

# Bayou and Marsh

No. 31

News from the Greater New Orleans Iris Society

July 2016

## ***SPECIES PRESERVATION TO BE PROGRAM TOPIC AT AUGUST 6 MEETING***

The Society for Louisiana Irises initiated an important new program within the last year, and GNOIS is heavily involved in implementation. The "Louisiana Iris Species Preservation Project" will be the topic of a program by Patrick O'Connor at the August 6 meeting.

An overview of the program, with lots of pictures, is now up on the GNOIS web site. Google "Greater New Orleans Iris Society" and click on the Species Preservation tab for a look, or just click [here](#).

The meeting will again feature our new schedule: from 9 to 10 am, refreshments and demonstrations, followed by a brief business meeting beginning at 10 am. The program by Patrick O'Connor will follow brief business meeting.

We will have our usual iris giveaway after the meeting, but no raffle this time. If you have rhizomes to share, bring them along. We'll just be a few short weeks from the start of the prime time to dig and divide Louisiana irises, and to add new plants to our gardens.

## **Iris Show and Rainbow Festival Highlight GNOIS Spring Fun**



*At the March meeting, Roland Guidry demonstrates methods of transporting an iris to a show to avoid damaging an otherwise winning stalk.*



*Gary Salathe and Sue Anthony helping to set up the Iris Show in the Courtyard at the New Orleans Museum of Art.*

### **GNOIS On The Web**

[www.louisianairisgnois.com](http://www.louisianairisgnois.com)

[www.facebook.com/GreaterNewOrleansIrisSociety](https://www.facebook.com/GreaterNewOrleansIrisSociety)

[www.zydecoirises.com](http://www.zydecoirises.com)



*Above, a nice row of Louisiana iris cultivars entered by members in the Iris Show in April, and, right, judging of the entries in progress. Below, Carol Drouant manning the GNOIS information table at the Rainbow Festival in the Sculpture Garden, held in conjunction with the Show.*

# Fulva Hunt!

An early April GNOIS field trip rolled in search of *Iris fulva* in the wild. One carload from New Orleans and another from the Northshore connected in Baton Rouge and headed west on Highway 190 toward the town of Lottie. There were roadside stops whenever blooming irises were seen, with an interruption for lunch in Opelousas.

The New Orleans group headed home by way of Rosedale and saw great bloom along the Rosedale Road toward Port Allen. At another brief stop several miles South of the LSU campus at an old borrow pit, there were some nice fulvas seen in an especially nice shade of red.

A fun day! And great to see wild irises still out there.





## More Fulva Hunting

*Previous page, taking pictures, Linda Trahan and Tyrone Foreman, left, and Lorrie Brown, right.*

*The group saw a good color range of fulvas including the typical rust red above, good orange forms along Highway 190 and on the Rosedale Road (previous page), and a bright red south of LSU on the way home (above right).*

*Fulvas were not the only find. Richard Drouant shot the Spider Lily (*Hymenocaulis occidentalis*) and the delicate flower on a *Clematis crispa* vine above. The New Orleans group saw *giganticaeruleas*, as on left, off I-10 on the way to Baton Rouge.*

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NEWSLETTER OF THE  
GREATER NEW ORLEANS IRIS SOCIETY

### OFFICERS

**Eileen Hollander, President**  
5436 South Claiborne  
New Orleans, LA 70036  
504-689-4233 eehollan@bellsouth.net

**Joe Musacchia, Vice-President**  
509 Linda Ann Av. Gray, LA 70359  
985-209-2917 1cajunjoe@att.com

**Fred Noggerath, Treasurer**  
4537 Ithaca St. Metairie, LA 70006  
504-889-0128 fnoggerath@yahoo.com

**Lorri Brown, Secretary**  
6509 Schouest St. Metairie, LA 70003  
504-442-1790  
lorrie.brown4@gmail.com

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### NEWSLETTER

**Patrick O'Connor**  
4628 Newlands St. Metairie, LA 70808  
504-343-1399 pfoconnor@cox.net

# Louisiana Irises That Make Me Happy

BY PATRICK O'CONNOR

**A**mazing progress has been made in the relatively few years in which Louisiana irises have been hybridized. Those stalwarts who collected wild irises in swamps and along bayous and who began hybridizing in the 1930s and 1940s would be hard pressed to recognize some of the newer hybrids. Even those working in the 1980s and 1990s surely would be surprised by their change in appearance and pleased with improvements in performance as good garden plants.



