES, BEECHWOODS, ST. VIGEANS, THE BRAES and FOREST LODGE they recall past associations with England. The mansions run the full gamut of High Victorian architecture from Neo-Classical simplicity, through Georgian and Queen Anne to more elaborate Italianate, Scottish-Baronial, Gothic and Tudoresque styles. All of these homes were made with large English style gardens complete with lakes, ponds, grottoes, summerhouses, croquet lawns, avenues of trees and miles of hedging. Nowadays these gardens survive in a state of romantic overgrowth and decay, the lonely cry of peacocks echoing across the glades . . . once tended by hordes of gardeners imported along with the plants from England . . . now deserted. The whole area has a fine cover of mature English and American oaks, hollies, firs, pines, sweet gums, rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias.

In this pleasant setting I am making a small garden in the remains of an ancient apple orchard surrounding our 1870 farm house. Among the species, which I greatly prefer to the bearded varieties, I grow many spurias, Louisianas, Siberians, Japanese, evansias, junos and Pacific Coast Natives. Nearly all are grown from seed as it is the only way to get them. The fabled varieties listed back in the 1850s were lost long ago and rigid quarantine laws introduced since then have effectively prevented their re-introduction, along with more recent introductions.

My seed raising technique is hardly any great scientific wonder; I simply plant all seed as soon as I get it. It's so hard for us to know how old the seed is when we get it that nearly all the keen gardeners I know plant it at once and hope there is some viable seed left. I plant in a commercial potting mix of peat, coarse sand, pulverized pine bark (*Pinus radiata*), and a little slow release fertilizer. Germination usually

(a) begins at once
(b) waits until autumn rains
(c) waits until spring
(d) occurs at any time

Germination has been very good, resulting in healthy pots full of seedlings to be planted out. I usually do this in the autumn when the rains come, at the same time I split up and shift my older clumps; this because I am still making the garden and need to move things around, not because they are huge plants. Provided that the weather stays damp and cool the iris suffer little set-back and soon new leaves appear among the cut-back fans. Should the weather turn warm and dry I have found that wet, half rotted straw strewn loosely about the division seems to keep things going. We are fortunate in having few pests, nothing more serious than aphids and odd caterpillars. Pasture grubs seem to eschew these scrawny rhizomes in favor of the tall bearded. I have not used

continued on next page

A *Munzii* Mystery Guest

Dick Sloan

In 1978 some sixty PCN seedlings bloomed in my suburban Los Angeles garden. These were on plants raised from seed packages received from George Stambach who always distributed small envelopes of seeds at the Southern California Iris Society meetings as long as he was able to attend. I have always had better luck in raising these plants from seed or transferring them from cans than from mail order plants where I usually lose over 50%.

Among these seedlings, what I assumed was a malformed flower showed intense blue color, with turquoise shadings. One other in the group was also a lavender blue, much less intense in color. I crossed the two, using the "malformed" flower as the pod parent, attracted by that brilliant tint. We moved that November and I brought only the two seedlings from the group to our present home. No bloom resulted in 1979 from the two plants but they showed satisfactory growth near the trunk of a large solitary pine tree. The pod from the cross produced one seedling soon after the seeds were potted. I saved it but managed to destroy the pot before further germination.

By this season the less blue pollen parent was showing itself a fairly unattractive plant with yellowish green leaves. Fortunately the lone offspring had inherited the good green foliage from its pod parent. It put up a bloom stalk . . . unfortunately broken off during a storm. I was able to tell only that it, too, will be a blue flower.

First flowers on the intense blue parent do not always emerge properly from the sheath, giving them a canted, malformed look. Subsequent blooms are properly displayed and are impressive. While somewhat lacking the fashionable round flower form, they are large and satisfying. This is a blue color that photographs blue, a powder blue with a large distinct turquoise wash on the falls and a very small but brilliant yellow signal area.

Pods are developing on it from some of the new Lenz *Iris munzii* hybrid cultivars being grown and distributed by Bob Hubley. I am eager to see results. I had been drifting into almost exclusively Louisiana iris collection, but this development will keep PCNs in the garden as long as interesting seedlings continue to appear in progeny from these plants.

