

Bayou and Marsh

No. 27

News from the Greater New Orleans Iris Society

September 2015

Getting Ready for 2018

Members and Katrina remembrance volunteers prepare beds for “Guest Irises” in the Sculpture Garden

In 2018, the Greater New Orleans Iris Society will host the national conventions of both the Society for Louisiana Irises and the American Iris Society. This will be an historic event. It will be the first AIS convention in New Orleans and the first in which the organization goes to a location featuring just one of the many iris groups.

Delegates will not find Bearded irises, Siberians, Spurias, or any of the many other types normally on

view at a national meeting. The focus, for the first time, will be on Louisianas, and GNOIS is determined that visitors will get an eye-ful of these highly varied plants.

One feature of iris conventions is “guest irises.” Hybridizers are invited to send their recent creations to be put into a special display. The 2018 convention will feature three locations of guest irises, one in the Sculpture Garden in New Orleans.



Volunteers at work installing rings for “guest irises” along the walkway next to the lagoon in the Sculpture Garden. By the time of the 2018 iris conventions, this will be an outstanding display, but it will be well worth a look beginning with the next bloom season.

NEXT MEETING SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 26 AT LONGUE VUE

The next meeting will feature our new schedule: from 9 to 10 am, refreshments and demonstrations, followed by a brief business meeting beginning at 10 am. The program will follow the business meeting.

The program will be given by Benny Trahan on “Things Learned” in his years of growing and exploring for Louisiana irises. Some of Benny’s collected and hybridized irises are featured elsewhere in this issue, and given his results, it appears that Benny has learned a great deal. We’re all looking forward to this presentation!

Demonstrations before the meeting will be provided by Eileen Hollander on dividing and planting and Joe Musacchia on the electronic database of all Louisiana iris cultivars. With the iris sale coming up in October, Eileen’s demo will be very timely.

The directions to Longue Vue are on page 5 in this issue. Admission is free for the meeting.

Pictures

Thanks to Calvin Lopes, Bonnie Beneschek, Eileen Hollander and Joe Musacchia for pictures of the work-day that appear in this issue.

On Saturday, September 5, GNOIS took advantage of the Katrina workday. A healthy portion of over one hundred volunteers in the Sculpture Garden did the hard work of digging a trench about eighty feet long and installing plastic rings to contain the different cultivars that will be provided by the end of October. There were GNOIS members, Master Gardeners of Greater New Orleans, members of the Krewe of Orpheus, employees of the Hilton Garden Inn, and folks who came from who knows where.

We are grateful to them all!



GNOIS On The Web

www.louisianairisgnois.com

www.facebook.com/GreaterNewOrleansIrisSociety

www.zydecoirises.com



Volunteers on September 5 were too numerous to name or even to get to know. In the upper right, Pamela Buckman, the Sculpture Garden Manager, gives instructions to over one hundred volunteers who signed up. Immediately above, members of the Krewe of Orpheus, who weeded the GNOIS Display Garden. Many thanks!

ANNUAL IRIS SALE

The GNOIS Louisiana Iris Sale will be held at Longue Vue on October 17 from 10:00 AM till Noon. Members donate a wide variety of named cultivars, and the sale is a great place to find new irises for your garden and at great prices. Don't miss this one! No sales before 10:00 but come early for the greatest variety.

BENNY TRAHAN REGISTRATIONS INCLUDE BOTH COLLECTED AND HYBRIDIZED IRISES

Benny has extensively studied wild irises across Louisiana and recently has registered some outstanding examples of *I. nelsonii* and *I. fulva*. He also has begun to register excellent hybrids. The irises pictured below are all forms of the species, and hybrids are shown on the next page.