*'Plum Good', Ira Nelson by Barbara Nelson, 2001.*

I generally like the new irises and have been impressed by almost

*Note: An earlier version of this article appeared in the American Iris Society's Blog, World of Irises.*

all. Those marked by the greatest transformation in appearance of the flower, however, are not necessarily the ones I am happiest to see every year. Don't get me wrong. Ruffling is great. Green styles can be pleasing. Signals on all parts add nice variation. Strong substance generally is a plus. Who can argue that a high bud count is not better than a lower one?

There is something to be said, however, for old friends, old forms, and for simplicity and grace. I think those qualities may be what makes me happy to see some favorite irises each year and to resist any urge to move them out to make way for the new.

This article will be about some iris hangers-on. A few are actually old, but others simply hearken back to the time before the ruffling revolution, which really began not so long ago. Even some new irises channel the quintessence of the wild ones and reinforce a prime directive for Louisiana irises: There are a variety of pleasing forms, not a single model for a good iris. And, it should be added, it is the appearance and performance of an iris in the garden that is the real test of its quality.

A good place to start is **'Plum Good'** (Nelson, 2001). This iris was developed by the late Ira S. Nelson, probably in the 1950s, but was only registered by his widow Barbara many years later. The intensity of the plum red color and bright yellow arrowhead signal make this one striking iris. The form is a bit open and slightly flaring, creating a bold but airy effect in the garden. Many old irises drift away, but iris gardeners have refused to let this one go.

If red is your color, **'Acadian'** (Conger, 1956) remains appealing. It was registered as "violet rose" but I don't see that. To me, the falls



*'Acadian', Sidney Conger, 1956.*

are distinctly red heavily overlaid with wine veining. True, the standards are a lighter color, and violet rose may be accurate, but the overall effect of the flower is a textured red. I don't know of anything else quite like it even after all these years.

Dorman Haymon's **'It's A Boy'** (Haymon, 1989) is an overlooked iris. It is a clear lavender blue with a strong yellow arrowhead signal



*'It's A Boy', Dorman Haymon, 1989.*

outlined deep blue. The flower form is open. The registration blurb tags this iris as blooming at midseason, but after three years I have yet to find that accurate. It is one of the last irises of the season, and it thus recommends itself to the procrastinating yet discriminating hybridizer. 'It's A Boy'



*'Velvet Memory', Richard Morgan, 1994.*

provides a very beautiful and welcome surprise when the bloom season seems almost over.

Color distinguishes '**Velvet Memory**' (Morgan, R, 1994) and I look forward to seeing its face every year. Richard Morgan registered it as "dark red violet" and I can't disagree as far as that goes. But there is something about the tone that is distinct. I have called it violet purple but that probably



*'Morgan's Dixie', Richard Morgan by Melody Wilhoit, 2009.*

is no more accurate. I'm not sure that my pictures or monitor capture the color or that any other iris has duplicated it.

My current favorite Richard Morgan iris is '**Morgan's Dixie**' (Morgan,

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*'Creole Canary', Marvin Granger, 1976.*

by Melody and Jerry Wilhoit, 2009). It is a short bright gold that is edged terracotta. It provides a vivid-to-nearly-blinding patch of orange in the garden. This, as they say, is one that you can't pass by, but partly that's because it reaches out and grabs you by the ankles. I cannot imagine a replacement. 'Morgan's Dixie' proves that an iris does not have to be tall to stand tall.



*'Henry Rowlan', M. D. Faith, 2000.*

Double Louisiana irises may be an acquired taste and if so, I have acquired it. They are oddities, really, and perhaps are best enjoyed if few in number. One I like is '**Creole Canary**' (Granger, 1976). It is "double" in the extreme, having six falls and a bunch of extra petaloids too numerous to count precisely. One might say it's a mess. It is, but I enjoy looking at it every year.

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**'Henry Rowlan'** (M. D. Faith, 2000) is hardly an oldie, but it demonstrates that a clean, simple form devoid of ruffling (much less doubling) retains a strong appeal. This is a gorgeous velvety purple iris that I never expect to replace. The contrasting bright yellow of the crown signal is striking. Someday this totally unruffled form may represent the new novelty iris.