Every time I see the plants, the fluttering tags marking my crosses and the swelling bee and/or selfed pods, I enjoy the mystery legacy George Stambach left. Imagination runs well ahead of actual potential, but this anticipation feeds the excitement each spring brings.

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any fertilizer on my plants although they would all get a small quantity of leaf mold from the walnuts and other deciduous trees in the garden. Most of my plants are two years old, having been acquired from SIGNA friends since we moved up here (our previous garden was made on sheet limestone so PCNs were out of the question). Few have flowered but all are very healthy and vigorous and I am expecting a bumper crop of flowers this year. We both admire the lovely Frontispiece of PCNs in Jean Stevens book *The Iris and Its Culture* and long to be able to pick large bunches of these delightful blooms for bringing indoors.

We have planted our seedlings as a thin groundcover under old fashioned roses and as borders around beds of azaleas, under hardy perennials. The sun in summer is very fierce and so I have guessed that they will not need full exposure as so often advocated by the experts who garden in milder climates. So far they seem to have appreciated the conditions provided and have multiplied at a most pleasing rate.

Of the seedlings grown, including those put in this year in April, the only one to have flowered is *Iris tenax* "Lemonade Springs" which had rather spidery, ruffled dark cream blooms with orange tones around the dark veined centres.

I have obtained four fine flowered forms from Mrs. Robyn Gully of Hawthorndene, who is a SIGNA member. One is a small, grassy leaved bright yellow with a dense network of red-brown veins. Two are broad leaved bright blues with purple halos around white eyes. One is smooth and tailored, the other ruffled and flaring. Lastly, a beautiful ruffled, flaring white; Robyn has many others equally lovely. I hope to have as good from my seedlings. This year should tell as most have developed many side fans, though the dwarf form (*Iris innominata*) seem much slower to increase and liable to die back in a few plants.

Iris gormanii doesn't get a mention in Warburton and Hamblen, nor in Dykes, but may be found in Jean Stevens' book as a species from British Columbia. It has fantastically strong leaf fibres. I thought to tidy up the clumps by pulling away the dieing leaves–result: I pulled up whole plants. It was obvious that the old roots had begun to shrivel while the new roots were only just emerging, so the plant had a very tenuous grip on the soil at the time.

Altogether, I think the Californians a most charming and useful group coming as they do after the precious winter flowers of *Iris unguicularis* and forms, putting on a brave show in the early days of spring when flowers of any sort are welcome in the garden and the home, even more so when they are as prolific as the Pacific Coast Natives.

From New Zealand

From the Species Section of the
New Zealand Iris Society Inc., Newsletter No. 2
April, 1980

ON PACIFIC COAST IRISES

Frances Love

For some reason the name "Innominata" flows off the tongues of people with great ease. What they usually mean is any plant belonging to that group–i.e., *tenax, douglasiana, fernaldii* or *innominata*, but surely these days it will be a hybrid between one and another or several of this promiscuous family. I would suggest that pure lines of any or all of the irises from the Pacific Coast of America are just about non-existent. Mind you they are wonderful value as ground cover under trees or as border plants or for filling a space in the perennial border. Probably the most important thing they need is perfect drainage. For this reason they are excellent round trees. At our Convention "workshop" it was suggested that they should not be watered during hot weather as that cools the soil too suddenly with the result that roots die and one is left with bits of plant dying off. I find they are not at all easy to divide and by far the easiest way to propagate is to grow from seed. When I first started I was happy to grow any seed so I could build up a stock of plants, but now I am prepared to cull out any with narrow twisted falls. I will probably only save seed from selected plants which I will hand pollinate–even though I have great faith in the bees–but the culling will still have to go on.

In the U.S.A. there are several breeders who are building their own lines, e.g., Santa Ana strain. I have had seed from several of these people over the last few years and some of the seedlings are lovely but there is the poorly shaped one also.