HOLDEN'S HIT
Collected *I. nelsonii*



BRONCO ROAD
Collected *I. nelsonii*



YOUNG'S COULEE
Collected *I. nelsonii*



BAYOU GAUCHE
Collected *I. fulva*



BIT OF BLUSH
Collected *I. fulva*



BUTEAUD'S GIFT
Collected *I. nelsonii*



LIL TRIS
Collected *I. fulva*



WEST WE GO
Collected *I. fulva*

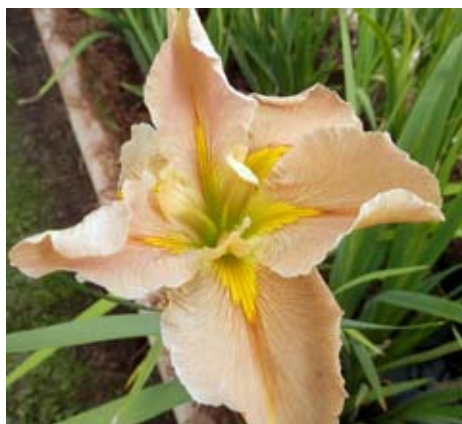


SHANGRI-LA PASS
Collected *I. fulva*

BENNY'S HYBRID LOUISIANA IRISES



KATHY'S CLOWN



MOON PIE



BRANDON'S CHOICE



CHELSEA GIRL



SIMPLY FANTASTIC



CONNOR'S CHOICE



HUNTER'S CATCH



DEBBIE'S DELIGHT

Getting to Longue Vue

Longue Vue is easy to find. From I-10, exit at City Park/Metairie Road and take Metairie Road in the direction away from the Park. There will be a golf course on the left and Metairie Lawn Cemetery on the right. Within a half mile, as soon as it becomes residential, look for Bamboo Road on the left. It is a narrow little street that is easy to miss. If you come to the bridge over a canal, you've just missed it. Once on Bamboo Rd., Longue Vue is on the left after a block or so.

When you enter Longue Vue, you will wind to a courtyard with a drive to the left leading directly to the house. Take that drive and then circle left around the house to a parking area in back. The Playhouse, and the GNOIS meeting, is just off the parking area.

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NEWSLETTER OF THE
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INVIGORATING IDEAS

BY TOM DILLARD

I have been following a discussion relative to invigorating moribund iris societies. A few years ago our local society (Central Arkansas Iris Society) was on the ropes – our leadership had gotten old and set in their ways. Fortunately, some new leadership assumed office, and we slowly reconstructed our society.

Here are some things that I think are crucial to keeping iris societies afloat (and, in part, it also pertains to other types of groups too):

1. Throw out a welcome mat. Make new members feel Welcome – and value their opinions.
2. Do not talk over the heads of new members. I am so irritated by officers and speakers who speak an iris-lingo, a code that new folks just don't comprehend.
3. Do not assume new members are "hooked." New members often need as long as a couple of years before they feel a part of things. For example, programs should contain information valuable to newbies. The American Iris Society slide sets, for example, speak mostly to the initiated – they are waaayyy too long – and speakers often feel they have to comment on every damned slide!
4. Have a meeting specifically to welcome new members. Usually our local society hosts a "tea" each autumn to welcome new members.
5. Don't forget social events. Yes, I know some societies are little more than social organizations, but there IS a middle approach. I suspect most local societies have a holiday celebration in December, which I always enjoy in part because it gives me a chance to get to know members better.
6. Give a gift to all new members. Our Society once had a meeting for new members with each newbie getting a free rhizome. Amazingly, people showed up (I suspect to get the rhizome?) in large numbers.
7. Publish a newsletter. A quarterly periodical will do wonders in informing members of what's going on. And, remember, those new members want to feel a part. (At a recent iris society committee meeting, one of our dearest and hard working members commented that she felt unwelcome on her first visit to the society.)
8. Try to get along – at least in front of guests and new members. I once spoke to an iris society in a neighboring state and the members spent so much time arguing among themselves that I hardly had the "energy" to give my remarks.
9. Give emphasis at society meetings to everything BUT BUSINESS! Conduct business in a board meeting at another time, and merely give an update to members. Of course, one must occasionally discuss and vote on major new projects, the financial situation, etc. However, it is not necessary to read minutes at full membership meetings. Do not allow meetings to run on and on and on. I recommend all speakers be given a time limit – no more than 30 minutes – and the limit enforced.
10. Host interesting programs. Our local society prescribes that the society vice president will serve as program chairman. He/she then organizes the programs for the year, and they are printed in the newsletter. We have a "rule" that every program must deal with irises in some fashion, though it can be a distant connection. (We have had programs in the past on such topics as 19th century plant hunters, the chemistry of soil fertilization, the AIS awards system, etc. I remember how appalled I was at one of my early society meetings – about 15 years ago – when a speaker gave a travelogue on her recent trip to Switzerland! Not a word on horticulture at all, much less irises.)
11. Do not badger members about joining AIS. Sure, we ought to issue an invitation at each meeting and provide forms for signing up, but don't go beyond that. Over time these new members will probably join, but they will object to forced feeding.