As might be expected, I am attached to several of my own hybrids. I still like these, but they



*'Barataria', Patrick O'Connor, 2002.*

may not grab others. They include '**Barataria**' (2002), '**Little Woods**' (2004), '**Gentilly**' (2003), '**Cocodrie**' (2013), '**When Pigs Fly**' (2013) and '**Zydeco**' (1999).

**'Barataria'** is one of those irises that do not have show stalks, but they are produced in such profusion that a clump provides a color blast approaching that of a blooming azalea. The day-glo rose color and contrasting white styles are an early highlight in



*'Little Woods', Patrick O'Connor, 2004*

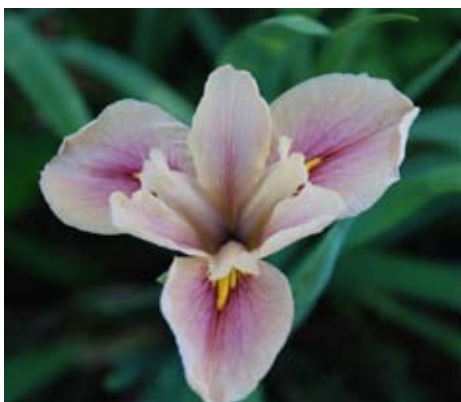


*'Cocodrie', Patrick O'Connor, 2013.*

the garden. **'Little Woods'** is a softer color – a warm rose – that is best appreciated close up. The styles and signals have a subtle greenish cast and a line of deeper rose decorates the center of the falls. One of the best smaller Louisiana irises.

**'Cocodrie'** defies the demand for overlapping petals but its flaring form, orange color and decorative signals underline the Louisiana standard that many forms are fine. This is another iris that slows your stroll down the garden path.

**'When Pigs Fly'** exerts the same pull with a unique combination of pearly pink and yellow signals outlined by bright fuchsia. This iris was



*'When Pigs Fly', Patrick O'Connor, 2013.*

named for its possibility of winning a Dykes, but at least there is no mistaking this one for any other. It's a fun iris.

**'Gentilly'** is a favorite due to its soft peach tones and tastefully decorated styles that are tipped rose and that show a hint of green. The yellow signal is outlined deep orange. That



*'Gentilly', Patrick O'Connor, 2003.*

may sound busy but the color contrasts are subtle, not garish. This iris is best enjoyed out of the full blast of all day sunlight. It definitely does benefit from partial shade.

**'Zydeco'** returned to form this year when planted again in a garden

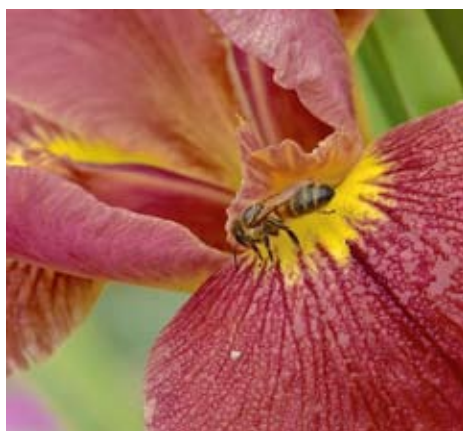
bed rather than under water culture. There aren't many, but a few Louisiana irises prefer to grow in a garden bed rather than in the bogs I create with drainless containers. **'Zydeco'** is a bright burnt orange self that deserves to be treated the way it wants.

Perhaps eventually I will tire of some of these old iris friends, as I have others. I do like to think they retain some of the character of their wild ancestors. It has become clear that the genetic possibilities for development and transformation of Louisiana irises are practically limitless. Someday they may be unrecognizable as products of the natural world. I hope that future Louisianas maintain qualities that reflect the essence of their natural heritage, and that we will not be entirely dazzled by beautiful images more likely to inhabit the far end of a kaleidoscope.



*'Zydeco', Patrick O'Connor, 1999.*

# SPRING IRISES BY RICHARD DROUANT



*GNOIS member and photographer Richard Drouant captured these beautiful images of Louisiana irises in the spring, many on the SLI Convention tour at Briarwood. One of these pictures is actually not a Louisiana iris. Do you know which?*

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## ON THE WILD SIDE



THESE THREE IRISES ARE GOOD EXAMPLES OF THE SPECIES *FULVA* AND *GIGANTICAERULEA*, TESTIMONY THAT THE WILD FORMS ARE EVERY BIT AS BEAUTIFUL AS MODERN CULTIVARS.