Although pure *Iris douglasiana* is to my mind not a good garden plant, its hybrids with *I. tenax* and *innominata* are sometimes really beautiful. Both these latter have two terminal buds only, but *douglasiana* is prolifically branched. If this is passed on of course we get the longer bloom season as we do with the tall beardeds with branching and a good bud count.

My one disappointment in this family is *munzii*. In this area it is too frost tender to stand our winter, one of only two in the genus that I find tender. The other is the Evansia from Hong Kong–*speculatrix*.

Dora Sparrow

Of the American seed planted in November 1977 about six types showed their first flowers last October. Three resembled *douglasiana* and had good-textured flowers of deep violet, grey lavender and pale gold, and another was a diminutive pale gold *innominata* type. Another flowered in the garden of a friend, and was from selected seed planted only eleven months previously. Sad to say, this clump browned off and died shortly after flowering. The heavy rain we have had while the soil has been warm could have caused this and other fatalities amongst some seedlings.

The violet and mauve shades were cross-pollinated, and some other flowers within a close color combination. All of these, hand fertilized, produced good seed capsules, but other flowers on the same plants, left to their own devises, did not develop any seed at all. It could be that there is a self-sterile factor present in this generation. (Or perhaps, that there was a lack of pollinating insects at the time?–Editor)

Germination has been good in the boxes this last spring. Seeds were sealed in a plastic container and placed in the freezer for a few weeks, then planted in sterilized soil. Germination was quick, and seemed to be 100%.

A Letter From France

Translation and Answer by Francesca Thoolen

Dear Mrs. Thoolen,

. . . I was absent when you distributed the Californicae iris seeds at the International Iris Congress in Orleans, France. I mentioned this to Mrs. Clarke at our last fall meeting in Dijon and she shared some of hers with me. I am most happy (I love all irises) but alas, I have very little knowledge of their culture. Having searched in many garden books and found nothing, I am appealing to you to obtain some cultural information. At the end of September 1979 I planted seeds, three in a fiber pot in acid soil, brought them inside and placed them on a window sill. These seedlings have come up and are now about 10 to 15cm high. I do not know what to do, my seedlings are dying one by one, at ground level. Perhaps they are too humid, not warm enough, not deep enough pots . . .? You see how I need advice such as, can I put them in the garden and when is the best time, how deep do I plant them, what exposure should they get, can I leave them in the garden through the winter, etc. . . .?

I intended to subscribe to the *Almanac* but I do not know English. Why doesn't a society as important as yours have a small section in French, it would be most helpful to us . . . .

Paulette Martin
Dijon, France

Dear Mrs. Martin,

. . . In nature, in California, these plants are found along the coast where the climate is not too hot, or at lower mountain elevations along the coast, usually in clearings or at the edge of forests. When one wants to cultivate them outside their natural habitat one must provide them, as much as is possible, with conditions which can, more or less, remind them of their origin—that is to say, a climate not too hot with *much* less water in summer. In other words, these plants can tolerate cool and wet or hot and dry, but *never* hot *and* wet.

The soil in California, generally, is neutral, therefore if your soil is calcareous, you would want to add some ferrous sulphate (very little goes a long way); if your soil is acid you would want to add some dolomite. Drainage should be sharp, and your soil should contain good quantities of humus which would help to realize this drainage.

Usually the seeds take about two months to germinate and as soon as they are about 5cm high they should be transplanted. To start with, I would advise transplanting half of your seedlings into the ground and the other half into pots. They should be located where they can receive morning sun and light afternoon shade. If you have deciduous oak trees they will do fine under the trees, or if you have bushes which do not require summer watering that would be fine. In France where it rains on and off throughout the summer you would not be expected to water them at all.

Concerning your dying seedlings, it sounds like a condition we call "damp off." It is a fungus which can be avoided in treating your soil with a fungicide. I would advise you to write to Dr. Maurice Boussard who can advise you better than I about a French product.

When you plant your seeds I believe you would have better success if you planted some 30 seeds to a pot about 13 to 15cm in diameter and about 18cm high. Soak the soil and the seeds (separately) with a solution of fungicide. When the seeds are dry again plant them in this treated soil.