Tom Dillard lives in Malvern, Arkansas. Tom served as Secretary for the the Society for Louisiana Irises and was editor of its journal, *Fleur de Lis*, for ten years. Tom is retired from the University of Arkansas Library where he was head of Special Collections. He now writes a weekly column on Arkansas history for Arkansas Online. This article was written for the newsletter of Region 17, American Iris Society, in Spring 2004.



Scruffy Foliage in Late Summer

Catherine Tanguis of Slidell writes with a question about the foliage on her Louisiana irises in late July. She said that her iris foliage was “droopy” and laying over on the ground. Catherine also said that only a few of them bloomed in the spring. The question: how to care for these irises.

This was a timely question in late summer and still is for those who have not yet re-worked their iris beds this fall. You may be seeing some new growth now, but it had not started when Catherine wrote. The question was well illustrated in a photo that Catherine sent. Most of the irises were near dormant, falling over and showing a good bit of yellow foliage. A few were greener and upright, and that illustrates an issue that we’ll just get out of the way first. The greenest irises in the pictures are unlikely to be Louisianas. They probably are yellow flags, *I. pseudacorus*, which do have handsome foliage but with a midrib. Louisiana iris blades are flat.

I. pseudacorus is a water-loving iris like Louisianas and will not bloom well in dry conditions. It is an exceedingly strong grower, however, and will crowd out Louisianas and other plants. The best advice: either move these irises to another location where they can spread alone, or discard them (but not into a bayou where these invasive plants can displace natives).



A section of irises growing in Catherine Tanguis' garden in Slidell.

Tom Dillard, Invigorating Ideas, continued from previous page.

Oh, one more thing: expect your president to have at least a vague familiarity with Roberts Rules of Order. For example, often a presiding officer will call for a motion and vote when a simple ruling by the chair will suffice. Motions to adjourn, for example, are totally unnecessary, unless a meeting has gone on too long, in which case a motion to adjourn will send a quick message to a dawdling president!

As to the condition of the Louisianas, the best step to take when irises appear as these do in the picture is to cut them back to about six inches. They will look better, and new growth will be encouraged. There won't be a lot until the fall, but that will get it started.

This semi-dormant state does not mean that the irises are unhealthy. With good treatment through the fall and winter, there can be good bloom in the spring. The irises are simply protecting themselves from less than optimal moisture and, perhaps, insufficient nourishment. For the sake of appearance, however, gardeners may wish to avoid or minimize dormancy in their Louisiana irises.

With *consistent* moisture and adequate fertilizer it is possible to keep Louisianas green and growing through the summer. There will always be a few yellow leaves that need to be pulled away and discarded, but it is relatively easy to maintain a nice appearance.

A soaker hose run several times a week is one option. Another would be a regular sprinkler connected to a hose with a timer set to give the irises a good, deep watering every couple of days during the summer. The irises could be hand watered regularly, of course, but not many people are really able to apply the amount of water needed by that method on a consistent basis. It is best to flood the ground regularly by some automated means.

It is not clear from Catherine's picture how close the irises are to trees. If the roots of trees extend into the bed, more water would be needed to compensate for the amount the trees consume.

Fertilizer is almost as critical as water. Irises are heavy feeders. The traditional recommendation was a pound of a 8-8-8 per 10 square feet of irises applied in the fall as new growth starts and again in late January just before the burst of growth that produces bloom stalks. Some prefer other combinations of nutrients, such as higher nitrogen in fall and lower in the spring, but, whatever you use, fertilize those irises!

IRIS PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD DROUANT



Richard Drouant is retired from the New Orleans Police Department with 32 years of service. He now enjoys extending the ephemeral beauty of Louisiana irises through his photography. Richard and his wife Carol are both GNOIS members and live in Kenner.



Greater New Orleans Iris Society

TO JOIN OR REJOIN GNOIS

2015 Dues \$5 - Please make checks payable to Greater New Orleans Iris Society, or GNOIS.

NAME _____

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(This newsletter is distributed primarily by email, so please give an email address if possible)

Mail to: Fred Noggerath, GNOIS Treasurer, 4537 Ithaca St., Metairie, LA 70006.



SOCIETY FOR LOUISIANA IRISES



SLI is an international organization established in 1941 to promote Louisiana irises. Members receive its quarterly magazine ***Fleur de Lis*** and occasional special publications. Membership is \$13 annually for an individual or \$32 triennial. Family is \$16 and \$44 respectively.

NAME _____

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Mooringsport, LA 71060**