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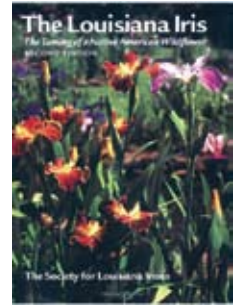


# Society for Louisiana Irises Storefront

## ***THE LOUISIANA IRIS: THE TAMING OF AN AMERICAN WILDFLOWER***

Contributing Editors: Marie Caillet, J. Farron Campbell, Kevin C. Vaughn, and Dennis Vercher  
Details: 254 pp, 111 color photos, 5 watercolors, 21 b/w photos, 14 line drawings, 11 tables, hardcover.

This authoritative treatment by The Society for Louisiana Irises is based on the first edition published by the Society in 1988, but it is considerably expanded. It covers every aspect of the history, botany, and development of these distinctive irises, with particular emphasis on the newest hybrids, hybridizing techniques, and cultural practices, and also includes suggestions for their use in the landscape and in floral arrangements. It should serve to introduce a wider gardening public to these colorful and versatile flowers. - \$30.00



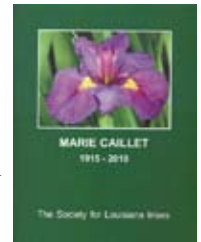
## ***Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises - The History of Hybridizing (2007)***

This Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises is a 100-page summary of how the "ditch irises" of Louisiana have been tamed and introduced into American gardens. Contents include informative articles on such early pioneers as Mary Swords DeBallion, Caroline Dorman, and Percy Viosca; the Shreveport and Lake Charles groups, the California hybridizers, and a wide variety of other contributors to the development of the Louisiana iris. Includes 30 color photographs of outstanding cultivars. Paperbound. - \$5.00 plus \$2.00 shipping within U.S.



## ***Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises honoring Marie Caillet (1915-2010)***

This is a very high quality publication that pays tribute to Marie Caillet, a charter member of SLI, longtime editor of the SLI newsletter, and the "grandmother" of SLI for many of us. This is a 52 page 8.5 x 10 publication in full color with many pictures of Marie, species Louisiana irises, Marie Caillet Cup Winners with pictures, a listing of SLI Distinguished Merit Award winners from 1989 to 2010, and memories of Marie written by several members of SLI. - \$10 plus \$3 shipping within US



## ***Louisiana Iris Hybridizers 1985-2010***

This is a paper bound booklet consisting of 99 pages of color pictures, the Marie Caillet Cup Winners from 2001 to 2010 with color pictures, the Mary Swords DeBaillon Medal winners from 1986 to 2010 with color pictures and many articles written by the hybridizers during the period 1985 to 2010. This is a companion book for the Special Publication of 2007, which contains information on the hybridizers from the beginning to 1984. - \$5 plus \$2 shipping within US



## ***Special Publication of the Society for Louisiana Irises 1995***

This paper bound special publication, edited by Marie Caillet and Joseph Mertzweiller, consist of 86 pages and contains "a half-century of progress", information on hybridizers, the development of the tetraploid LA irises, information on LA irises in Australia, culture of LA irises and many beautiful pictures of LA irises. There is a limited supply of of this publication remaining so get them while they last. - \$5 plus \$2 shipping within US

## ***The SLI Louisiana Iris Checklist CD!***

The CD checklist is illustrated with photos of many of the cultivars and it can be displayed in three formats. It has a powerful search feature that allows you to search the checklist by cultivar attributes such as name, date of introduction, hybridizer, parentage and much more. The checklist lists names, descriptions, breeder/ introducer and parentage of iris cultivars from the 1920's through the present. The iris are grouped by year of registration and/or introduction. The CD will cost \$10 for delivery to the United States,



***Any of these products & other Iris materials can be ordered from the SLI Treasurer Ron Killingsworth.  
For shipment outside US please contact Ron Killingsworth directly for pricing***

10329 Caddo Lake Road, Mooringsport, LA 71060 318-996-9969 retmiagt@gmail.com



Greater New Orleans Iris Society

## TO JOIN OR REJOIN GNOIS

2016 Dues \$10 - Please make checks payable to Greater New Orleans Iris Society, or GNOIS.

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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 \$17 annually for an individual or \$45 triennial. Family is \$22 and \$60 respectively.

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