The usual time to transplant an adult plant is in the fall when your climate has considerably cooled down. Here in California it is usually in November. One of the best ways to guide you is to unearth some soil around the plant and see if new tiny roots are starting to show near the crown. This is easy to see since the old roots are usually dark brown. It is important to keep all roots wet while they are out of the ground waiting to be replanted. Before you remove any adult plants notice the level of the soil in relation to the plant. When you re-locate the plant or its divisions be sure to place them at the same height as they were before, i.e., where the color at the base of the plant lightens considerably just above the root zone. Be sure to keep the plant cool and moist until established. In the following spring, about one month before expected bloom, fertilize with 0-10-10 or even better, with an azalea or rhododendron fertilizer.

Concerning articles in French for French members, I am afraid that we would have to publish in other languages to make other nationalities happy. It is probably why SFIB does not do the same for other languages also, but SFIB has many English speaking members who could translate parts of the *Almanac* (with permission of the editor, of course) for their bulletin. Perhaps a note to Madame Perrier, who knows English quite well, will give you the answer. Other members who know English are Madame Clarke, Messrs. Boussard, Cayeux, Sequi, and Turbat and probably many others.

I hope this letter has been able to help you somewhat and, please do not hesitate to write to me again all about the beautiful flowers you have been able to produce as a result of making crosses. They are easy to make and fascinating to see.

Sincerely yours,
Francesca

P.S. Enclosed are some packets of PCN seeds . . . compliments of SPCNI.

Growing PCNs in Tulsa, Oklahoma

Dorothy Hujsak

After four long years I have given up trying to raise the lovely registered and named Pacific Coast Natives . . . something I swore I'd never do, being a very determined person. I never saw a bloom until the San Jose Convention but had read about them in SIGNA, the AIS Bulletin and later in the *Almanac*. I ordered and received beautiful plants in the fall, and every winter, with good protection, they would flourish even with temperatures dipping into the teens, only to die sometime during the spring. I died a little with each and have succeeded only with CHIMES, FAIRY CHIMES, MENDOCINO MORN, SUSIE KNAPP, and GOLDEN NYMPH. This morning I realized that the last green leaves on RIPPLE ROCK were gone.

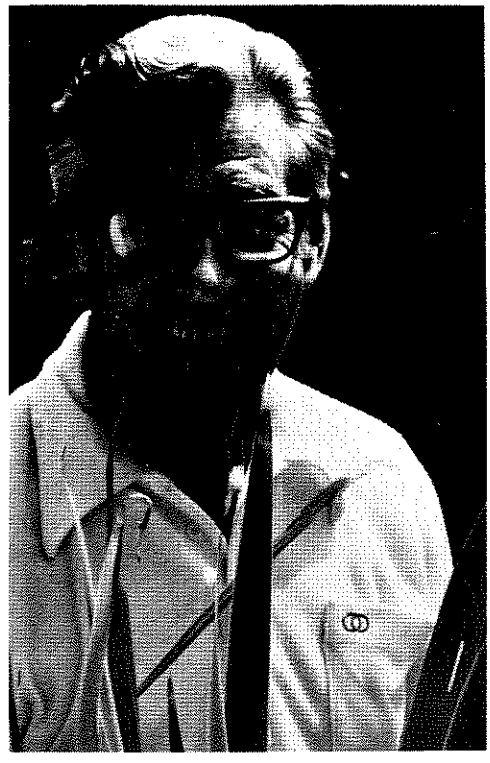
But, in a way, I'm lucky because I ordered, at the same time, some seeds from the Species Seed Exchange and from Joe Ghio and now have about 250 seedlings; some are tiny and some are small clumps. They haven't come easy either, and I have tried every method possible to germinate and keep them going. I have planted them in moist peatmoss in medicine bottles, planted them in cut-off milk cartons in the ground, tried the Mung bean, rose hip, Ila Nunn method, Bee Warburton's Clorox method, and Dr. Ellis' method (SIGNA p. 530). With each of these I have had small successes.

