

GNOIS

GREATER
NEW ORLEANS

IRIS
SOCIETY



Greater New Orleans Iris Society

PRESERVATION
PARTNERSHIPS
EDUCATION
BEAUTIFUL GARDENS

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DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF OUR NATIVE IRISES

The Greater New Orleans Iris Society has a more varied focus than many plant organizations. It is not just a group of gardeners with an interest in a particular plant, although it is that, too. GNOIS places strong emphasis on our native, wild irises and the need to preserve – and in some cases – restore them in our environment.

Louisiana iris species are not entirely absent from other states. Some are found in hospitable spots up the Mississippi Valley into Illinois and even Ontario. Many inhabit the wetlands of Florida where masses of blue irises grow that are among the five species that taxonomists include in the Louisiana iris group.

Louisiana, however, is unique in both the density and variety of species, colors, and forms of wild irises. Only in Louisiana will one find both of the red species (*I. fulva* and *I. nelsonii*) and the blue species (*I. giganteaerulea* and *I. brevicaulis*) growing in numbers. Virtually all the spectacular hybrid cultivars of Louisiana irises today are derived from plants collected in Louisiana.

The individual species prefer a slightly different environmental niche, but in limited but notable instances, they are found in proximity. For example, when delta lands (the haunt of *I. fulva*) abut or intersect freshwater swamps and marshes (where *I. giganteaerulea* is common), the opportunities for natural hybridization have been presented over the years. When the bumblebees have done their work, the result has been new and unusual colors and flower forms created in these “hybrid zones.” This occurs only in Louisiana.



Richard Drouant

I. fulva, a dweller of deltaic lands from Louisiana and up the Mississippi Valley.

This legacy of Louisiana’s natural heritage excites some of our members as much as growing the beautiful garden cultivars that have become abundant. But most of our members enjoy both, and GNOIS activities reflect the breadth of our members’ interests.

GNOIS Projects

Members’ strong interest and initiative in preserving and promoting Louisiana irises continue to generate numerous projects supported by GNOIS. The organization is fortunate to have access to a large area in which to grow out both species and cultivars of Louisiana irises in sufficient numbers to make donations to public plantings possible. Irises have been donated to GNOIS as well.

GNOIS projects include:

Louisiana Iris Species Preservation Project. GNOIS grows over one hundred forms of the five Louisiana species as part of a Society for Louisiana Irises project to preserve the diversity of forms of these irises.

Northlake Nature Center, Mandeville. GNOIS members have begun planting species irises in a swamp setting. After future clearing and planting, the Center will be one of the few places where all five species are grown in a safe and accessible natural setting.

GNOIS initiates many projects designed to save, preserve, and promote Louisiana irises, especially the native, wild forms that are Louisiana’s natural legacy.



Benny Trahan

The red and rare yellow forms of *I. nelsonii*. Found only near Abbeville.

I. giganteaerulea, the tall blue of fresh water Gulf Coast swamps, especially in Louisiana. Rare white forms also occur.



Propagation Project. GNOIS is accelerating the propagation of species irises in both public and private locations to provide stock to donate for future projects.

Woodland Conservancy, Belle Chasse. Members have begun new plantings of *I. giganteaerulea* while relocating others. Plans are to plant three of the five Louisiana species.

GNOIS also has assisted with plantings of Louisiana iris cultivars in the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden in City Park; at St. Paul’s School, a boys’ high school in Covington; the Guerrilla Garden in the Lower Ninth Ward and numerous other locations.



I. brevicaulis

JOIN US!

New members of GNOIS are welcome, valued, and needed. Dues are just \$10 per year for an individual or a family. A membership form can be downloaded from our website at:

www.louisianairisgnois.com/Membership/

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

The Greater New Orleans Iris Society welcomes participation in a wide range of engaging activities. These consist of regular meetings and programs, iris raffles and cultural demonstrations, an Annual Louisiana Iris Sale, preservation projects, workdays in the Sculpture Garden and in the GNOIS iris plantings, and special events during bloom season.

The Louisiana Iris Rainbow Festival in the Sydney and Walda Besthoff Sculpture Garden.

Since Katrina, the Sculpture Garden has been planted with an extensive collection of Louisiana irises. Hybrid cultivars line the lagoon, offering beautiful sights akin to the irises in their natural habitat. In addition, a GNOIS Display Garden offers a concentrated exhibit of the latest named iris cultivars. The Festival presents an opportunity to see all these irises as well as the fascinating sculptures, and in addition, to hear programs related to irises. In some years, an **Iris Show** accredited by the American Iris Society is included. There are usually irises for sale at the Festival.



Louisiana Iris Day at Longue Vue. Each spring the society has sponsored a Louisiana Iris Day event in the Wild Garden at Longue Vue. The Wild Garden is the home of an historic and beautiful iris collection. The Louisiana Iris Day is free and laid back, a relaxing late afternoon treat offering the opportunity to

stroll through the irises and talk with other iris enthusi-

asts and experts.

Iris Sale. GNOIS holds an Annual Louisiana Iris Sale at Longue Vue each October, which is the prime time for planting new irises. Bare rhizomes are contributed by our members and a very large number of varieties are available



at good prices. The sale is a great opportunity to enlarge any iris collection and to beautify one's landscape.

Iris Shows.

GNOIS periodically holds formal Louisiana Iris Shows judged by accredited American Iris Society judges. Cut iris scapes are displayed in bottles, and awards are given for seedlings and for cultivars that best exhibit the standards of good growth and form established by AIS. Anyone can enter an iris. Shows are an opportunity for growers to display their skills, but more importantly, they offer the public a chance to see a large number of the latest Louisiana irises in one place.



Volunteer Opportunities. GNOIS offers members a chance to get involved. Third Tuesday workdays are scheduled most months in the Sculpture Garden. The society's plantings in City Park, used to help preserve the species and to propagate cultivars for donation to public gardens, require a significant effort best shared by many participants. Members enjoy a couple of hours at both places, with rewarding results and the satisfaction of knowing they have helped make a significant impact in the community.



Bayou and Marsh, the newsletter of GNOIS



GNOIS

PLEASE JOIN OR RENEW!

Dues are \$10 per person or household for one year, or \$25 for three years. Please make checks payable to Greater New Orleans Iris Society, or GNOIS. Please provide the names of those in the household who will participate and, if desired, email addresses for each.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____

EMAIL _____

(Please provide an email address to receive this newsletter and other information.)

**Mail to: Catherine Mason, Membership Chair
P.O. Box #438, Mandeville, LA 70470**