I have learned the hard way to keep my seedbeds moist, use a place in the shade, use Black Leaf slug and snail killer, cover the beds with hardware cloth to ward off the ravages of birds, squirrels, dogs and rabbits, and to make maps of the seed beds and location of the transplants.

At last, I have my own method with which I am having really good success. The seeds, some being 3 to 4 years old, are planted most anytime, usually fall or winter, after being soaked for one or more days and planted in a moist mixture of three parts milled sphagnum, two parts vermiculite and one part perlite in what I call pinch pots with the ends cut off. These are the plastic six-pack type in which certain annuals are found in the nursery. Each of the six sections is 1 X 1½ inches and several containers, clustered together, take up very little room. Any number of seeds are planted in each section and I think germination is good because they are so close together. These are sunk in the ground, covered with chopped oak leaves and hardware cloth, and kept moist. When about four inches tall, I pinch out the seedlings with the moist mix, place them in a container of a weak solution of Rapid-Gro fertilizer, leave them over night, then gently separate and line them out in a shady place, watering them in with the solution. These are kept moist, mulched with oak leaves and pine needles, and fed at intervals weak solution of Rapid-Gro with the hose sprayer.

Tulsa does not have the most ideal weather, but I love the city because most things that are grown in both the north and south can be grown here. Winters may reach as low as zero degrees and it may go as high as one hundred degrees in the summer. It will get pretty dry in the summer and then we will have a real "gully-washer" now and then. About three weeks ago we had fourteen inches in three days and right now we have had twelve days of over one hundred degrees with a humidity of 53%; this is very unusual.

I felt fortunate to have two nice seedlings and CHIMES in the 1980 convention show and will keep trying. With the promise of pollen from CANYON SNOW—who knows, I may make it. As I said, I am a very determined person.



First Vice-President Duncan Eader

More on Seeds

B. Leroy Davidson

It is recommended that the irises which do not transplant easily be sown in the spot where they are to flower. This is a splendid idea, but one that isn't practical for most of us. How then to best succeed? It would seem that an even moisture supply is most critical from the time the seed is planted right on up to the maiden flowering, allowing for a bit of drying off in summer.

Local conditions here are about ideal so that rather than having a problem with germination, if seed is let fall on the ground rather than harvested, the resulting seedlings come up like cress to give a weeding problem. Who has the heart to pull them even if they are far too crowded for their own good? Quite a number of very passable flowers have come about by themselves in just that way, although the better ones have resulted from planned crosses.

As the capsules begin to split, the seed is gathered and dried off until early fall when it is planted in a sandy humus soil. In the past a ground bed was used for seed sowing but it is easier to handle the PCNs if they are planted in large pots or gallon cans. When there is an obvious overcrowd I have sometimes pricked the seedlings out into individual three inch plastic pots as they were getting a second or third leaf, but for the most part they are left an entire year and then the seed lot is dumped out and individual plants put into pots or directly into the garden.

It is so easy here that it is hard to imagine others having a bad time, but I think it is particularly important to watch the moisture, being sure that once wet the seed never gets dry. I formerly used what we were then calling Doakes Solution, KNO_3 and Thiourea, to soak old seed that had gotten very dry and shriveled. It is best to store any seed not immediately planted the year of harvest in a tight container in the refrigerator so that it doesn't get so dessicated. In fact, I have a jar that has been stored for ten years and which I occasionally open and "test" by planting a few. These are from miscellaneous plants mainly *Iris innominata* and/or *Iris tenax* as mixed up by whatever the birds and bees thought appropriate. And it still germinates, so that this idea of "fresh" seed is not exactly that critical, providing, of course, that it is not allowed to dry so hard it is actually dead.

It might be well for those who do have a bad time germinating seed to sprout it on a saucer filled with water and changed frequently; this certainly would assure its not drying out. Even more critical that the germination is the transfer to the soil. It is necessary to be just as watchful about the water, if not even more so, at this stage and then right through to flowering.

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